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The Black cat

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Little Magazine

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THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO.
SALEM MASS.

Paragraphs From Our Own Portfolio

The Fixed Purpose of Our Souls

Do you remember how the Sunday School Superintendent used to get up along toward the end of the session, just when you were getting hungry, and ask, "What ought to be the fixed purpose of our souls?" And you wished that he wasn't so almighty particular about everybody's soul, including yours, when his own was rather a shriveled-up affair. Besides you were not interested in souls just at that moment. You were getting hungrier every minute. And what business was it of his anyway?

Everybody else stood up and answered, so you did too, without in the least knowing or caring what it was all about.

"What ought to be the fixed purpose of our souls? Huh? Oh, yes— 'To be a worker together with God toward so great a good,' " etc. You mumbled along trying to keep up with the rest of the school, but never quite succeeding.

After that, they let you go home—a thoroughly prophylactic Christian, if there ever was one.

That disposes of your youth and brings us down to the present moment and more especially to the business of the present moment, which is to find out what really ought to be the fixed purpose of our souls as literati —or rather your soul.

You are buying The Black Cat every month because you have always liked Black Cat stories. Yet you are a trifle uneasy, a bit critical. You think you would enjoy it a little more, if you could correct the editor's mistakes. In short, you think you should have his job; and he should be—well, you'd hate to tell him just what you think he should be doing for a living.

"If I were the editor," you begin.

"Is that so?" we want to know.

And right there we go to the mat together with the result that The Black Cat Club is formed. It is created for just such people as you because we have a sneaking respect for your likes and dislikes in the way of fiction and want to know how you like The Black Cat and The Thriller and what you know about the magazine business anyway.

So there you are.

Now what ought to be the fixed purpose of your soul? And the answer is—To Be a Worker Together With the Editor.

The Black Cat Club is merely the vehicle designed to make possible such ideal relations between editor and readers. Whether or not it flourishes depends largely upon the fixed purpose of your soul.

For full particulars see the full page advertisement.

The Black Cat

VOL. XXII. No. 2 NOVEMBER, 1916 10c. a COPY. $1.00 a YEAR

Contents

Cover Design . . . *By* **Arthur Knapp**

The Skagpole Venus . . *By* **Stanley Shaw** ***Page*** **1**

A connoisseur of old masters invokes the aid of Hymen in securing the famous "Skagpole Venus" for his art gallery.

A Bull Market in Fiddles *By* **J. Bernard Lynch** ***Page*** **11**

In which a couple of Bulls break loose in the fiddle market. Prices soar, and Uncle Myer hitches his wagon to a "Strad."

Hazard & O'Chance: Light Comedy *By* **F. W. Dever** ***Page*** **28**

Highway robbery is a legitimate profession as practiced by these two comedians, who pool their capital in one grand plunge on the good horse, Pat McGlynn. But Pat proves to be one of those flivvers that pass in the night.

Number One on the Sucker List *By* **G. B. Grant** ***Page*** **25**

Two men match wits to see which is on the side of the intellectuals and which is on the sucker list—and all because of a few letters written by a young lady who had not reached the age of discretion.

Dematerialization . . . *By* **C. Mason** ***Page*** **30**

It is a simple matter to dematerialize a body by cremation. In this case, a man locks a good, healthy girl in a bank vault for two hours and tries to send her soul into the infinite with the aid of soft music instead of fire.

The Geniuses of the Sun . *By* **Oscar Lewis** ***Page*** **33**

After years in the turmoil of metropolitan journalism, a man goes back to the country paper of his youth in search of a job, a restful atmosphere, and a—girl.

Lost—A Star . . *By* **Kenneth Vaux Reed** ***Page*** **39**

A fall from a second story window is generally more or less painful. Certainly there is rarely any romance in it. But then, the girl in this story wasn't looking for romance, she was trying to avoid it.

The Bone of a Camel . *By* **Erich Brandeis** ***Page*** **48**

A good yarn for Amy Lowell and the other verse librists to read. It might be the means of reviving the camel bone school of poets.

The Sculpin . . . *By* **Le Roy Kenneth** ***Page*** **53**

If a man dies with his boots on, the "obit," men register a few extra sobs on their typewriters. But when a man, just out of the trenches, dies with gloves on, he is likely to be misunderstood—with boots or without them.

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

A CONTEST

The Black Cat Club is composed of writers, would-be writers and readers: in fact, any one interested in short stories either as a writer or reader, may become a member. The object of the club is to stimulate interest in short stories. There is no membership fee. A coupon is printed below for the convenience of each one desiring to become a member.

The first duties of members consist of reading The Black Cat and submitting to the club a list of the stories in each issue arranged according to their merit with reasons in the fewest number of words possible.

Cash Prizes for Writers and Readers

A Prize of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as Best by the largest number of club members.

Prizes of $5.00 each will be awarded to the five members submitting the Best lists and reasons.

The First Contest comprises the stories in this issue (November) and all lists must be received at the office of The Black Cat, Salem, Mass., before December 1st. Prizes will be awarded December 5th, and result of the contest will be published in the February Black Cat issued January 15th. *Address all communications to*

THE BLACK CAT, SALEM, MASS.

CUT OUT THIS COUPON AND ATTACH TO YOUR ANSWER

Date ____________________

THE BLACK CAT CLUB,
Salem, Mass.

Please enroll me as a member of The Black Cat Club.

I have read the November Black Cat and enclose herewith a list of the stories arranged in the order of their merit with my reasons for this arrangement.

Name ____________________

Address ____________________

THE SKAGPOLE VENUS

BY STANLEY SHAW

A connoisseur of old masters invokes the aid of Hymen in securing the famous "Skagpole Venus" for his art gallery.

MISS Anita Maloney was tripping down Fifth Avenue on her way to Belford's Big Department Store, where she would spend the day behind the jewelry counter selling "Guaranteed $90 Diamond Rings, this day only $49.98."

Anita was a sight for tired eyes, refreshment for frazzled nerves and relief for saw-edged dispositions. They certainly do not come prettier than Anita anywhere on the Avenue, and that is saying considerable for the young lady. One look at Anita should have been enough to start any sensible young man to studying the house-furnishing goods windows. Her hair was the color of rich burnt umber and abundant, her complexion cream and rose, and her lips presented that crimson cupid's bow effect, alike the pride of artists and the despair of femininity in the flesh.

There may not have been any tremendous excess of gray matter behind Miss Anita Maloney's transcendent pulchritude, yet it is on record that amazing undertakings are often attempted on limited assets, and beauty minus may not, after all, be such poor capital for a penniless young lady just turned nineteen, especially if she have as a silent partner one of the richest men in the country.

Leaving Miss Anita Maloney, we must step across to West 86th Street, the home of Mr. John Thomas Derrington, said to be worth some fifty million dollars. Permit that satisfying sum to sink into your soul, but don't jump at conclusions: John Thomas has a wife fully capable of keeping him out of the clutches of designing beauties; furthermore, the passion of John Thomas's life is old masters, not young misses.

Vast wealth is popularly supposed to breed inefficient digestive apparatuses, insomnia and sour dispositions. In furtherance of a more equitable distribution of this world's needful, it is to be hoped that such is sometimes the case; truth compels the statement, however, that, in spite of his money, J. T. owned the digestion of an ostrich, a chronic propensity for sleeping like a husky infant and a perpetually sunny disposition. Quite a jolly, chaffing old millionaire was John Thomas, very fond of his jokes. Yet he was not thoroughly happy; the worm of discontent did sometimes gnaw at his vitals.

The cause of John Thomas's repining was that he did not possess the famous Skagpole Venus, and, though he did own a goodly share of

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all the other old masters a millionaire might desire, they all became as dead sea fruit when his mind dwelt on the unattainable one.

David Belford, proprietor of Belford's Big Department Store, owned the Skagpole Venus, so called because it once hung in the ancestral halls of the sixth Lord Skagpole, now deceased, before being sold to Belford, in order that the seventh Lord Skagpole might raise the necessary wherewithal to marry Letty Allerby of the Gaiety Theatre.

The Skagpole Venus, though still a beauty, was certainly beginning to show her age, if cracked varnish may be taken as evidence, yet these little matters dimmed not the soul within to her present owner, David Belford, in whose vast gallery she occupied the place of honor, despite frequent bids for her favor by John Thomas Derrington, who, up to the present hour, had offered as high as $50,000 for the square of canvas whereon she reclined.

To return to Miss Anita Maloney, who, by this time, had arrived at Belford's Big Department Store, deposited her outer wraps in the basement locker, and stood behind a crystal jewelry counter, clothed in trim black, with snowy collar and cuffs, prepared to dispense those guaranteed $90 diamond rings, this day only at $49.98. Though the month was July and the temperature hovered about the nineties, Miss Anita, appearing as cool, comfortable and perfect as the proverbial cucumber, was arranging a stray lock of her perfect coiffure, when her fellow salesgirl, Miss Levy, spoke in a guarded undertone:

"Get onto your job, Maloney, here comes that old snuffer to look at them emeralds again."

A "snuffer," in behind-the-counter parlance, is a shopper who goes purse-empty about from store to store, merely for the pure joy of looking—or perhaps in the interest of some rival concern—with no thought whatever of actual investment.

True, the gentleman coming had been in twice before to inspect an emerald necklace priced at $987.49, yet he was no snuffer, being none other than John Thomas Derrington, he of the fifty millions.

Next to priceless old masters, John Thomas loved perfect gems, and he had it in mind to present his only daughter, Alice, on her early arriving birthday, with an emerald necklace; but, being a very thrifty old gentleman—as you may gather from the fact of those fifty millions—he never invested until he had carefully weighed all matters pro and con.

Miss Anita Maloney assumed her very sweetest "charge customer" smile, while John Thomas coughed a sort of polite but perfunctory "Hem!" fumbled for his pince-nez, found the black ribbon, adjusted the lenses and spoke:

"I hesitate to trouble you again, young lady, but, if you do not mind, I should like to glance just once more at an emerald necklace you have, priced, I believe, at $887.49."

From pure force of habit, John Thomas subtracted a hundred dollars from what he well enough remembered to be the real price of the necklace. Miss Anita Maloney, rather taking to the thin, Punch-like face of this clean, courtly old gentleman, smiled and corrected him.

"Those are very fine gems, sir," she continued pleasantly, placing the desired piece of jewelry in its immaculate velvet-lined case on the counter pad for Derrington's inspection. "Every stone is guaranteed perfect; they would cost you at least a half more than our price at any specialty store. Being a departmental establishment, we sell jewelry at department store profits, exactly as we do dry goods and groceries." Miss Anita, having attended the Belford School of Salesmanship very assiduously, knew just what to say.

Albeit John Thomas Derrington had twice before been in to examine these emeralds, he had but perfunctorily glanced at the salesperson showing them. He seldom gathered a more comprehensive idea of any salesperson's individual appearance than of the faces of his servants. Salespeople and servants were a mere matter of course with Derrington, man of mighty millions. Should one chance to have eyes like an owl, or a nose like an elephant, he might have been startled into attention; otherwise, they faded into the general landscape. Now, however, he was suddenly aware of something pleasing in the sweet voice expatiating on the attractions of the necklace.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the slightly startled man, who was feeling the extreme heat himself. "How cool and comfortable you seem this morning, young lady."

John Thomas had no definite idea why it was so, yet as he sensed Miss Anita Maloney's fresh beauty, it started him thinking of the Skagpole Venus. Perhaps it was because, in his eyes, both represented perfection.

"I have a contented mind," answered Miss Anita off-handedly. "The heat never troubles me."

"It appears not," added John Thomas. "But I might hazard a guess regarding something that does trouble you."

Miss Anita, knowing perfectly well that this dry, jolly old gentleman was not attempting a flirtation, looked perfunctory interest.

"Yes?" she inquired.

"I'll wager you are troubled with more sweethearts than a body could shake a stick at," answered John T. with a sage nod. "Or else the present day lads are nothing like as appreciative as they were in my time."

"You'd lose," answered Anita. "I haven't a sweetheart to my name."

"Umm-m, well, maybe they have changed," hummed John Thomas.

As his eyes were travelling again toward the necklace, he caught sight of a stout person stepping his way. He began to chuckle, holding up four outspread fingers and a thumb so that the man approaching might see them. This latter gentleman was David Belford, who made it a settled habit to walk once through each aisle of his vast department store daily.

Belford was short, pursy, fussy and florid. A bristling white moustache half hid his mouth and his head was bare of hair, save for a fast disappearing white ring below his ears. He caught sight of Derrington's upheld hand and shook his head in denial, knowing that John Thomas's gesture signified an added bid of

$5,000 for the Skagpole Venus.

This was a custom between the two whenever they met. John Thomas had but once made a verbal offer for the Venus, and that was $20,000. Since then his bids had mounted upward, by skips, of from one finger to five, representing thousands in real money, until it now stood at $50,000.

"You hard-hearted old reprobate," he squeaked, laughing as Belford approached. "Don't you ever mean to sell me that painting?"

"Well, now then, why should I sell it to you?" asked Belford, a controversial sort of chap, in a raspy, querulous voice. "I'm fond of it myself, and, really, you know, Derrington, you haven't offered me anything at all tempting yet."

"Bless my soul and body, man, tempting!" exclaimed John Thomas. "I daresay you'll make twenty-five thousand on the deal at my last offer. Is that what you call a decent department store profit? Eh, what, eh?" He turned and winked slyly at Miss Anita Maloney and, at sight of her beautifully placid features, seemed suddenly struck with an idea.

"Look here, Bel'," he exclaimed, tapping that gentleman on one fat shoulder. "Have you any sporting blood in you? I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll wager my 'Dance of the Hamadryades' against your 'Venus,' the winner to have the loser's picture at $20,000. What do you say?"

The department store man coughed throatily, and his florid features became a few shades brighter.

"Well, now then, Derrington, what is your idea of a fairish wager?" he asked interestedly.

"My 'Dance of the Hamadryades' against your 'Venus' I can tell you who your son marries," snapped John Thomas.

Belford jumped; the thing struck him almost in a heap. Freddie Belford, apple of his father's eye, had only just arrived at marriageable age, and the elder Belford had never yet thought of matrimony in connection with his only son.

"Now then, look here, Derrington, you're taking an unfair advantage," he finally sputtered. "Frederick isn't likely to marry anybody for some time. If you know about any clandestine love affair my boy has become entangled in you ought to tell me of it without putting a price on your information." His voice was a trifle wheedling as he concluded, for this had hit him in a very tender spot.

"Information is altogether too valuable to part with without making a decent department store profit," chuckled Derrington, winking again at Miss Maloney.

Belford studied the subject again. He was morally certain Frederick had no idea of marrying; yet, if so be it he had, Belford would almost be willing to part with the Skagpole Venus, merely to know the maiden's name, also, he had always coveted Derrington's "Dance of the Hamadryades," and $20,000 for that painting was a low figure.

"Well, now then, Derrington, I think I shall have to take you up there," he rasped. "Who is Frederick going to marry?"

"Wait, wait," protested canny John Thomas. "We must have this thing down in black and white. I'll write the young woman's name—not that I claim she is young, you understand—on a slip of paper, seal it in an envelope, and you may put the envelope in your office safe. If Frederick marries within six months, open the envelope. If I have named the girl, the Skagpole Venus is mine at $20,000. If I have failed to name her correctly, or Frederick doesn't marry within six months, 'The Dance of the Hamadryades' is yours at the same figure. That's more than fair, Bel'; you have two chances to my one; he may not marry, or, if he does, I may not call the name of the bride."

Belford yanked nervously at his white moustache, vexed to find he was not to hear the young woman's name at once. "Dammit, what *does* the old file know?" he thought. "That's a queer wager, but, at least, if Frederick doesn't marry in six months I'll know who Derrington is hinting at." "Aloud, he said, "Well, all right, Derrington. I'll take you up there."

Paper and envelope being secured from the stationery department, John Thomas, a letter sheet laid atop of the jewelry counter behind which Miss Anita Maloney still waited to serve his wishes, was about to write when Belford heard something that made him listen acutely.

"Young lady, what is your name?" asked John Thomas in guarded tones of Miss Maloney as he poised his pen.

Belford, having his back toward John T. was not aware of it, but Derrington, as he put his question to the salesgirl, covertly observed the department store owner through one corner of a very wise eye, carefully estimating the distance between that man and himself. Perhaps he imagined Belford might suddenly leap forward and wrest that bit of paper from his hands the instant the name was imposed thereon; then, again—but the pretty salesgirl was answering.

"Anita May Maloney," she replied sweetly.

John Thomas wrote down something, folded the paper painstakingly, slipped it inside the envelope, dated and memorandumed it and handed the sealed sheet to Belford, who accepted it with an obviously puzzled air and an unmistakably shaky hand. For the first time since she had been employed in his store, he looked at Miss Anita Maloney and was profoundly impressed with her compelling beauty.

"Good God!" he thought. "Can it be possible there is anything between my Frederick and this person? I'll have to look into matters with the boy, right away."

"Tuck that in your safe, Bel'," chuckled Derrington. "And, remember: not to be opened unless Frederick marries within six months."

As Belford walked away, so bewildered by this odd and unexpected turn of events that he could with difficulty realize whether he was walking on his hands or his feet, John Thomas gave his attention to Miss Anita Maloney and the emerald necklace. The salesgirl, formerly a mere shadow merging into the general landscape of John Thomas's life, had now become a personality.

"I think you may have that necklace wrapped up," he said, "and I will take it with me. Here is my card. I believe my family has an account here. And, let me add, if the good wish does not give offense, that a young lady as pretty as yourself deserves better fortune in the matter of sweethearts."

"But what can a poor girl do if the boys don't come and propose?" smiled Miss Maloney as she accepted John T.'s card and proceeded to make out a charge slip for the floorman's approval.

"Tut, tut," laughed Derrington. "As if you didn't know you have the whole thing in your own hands, what? Eh, what?"

Miss Maloney shook her handsome head doubtfully.

"I'll tell you what, young lady," declared John Thomas, "I'll make it an object for you, yourself, to prove I'm right. If *you* marry within six months I'll make you a present of the handsomest dinner ring in New York."

"I'm sure you're very generous," answered Miss Maloney in a rather noncommittal way, handing John T. his wrapped package. "I hope you won't forget it; but I'm afraid there is little chance for me."

Leaving John Thomas to journey homeward, and Miss Anita Maloney to go back to the business of selling guaranteed $90 diamond rings, this day only $49.98, we must proceed to the home of David Belford, where, as may be surmised, a most uncomfortable half hour awaited Mr. Frederick.

In the Belford library, a rather somber but ornate room, finished in carved mahogany and tooled Spanish leather with bronze lighting fixtures and wood-green draperies at windows and doors, David himself fidgeted nervously back and forth before the huge pyramid fireplace in expectation of the momentary entrance of his son, whom he had had summoned to the presence.

Frederick entered, a fine, well set up young fellow, broad of shoulder and blonde of head, yet a young man not yet completely over the embarrassing knowledge of possessing uncomfortable hands and feet; a knowledge further complicated by an alarming propensity of the face assuming the color of a fresh-cut beet at the slightest provocation, and of the tongue to suddenly feel so large that it seemed to completely fill the mouth, making coherent speech difficult. In a word, Frederick was diffident.

The failing of fathers, especially fathers with money, is common knowledge. David Belford already suspected the worst; yet, since he really loved this handsome lad, he began gently.

"Now then, Frederick, my boy, what's all this I hear about marriage?" he asked.

As has before been intimated, an easy flow of language was not one of Frederick's long suits, less so under stress of excitement than upon ordinary occasions. His face promptly assumed the rubicund appearance of a newly spanked infant and he could only stammer:

"Ma-marriage, poppa; great heavens!"

Certainly this might be called a non-committal statement, however you interpret it; yet, in David Belford's mind, it became an almost complete confession of guilt. He began to rave and sputter like fat over a blazing fire.

"Now then, Frederick, I won't have it, that's all there is about it," he finally ended up, explosively. "Almost anybody but one of my salesgirls. I won't have it, Frederick,—Anita May Maloney! The name is enough. Sounds like a girl from the Follies."

"Anita May Maloney!" Frederick finally managed to stammer. "Why, poppa, I never saw her."

"What, what?" exclaimed Belford, his puffy-lidded eyes opening wide. Surely Derrington's inference was as plain as the nose on his face, he thought, yet the earnestness of his son's tone made him pause and produced a slight ray of hope. "Never saw her!" he repeated. "Frederick, are you lying to me?"

"Of course not. Why on earth should I lie about it?" answered the young man indignantly. "Poppa, I should think you'd gone crazy."

David studied the matter a moment. "Well, now then, Frederick," he finally said, speaking more mildly. "You come down to the shop tomorrow and see the girl; she's in the jewelry department. She really is handsome, and you may know her under some other name. If you assure me, after you see her tomorrow, that you've never known her, I'll believe you."

Thus did it happen that Frederick Belford entered his father's famous departmental establishment on the following morning and inquired of a floorman the direction to the jewelry section, blushing meanwhile as though he were about to face a battery of beauties, instead of but one. The floorman, not having the remotest idea who the young man was, guided him gently toward the ring counter, winked a facetious aside at the salesgirl there and said:

"Wedding rings, sir? Yes, sir, Miss Maloney will show them to you."

Frederick caught the name, caught the inference, gave one glance at the ravishing young woman before him and fled, his former blushes being as the palest of pink sunsets to the roseate flush that now suffused his burning face. But he had proceeded no farther than the stationery section when he stalked into the arms of the senior Belford himself.

"Well, now then, Frederick, did you see her?" inquired David of his son.

"Of course I saw her," was Frederick's indignant reply as his face assumed its normal hue. "And I give you my word, poppa, I never before set my eyes on the girl."

"Well, then, that's enough," declared Belford, tremendously relieved. "I must have misunderstood Derrington."

"Der—Derrington!" stammered Frederick, falling into a new pit of embarrassment. "What has he got to do with it?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," answered Belford. "The old file made a funny wager with me, that's all; said he knew who you would marry within six months, and I thought he hinted pretty strong at its being one of my salesgirls; but the matter's ended now; we won't say any more about it. It was probably one of those stupid jokes Derrington is so fond of cooking up."

So Freddie Belford motored home in a very mixed state of mind and Miss Anita Maloney thought what a fine, manly young fellow he was to show such extreme embarrassment at the mere mention of wedding rings.

That very evening, as it happened, Miss Anita Maloney was requested to work over-time by Brace, the jewelry buyer. She, knowing her rights, lodged a vigorous protest with the superintendent. The latter gentleman, never having paid much previous attention to Anita, but now realizing that such pretty salesgirls for the jewelry counter were not easy to obtain, perceived the force of her argument and promptly told Brace to back up. All of which may not, at first thought, appear as matter germane to this particular chronicle, but, as will appear later, really has a rather important bearing on subsequent developments.

A period of some two months must be permitted to elapse before we can again take up the thread of events.

It was early September. David Belford, making his usual morning tour through the aisles of his store, paused at the ring counter, aware of a strangely unfamiliar aspect there. For a moment, he stood pulling at his bristling white moustache, attempting to puzzle out what particular thing was not as it should be. Suddenly he hit upon it; Miss Anita Maloney, she of the big brown orbs and the Cupid's bow lips, was not present.

For a brief moment, David Belford appeared in imminent danger of apoplexy; but it was not wholly Miss Maloney's absence that took his breath up short and made his heart pound an extra beat to the second; it was the icy recollection that his son, Frederick, had also been most unaccountably absent from home on the day and night previous.

Came forward Brace, the jewelry buyer, and to him Belford put the question that was filling his soul with a half dozen different varieties of anguish.

"Now then, Brace, what has became of the rather prettyish salesgirl you had on rings?" inquired Belford. "McGuffy—Mahoney—ah, umm—Maloney! Yes, Miss Maloney, that was her name."

Brace fixed his eyes on a given point midway between his chief and the ring counter and wondered what Belford was really driving at. Having been away on a foreign buying trip for several weeks, he did not know why Miss Maloney was not present; but, catching sight of Miss Julia Levy, he informed his chief that he would inquire. Thus answered Miss Levy:

"Gee, Mr. Brace, didn't you know? Maloney give in her notice more'n a week ago. She got hitched up last night."

Belford heard. "What!" he bellowed, and then fled with a speed that almost equalled that with which his own son had once quitted the same counter. Something assured him the worst had happened. He stumbled into his private office, gripped the desk telephone and called for two-three-six Riverside, his town house.

"Has Frederick arrived home yet?" was the question he hurled into the mouthpiece.

The silky voice of Fanning, his butler, answered from the other end of the wire. "I do not know, sir, but I will find out at once."

Belford dropped into a chair and began to drum impatiently with fat fingers on the mahogany desk. He was beginning to see a little more clearly. While he did not suspect his son of having lied in the matter, he did harbor a suspicion that wily old John Derrington had worked a rather clever scheme on him, using him as a medium to bring two young people together, calculating on human nature to do the rest.

"Dammit! Dammit!" he sputtered. "I'll get even with that old file if it takes me twenty years and half my fortune."

His volcanic meditations were interrupted by Fanning's voice on the wire, his tones now visibly perturbed and politely hesitating. "Mr. Belford? Ah, yes sir. I believe Mr. Frederick is not expected home today, sir," he said. "Yes sir, he has been heard from to that effect himself, sir, I believe."

"I knew it, I knew it," stuttered Belford, exasperated almost to the point of another apoplectic shock. "Now then, Fanning, don't beat about the bush. He's married, isn't he, run off with some young hussy?"

"Well sir, I believe that is what it amounts to, sir, though the madame is out, sir, and my information comes solely from her maid." answered the butler.

Belford waited to hear no more. Dropping the instrument, he stormed wildly back and forth beside his desk, calling the direst extremes of vengeance upon the defenseless head of John Thomas Derrington. In the midst of this tirade, John Thomas Derrington himself was announced.

"Show him in, Danvers, show him in," barked Belford, his blue eyes snapping fire, while he spread ten gripping fingers, as if Derrington's throat were already within his grasp.

It is difficult to beat up a man who meets you with the sunniest of smiles; nay, more; it is impossible, no matter how hot your anger, as David Belford discovered the instant John Thomas entered, his thin, Punch-like features contorted into the most roguish of grins as he poked Belford between two heavily upholstered ribs with a lean finger.

"So you've opened it, have you?" he said. "Well, what did I tell you? Eh, what, eh? Here's my check for $20,000, Bel'; you may send the Venus over to my gallery right away."

Having found he could not deliberately strike this cheery old man, Belford attempted to engulf him in denunciation.

"Derrington, you conscienceless old rascal," he raved. "You very well know Frederick had no idea of marriage until you deliberately caused me to put the idea into his head. It was a low-down trick. If you were a younger man, I'd—I'd—"

"What, eh, what?" interrupted John Thomas in astonishment. "I thought you'd like the idea. The boy is much better off married. To be sure, an elopement isn't just the proper thing; but why not let the young folks have their fun? Eh, why not, eh?"

Belford could only sputter; words adequate to the occasion he could not find.

"Oh, well, Bel', you'll get used to it," continued John Thomas. "I didn't think you'd take the loss of the 'Venus' so hard, or I'd never made the wager. But a bet's a bet. Come, shake hands, we ought to be friends."

His anger made Belford refuse, and John Thomas had to leave without the desired salutation, but there was a tremendously pleased twinkle in his eyes as he went out.

For almost an hour, Belford sat alone at his desk meditating on what a mess his son had got into and how best to extricate him. Finally, an idea occurred to him. He would have just one look into that envelope, to make certain everything was all right. In a moment, he had secured it from his office safe. Ripping open the folded sheet, Belford's eyes became almost as big as butter plates. He hurried to get 900 West 86th Street, Derrington's town house, on the telephone, and insisted on having Derrington himself at the wire.

"Now then, Derrington," he fairly roared, "this joke has gone far enough. What the devil did you mean by handing me that check for $20,000, when you had written your daughter Alice's name on the paper you left in my safe? Frederick hasn't married Alice; he eloped last night with a doll-faced salesgirl named Anita May Maloney."

For several seconds, all that Belford could hear over the wire was the rattling chuckle of some one who appeared to be either choking or to have heard what he considered a capital jest. Coherent words finally did reach Belford's ears.

"Oh, no, Bel'," came the thin voice of John Thomas Derrington, "Miss Maloney hasn't carried off your son; she has married your young superintendent. I happen to know because she just reminded me of a promise I made her some time ago. Frederick has married Alice; they'll be home a week from Saturday. Goodbye."

For the Christmas number we have two stories that just radiate the spirit of the season.

CAPTAIN HARDTACK AND THE VELVET PRINCE, *by Mabel S. Merrill* is a story which is remarkable for its characters. Few stories of the length of this one are so strong in this respect, not to mention the artistic blending of humor and pathos. You will love the Captain and "Rosyleen" and you will like the Prince, too, and "Brickdust" Macaulay and "Angel" McGrath.

WIRELESS FROM CHEYENNE, *by George Thomas Armitage* is the other holliday story. A cowboy faces the problem of providing a Christmas present for his girl after losing his money by a disastrous investment in red, white and blue chips.

A BULL MARKET IN FIDDLES

BY J. BERNARD LYNCH

In which a couple of Bulls break loose in the fiddle market. Prices soar, and Uncle Myer hitches his wagon to a "Strad."

UNCLE MYER, first aid to the financially afflicted, displayed unwonted interest as he mentally inventoried a customer, while leaning patronizingly across the glass showcase.

That customer was tall, gaunt, emaciated; his hair long and straggly, the chalky color of his face accentuated by bright, sparkling light in big brown eyes. The age advertised by plentiful streaks of gray strands was repudiated by a youthful figure and nervous energy evidenced in every movement.

With apparent effort, he raised a violin case from the floor and laid it across the counter. Then after a sigh he relaxed his grip and, with a gesture of despair, allowed his gaze to travel questioningly toward the pawnbroker.

"Well," asked the keeper, "do you want a loan or is it for sale?"

"A loan," answered the man, wearily. "It's my all, but soul hunger must wait until human need is satisfied."

The pawnbroker, with business-like brusqueness, snapped open the catch and made ready to uncover the offering.

"Pardon me," interposed the man, "this is an instrument of delicate and artistic construction, and must be handled with care. In fact—it is an old master!"

Slowly, as if drawing forth a precious treasure, the man laid the violin on the counter. He then looked toward the pawnbroker, as if anticipating that the exhibition would enforce enthusiastic admiration.

The pawnbroker, to whom all instruments perhaps looked alike, blinked disinterestedly and asked, "How much do you want?"

"Listen," said the man, impressively, as he raised the instrument from the counter and tucked it, in a peculiar manner, under his chin. "You fail to value this treasure, but the violin will make you understand."

He drew the bow across the strings slowly, and the eulogy he could not convey in words he put into tones and half tones. A merry lilting waltz enlivened the sombre atmosphere and regaled the varied collection of misfortune's trophies. The man and melody bespoke mastery in the medium of expression and the pawnbroker's grim look softened as he felt the appeal dominating the strains.

The music ceased with soft plaintiveness and the player laid the instrument on the counter.

"You see," he offered, indulgently, "it bespeaks the mellowness of bygone years; it is a heritage of master workmanship. But even though it's my soul, my heart, my life, we must part for a while. Although the value of such an instrument as this should be counted by thousands, I ask but a trifle. To get too much might keep us apart too long, for genius is often hungry and fortune is a fickle jade. Let me have three dollars until the ghost walks."

With an expression of relief the pawnbroker, after a causual examination, turned to the desk and, securing his customer's name and address, passed money and pawn ticket across the counter.

The grotesque customer moved slowly toward the door and then stopped. "Pardon me," he said, as he retraced his steps, "I trust you appreciate how important the safe keeping of that violin is. Being delicate it is extremely sensitive to heat and cold. It is also affected by darkness. It must have light and air. Would you mind hanging it up somewhere?"

"I will store it in the back room," answered the pawnbroker. "It is both sunny and airy there.'"

The violin owner shook his head protestingly, as if doubting the character of the back room. "There's a good place right above the counter," he said; "would you mind hanging it up?"

"All right," answered the pawnbroker, impatiently, and after placing the case under the counter he hung the violin where designated, while the man looked on approvingly. Then, after profuse thanks, the odd customer departed.

And with the service lubricated by demands of other customers, Uncle Myer forgot the violin and its strange-looking owner.

Two days later he smiled a welcome to a gentleman whose personal appearance breathed money begetting confidence. As the demands for loans had been unusually large during the day, the pawnbroker beamed pleasantly when his customer requested to see a diamond ring from the window display.

The man studied the ring reflectively, and with the aid of a pocket microscope viewed the sparkling gem.

"The stone is good," he admitted, "but I find, on closer examination, the setting is an inferior copy of one I already have in my collection, for that reason it does not interest me."

"Don't be in a hurry, mister," said the pawnbroker, in an agony at the prospect of losing a sale. "Look around. Possibly you'll see something else you'll like."

The man paused, rather bored, and sent his glances wandering indifferently over the many pledged articles in evidence. The pawnbroker could see that nothing really attracted him. What a pity the ring had not been salable. Uncle Myer thrust it back into the window with a peevish sniff. At the same time he made up his mind not to let that customer escape without buying something. He felt his mercantile honor was involved in the affair.

"At any rate," he told himself, "he didn't go out. What is it he looks at now?"

The stranger's gaze had come to a halt above the counter. It remained there while Uncle Myer turned and looked at the same object.

No word was spoken for so long a while that the spirit of the pawnshop, always lying in wait for a moment when human influence ceases to dominate, had a chance for expression. Uncle Myer feared these moments. When he was there by himself he tried to avoid them by whistling, 'phone talks, or strolls to the door, whence he could overhear the busy street. The pledges were now in full power. Each clock ticked its loudest, each bit of bric-a-brac rang true to a vibration, a mandolin string snapped, an antique cabinet creaked as if to say "I could a tale unfold—"

And then a word was spoken—one word, no more.

"Stradivarius!"

Myer's heart thumped. (Did the stranger say it—could a man speak when his lips did not move?) Myer almost believed he had said it himself —only, as it happened, 'twas a word with which he had small acquaintance. Shaking off the weird influence of the silence, he cleared his throat and looked commandingly at the customer. To his relief, the latter spoke at once in a business-like manner.

"That violin," he remarked, "looks rather interesting. My special fad is gems, but I like to look at instruments. I have an idea that one might be unique."

"Sorry, mister," said the pawnbroker, "but that violin is not for sale. It's a pledged article, and only here two days. But I've other instruments. Maybe—"

The man made a gesture of irritation. "No," he said, sharply, "I don't care to waste time on ordinary modern fiddles. Of course that may be nothing more, but I fancied—at least, I'd like to examine it. But if it's not on sale—never mind!"

And he turned toward the door. Could Uncle Myer let him go, thus, taking with him a pawnbroker's prestige and also (perhaps) several dollars' profit? No, Uncle Myer could not!

"Come back," he called, "oh, please come back. I'll take it down—sure there's no harm in just letting you look it over. Then you can tell me what it's worth; and I know you'll be careful handling it. The owner warned me it was delicate."

The pawnbroker watched with deep attention as the customer weighed and examined the instrument, but it was with hope that the violin would be found wanting, as the ring had been. Then the pawnbroker would try him with an amber necklace or a mosaic brooch. These collectors were likely to buy anything.

At first it seemed as if the violin were anything but satisfactory, for after taking it to the door and looking it over in the light from the street, it was brought back and laid aside with seeming carelessness. Still, the customer made no move to depart, and after complaining because there was no fly in the amber, the mossaic was condemned as "modern," his attention reverted to the violin.

"So it's not for sale?" said the customer, slowly. "Well, I'm sorry. I've taken up a lot of your time, and I'd like to see you paid for your courtesy. But—what can a man do when the only object he cares for is 'not for sale'?"

Uncle Myer sighed in disgust, even

while he wondered if the man wanted the violin, or was only trying to cover his exit neatly.

"Would you really like the fiddle?" he asked. "Do you see something of value in it?"

The man turned guiltily from his amorous gaze at the combination of wood, glue and strings, and put on what seemed to the pawnbroker an obvious assumption of nonchalance.

"Oh, I don't know," he remarked, "as it's really worth anything. It's only curious, I guess. Still, I'd be willing to venture a bid on it, just to reward you for your time and because my collection lacks a violin."

Uncle Myer remembered the hungry look of the old-young man, and convinced himself he could do everyone a good turn.

"What'll you give," he whispered, "if I can induce the owner to sell? He prized it very highly, I remember, so he'll be hard to handle. I must be able to make him a good offer."

"I don't know what your idea is of a good offer," said the collector. "I'd scarcely care to go five hundred. If that would tempt you, and you can get it for a trifle less from him, let me know. Here's my card. I'm at the Copley Hotel for a week."

He went out, leaving Uncle Myer mentally stunned. He had actually expected the customer to stop at "five"—and he had gone on to "hundred" as calmly as if ordering weinersnitzel in a delicatessen shop.

Myer took up the violin and tried to look into its inner economy. At the same time he gave himself explanatory information.

"An old master he said you were," he observed, "and didn't like the dark. So I should hang you where you'd get the air. And an old master you must be if a man wants you for five hundred. How'd he put it? 'I'd scarcely care to go above five hundred.' "

The shop had grown quiet again, despite Myer's self communings and suddenly his heart gave the familiar pound, just as it had done a half hour before when a mysterious word floated on the air.

What was that word—Stradivarius! And what association had it in the mind of Myer?

An encyclopedia had come into the shop in flotsam from a library. Myer hauled down the volume "Pue to Strad" and solved the puzzle. A "Strad" was a violin, "an old master," probably of fabulous worth. The stranger suspected this of being one. The word had been pumped into the air inadvertently. Instead of cheating himself by paying five hundred, he would be trying to cheat Uncle Myer. Well, the first thing to do was to get that fiddle into one's hands. Then "business" could be talked to that "collector," and perhaps when the violin changed hands more than a paltry five hundred would do likewise.

While trying to decide on what pretence the owner could be invited to the pawnshop without arousing suspicion, that down-and-outer crossed the threshold of his own volition. And he wore what Uncle Myer diagnosed as a lean and hungry air.

"Say," he pleaded, "I'm whipped clean again, and I've got to have an extra two dollars. My ship is still pounding its nose off beyond the coast of plenty. Can you add another two spot to the violin incumbrance?"

"Well, maybe," considered the pawnbroker. "Or—perhaps you'd sell the violin?"

"And perhaps I wouldn't think of anything of the kind," was the immediate reply. "Guess you don't know the soul of art that is held in bondage for want of a few dollars. No, mister, you can't appreciate the heaven of music that is imprisoned in that violin. If I sold it I would be selling all that is dear in the world to me."

The pawnbroker's face hardened and his eyes glinted covetously. "Then I can't be bothered," he answered, indifferently. "No more can I give you as a loan. To buy I'll give you a good price."

The man, taken aback by this cavalier treatment, turned and gazed ruefully toward the street. "I must have money to live," Myer heard him whisper. And then he wrung his hands, afterward passing them over his eyes as if to drive away a bad dream. Then, "Well, how much will you give?" he jerked out, desperately.

"Maybe ten or fifteen dollars," said the pawnbroker, cautiously. "I would risk the fifteen because you say it has value."

The man's answer was a sob that turned into a derisive chuckle. "Fool," he sneered, "that violin is worth thousands—indeed, is priceless. But I cannot starve—give me three hundred and I'll sacrifice it."

The pawnbroker raised his shoulders and inclined his head while an indulgent smile spread over his features. "For an old fiddle, three hundred dollars! Please don't joke in business hours."

"See here," said the man decisively, "you heard my offer. It was wrung from me by hunger—that alone. If you cannot accept it say so before another minute. I will go out among my friends; surely they will aid me to live until such time as I am able to redeem it." He paused to give the pawnbroker opportunity to think, then said, "The minute is up—what is your decision?"

The pawnbroker, still deliberating, allowed his customer to reach the door before he called him back. "Stop, stop, please," he cried. "I can—I can give you a hundred and fifty. It's all the money I have in the store. A princely offer, and one I shall not make again."

The man made as if to depart, then, as the door opened to admit another customer, he squared his shoulders, bit his lips, and moaned, "Give me the money."

Waiting only long enough to count the bills tendered him, and to surrender his pawnticket, he hastened away, his very back suggestive of a burden of lifetime regret. Myer allowed but one pang of sympathy to intrude on his self-congratulation. After all, a hundred and fifty was a bunch of money, and if the poor fellow didn't know he was selling a "Strad" he would realize that he had been well paid—when he came to think it over. "An old master!" cooed Myer to his purchase, and longed to fondle it all night.

An hour after opening up next morning, Myer went to the telephone and, thrilling under the glow of commercial conquest, asked for the Copley Hotel. When the connection was made he inquired for Mr. James, the name on the card.

"Don't know him," came back over the wire, after several minutes of waiting. "We have no guest of that name stopping here."

Uncle Myer hung up the receiver weakly, as a disquieting thought crowded upon him. He rushed wildly to the hotel, but there was nothing to add to the telephone conversation. Inquiry at other hotels brought no hope. Mr. James was an unknown person.

Toward his three-ball establishment Uncle Myer moved mechanically and when he had entered he found a seat. His suspicions developed into facts. Sadly from the safe he took the violin and hung it back on the hook, while all and sundry among the pledges seemed to join in the sneer, "An old master!"

"It's a new game for the crooks," Myer soliloquized. "And I it had to be that should be the victim and lose my hundred and fifty. What a slick pair of Jesse Jimmies."

No sooner had he reported the fraud to police headquarters than he received a visit from Max Klein, a neighboring pawnbroker. "Say, Goldman," asked Klein, as he entered, "did you get caught on the new violin game?"

"What business, tell me, is it of yours?" groaned Goldman. "For the post mortem cackle you come round."

"I came for the reason that misery likes company," said Klein. "They got me for a hundred and twenty-five. And you?"

"A hundred and fifty," reluctantly admitted Goldman. "Twenty-five dollars you're better off than I am."

"Who wouldn't get caught?" said Klein, consolingly. "They were a nifty pair of actors. Show me your fiddle."

Goldman obeyed, and then Klein shook his head knowingly. "Just like mine, a cheap new fiddle, fixed up to make it look old and valuable.

"I'll bet they're breathing a balmier climate by now," he gloomed, before returning to his own place.

When Goldman had made his day's report to the police and locked up securely, he wandered toward the white light district. He felt versed in the weaknesses of the unrighteous, and thought it just possible the pair who had duped him might be lingering where the cafés harbored the cabarets. Two hours of Sherlocking somewhat damped his ardor. He decided to begin to enjoy himself, sat down and ordered refreshments with which he really intended to refresh himself. An orchestra of three pieces, cornet, violin and piano, was playing an enticing waltz, and playing it well, considering the place and the hour. A very pretty girl adorned the piano stool, and the cornetist, an elderly chap, took such good care of her that Goldman thought he must be her father. The violinist stood outside the family group, fiddling cleverly. Goldman liked him because he was so different from the man who had pawned the fiddle. He should never care for pale men with flowing locks again. This chap had short black hair and a red face, the healthy glow of which included even the nose. He was carefully dressed, and looked as if used to his "three squares and a snack" daily.

Yet even while indulging in these reflections Myer's heart gave that old familiar thump. The man looked different in every particular. He had *not* run away, but was publicly exposing himself in the brightest of *lights*. His gaze, as he bowed to the perfunctory applause of the drinkers, was now dreamy, now keen and practical, never desperate—as that other gaze had been. But—he hugged the violin as that man had hugged it. The peculiar attitude was registered on Myers' memory.

"It's him," he gulped, and rushed out for a policeman.

He came upon one lolling carelessly at a street corner, to whom the pawnbroker, in high-pitched tones, imparted news of the fraud and its discovery.

"Wait," said the officer, "I'll 'phone to the station for a plain clothes man. It wouldn't do for me to make the arrest in uniform. It might hurt the management."

Ten minutes later the plain clothes man put in his appearance and in deference to the wishes of the café people the officer waited until the place closed before arresting his man. Goldman, much elated by the result of his sleuthing, went home to a much needed rest.

Next morning he was honored by a visit from headquarters.

"You had it right, Goldman," advised the inspector, "the man whose arrest you caused is the guilty party. He confessed after we found the makeup, wig and so on, in his room. He had played the game on more than you and Klein—half the pawnbrokers in town were left lamenting. His partner, who framed the job, got away to New York, beating the chap we have in custody out of his share of the proceeds. In fact, the man who pawned the violins and did the dirty work was really a dupe. The fellow who got away, an old-time gentleman crook, uses his brains to pick out uncompromising jobs, attended with little risk. He got acquainted with the violinist at the cabaret, where the plan was arranged.

"The queerest part of the story," added the inspector, "begins with the stealing of all the violins in Providence. One of the lot was taken from a wealthy residence and is a real Stradivarius, for which there is a reward of five hundred dollars. It has a special V-shaped mark burned in the wood at the bridge. Now some of you pawnbrokers—"

Goldman, without waiting for further information, rushed behind the counter and grabbed the fiddle. His eyes traveled hungrily to the bridge and there they stopped, as he emitted a shout of joy.

"This is it," he cried; "this is the real Stradivarius!"

"You're lucky, after all," said the inspector, "but remember," he continued, "you'll be wanted in court tomorrow morning as a witness."

"I'll go," said Goldman, "but inspector, please, I ask you, don't ask me to testify. I shouldn't want to say anything against that fiddler. He done me a favor. Think of it, inspector, three hundred and fifty profit. I had a suspicion all along it was an old master!"

HAZARD & O'CHANCE: LIGHT COMEDY

BY FRANCIS W. DEVER

Highway robbery is a legitimate profession as practiced by these two comedians, who pool their capital in one grand plunge on the good horse, Pat McGlynn. But Pat proves to be one of those flivvers that pass in the night.

VICIOUSLY the September sun cast its enervating rays on the macadem of the Black Horse Pike. Wearily the drooping figures of Terrence O'Chance and me shuffled over it, (the pike, of course), burdened each with the weight of a traveling bag and a heart heavy with woe; and with pockets that sang not the sweet melody of jingling coins.

This wallop of Fate we would, ordinarily, have accepted with the calm philosophy of practice. Involved in our late descent from affluence, however, were many things which rendered it, even to our callous hides, a blow most cruel indeed.

Before carrying you over the route from effect to cause, a word or two anent the *dramatis personae* would seem not out of place:

Terrence O'Chance is five feet, eight, ovate, and ample of back. Red hair and imperturbability are a rare combination. Terrence possesses it. Also, he has a captivating, redeeming, blue-eyed humor. And when you hear the voice of him, you sense the purl of water through the green-scoured hills of Erin; and you know that Terrence O'Chance has hung by the heels from Blarney Castle, and pressed his lips against a certain facet of cold, unresponsive stone, not once only, but often, and passionately.

My own specifications I will omit. In their stead, permit me to offer that if the autobiography of alias Dave Hazard were written, it would contain sequent and closely related chapters entitled: *Broadway on the High Gear; The Expensive Heart of Mazie Terpsichore; A Row with Dad; and Pruned from the Family Tree.*

Two weeks prior to the staging of this comedy, Terry and I desired to operate in the town of Oyster Grass, New Jersey. One of our preliminaries was to call on Reuben Venal, chief of police. Character analysis accomplished, we discussed our enterprise with him. A a result, it was mutually agreed and understood that each and every night at the hour of eight, and stealthily, Terry or I would deposit in the yawning palm of the officer on our beat, the meager sum of two dollars. Said Reuben Venal, in return, was to render himself and his department, as far as possible, concerning a certain stuss game, bereft of sight, speech and hearing. Further: Hazard and O'Chance were to be advised of any raid, foray, visit, or other device tending to jeopardize their peace, liberty, or comfort, at least thirty minutes in advance.

Ten days that little game of ours prospered. Then, unheralded, one night at the hour of nine, the officer into whose yearning palm Terry or I had deposited each and every night at the hour of eight, and stealthily, the meager sum of two dollars, closed our doors and projected us into the august presence of His Honor, the mayor.

We were held for court then in session. Ere another two suns had sunk beneath the hills that fringed the western rim, the Grand Jury had us indicted. We pleaded guilty. The judge was an adept at knowing what the traffic would bear. He fined us two hundred and fifty each, accepting my stop watch, worth three hundred, for the twenty dollars we were short; and suspended sentence. In reference to our future, he advised most kindly; and gave us three hours to relieve the country of the "odium" of our presence. The cynosure of eyes choleric, eyes contemptuous, and eyes commiserating, we slunk from the court house. With an hour to spare, we hurried over the county line.

Again you see Terrence O'Chance and Dave Hazard, misanthropes, wilted, leg-weary, and barren of funds, plodding disconsolately over the somber surface of the Black Horse Pike.

" 'Tis a foine pass we've come to when two dacent respectable gamblers can't ply their trade without bein' persecuted be a bunch of rubes that couldn't tell a full house from low casino," mourned Terry.

"We rave about Rooshia and the Jews but, in me own opinion: 'Charity begins at home.' It's got so a man can't participate in a game of penny ante in the gintle warmth of his own foireside without some self-appointed eradicator of vice reportin' the incident to the police. The country's gone to the divil."

"Professional jealousy, Terry," I explained. "The pirates of finance have it on us. With wealth on their side, they're out to eliminate competition. What chance have honest men like us against them?"

"Niver a monad," said Terry. "But there's wan little oasis in this desert of persecution. Down on the boardwalk, the other day, a chap was tellin' me about it. It lies south of the Mason & Dixon line.

"Makin' powder for the allies is the chafe industry.

"Pick and shovel men recave four dollars a day; and the poor unfortunates are rakin' their brains for conganial ways of partin' with it. Law and order would be as welcome as roaches in Mrs. Rohrer's kitchen. There's only wan first-class game of chance in the town, too, and it don't begin to handle the patronage. Be golly, Dave, if we had a hundred dollars, we'd go down there, and soon be lopin' along on the road to filthy opulence."

"One hundred dollars!" I laughed bitterly. "If we had fifty cents right now, we wouldn't be dining on raw turnips and tomatoes, believe me. If we don't reach Philadelphia shortly, we'll be stricken with acute indigestion from worry and lack of proper food." Just then, as a touring car rushed past, some one in it threw a folded newspaper. It took Terry on the side of the head, and ricocheted sharply to the road. Terry rubbed his head ruefully. Angrily my eyes followed the car.

"Forget it," smiled Terry. "I have no kick to register. It moight have been a brick."

He stepped to the newspaper and picked it up. At once he turned to the sporting page. We read the Belgrave entries together.

"Look at Pat McGlynn in the third," yelled Terry. "Nointy eight pounds, and apprintace allowance. The handicapper must have been intoxicated. If Pat McGlynn couldn't bate that field with William Howard Taft up, Oi'm no judge of skates. The pickers have overlooked him, too. Oi'll bit ye could get as good as tin to wan. And us without a cint! Dave, if we can raise twinty dollars be tomorrow at iliven, and tiligraph it to McTurf, we'll be anyway two hundred dollars to the good. Thin we'd go down and show thim poor pick and shovel min how to be happy though married to four dollars a day."

I laughed quietly as Terry raved on.

About two o'clock that afternoon, we came upon a little four by six box by the roadside. Terry peered in the window.

"It must be a pay station," he announced. "There's a tiliphone in it."

This was my second trip over the Black Horse Pike. My first had been made by automobile. The chauffeur, a garrulous fellow, had informed me regarding this very box.

"It's a pay station, all right," I answered cynically. "Not the kind you mean, though. It's one of those diabolic contrivances known as speed traps.

"Another legal shakedown. There's no danger of us getting caught in it today, is there?" I laughed. "At any rate, it's only operative on Sundays when business is particularly good. You see, if it were worked every day, motorists would learn to run through it slowly, and another 'jestice o' the peace' and another 'conshtable' would be working for their living."

"Only on Sunday you say it's worked," mused Terry. "I wonder now—" Again he peered through the window. "There's a copy of the Revoised shtatutes lyin' on the 'phone stand. I wonder now—say, Dave, aren't ye almost a lawyer?"

"Another year at school would have turned the trick," I answered.

"Foine;" his eyes scintillated with the joy of a new-born inspiration. "The trap's sit. Ye may be the jestice of the pace, Oi'll be the conshtable. To avoid confusion, and minimize complications, we'll shtop no cars bearin' New Jersey licenses. It moight also be well to sit up yer office in the cut back of this hill. Whin Oi make an arrest, Oi'll have the prisoners droive in. The hearin's had better be proivate."

"You don't mean for us to—"

He interrupted while I was grasping the import of the scheme: "Ye get me, Oi think."

"Terry, you've got brains," I said with much *eclat;* no one who knew you long could well gainsay that. This proposition of yours looks good; it teems with the spice of adventure. There's only one serious objection to it; you're taking something and giving nothing in return. Was it Jeff Peters or Andy Carnegie who laid so much stress on this violation of business ethics? Whoever it was expressed my sentiments."

"How much does the Shtate of New Jersey owe us roight now?" he inquired.

"Considering mental anguish, ruin of business, lawyer's fees and fine, I should say about three thousand dollars. Neverthe—"

He again interrupted. "Yer estimate's low. But it disposes of the shtate. As to the motorist: There is written in the shtatutes of this shtate a law which provides a pinalty to be assissed on thim that droive their automobiles or motorcycles beyant a given shpade.

"Ivery toime a motorist violates this shtatute and gets away with it, he defrauds and insults this inglorious commonwealth. In shpoite of yer opinion of shpade traps, Oi think they're a grand and not unnaccassary corractive inshtitution. Not less than half a dozen toimes this very day we have been missed be the diameter of an oylash as some woild divil shot by. Can't ye see that we're doin' the shtate a sarvice be the settin' of this trap? At the same toime the money we collect in the name of the shtate, and turn over to ourselves rajuces the shtate's debt to us, and don't cost the shtate anything. Wan thing Oi'll grant: the shtate won't appreciate the work we're about to do. But rapublics and commonwealths are provarbially ungrateful."

I wrung his hand. Terry's logic was compelling. From the depths of my travelling bag, I disinterred a field glass. I handed it to Terry.

"Remember," I reminded, "a New Jersey license is as good as a passport. And we'd better not stop anything running less than forty miles an hour.

"From past observation, we'll keep busy enough at that."

"Very well, Yer Honor." Terry saluted comically.

The first car to feel the spring of the trap bore a New York license.

"Ye are under arrist for shpadin'," Terry informed the chauffeur.

A man on the rear seat bent forward smiling. He consulted a billfold of unusual promise.

"My friend," he stated, "we are in a great hurry. We plead guilty. How much do we owe you?"

Terry and I held council. I came forward.

"You are fined five dollars and costs," I announced. Seven dollars and fifty cents, total."

He proffered a crisp ten dollar bill. "Good day, gentlemen," he bade us genially, and made no reference to his change.

"Pretty soft, Terry, pretty soft, eh, what?" I chortled.

"That wan was, yis," Terry admitted. "They won't all be in a hurry, though."

The next two cars bore Pennsylvania licenses. After some argument, and reference to the Revised Statutes, we collected from each seven dollars and fifty cents. We might have gotten more, but the motorists seemed pretty good fellows.

Then came the fourth car; in it a tartar. New York should have been ashamed of him.

"Outrageous," he blustered when Terry informed him of the charge.

"Outrageous, I repeat. Let me warn you that I will pay no fine, sir. First I will rot in one of your filthy jails."

"Ye were runnin' at the rate of fifty miles an hour, contrary to one of the shtatutes of this shtate, the number of which I disremember" Terry answered without show of spirit.

"You are mistaken, sir. I was not running a mile over thirty-five," asserted he who would rot in jail.

"Well, thirty's the limit," said Terry. "Bring yer machine off the highway. Ye'll be blockin' traffic."

Court convened. Preliminaries over.

"Mr. Plethore," said I, "you have heard the charge of 'Constable Burk.' What have you to say?"

Mr. Plethore had a great deal to say. He directed a tirade of invectives against the State of New Jersey—the integrity of its judiciary; the honesty of its people, (called them leeches, vampires, and sand-burrs), and their culture; and deeply into the tender flesh of its traditions, he jabbed the harpoon of coarse irony. Vocabulary of abuse exhausted, he paused.

"You seem to forget that you are in the presence of the court," I reminded.

"Court!" he howled. "A court of grafters, I should call it."

"Foine him for contimpt," whispered Terry.

"Enough said, my friend," I warned the defendant, assuming a mien of legal severity. "You are fined ten dollars for contempt of court, and ten dollars and costs for speeding. And if the fine does not have the effect of civilizing your tongue, we will try harsher measures."

"I desire to enter an appeal," he stated with the wheeze of an exhausting gas-bag.

"You may do so," I bluffed. "Bear in mind, however, that your remarks relative to the courts of this state will not look well on the records. You have your rights, nevertheless, so we will enter an appeal." Mr. Plethore engrossed himself in deep thought.

"Your Honor," said he, for the first time, and in melliferous tones, "an apology is due you. Permit me to offer it humbly and sincerely. This matter has annoyed and inconvenienced me more than you can imagine; and it is clear that I have allowed my temper to overrule my better judgment. Permit me to rid myself of the unpleasant incident. Will you kindly vacate the appeal? I have but fifteen dollars in cash on my person; will you accept my cheque for the balance?"

"Your apology alters the aspect of the case," I said. "Appeal not entered. Your fine for speeding is reduced to seven fifty and costs, and the law will consider its dignity upheld by a five instead of a ten dollar fine. Fifteen dollars removes your obligation to the court. Thank you. May we meet again under less embarrassing circumstances. Bon Voyage!"

Mr. Plethore and his little Ford rambled on. As he moved off, I noted on his brow a cumulus of anger. So did Terry.

"Dave," said Terry, "it's about toime for us to be hittin' the grit. If Oi'm any judge of human nature, Mr. Plethore is goin' to bawl us out to ivery traveller he meets. Complications are inivitable, as me friend the poet ixprisses it. A half hour hince, and ivery pitchfork wielder in this locality will be trailin' us. The day has been profitable; why risk further humiliation at the hands of this accursed commonwealth."

Walking rapidly, we soon came to a flag station of the Philadelphia & Fog River Railroad. Opportunely, too.

Shortly we were bowling merrily toward the big city across the Delaware. Once over the river, we breathed relief.

"Terry," I conceded, "the thirty-nine dollars we collected this afternoon is the product of your gray matter. Minus carfare expended, the disposition of it lies with you. I believe you mentioned a horse called Pat McGlynn, running at Belgrave tomorrow in a field of dogs. How much goes down on Pat McGlynn?"

"Since ye put it that way," answered Terry, "we'll woire twinty foive to McTurf."

First, though, we took the "L." Time to telegraph was not so precious. On the other hand, it were better not to linger long near the Jersey ferry. At Fortieth and Market Streets we left the "L." Immediately we hunted up a telegraph office. As telegraph companies are somewhat chary of handling business relating to horse racing, unpleasant questions are sometimes asked in this connection. Communicating with McTurf by means of a code, we wired with the twenty-five, this message which, in view of what precedes, is no doubt clear:

> See Pat after two tomorrow. Make best bargain.
>
> HAZARD & O'CHANCE.

It occurred to me, after the telegram was on its way, that it would have been safer to have used "McGlynn" instead of "Pat" to designate the entry. Terry laughed when I voiced the thought.

"McTurf makes no mistakes," he assured me. "You should know that by this time. Pat McGlynn is the only Pat intered for tomorrow, anyhow."

"Third race: Fedora wins!" I read to Terry next evening from a sporting extra. "Among others, I observe that one Patrick McGlynn also ran," I remarked cynically.

Terry gazed at me. I gazed at Terry. Silently, sorrowfully, we fell into the arms of each other; silently, sorrowfully, we wept upon the shoulders of each other.

What did the gods think we were, anyway?

To a café we wandered, and sought solace in drinks of many colors, and maundered of evil stars, and the tenacity of misfortune until the shrill, defiant crow of a cork in a poultry store nearby apprised us of approaching dawn. In the nepenthic grip of saturation, we wended a tortuous journey to our little third-floor-back.

There in the gentle arms of Slumber, (or Morpheus, if you insist), we knew no more until well into the morning, when some one knocked loudly upon our door. It was the landlady. An expressman desired that we sign for a money package, she stated. Terry and I rushed to the street door. Sure enough, there *was* a money package—value three hundred and fifteen dollars! Terry opened it. This is the gist of the note it contained:

> Twelve to one was the best I could get on Fedora. Harris and I cracked a couple

of pints on you which accounts for the missing ten. Don't be so cryptical in indicating your skate hereafter. You had me guessing for a few minutes. Regards.
McTurf.

"If McTurf calls this a joke," said Terry, "Oi'm a willin' victim."

"Sentiment echoed," I returned.

For fully an hour Terry and I mooted this strange matter. Like a will-o'-the-wisp, solution seemed as far away at the conclusion as when we began. One thing we knew: the money belonged to us, however its acquisition was brought about. McTurf's note had not been written to veil an act of benevolence. He was no paragon of charity we knew.

"How about the tiligraph company?" suggested the resourceful Terry.

We called at the office from which we had telegraphed McTurf.

"Will you please have ours of yesterday to McTurf, New York, repeated?" I asked the clerk.

A little later the clerk submitted for our inspection the following:

See *hat* after two. Make best bargain.

A DATE WITH FATE, *by Gertrude Sanborn* is another December feature. It is a cheery little story of a woman who went into the park in search of romance because she was tired of crocheting picots across guest towels and was bored by a husband who was a perfect forty-eight (around the waist) and had a perennial pain in his shoulder.

NUMBER ONE ON THE SUCKER LIST

BY G. B. GRANT

Two men match wits to see which is on the side of the intellectuals and which is on the sucker list—and all because of a few letters written by a young lady who had not reached the age of discretion.

THE sign on the door read, The Kimbarton Detective Agency. Underneath in smaller letters were the words, *Divorce Cases A Specialty*. The building was dingy and the corridors showed strong evidences of neglect.

The man in the hall plainly did not belong. From the "tissue weight fall soft" to the neatly shod feet, he was immaculate. The gray suit with the gardenia in the buttonhole, seemed to recoil in disgust from the dry, musty odor that pervaded the place; the irreproachable linen of his attire looked whiter for its surroundings. His nostrils twitching disdainfully and the clean-cut patrician face with its thin, cruel lips, showed the distaste he felt for the work before him. He reluctantly opened the door and went in.

The office bore out the promise implied by the rest of the building. It was lighted by two dingy windows, through which the sun was trying in vain to shine. A typewriter desk, minus the typewriter, occupied the room. Three or four chairs, timeworn and dilapidated, stood along the wall, and a calendar bearing a date of two years previous hung between the windows. A door at the back of the room bore the inscription, *Mr. Kimbarton, Private,* and from behind this issued raucous snores with steady monotony.

The visitor rapped smartly on the desk with his cane, waited a moment, rapped again, and then a third time.

The snores ceased, the door opened, and from within came a short, pudgy figure dressed in a soiled and wrinkled suit of blue serge. He stood in the doorway for a moment, sleepily rubbing his eyes, his pasty face moist with perspiration.

"Whadya want?" he growled surlily.

"Mr. Kimbarton, I take it?" remarked the visitor.

"You take it right then, an' I don't need no books, an' no insurance, an' you gotta fat lotta nerve a-comin' into a busy man's office an' poundin' on his furniture with a stick. Whadya want anyway?"

"I thought," said the stranger, picking his stick up from the desk where he had laid it, "that this was a detective agency. I see that I was mistaken. It's a school for bad manners; and, as I don't feel that I need any lessons in that line, I will bid you good-day."

He started for the door, but the other forestalled him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said meekly, "but I was up all night on a case and my temper is a bit short today. Anything I can do for you in the line of business I assure you I'll be very glad to handle."

He brought two chairs from near the wall and placed them by the table.

"Sit down, sir," Kimbarton urged; "anything you may give us to handle will receive the most excellent of attention." His eyes searched the visitor's face anxiously now.

The man in gray stood by the door, twirling his stick, mulling the situation over and trying to reach some decision. Then, with a smile of contempt at his own weakness, he walked to the table and seated himself.

"Kimbarton," he said slowly, "I'm going to lay my case before you and I want to tell it in my own way without interruptions, mind, without any interruptions. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said the detective, "I gotcha."

"Right! First then, my name is Van Der Cynck and I am the private secretary of Mrs. Willis Stairing, wife of the Nevada smelter magnate. Remember, no interruptions," as the detective moistened his lips with his tongue. "Jerry Longley recommended you to me. He said you were a 'damned crook' and would do anything in the world for money." He paused, but the detective remained silent and he went on again. "That's why I gave you another chance. Crooks are common. I know twenty in my own set that are fully as crooked as you, but Longley says that you have brains and can use them. That's what I'm looking for,—crooked brains.

"Three years ago I met Ethel Clagdon at a house-party at Saranac. It was the first time I had seen her for about ten years, and she had changed from a long-legged, freckle-faced kid into a magnificent looking woman. I did not know her at first, but she recognized me at once and greeted me most cordially with outstretched hands."

Van Der Cynck raised his hand warningly to Kimbarton, who had straightened up in his chair and was gaping at him, stupid with amazement.

"'Ethel Clagdon,' she replied to my salutation. 'Wyndham was my uncle's name, Billy; I had no right to it. Oh, that glorious summer! I shall never forget it. And you—you haven't changed a bit. Come over and sit down, Billy.' She led me to a chair away from the rest of the crowd and we began to talk over old times.

"'It was always money, money, money,' she said. 'Wherever I went, even when a child, people forgot to look at me. The Clagdon millions blinded them. They didn't care whether I was an ugly duckling or a bird of paradise; whether I was an angel or an imp; it was all one to them. I reflected money, and to stand in the glow of that reflection was all they craved. Billy, I was so sick of it. Never an honest opinion; never a kindly impulse. They were drunk with the thought of so much gold, and I was fawned on and petted until—well, I couldn't stand it, and so summers I would go to visit Uncle Jim and I told every one my name was Wyndham. The summer I met you was the first of six, and the happiest of all, Billy. When I was finally discovered even there and I saw people who had known me for years change over night and get the gold-greedy look in their eyes and the fawning, sycophantic tone in their voices, I gave up the struggle and that was the end of masquerading.'

"We saw a great deal of each other after that; and a year later she promised to marry me, but insisted that the engagement be kept a secret for the time being. Then came the failure of the Mastodon Bank, and the Clagdon fortune was wiped out. Henry Clagdon committed suicide rather than face a term in a Federal prison; and when everything was settled, Ethel was not only fatherless, but penniless. I urged her to marry me then, but she kept putting me off. Then yesterday," and Van Der Cynck's face was wicked with anger, "she told me she was going to marry John Dally, a miserable artist who can't sell enough of his own pictures to keep him out of the poorhouse,—and she penniless." He slapped his stick on the desk in wordless rage and stared straight ahead, forgetting, apparently, the man to whom he was talking.

An apologetic cough from Kimbarton recalled him to his surroundings and he took up his story again.

"That brings me to my purpose in seeking you," he said. "Once she told me that,"—he gulped with rage. "She said, 'It was the third summer Billy, I was nineteen, and my head was full of romance. His name was Kenally, Howard Kenally, and I thought I was in love with him. He said he was in love with me, and I believed him. We eloped, but Uncle found out and brought me back. Then I wrote to him. Foolish, silly letters they were, the kind a silly, sentimental child would write, saying how dearly I loved him and always would, and a lot of silliness; nothing that was wrong, but horribly and utterly foolish. Then my uncle told me that he had looked him up and found he was a married man, and that killed it. I never saw nor heard of him again and hope that I never shall, but I wanted to tell you about this, Billy, so you would know.'"

Van Der Cynck studied the tip of his shoe for a moment and then went on, his face fiendish in its intensity, his voice vibrating with suppressed anger.

"Here is my plan. Find this man Kenally, get the letters, and send them to Dally. Dally is a prude, a man who would think a woman unclean if she should tell a lie even by imputation. He's a Puritan of the most rigid views. Those letters would damn her in his eyes as surely as if she were Saphira herself. I'd bleed them of every cent they have; but she's broke, and he's as poor as a church mouse. I don't care a whoop about the money anyway, but by God, she won't marry him if I have anything to say about it Get those letters, Kimbarton, and I'll give you a hundred dollars apiece for them, and pay your expenses. Look up this man Kenally. All I know of him is that he was at Idlemere ten years ago and he was a short, stout blonde, with blue eyes. He was married and lived in Chicago on Dearborn, near Schiller Street. Can you handle it?"

"I can handle it all right," said Kimbarton slowly, "provided the price is O. K. One hundred apiece isn't enough for them letters."

"How much, then?" asked the young man angrily. "Look here; don't think you can play me for a mark. I'm not a rich man and while I am willing to do the right thing, I won't be held up. What's your price?"

"Listen to me, now," said Kimbarton, his face showing the confidence he felt in his ability to handle the situation. "In the first place, you come into my office as if you owned it, tell me where to head in at, and call me a crook without any license. If I'm a crook that's my own business. I haven't got you skinned any, I reckon. You talk about blackmail like you was pretty well used to it, and you're trying to hand this girl a package because she throws you down and hooks up with another guy. Well, the letters will cost you one hundred dollars apiece, all right. That's five hundred. Callin' me a crook is five hundred more, and five hundred more for necessary expenses is a grand total of fifteen hundred. Take it or leave it."

"Right," said Van Der Cynck, shaking with passion and getting to his feet. "I'll leave it, you dirty little shyster."

"One moment, please," grinned Kimbarton malignantly; "that word 'shyster' will cost you another hundred. Yes, I know," as the young man started to speak, "there are plenty of other agencies that would be glad to handle this, but you see I happen to be Kenally," and he burst out laughing at the look of blank amazement on the face of his visitor.

Van Der Cynck came back and sat down. "What's your price?" he asked helplessly, "and how the devil do you happen to be Kenally and Kimbarton, too?"

"Oh!" remarked the detective airily, "I just traveled under that name for a while, liking the sound of it, so to speak. As to the price, I told you, sixteen hundred."

"Ridiculous!" cried Van Der Cynck. He rose to his feet again. "I will give you a thousand dollars for the letters, and that's the ultimate limit. If you insist, I'll apologize for calling you a crook and a shyster, but I won't give more than a thousand for the letters, and that's final."

He had his hand on the door knob when the detective spoke. "You win," he said; "a thousand goes. Wait!" He went into the room marked private, and for several minutes the visitor waited. Kimbarton presently returned with a packet of letters in his hand and laid them on the table. "C. O. D." he remarked and looked expectantly at Van Der Cynck.

"I want to examine them first," was the answer; "that's a little thin. First you say you are Kenally, when I know you are Kimbarton, then you want to sell me those letters you have there for a thousand dollars when I don't know whether they're the ones I want or not." He held out his hand. "Give them to me. If they are what you say they are, you'll get your money immediately. Come!"

He looked expectantly at the detective, still holding out his hand; and, after a moment's hesitation, Kimbarton placed the letters in it.

Rapidly Van Der Cynck ran

through them, his lips relaxing into a faint smile as he gathered the import of them. Folding the last one, he placed the packet in his pocket. Then, drawing a fat wallet from his inside pocket, he counted out ten hundred-dollar bills on the desk. Picking up his cane, he started for the door when the voice of the detective halted him again. There was a taunt in the voice now and a sneer on the coarse lips of the man as he spoke.

"Say," he drawled, "you're a pretty wise Willie. Not! You were going to hand me a package wan't you? Going to get them letters cheap and get away with it while I played the sucker and watched you do it? Well, you're just about a thousand out on this deal, Old Top."

"What do you mean?" demanded Van Der Cynck coldly. "Are not these the letters I wanted? Are there any more besides these?"

"Oh! They're the ones you wanted all right, and that's all of 'em; but you, you're a fine come-on you are. Why, you poor nut, I'd a-pulled that game myself if you hadn't butted in, and anyone had tipped me off where I could find that Wyndham doll. I didn't know her name was Clagdon. Kicked me out of the back end of a rig, her uncle did, and I've been laying for a chance to get square. And you! You blow in and run the whole game for me and hand me a thousand bucks. You're a hot sketch! I gotta hand it to you, kid."

Van Der Cynck had flushed angrily while Kimbarton was talking, but waited quietly until he had finished. Then, in the same even, well-modulated tone that had characterized his earlier speech, he said, "Jerry Longley said you were a damned crook, and I believed him. He said you were a fat-head, and I believed him. Figuring you to be these two things, I called you the first to make you mad, and added that you had brains to make you foolish. I succeeded admirably in each case. Me, you characterize as a sucker, a come-on, and several other very worthy things that are, no doubt, a part of your profession. You say I'm a thousand dollars out. Maybe. Mrs. Stairing, however, is probably many thousand in, besides, and an untold amount of happiness and a fortune in nights when she will be able to sleep. On the whole, I think I'm entirely satisfied, and I am sure Mrs. Stairing is."

"What the hell has Mrs. Stairing got to do with this anyway?" snarled Kimbarton. "I don't know anything about Mrs. Stairing. It's this Wyndham kid we are talking about, ain't it?"

"One and the same," assented Van Der Cynck, over his shoulder, as he opened the door and stepped into the hall, "and my name, by the way, is Clagdon, not Van Der Cynck. You see, Ethel Clagdon married Stairing this morning; and as I happen to be her brother, she asked me to clear up this annoying little business detail while they were on their honeymoon, and before you found out who she was. Come-on—eh? Why, my dear Mr. Kimbarton Kenally, I've known who you were for six months. You're number one on the sucker list. No one but a come-on would fall for that sentimental bunk I sprung on you."

The door closed with a bang.

DEMATERIALIZATION

BY C. MASON

It is a simple matter to dematerialize a body by cremation. In this case, a man locks a good, healthy girl in a bank vault for two hours and tries to send her soul into the infinite with the aid of soft music instead of fire.

A FAIR young thing, with tender blue eyes, entered Woodworth's office and calmly seated herself. A glance at her portfolio impelled him to seek refuge in the cool brick vault of his neighbor across the passage, Barker, who called himself a banker; but the lady barred the way.

"No," he said desperately, without waiting to be interrogated, "I don't want to subscribe for a History of the War, nor Lives of the Candidates, nor Picturesque Anything."

"But, honored sir," replied the mild, simple and rather simpering young person, "I do not ask you to subscribe for anything, unless, indeed, you would honor me by taking a ticket—"

"Ticket nothing!" again interrupted Woodworth. "I've no leisure for amusements. My time is all taken up with my profession—and science."

"Ah, that is what drew me hither!" beamed the beautiful girl. "I perceived by your sign that you were a lawyer, and I have heard that you are a member—a prominent one—of the Psychical Research Society. In one, or both capacities, I think you can do me an inestimable service."

Woodworth, touched at two vulnerable points, unbent.

"You see, kind sir," she continued, "I am a materialized spirit. My manager, Mr. Shockton, who is stopping at the hotel—here is his card—called me forth from the spirit world by mistake for Martha Washington, with whom I was contemporaneous."

Woodworth had noticed the antique style and courtly bearing of his visitor.

"He delayed so long in endeavoring to correct his error," she went on, "that, instead of remaining in the misty, indistinct form in which spirits are preferably presented, I became as thoroughly substantial as when I was before on earth, one hundred and forty-six years ago."

"Upon my word, young lady—or, venerable dame—" the lawyer corrected with halting courtesy, "this is a very extraordinary statement. Do you not know that you render yourself liable to prosecution for obtaining money under false pretences when you attempt to sell tickets on such a tale as that?"

She smiled trustingly. "No, sir, I did not know that. Indeed, I am only beginning to learn the strange things of your wonderful century—but I like them very much. Though my familiarity with the distaff and spindle, the needle and quill pen will no longer afford me a livelihood, I have an ardent longing to learn the sewing machine or the typewriter—and become a New Woman. I am most anxious to resume the life prematurely cut short in 1770, in my eighteenth year, when I died from what was erroneously diagnosed as a quinsy. I have reason to believe that, had I been properly treated for diphtheria with an antitoxin serum, I should have lived to a good old age."

"What is there to prevent you from doing so now?" asked Woodworth, touched and interested immeasurably by his singular client.

"Because my master—for so I must call him—Mr. Shockton, who brought me from the other world, is determined to send me back. I hear that, from mercenary motives, he means to dematerialize me at his very next séance."

Woodworth hurriedly thought of all known legal processes, but neither *habeas corpus, ne exeat,* nor any other writ with which he was familiar seemed a remedy against the peculiar form of extradition proposed by Shockton.

Putting on his hat, he exclaimed: "You sit right there while I interview this tyrant, Miss ——?"

"Amy Alright was my name before," she answered sweetly.

Finding the spiritual manager in his improvised office at the hotel, the lawyer addressed him by name, saying: "I warn you to desist from your persecution of my client, Miss Amy Alright. She is perfectly satisfied with 'this mundane sphere,' as the reporters call it, and intends to remain here. I shall take steps to enjoin you from making her the subject of further experiment."

"Take a ticket," was Shockton's cordial response, thrusting out a card. "One dollar, please; 7:30 this evening. We are going to dematerialize the chit this very night, and if it doesn't come off, call me all the liars you like. Next!"

"One moment, Mr. Shockton," and Woodworth severely. "I understand you to say that you intend to dematerialize, which I suppose means to disembody—to cause to disappear—"

"Into thin air—evaporate—*vamose!*" answered the medium, in a businesslike tone.

"Cause to disappear a person now living? That, my dear sir, is murder!"

"Wrong!" replied Shockton. "Who is this girl? Where does she hail from? She has been dead one hundred and forty-six years. Can't kill a person twice, you know. What good is she, anyhow? She's way behind the times—can't even sell a ticket to her own dematerialization."

"Then you are determined to dematerialize the lady again?" demanded Woodworth, somewhat demoralized.

"Sure; come and see for yourself. Take a ticket, and one for your wife."

"I shall certainly come—with the police. You insist on making this preposterous experiment?"

"Fact. But tell you what I'll do. You may take the young woman—lock her up—do anything you like with her, and I'll bet you a cool hundred I'll dematerialize her all the same."

Woodworth clutched at this proposition—he began to see a way out. The Psychical Research Society was hastily summoned in special session, and Amy Alright was introduced to President Barker and the members.

Her frankness and timidity convinced the most sceptical among them that she, at least, was innocent of collusion with the medium. She appeared terribly to dread the threats of Shockton.

"Oh, gentlemen," she pleaded, "put me under ground; put me in some strong place, where it will be impossible to get at me. I am so tired of being a spirit. Don't let me be dematerialized again!"

Provided with a lunch from the hotel, wrapped in napkins, she was smuggled into Barker's Bank—it was dignified by that name in the village—and locked into its roomy old brick vault, and a committee signed an affidavit to that effect.

Then all the Psychical people attended Shockton's séance. It was very long and very mysterious. For two hours the audience—they could not be called spectators—sat in darkness, listening to soft music and waiting for Amy Alright to appear.

At last there came a gentle tapping. "Ah, ha!" exclaimed Shockton, "she comes! Who goes there?"

"The spirit of Mistress Amy Alright, who died of the quinsy in 1770."

"Are you in the flesh, or in the spirit?"

"A spirit, alas! Oh, woe is me!"

"There you are, gentlemen!" said Shockton, switching on the light. "Now produce your Amy, if you can."

The audience, led by the Psychical Research committee, trooped back to Barker's Bank. Heavens! The man had won his bet—Amy had dematerialized after all.

So had the contents of the bank!

The only material evidences remaining of the guileless girl and her work were the crumbs of her luncheon, the napkins in which it had been wrapped, and a hotel table knife—snapped short off—which had served as a screw-driver. The big, old-style locks, with their screws, lay on the floor.

In the December issue: PUTTING ONE OVER ON ADAM, *by Leland S. Chester,* a business story in which rival firms in the meat packing industry strive to gain control of the local market.

THE GENIUSES OF THE SUN

BY OSCAR LEWIS

After years in the turmoil of metropolitan journalism, a man goes back to the country paper of his youth in search of a job, a restful atmosphere, and—a girl.

THE swinging door of the city editor's office creaked half open and Henshaw's tow-haired copy kid stuck his head out into the city room.

"Stratton!" he called, and the occupant of the seat by the window dropped the paper he had been pretending to read and shuffled to his feet. His gaze roved about the all but deserted city room; its few occupants were busy and none looked up, which fact caused Stratton to smile faintly. They were good fellows, he reflected—none better—and he was thankful to them for pretending to be unconscious of his humiliation, though their deception fooled no one.

They knew what was coming; knew it as well as Stratton himself. Since that day, a week before, when the stockholders, dissatisfied with their last semi-annual dividend checks, had shifted directors and demanded a cut in expenses—since that day, the one question in the minds of the city room had been, "Who?" And now that question had been answered.

When Henshaw, giving out the assignments ten minutes before, had sent White out on the Hyde Street murder case, those who were of the old guard exchanged knowing glances, for the day's big story—especially if it were of the "violence" type—generally went to Stratton. And, as one by one the reporters got into their overcoats and stamped out on their assignments and still Stratton remained reading his paper at the desk by the window, even the greenest of the cubs realized who was to be let out.

Stratton passed into the city editor's office, the swinging door closed behind him, and two minutes later, he stepped out again into the city room.

Henshaw had been very kind, in fact, had come closer to an expression of human emotion than Stratton, after seven years of nightly association, had deemed him capable. But Stratton was the highest paid member of the staff and Henshaw must reduce the payroll, though he could not manage with fewer men. A second-rate man could be hired on half Stratton's salary, and the other half added to the dividend checks of the stockholders. Henshaw had fully explained the situation, and they had risen to their feet and gripped hands.

Stratton straightened up his desk, sweeping the mutilated sheets of yellow copy paper that littered its top to the floor; gathered up a few personal trifles and left.

The elevator boy told him on the way down that the home team had scored two runs in the first, and the man behind the cigar stand in the corridor greeted him perfunctorily as he passed. Then Stratton stepped out into the unnoticing crowds of the street. So much for his seven years on the *Sentinel.*

At his rooms, he sat down and gazed out of the window and smoked. After an hour, he got up and wrote a letter which he took down to the end of the corridor and dropped down the chute. And for the next six days Stratton spent his time sleeping and smoking by the window or wandering about the city park. Much of this new-found leisure was spent in day dreams that a week before he would have found entirely incomprehensible. At the end of six days came an answer to his letter. He tore it open eagerly.

"My dear Fred," it began. Stratton repeated the phrase, the lines of his face crinkling very slowly to a smile. He read on:

> Give you back your old job on the *Sun?* Dear boy, would Corsica have welcomed her conquerer home; or Stratford hers? Come, tho' I fear you will find us rather dull—a little eight page semi-weekly—after your achievements. Seven years! And now you are coming back. We shall be very proud to welcome you.
>
> H. GALVAS.

Stratton started the next day. The little shop he found unchanged. The editor greeted him at the door, his gray eyes shining and held him at arm's length and chuckled over him as over a son. Stratton wandered slowly about the shop, reconstructing memories; the row of cases along the wall to the left, where he had struggled to mastery over the compositor's art; the cement topped make-up table where, in the early days, he had pied the form of the department store's "Annual Mid-Summer Sale" advertisement and then fled home, convinced that his connection with journalism was henceforth and forever ended. He took a drink at the tin icewater container in the corner and noticed that a thick glass tumbler had taken the place of the cocoanut shell that used to serve. Stratton regretted this. Before going home that evening with the editor, he set two sticks of legal news for the Tuesday issue, bungling it badly for he found his fingers clumsy.

Stratton fell into the old routine quickly. He renewed old acquaintances about town; he set up want ads whistling as he worked; he run the job press, and went about town rustling "locals" which he wrote up in his own pungent style—tiny three-line character sketches, so genial and good-natured, so humanly humorous as to make even the persons they depicted chuckle delightedly at their own foibles.

Fred Stratton settled back into his old niche, which he found very satisfying and restful, and it was some time before he would admit to himself that he was not quite happy. Yet this was true. One by one, during the days since he had returned, he had gathered up the broken threads of his old life; but there was one that eluded him. The thought worried him and he puzzled over it constantly, and, when finally the solution came to him, he laughed outright. That night, as he sat on the steps of the editor's cottage, he found himself asking about Helen Dimmick.

"In the old days, when the three of us were here together," he said, "Helen Dimmick, you remember, kept the books and wrote the society column Saturdays, and looked after the want ads and subscriptions. How we three did work! And when a show or a circus came to town Helen and I would go and enjoy it the more because we belonged to the Press and had complimentary tickets!"

The girl, Stratton learned had left the *Sun* a year after he himself, and, like him, had gone East. The old man led him inside and showed him a copy of a small juvenile paper with Helen Dimmick's name as associate editor.

"How proud I have been of you two," said the old editor, placing a hand upon Stratton's shoulder,—"the geniuses who started on the *Sun!*"

This news of his old colleague sent Stratton's thoughts roving often into the past. But the joy of recreating the old atmosphere and of experiencing anew the zest and restless eagerness of earlier days was too keen for him to be other than contented.

And then one day, nearly a month after his return, Fred Stratton felt once more the thrill of the big news story and, in an instant, became the metropolitan reporter, Stratton of the *Sentinel.*

He had wandered early one afternoon to the depot, where he proposed covering the up express in the interests of the "Local Comings and Goings" column, and had been standing at the ticket window talking idly with the agent when the telegraph instrument began chattering sharply its "urgent—urgent—urgent" signal. The agent opened his key and shot back a reply as he drew a yellow pad toward him.

Stratton, sensing anxiety in the other's actions, leaned over his shoulder and watched the twisting pencil.

—No. 9.—wrecked, southern approach, Trinity bridge—broken rail, down embankment—engine, baggage, four coaches—under water, rush aid, doctors—notify Gen. Supt.—Tomelson, Trinity bridge operator—No. 9.—wrecked, so—

The instrument kept up its sharp, nervous clatter, repeating the message while the agent straightened up slowly and sprang toward the door.

Stratton grasped his arm as he emerged. "I'll fetch doctors," he said, "and nurses and supplies—"

"Yes—yes," replied the other, not stopping. "And hurry." He disappeared in the direction of the roundhouse.

Stratton crossed the street to the office of the telegraph and telephone company. He gave the news to central with orders to locate every doctor within call. While waiting, he stepped across to the telegraph counter and scrawled a message. It was a twenty-word "flash" of the wreck addressed to the *Sentinel* and signed "Stratton." The operator sent it at once. Then, like a good reporter, he learned the location of the telegraph office nearest the wreck. The girl at the switchboard called him and for the next five minutes Stratton repeated his news to doctors and nurses, and to stores where he ordered blankets and such other things as occurred to him as likely to be of use. And always he added the incisive order to hurry—hurry!

The relief train—switch engine, a flat car and two day coaches—started fifteen minutes after the message had been received and Stratton rode with the others in the forward coach. It was a quiet, repressed group that had gathered there; the four doctors, examining and rearranging the contents of their kits, one even removing his coat and cuffs in ominous preparation; the amateur nurses nervously sorting stacks of towels and rolls of cotton upon the red plush seats; the group of helpers, recruited from the loungers about the depot, standing silently in the aisle or on the swaying front platform and gazing down the straight track ahead.

A high, motionless column of white smoke and steam first warned the watchers that their race was approaching its end. The engine loosed a prolonged blast, rumbled across Trinity bridge and slowed down as they neared the curve that brought the wreck into view.

Two cars remained on the track, a third slanted down the steep embankment and the remaining four lay in an irregular "W" in the muddy lagoon at the riverside. At its head was the engine, drivers in the air, a peaceful film of smoke rising from its riven vitals.

A group of those who had escaped, occupants of the rear coaches for the most part, were standing in groups on the tracks and gazing down upon the half-submerged coaches below. Several who were not seriously injured were seated along the fence opposite, where they were subjected to the gaze of the curious. A dozen men walked back and forth along the sprawled coaches below, carrying sticks with which they carefully smashed the cracked glass from the sashes of the windows. Save for the steaming engine of the relief train, this clash of glass was the only definable sound that the rescuers could hear.

The arrival of the relief train speedily brought a return of decision to the survivors; reality, which for half an hour had been in eclipse, pushed again to the fore and the work of rescue began to move quickly. Ropes were obtained; jammed doors were forced or men lowered through broken windows. Another relief train came hurrying into sight from down the valley, and directly behind, the business-like wrecker from division headquarters. Authoritative shouts filled the air; the axes of the wrecking crew crashed through paneling and portions of broken seats were shoved through windows and tossed aside. Stretchers appeared; the line by the fence grew longer.

Stratton busied himself here. He obtained the names and addresses of the injured and the extent of their injuries; he listened to the conflicting stories of the survivors and culled the truth from the distorted; he aided in searching the pockets for means of identifying the dead. The work was not new to him; it was the "violence story" atmosphere that he had so lately escaped. He moved about quickly, his voice quick, nervously tense, his face an absorbed mask.

He reached the end of the line and sat down upon an overturned plush seat and rewrote his list of names very plainly, labeling it, "Partial list of dead and injured." He then wrote a brief account of the wreck, skeletonizing it to save time in transmission; merely listing the essentials for the rewrite man in the office, and confining it to a single sheet of copy paper. The relief train upon which he had come was about to return, carrying the first of the dead and injured. Stratton gave his story into the keeping of one of the trainmen, who promised to get it on the wire for him.

He went back to the line by the fence. Several new figures had been added to the end and he obtained the names of these. The last one in the row was a little girl. She was conscious, so he leaned down and asked her name. The child stared back at him in a wide-eyed, dazed fashion; and Stratton, obtaining no answer, wrote on his list, "Unidentified girl, about seven, slightly injured—shock." As he wrote, he became conscious that someone had kneeled down opposite. Very tenderly this newcomer raised the frightened girl in her arms and drew a caressing hand over her forehead. "Now tell me your name," she said, a note of maternal gentleness in her tone, and the child answered immediately.

"Why," said the girl, softly, "her mother is down at the other end of the line. How glad they both will be!" And the tense, strained lines of her face relaxed in a quick smile at Stratton.

He had looked up at the first sound of her voice, and now, for an instant, their eyes held each other's. A moment passed before either spoke, and then, unconscious of their surroundings, their hands went out in an instinctive, friendly grasp. Tongues were loosed and words came tumbling from their lips.

"Helen Dimmick—"

"The great Stratton!" exclaimed she, and then the girl between them stirred; this brought both back to the present, repentant at their moment of self-interest. Helen Dimmick, a quick look of sympathy in her face, gathered the child up and carried it to its mother.

"I'll look for you on the train," promised Stratton, returning to his work.

During the greater part of the journey back to town the girl was busy at her volunteer nursing and Stratton gathered up the loose ends of his story. Then he sought her out and they sat together in a deserted rear seat. In a few brief words he explained to her the story of his return to the *Sun*. Helen Dimmick listened eagerly.

"Why—why I, myself," she began haltingly, and then paused. "It's so surprising; I can hardly explain—"

"There's no need," said Stratton, slowly. "I can do it as well; explain how you one day found leisure to look along the road ahead, and how you fell to wondering if such things as quiet and restfulness really existed anywhere, or if they were only soft-sounding names. And, how, after a time, the days on the *Sun* rose before your eyes, and you had your answer, and—"

"And the next morning I bought my ticket, laughing at my own folly, neglecting to even write—"

"The place is open, and waiting," said Stratton. "And—and the famous Animal Show comes on the Seventeenth; the advance man was in yesterday and left the tickets!"

Arriving in town Stratton wired the remaining details of his story, and together they wandered around to the little shop where the old editor welcomed the girl back gladly, and Stratton had her sit at the desk by the window and tap the red curve of her lower lip with the tip of her pencil as she gazed across upon the courthouse square, for this, he declared, had been her habit. For a long time the three talked of the old times that had come again. "And some day," said the old editor, "I shall cease to edit the *Sun,* and I like to think that you two will be here in my place, and that the work will go on."

Next morning there came to Stratton a long telegram from the *Sentinel.* The accident of his having been near the scene of the wreck had enabled that paper to score a very clean beat over its rivals, and the message, in consequence, was enthusiastic and one of congratulation. "We haven't succeeded in finding anyone who handles the violence stories as well as you," the message concluded. "Your old position is open if you care to return."

Stratton's pulse quickened at this admission of ability. He sat very still, puzzling silently. The lagging midday breeze floated in at the open windows and rustled the slip in his hand. In the rear of the shop the old editor leaned over a table, spectacles well down on his nose, his lips moving as he corrected a strip of proof.

Presently, Stratton tossed the telegram to the girl. "Your old position," she stated, "they've offered it back. That's fine," striving to put enthusiasm into her voice. "I'm glad, for your sake. Let me be the first to congratulate you." And she held out her hand with a vague smile.

Stratton rose to his feet and picked up the telegram, tearing it slowly into a dozen strips. Both smiled faintly as they watched the pieces flutter down into the waste basket.

"Yes," said Stratton, taking the proffered hand, "you shall be the first to congratulate me."

Hapsburg Liebe tells one of his stories of the Tennessee mountains next month; a story of the land where the laurel and the feud flourish. BUCK HENRY, DESERTER is the name of it; and it has something in it besides a feud.

LOST---A STAR

BY KENNETH VAUX REED

A fall from a second story window is generally more or less painful. Certainly there is rarely any romance in it. But then, the girl in this story wasn't looking for romance, she was trying to avoid it.

IVY'S trousered legs swung gayly even while she frowned severely at a fold of her wide white smock which she creased and re-creased. Ivy's feet were like that—eternally optimistic, dance feet. And, sitting there on the sill of Perreard's second-story window, she was merry in spite of the seriousness of the business in hand.

"Nothing to it, Harvey." She shook her head without turning to look at the moist, chubby tenor who pleaded at her shoulder. "I can't see you that way."

"Aw, be a good fellow, sweetie," the little fat man begged peevishly, coaxingly. "Just try and look once. You and I hitched up could go out over the big time together and show vaudeville what's what. You've been there and got a rep, I know. That's why Perry just the same as stars you here in his bum cabaret. It'd be kinda like hitching my wagon to a star I suppose, but I'm willing. Sing me the pretty tune this time. C'mon." His hot breath was on her neck, his cheek against hers, one arm behind her, the other circling in front to meet it. He was fat and warm and excited. The physical contact made Ivy frown and her foot stop swinging for an instant, but she had long since learned to endure this thing from men she could not ignore altogether. She sat still in his embrace.

Behind them, in Perry's, was the buzz of the cabaret diners and over that the boisterous delivery of a vaudeville monologuist. The faint glow of light that strained through the coarse canvas of the scenery on Perry's miniature stage to lighten the gloom all about them, came from the great hot room where Perry's patrons, rejoicing in the belief that they were happy as Parisians only are happy, consumed carelessly prepared food and carefully adulterated wine and all the while applauded the excellence of the entertainment provided. For Perry's is one of the oldest of the cabarets in this country and the best as a place of amusement. There the spirit of the cabaret is preserved.

So long was Ivy silent that the fat man finally concluded she was not going to answer him.

"Silence tokens assent," he murmured and tried to kiss her. Her hand went up to his face and turned it away easily, carelessly. And again she was silent, suffering his embrace, her face turned away from the light outward to the listless breeze from the darkness of the street below. Even this darkness was broken by bright light in two paths from the windows of Perreard's Restaurant—the downstairs one where stupid people, uninterested in French songs and music with their meals, took advantage of the economic opportunity offered in Perreard's sixty-cent dinner. Just the lobe of her ear and a straying strand of her bright hair peeping from under the floppy velvet tam-o'-shanter, the curving line of her jaw and a very small patch of her cheek were caught in a high light by the glow behind her. Instead of the professional smile on her lips was a wistful one her public had never seen. But the one foot hanging free under the sill swung almost as briskly as ever.

"I'm different from most girls in the profession, Harvey," she spoke at last.

"Sure you are," agreed the tenor tightening his embrace. "That's why I want you."

Ivy loosened his arms a little and went on as if he hadn't spoken. "I left a happy home over on the edge of Jersey to go on the stage. My folks weren't crazy about my going, but I didn't have to run away. Guess I was like all the stage-struck Janes though. Nothing would do but I must 'develop my talent' and be a Broadway planet.

"But, Harvey, I landed a job the first day in the big wicked city, went into a musical stock organization that summer and into vaudeville the next season with a good act. In the spring I went out on the U. B. circuit with my own tabloid company. It was too easy. And right now I'm as much of a star as I'll ever be—willingly. There isn't anything I hate just at this minute like the smell of the theatre, and the glare, and the lights on the bald heads, and the feel of the grease on my lips. Here Perry's got me down for a new song tonight—by Berlin—sure-fire hit. And here I am dolled up like a little Artie art student in velvet pants and a silk smock like no artist ever wore and tam-o'-shanter—all ready to go on and sing, "The Picture of My Dreams," before the admiring throng. Am I satisfied? No. What do I want? I don't know. But one thing sure: The stage has gone stale on me. I wish now I'd stayed home. As the cartoons say, 'Father was right'. It's my own fault, I guess. I thought I had a lifework and now the bottom's fallen out of it. I'm going to drop out of the show business, Harvey. So if you want to marry a partner for vaudeville,—forget me, that's all."

The fat tenor looked around into her face. "I get you, sweetie. What you want is a home and kids and fireside stuff. I'm dippy about you. I'll go that far. Just say the word and there's a flat up in—"

"Maybe you're right," was Ivy's listless interruption. "Home and kids and fireside sound good. But there's got to be more. Something you ain't got. Something that isn't in you. So just run along, Harvey—and forget it."

Instead, the perspiring man drew her against his chest tightly and pushed his face over her shoulder against her own. "I'm damned if I do, Ivy. You're a little queen and I want you. The only one I ever felt like this about! I'm going to wake you up yet." He sought her lips.

"Cut it," cried Ivy, roused to anger at last. "I've said 'no' and that's all there is to it. It's your cue for a quick exit. Good night!" She drew her hands up between them and laid them on his shirt front, holding him away. "Let go! Let go, I say, Harvey. Don't be a fool. I can—" She pushed suddenly so that the starched shirt front wrinkled and crackled loudly. But the tenor was heavy. The push worked just contrary to her expectation. She slipped outward on the window sill, wildly reaching for a hold on something, anything. Her fingers caught his collar, pulled, broke it. And Ivy slipped suddenly downward.

The awning over the restaurant entrance broke her fall. She flapped down to the pavement on hands and knees enveloped in a swirl of canvas, but not even scratched.

The first thing she did was to laugh—a merry peal, muffled under the canvas. Almost immediately she was conscious of hands tearing excitedly at the chaos that covered her, and, in an instant, she was able to scramble up, the last fold falling away from her. There she stood, in the flare of light from one of Perreard's lower windows, a jaunty figure in tam-o'-shanter, smock and velveteen trousers, smiling happily and beating the dust from her clothes. Facing her, the full light on his lean face, was a tall, earnest-eyed young fellow, evidently the man who had extricated her from the wreckage. He was talking and holding her arm, demanding to know if she were hurt. Behind them, in the restaurant, people were rising to their feet, waiters were hurrying toward them. Ivy saw them and looked down at her costume. A vivid imagination showed her, in a flash, how they would crowd around, asking silly questions, and storing up information to spread all over the city. Off stage, she was seized with stage-fright.

"Quick!" whispered Ivy, and her happy-go-lucky feet turned of their own accord. "I've got to hide. Please, —just for a minute." As the door of the restaurant opened, Ivy slipped with her rescuer into the darkness, moving swiftly, running along the dark street until the young man drew her aside into a darkened store entrance.

"Far enough!" he breathed, and they both paused, a little breathless.

In the half light, Ivy could see her rescuer leaning against the plate glass window, tall and blonde, slender and boyish. He was very serious she could see vaguely.

"Why did we run?" he asked abruptly.

"We ran to—because—because they were coming,—the waiters,—the people. I didn't want to be seen—in these clothes." Though she had thought nothing of appearing before the cabaret crowd at Perreard's in the costume, Ivy blushed a little under his frank scrutiny.

"A hod carrier appears before all eyes in his overalls. Why should you not be seen in your working clothes?" The young man eyed her sententiously.

Ivy looked sharply at him, then down at the smock and trousers. "Working clothes?" Then, "Of course." Again she regarded him earnestly, puzzled. "But I've never worn these on the street before."

"You're not ashamed of them, though?" he interrogated. A moment he was silent, then sighed deeply. "It's the dream of my life—to be an artist. Please say you're not ashamed of your profession."

Only a second did Ivy puzzle over that before she answered. "No, not in the least." This was true whether he spoke of painters or actors. There was a suspicion in her mind, though, that he had made the mistake. Anyway, she never had been ashamed of her profession.

"I'm glad of that," he nodded. "For in God's world there are no nobler men than the artists."

Again she wondered whether he was speaking of artists in a large sense or particularly in reference to creators of pictures. And too, this time she was struck by the exclusive masculinity of his sentiment. She asked herself whether he could be making another mistake, a great big ludicrous mistake.

"There are women who paint, too," she said airily, in the tone of an impersonal observation. Then added in slight confusion, "I mean women artists, of course."

"Oh, certainly," he agreed, impatiently, she thought. "But I can't believe there is much sex rivalry in art. We give the women honor due. I mean we men do. Don't you think so?"

Ivy nodded sagely, exercising all her self-control. "Oh, we do. Indeed we do." She wanted to laugh immoderately. His mistake was so absurdly absurd. And yet she could not put him straight. She knew well that she could not face his serious regard and explain as kindly as he deserved to have it explained that she was an actress, a dancer instead of an inspired painter of pictures; that the trousers were a costume, not a habit.

Biting her lips to keep from smiling, she turned from him and stole on tiptoe to the corner of the show window to peep cautiously around. In front of the restaurant was Perreard himself, his hands flitting all ways at arm's length, his feet stamping the hard pavement. Several waiters jabbered with him excitedly, and bystanders joined in the fun.

"Oh, I *must* go back," she told the young man, turning to him. "I'm needed. I've got to go—in only a minute." But after two minutes she still lingered. He joined her at the window corner and together they watched the crowd.

"Look here," he began suddenly. "You don't want to appear before that crowd do you? And unless you do, you can't get back to your studio until the excitement is over. Meanwhile—if you could stay—I—I'd like to talk to you,—if you'd let me,—please." There was eagerness and earnestness in his face, a sort of boyish enthusiasm that made Ivy want to stay. She wavered for an instant. She was thinking of Perreard. But again she turned the way her feet wanted to go, giving a mental snap of her fingers in his direction.

They drew back into the entrance.

"You see, I've never talked to a real artist before," the boy explained. "And I'm madly interested in painting. To nurse a canvas from absolute bleakness to something real, almost breathing, the counterpart of life itself, seems to me— But of course," he broke off shyly, "I am only an amateur. I haven't yet learned to know when I'm inspired and when I'm not. I've always felt that if I could just know an artist, talk to one, I could feel so much more confidence in myself and my work."

So serious was he that Ivy felt a little sorry for the deception. But she could not bring herself to co[illegible]. "Anything I can do for you," she whispered, "I'll do gladly. 'Help one another' is almost an axiom among us. Besides,—you rescued me."

"Will you? Oh, will you?" the young man cried eagerly. "I knew you would. I prayed you would. You'll have the time. Wait while I get a taxi. Please don't think better of what you've promised. It means so much to me. Wait here." And he would have been off and away had not Ivy caught at his sleeve and clung in almost feminine fear.

"Wait a minute! Don't go! Please! Tell me first what you want."

"I'm afraid you won't do it. It's not much to ask. Please don't think of refusing."

"Yes, but what?"

The young man was quiet for a moment while the earnestness and pleading gathered in his eyes. "Only to look at my pictures. Tell me whether they're good or—or bad; whether I've got a chance. It means so much to me to know. Won't you come?"

Then, while Ivy was grasping the import of his request, the low-gear noises of a taxicab grated in the street, and from the direction of Perreard's came the vehicle gathering speed. The young man at her side darted forth, and in an instant too brief for reflection or consideration, too brief in fact for anything but a soft laugh over the mischief her feet were doing, she was in the machine.

There was no talk during the brief, swift ride. Ivy combed her memory for art phrases, professional-sounding words of vague meaning. Then she found herself waiting on the sidewalk in front of a dark, dingy building looming upward four stories or so. Her friend rejoined her.

"We could have walked," she suggested, nodding at the departing taxi. "Those things are expensive."

He smiled sadly. "Oh, I can afford it," he mourned. "It I were a real artist it might have occurred to me to walk. But I'm tied to a job and a salary, and my father gives me studio and room rent free here. That's why I have to paint afternoons and Sundays and do my drawing by artificial light. You draw in the evening sometimes, don't you?"

"Saturday night," replied Ivy gravely, and with little fear that he would catch her meaning. "I've got a reputation for drawing, too. That's the reason they pay me what I ask."

They had entered the gloomy building with its unlighted halls and climbed three flights of steps. Along a passage, they groped until the boy paused, and she heard the clink of keys. She wavered for a moment, then, with a smile, stood waiting.

"I've been after Father to put electric lights in this old barn," he explained as he bent to the keyhole. "There's only gas; but I think we can see all right. And please tell me the truth. I can stand it. I'd really rather not be flattered. This way." He threw open the door and walked in familiarly.

But before Ivy had taken a step she heard a sound,—a heavy rasping sound as of some one using a meat saw on a taut rope. She stood stock-still.

"What's that?" she whispered timorously. In spite of the role she was playing, her voice trembled. Her misgivings took shape and she reprimanded herself for being placed in such a position. "What's that?" she repeated.

"Come on," came her guide's voice from within the room. "It's only my room-mate. He sleeps like a log—in a sawmill. The lights won't wake him. Come on. And be careful of that chair—to the right of the door."

But Ivy was running away. On tiptoe she slipped down the corridor in the dark and, hearing him stumble over a chair and call out again softly, she stole down the stairway in mouse-like silence. It was plain desertion. Yet the absurdity of it made her want to laugh aloud.

She ran a block after she had left the building, then stopped to look around. But before she could discover where she was, to her surprise, almost consternation, she caught sight of a tall shadow a block away,—a fleeting figure in headlong pursuit. She caught her breath. Pursuit! She hadn't dreamed he'd follow. For a moment she stood almost breathless, while he hammered on toward her.

Afterward she could recollect that a precious instant had been wasted while the thought flashed into her mind that she was glad in a wild, unaccountable way that the boy was following her. Then she had fled.

The rest of that mad chase she remembered as a breathless nightmare, a mere chaos of impressions. There was one vivid recollection of a narrow escape when, dodging about in a parked square, only his stumbling over a "Keep Off" sign had saved her. She had sped away, smock knotted about her waist, hair uncoiffed but safe in the bagging fold of the tam-o'-shanter, free-limbed and swift, only a boy running in the shadows.

A street, darker than the rest, presented itself, its narrow opening partly concealed by a projecting porch. Dimly she realized that it led to a less admirable part of the city, but she could not halt. Into it she turned, running on tiptoe so that he might not hear her when he came to the corner behind. A short block and then a turn; another short block and a blank wall.

In consternation, Ivy paused. Back against the wall, her breast rising and falling in tumult, she listened. Only the city's sounding silence fell on her ears for long minutes that seemed like hours. She relaxed. The sigh she gave was genuine, not of relief, but akin to disappointment. Because now that she had escaped she felt sorry for the boy whom she had treated so badly—not intentionally, but badly, nevertheless. Then she remembered that he had been intent only on regaining his fleeing art critic; he had not known that this was a girl he pursued; he had given chase for none but selfish reasons. Indeed, she had fled to prevent his discovering that it was a girl who had run away from his roommate's snores. She was glad she had succeeded in eluding him. Only now that she was free she would like—she half wished that he could guess.

Then came footsteps pounding at the entrance of the blind alley.

Ivy thrilled, looked this way and that, laughing in the renewed joy of the chase. Overtake those flying feet, impertinent boy? Never. For beside the house at her left Ivy had discovered a narrow flight of stone steps mounting to some unknown level in the darkness.

Up she sprang, two steps at a time. But tired muscles refused to climb a thousand steps in five hundred bounds; and these steps were steep. So she was obliged to slacken her speed and plod step by step, up and up, until there seemed no end, and she was beginning to puff and pant. And in climbing those endless stairs she had to raise both hands several times to the faithful tam in order to prevent its slipping off and spilling her hair about her shoulders.

Just as she saw the deep blue of the night sky above the top step, there came to her the sound of ascending steps. two at a time on the first few stairs, then one at a time, and slowing perceptibly. Ivy had come above the tops of the houses crowded close under the hill in the older part of the city, and when she saw the top step and beyond that the street along the edge of the hill and heard the hurrying footsteps behind her, she bounded up the remaining steps. Sharply to the left she turned, along the road overlooking the city, and came to an abrupt and jarring stop in the embrace of a giant, who resolved into a policeman at a glance. The insecure tam-o'-shanter slipped and dropped to the nape of her neck, revealing its burden of wavy curling locks to the copper's astonished eyes for a brief moment before she swept one arm swiftly upward to replace it and conceal her disordered hair.

"Holy St. Swithings! It's a girl!" whistled Officer Corrigan, and grasped Ivy's two arms just below the shoulders holding her off for inspection. "And a queen at that. What's up, my pretty lady? And where did you get the rig?"

"Let me go! Let me go,—p-please!" panted Ivy, weaving from side to side in a struggle to escape the arm of the law. "Come, officer. I've got to go on. You'll be sorry if—" Then changing her tone—"Please, sir," and smiled at him.

"Sure," chuckled Officer Corrigan, and still holding her in his great paws, he looked up and down the street. "Just one, little queen, and I'll forget I met you." He released one of Ivy's arms so that he could press back his straggling mustache with two caressing sweeps of his great fingers. Ivy realized his intentions and fought madly, but succeeded only in keeping one arm free while he bent over her with a smug, grimacing face.

"Just put up your bail, little bird, and you're out o' jail," he smirked. "Put up your pretty face and you can say good-bye."

"You ugly mutt," sobbed Ivy, in rage and desperation, her free hand striving futilely to break the grip on her arm. "You're on the force to protect women. You—I'll see you smashed for this."

Officer Corrigan laughed nastily. And, as if bent on choking that ugly sound, out of the darkness of the stairway came a leaping figure. One machine-like blow and Ivy was free. She shrank back into the shadows, watching the blonde boy in action, fascinated. Unconsciously, keeping her eyes on the fray before her, she assured herself that the tam-o'-shanter was securely in position, hiding all her hair. And instinctively she drew farther back into the shadows, seeking a hiding place. She knew that whichever man was victorious she must not be found. But she crouched behind a fence to watch the struggle because she could not bring herself to run away.

The man from whom she had fled was proving himself a match for the burly policeman. After that one blow, delivered with all the force in him, he was in the grip of the bigger man.

"Blow your whistle," he panted as he locked his left arm in Officer Corrigan's right to prevent his reaching for the club behind him. "Make a row. Go on! I dare you!"

The officer struggled on in silence. Back they went against the railing that bordered the terraced street. Below them were the roofs of squalid houses and beyond that the great expanse of the city. The rail was stout iron yet it quivered under the weight thrown against it. Officer Corrigan was heavy. And for that reason—for his weight was fat, and malt liquor fat at that—Officer Corrigan began to puff and weaken. Swiftly the blonde boy's right arm went under the stout policeman's left armpit up to the shoulder. His chest pressed tight against the officer's; the moving arm came up behind Officer Corrigan's neck, then to the left side of it, and the hand slipped in front of his throat close under his chin. Officer Corrigan found his head going back, his chin up, his back bending backward. He attempted to relieve the strain and straighten up by stepping backward and away from the tense-faced, stern-jawed figure. His foot struck the other's foot placed behind him, and down he fell like a slaughtered bull, on his back.

The boyish man stood over him.

"Get up, scum! Get up and get out. Complain and howl for help if you dare. Come on! Up!" And he stirred the prostrate bully with his foot. Up clambered the fallen guardian of the law's majesty, pale of face and gasping.

"I—I'm—going—to die," Ivy heard him whimper, breathing jerkily.

"I hope so," said the stern figure over him. "But I'm afraid not. Haven't you ever had the wind knocked out of you before? Move on, officer. Move on!" Whining and cowed, Officer Corrigan moved.

The boy wiped the palm of his hand over his brow and laughed mirthlessly. He looked about him slowly, turned toward Ivy's hiding place and took a few doubtful steps. She knew he was looking for the man who could criticise his pictures.

"Girl!" he called. "Hello! Where are you, girl? Where are you?"

Crouched behind her fence, Ivy felt her heart leap as never in her happy life had it leaped before. With the tide of crimson that swept over her, swept also a tide of joy. He knew! He had known! The pursuit then had been the pursuit of life, the pursuit of man for woman! But within her was a strange constraint, perhaps a stupified happiness, or perhaps more; in any case, an influence she did not understand, but which restrained her.

"Girl!" he kept calling, up and down the shadow. For awhile she could not see him, but his voice came to her faintly. Again he passed near her hiding place. Soon his voice grew fainter and fainter—farther and farther away; then she heard it no more.

Panic-stricken she sprang to her feet. She took two steps in the direction in which he had vanished, paused, then went on hastily.

"Boy!" she called. "Where are you? I'm here. I was hiding. Boy, where are you?"

Presently she saw him leaning on the iron rail.

"Boy," she called, "were you calling me? Were you looking for me?"

When he heard her, his body straightened and the blonde head raised swiftly. He came toward her, both hands extended.

"Why did you hide? Why did you run away from me?" he asked, the serious light burning in his eyes made her aware that on his questions depended the continuation of the earth's revolution or the rising of tomorrow's sun.

"I—I didn't think you knew," she whispered, her profile toward him, her gaze directed at the far horizon which suddenly flared a hot red in an arc over the gas houses where a door had been opened on roaring fires.

"Knew what?" His earnestness amounted to a compelling force.

Either from an instinctive resistance to force or from that strange constraint that had laid its hand on her once before, she was silent, still looking away from him.

"You were afraid," he accused.

Slowly she nodded. "Yes, I—I was afraid to have you know."

"Know what? Please, don't torment me."

"That I am a woman."

"Lord, yes! I knew that!" He laughed queerly, his flashing eyes betraying repressed emotion. The gas house flamed again on the edge of the sky. In a moment she was crushed against his breast, breathless, but tumultuously happy. She heard him whisper something unintelligible, but somehow she knew what he was saying and put her face up to his without a thought as to the wonder of it.

"Little sweetheart," he murmured, "did you think I didn't *know* the minute I saw you? Did you think your working clothes could fool me?"

She smiled up into his face greatly comforted. "Then you didn't mean me when you said 'we men,' back there? You never thought I was a man?"

He pressed her closer. "Glory, no! You couldn't even fool a policeman."

"But," and she forced herself to say it, "I'm not an artist. I don't know the difference between a palette and a—an easel."

Then he laughed aloud, his seriousness lost. "I knew that, too,—away back there when the taxi stopped under a street lamp and I saw your smock. It's entirely too clean."

THE BONE OF A CAMEL

BY ERICH BRANDEIS

A good yarn for Amy Lowell and the other verse librists to read. It might be the means of reviving the camel bone school of poets.

I HAD just taken a headache powder. Every time I go to one of Bill Curtis's parties I have to take a headache powder the next day. The powder had not taken any effect yet. I was stretched out on the sofa, my head buried in a pillow which was the only heritage from a rich aunt. She had left all the rest of her belongings to charity.

The pillow was perfectly plain, just as plain as my aunt had been; nothing on it but green trees and red flowers on a yellow background. But, the way I felt, I imagined that I was in the midst of an African jungle with gorillas and snakes surrounding me. Just as a roaring lion approached to do me harm my man entered and announced:

"A Mr. Jennings."

"Who?"

"Mr. Jennings. He says he is from Kalamazoo and came here especially to see you."

"Mr. Jennings," I pondered, "and from Kalamazoo. Never heard of him."

Nevertheless, I told the servant to show him in after he had assured me that this man Jennings did not look as if he wanted to borrow money or sell me life insurance or books.

A callow youth entered the door. The thing I noticed first was that he had many freckles on his nose. If anybody had told me that there was room for so many freckles on one single nose, I should not have believed it.

The clothes indicated small town. The shoes, turned up in front, had been half-soled; and I noticed that that clean young man took the expensive little Belutschisten near the door for a door mat, as he respectfully scraped his feet on it. Then he advanced two steps, bowed and introduced himself.

"Joseph Jennings, student of physiology from Kalamazoo. At present I am studying Oriental languages at St. Vitus."

"Pleased to meet you," I lied.

"You will be surprised—" He stopped. But as I did not, as he expected, lie about it, he continued. "You may be surprised that I am calling on you. I am from Kalamazoo, Michigan, you know."

As I couldn't see any cause for surprise in the fact that the young man was from Kalamazoo and as, in my present condition I would not even have been surprised had he been from Jamina or Wadi Halfa, he soon resumed, stroking his knee:

"I have a recommendation for you from your friend, Doctor McIntyre from St. Vitus."

I knew that kind of recommendation. McIntyre was a great friend of all aspirants in art and letters and whenever anybody wanted anything he gave him a recommendation to friends in New York.

Only three weeks before he had sent me a flute player with a recommendation. The man was thin as a stick, wore a celluloid collar and had a whole book full of testimonials from his home town friends. He was bound to go into vaudeville and did not leave me until I started him on the road to success with a dollar. Therefore my enthusiasm for friend McIntyre's recommendations was way below par.

Still, Jennings was a student, and I had been a student myself.

"May I ask what you are doing here in New York?"

"Oh, yes, that's why I am calling on you."

He hesitated a moment then he asked: "Of course you know the Modsahabat?"

"The Modsahabat?" I pondered. Was that a Spanish dancer, or did she play in musical comedy, or—

"I am sorry," I finally said, "but I can't just place the lady. Is she supposed to be in New York?"

"A lady!" Jennings looked at me as if I had suddenly gone daft. "But you must remember the Modsahabat, those narrative poems of pre-Mohammedan origin which the Arabians wrote in golden letters on Byssus and which now hang on the walls of the Kaba in Mecca."

I thought that in my present condition the Arabians would have done me a great favor if, instead of the Modsahabat, they had hung Jennings of Kalamazoo on the walls. But I simply answered:

"Oh, yes, in the Kaba."

"I am thinking of writing a book on the Modsahabat," Jennings then informed me.

I assured him that I had been waiting a long time for just such a valuable book to be published.

"I intend to prove, furthermore, that at the time the Modsahabat are supposed to have originated, the Arabians did not even know the art of writing on Byssus," continued Jennings.

A hypothesis which appeared much more important as I did not have the slightest idea what Byssus meant. I remembered Issus, where Alexander the Great had been victorious; I knew of Nessus who poisoned Hercules in such a mean manner; but Byssus was a stranger to me.

"And I intend to prove that before the days of Mohammed such prize poems of Arabian poets were generally written on camels' bones and that on all preserved camels' bones there is not the slightest trace of Modsahabat."

"And you see," he continued, scratching his freckles, "I am looking for one of those camel bones."

"In my house?"

"No, of course not. But I have been told that at the museum here they have one of those bones. My father gave me my travelling expenses and enough money to stay here as long as it will take me to decipher the writing on the bone. Tomorrow I shall start on my search in the museum. I thought that perhaps—and your friend Doctor McIntyre said that you—"

That was just like McIntyre; flute or camel's bone—I never played one or read the other,—but, in both cases, McIntyre stamped me as an authority. I therefore assured Mr. Jennings of Kalamazoo that as long as I had lived in New York I had never heard of the camel bone.

He was very sorry and our conversation began to lag until I finally asked him:

"How do you like New York?"

"It seems rather a noisy town for quiet study," replied Jennings, "and the arrangement of the streets is somewhat strange. One seems to take the wrong cars continually."

I was afraid he might begin to talk about Modsahabat and Byssus again, and, as I did not care to display further ignorance, I began to draw an elaborate map for him, showing the nearest and safest way to the museum.

Finally I explained the route with all its street car, subway, elevated and bus connections, and as I happened to have a ticket for a musical comedy which I could not use on account of my headache, I offered it to him, apologizing for the fact that it would be rather a frivolous entertainment for a man of his mental calibre, but then —this was New York.

He was kind enough to accept the ticket, remarking at the same time that while it had nothing to do with his studies and that he was especially opposed to the shameless display of hosiery which one sees in such entertainments, out of mere curiosity he would look in for a few minutes.

Before he departed he promised to keep me informed about his progress with the Modsahabat.

Two days later, one of my cousins called on me. He is a fruitgrower on a large ranch near a small town and his principal accomplishments are high-balls and a book on "The Removal of Spiders from Young Peach Plants," which he considers one of the best books ever written.

But when cousin Edward comes to New York he generally forgets all about spiders and peach plants and thinks mostly of his other accomplishment. He is especially interested in the night life. And as he stoutly maintains that he can not get along without me on his night trips, his visits generally mean numerous highballs and splitting headaches for me.

This time, as usual, I had to accompany him. He managed to find a statuesque blonde with a raucous voice, who chewed a toothpick and was inordinately fond of champagne at five dollars the bottle. While Edward was telling her about crops and spiders, she flirted with a college student at the next table.

I was bored and felt extremely *de trop* when suddenly I saw something that attracted my attention. There in one of the stalls, with his arms around a very thin lady, sat Jennings from Kalamazoo, freckles and all.

When he saw me he came over to our table, his steps rather insecure, and he expressed great pleasure at seeing me.

"You are no doubt surprised to see me here," he said, "but, you see, I met that young lady after the theatre the night you gave me the ticket and she has been a great help to me ever since."

"Have you found the camel bone?" I asked.

He told me that he had not and, to be perfectly frank, had not even been to the museum.

"In spite of your description, I got the wrong car and instead of going to the museum I landed in Fourteenth Street."

He was about to tell me what he had done in Fourteenth Street, when his female friend came over to the table.

"Say, Jennings," she queried, "are you trying to ditch me?"

He informed her, tenderly, that he had no such intentions.

It then developed that my cousin's blonde and Jennings's bony beauty were friends. They kissed and embraced and the two joined our party.

I took French leave and went home.

The next day Cousin Edward called me up on the 'phone and informed me that Jennings was an awfully good scout and although he had been very drunk he had told him all about the Modsahabat and the camel bone.

For two days I heard nothing from Cousin Edward and I forgot about him and Jennings.

The third day, without knocking, Cousin Edward came in, sat in my most comfortable chair, lighted one of my cigars, and began to whistle.

"Did you ever see a *real* Salome dance?" he suddenly asked me.

I told him that I had not and was informed that I had missed the chance of a lifetime.

He then gave me a description of a little trip he and Jennings from Kalamazoo had taken into the tenderloin the previous evening after a good dinner with much wine, and how they had dropped into a place which advertised real Arabian dancers.

"It was not a very inviting place," he said, "and the drinks were awful. I didn't feel like going, but Jennings thinks there isn't a better chance to study life than in these places.

"It was too early for the crowds and two of the Arabian girls were sitting around in the half empty place. They joined us and started a conversation. One of them did not look very genuine and was quite old, but the other was great! Young, classy, with big black eyes, very black hair and teeth like ivory.

"The girls soon became familiar, the older first. Finally, the younger of the two proposed to give a special performance for twenty dollars; and she danced the real Salome dance. It isn't necessary to describe it, but it was the real thing, all right. And with the drinks, and the dance, and the heat, Jennings became very lively.

"He took a great fancy to the younger girl and she told him that her name was Zuleika and that twice as a child she had been in Mecca with her father, a respected Bedouin sheik of oldest desert nobility, and that she had in her personal possession one of those rare camel bones on which the Modsahabat is written.

"She did not brag about it. Jennings, clever as he is, just wormed it out of her by numerous questions.

"He then tried to speak Arabian to her, but did not succeed, because he knew only the classic Arabian, while the pretty girl apparently spoke the modern dialect. But because Zuleika had been working in New York for a number of years—publicly showing the greatly modified Salome dance—she spoke English very well, in fact, with the typical Bowery slang.

"As it was Jennings's greatest wish to gain possession of the camel bone before a museum or a college could take it away from him, he immediately offered the girl fifty dollars for it. But Zuleika only smiled and gave him such a look that he felt very cheap for having made such a low offer."

At length Edward came to the purpose of his visit. Jennings's money had temporarily given out, and he also was a little embarrassed at present. He had written home and expected funds shortly, but he needed two hundred dollars right away to buy the camel bone. And as they, of course, wanted to celebrate the good luck, a few dollars more for a nice, quiet, wine supper with the Arabian girls was necessary.

It was hard for me to say what I thought of Edward and Jennings. But rather than be called stingy, I gave Edward my check; and he promised to return the money in a few days.

Several months passed. I never saw Jennings again, but from Cousin Edward I received this letter:

Dear Cousin and Friend:—

You are probably surprised that I haven't sent the money I owe you and I should have written a long time ago, but I have been awfully busy with some experiments on a new spider glue. It's going to be a world beater. So I hope you will excuse me.

Poor Jennings is in wrong at home. He came back without the bone, looking very seedy. His mother thought he had worked too hard, but his father knew better. He was in New York once when he was young.

Jennings is trying awfully hard to get along and is earning his living tutoring and writing for the newspapers up home. Worst of all, he has discovered that the bone which he bought from the beautiful Arabian girl—you remember the one with the Salome dance I told you about—seems to be of more recent date than he thought and the hieroglyphics on it are not Modsahabat at all, but something more modern. He thinks however, it is worth considerable money anyway, as he bought it at a bargain. To show his good faith, he gave it to me for the debt.

Of course, in this little town, I can't dispose of such a rare bone; but in New York you should be able to sell it easily and that's why I'm sending it to you. Keep the $225 we owe out of what you get for the bone and send me the balance so that I may forward it to poor Jennings.

It will be to our and your best interests that you sell it soon, because I think the bone smells a little.

Yours sincerely,

Edward.

I agreed particularly with the last part of the letter and did not lose any time. I took the bone to the curator of the Museum of Natural History. He is an authority on Oriental matters and examined the hieroglyphics carefully, covering his nose. He said it wasn't Assyrian, nor Arabian, nor Babylonian, nor Chaldean. It was Bunk. As to the bone, he advised me to consult a butcher.

I threw Modsahabat in the garbage can yesterday. Then I wrote a letter which read as follows:

Dear Cousin Edward:—

The market for camel bones is punk just now, especially when the camel is an ox. Tell Jennings to brush up on Zoology before he goes after any more Modsahabats.

Cousin Jim.

THE SCULPIN

BY LEROY KENNETH

If a man dies with his boots on, the "obit," men register a few extra sobs on their typewriters. But when a man, just out of the trenches, dies with his gloves on, he is likely to be misunderstood —with boots or without them.

THE day was heavy with the promise of wind; there was a smell of frost in the air, and the big white flakes slowly sifting down were already covering their trail across the ice. Tom O'Neil, the master watch, surveyed his gang of sealers. The regular crew was overseas to the war, and the bunch of lubbers he had taken to the ice would be helpless in a blow.

"Come on, you loafers," he shouted. "We can't skin 'em now."

He jammed his pike into a cake of drift ice to pole-vault a fissure. The cake turned when he was in the air and, as his body slapped the water, his head crashed on the ice and stunned him.

The Sculpin plunged to the rescue, Scotty whipped a drag-line into the water, and the gang pulled them onto the ice.

"I wa'n't afraid," the Sculpin chuckled, pulling his wet shirt over his head.

His drawn face, and fishy eyes that seemed always staring with fright, had won him the title, "Sculpin," the most worthless fish of the sea. He was unpopular at the sealing grounds because he wore gloves. Gloves are a woman's garment; mittens the badge of a man. The Sculpin wore gloves always, eating, hunting, or sleeping. Even now, as he humped his back to the gale and stripped to the hide to wring the freezing water from his clothes, he kept on his gloves.

"We're caught," shouted O'Neil, above the moan of the wind, as the storm drove down upon them.

The Sculpin looked at the cloud of flakes waltzing among the ice-hummocks. "Better'n gas," he yelled. "I ain't afraid."

"This is hell," chattered O'Neil, as he tried to pound the ice out of his reefer.

"Nothing like," called the Sculpin, struggling back into his crusting clothes,—"just man-sized weather."

O'Neil searched the horizon of blurring white. The maze of hummocks was confusing, and the drifts over the bodies of the dead seals were constantly changing shape. He had come due north when they "walked the ship down;" but the compass was useless on the floe, for the whole mass might have turned since morning and the ship they had left at the south, might now be north, east, or west, while the bergs he had depended on to guide them back were erased from sight in the thick sheets of snow that went racing past.

"Have to hold her down 'til morning," he admitted at last.

The Sculpin threw back his head, took a long breath of the cold air, and laughed. The danger they faced seemed to give him pleasure.

O'Neil's clothes were wet, and they made him shiver as the stiffening ice-envelope rubbed against his body. His head was pounding and the chill of his freezing garments was eating into his blood.

The men huddled together, a helpless mob, and the wind whipped stinging particles of ice and snow into their faces.

"Blowin' harder every minute," whined Scotty in despair.

"Let it come," sang the Sculpin, a smile of delight at the prospect wreathing his ice-cemented face. "Let it come. I ain't afraid."

O'Neil knew a desire to sleep was a symptom of freezing, yet his eyes would close in spite of him, and the icicles on his lashes seemed to lock his eyes if he even winked.

"Every man for himself," he said, and slumped to the ice.

"Steady, boys." The Sculpin's voice rose above the howl of the storm. "He's down. I'll take command."

The frightened men accepted his leadership, for not one of them knew what to do. He ordered them to build a wall of frozen seal-bodies, ice, and snow. When it was done, they crouched close together in the lee of it for protection from the wind. The blow on the head had left O'Neil as spiritless as a jelly-fish, so the Sculpin got him to his feet and kept him walking.

"It's no use. We're done for."

"Without a fight," bellowed the Sculpin, angrily.

Holding O'Neil at arm's length, he deliberately struck the master-watch in the face with his gloved fist.

"Gone clean off his head," said Scotty. "I say, you—"

"Get back," barked the Sculpin, pushing Scotty into the lee of the wall. "I'm in command."

"Crazy as a stingaree," whispered Scotty to himself; but he obeyed.

"Now, you slacker," the Sculpin bellowed at O'Neil. "You've got to fight."

O'Neil did not want to fight; he wanted to be left alone—to sleep. The sting of the Sculpin's blows roused him, and he attempted to ward them off. Then, in petulance, he fought back; but not much science can be shown with nearly a pound of ice and frozen woolen on each hand.

The Sculpin tripped over the body of a dead seal and fell. O'Neil, now thoroughly angry, leaped onto the fallen body and clawed for the throat; but the oil-skins were buttoned high and thick with ice, and his frozen mittens made a choking hold impossible.

"Say when," yelled the Sculpin, as they rolled over and over, a confused jumble of flying arms and legs.

The snow they kicked up in the struggle was pounced on by the wind and instantly streaked away into the dusk. The Sculpin slammed O'Neil into a drift and sat on his chest.

"Enough," panted O'Neil.

"Awake?" the Sculpin asked, and O'Neil nodded assurance. "Then listen." The Sculpin spoke slowly, and earnestly. "I've taken your place, here—on the ice. You take my place, over there—with the old crew."

"Where?" perplexedly.

"Overseas—in the trenches. They need men. They need us both. You wouldn't go for yourself. You will go for me. That's what I'm saving you for."

"Afraid to go yourself?" O'Neil sneered.

"Will you go?" grimly.

"Get me back alive, and I'll enlist," he agreed. "You're a nervy coward."

"You'll take my place?" The Sculpin spoke sadly, as he waved his hand to the east. "And you'll not be afraid?"

"I'll not be afraid," promised O'Neil, as the Sculpin helped him to his feet.

The Sculpin turned to the gang. "Bruce, Scotty, get out here and fight. Never mind why—just fight. Get mad. Hit hard—and don't be afraid."

Their only hope of fighting sleep was in fighting one another, so the gang wrestled and fought, sang and yelled, and tried to keep from thinking of their peril.

In the darkness, O'Neil wandered from the shelter of the wall. They found him in the open, fast asleep. The gang carried him to shelter and peeled off his frozen clothes, while the Sculpin gathered the drag-ropes of the gang into a pile and touched a match to the grease-soaked hemp.

In the flare of heat from the burning stack, the men rubbed O'Neil with snow, and roused him, while the Sculpin thawed and dried the clothes in the heat from the burning lines.

When the ropes were smouldering in a last red glow, the Sculpin broke up all save one of the pikes and clubs and, husbanding the precious fuel, managed to keep the fire burning through the lagging hours of the night.

As the embers faded, leaving only a charred spot on the ice to remind them of the fire, a little streak of dawn came sifting along with the snow, and with the light came the "whre-ee-e-ah!" of the ship's siren.

The wind had shifted and brought them the sound they had been tuning their ears all night to catch. It gave them the direction of the ship. With a shout, they broke from the lee of the wall and started into the teeth of the storm.

In the rush, O'Neil stepped into a snow-covered blow-hole and fell. He tried to scramble to his feet, but sank back with a broken ankle.

The Sculpin paused long enough to toss him on his shoulder and plunged on toward the sound of the whistle that came trembling through the air at ten second intervals. He caught the men at the crevass, where there was only the one pike with which to leap the open water.

He could not leap a five-year fissure with a cripple in his arms, so he ordered the men to the ship, and to send help.

He laid O'Neil in the lee of a pressure-ridge and sat down beside him to wait. "I'm tired," he admitted to himself, "but I ain't afraid."

The ice under them was groaning with the heave of the water. Across the floe raced a reverberatory crackle as the seams strained with the pulse of the sea. Down the wind came the boom of monster ice-cakes churned in the waves.

"She's breaking," whispered O'Neil,

faintly. "We're done; we're done."

"Alive, to take my place," muttered the Sculpin, as he clambered to his feet, and wrestled O'Neil to his shoulder.

He lumbered across the ice with his burden, tripped and fell; regained his feet, and plunged forward with a dogged persistence. The crack widened; but in the shadow of a berg, it was veiled with a thin rubber-ice. Putting down the now silent body, he tested the ice with his foot. The waves coiled out in widening circles until they touched the other side. It was thin ice, very pliable, the result of the extreme cold on the sheltered salt water.

With O'Neil in his arms, he might not be able to keep on the crest of the wave their weight would make. If the wave got ahead of them, left them in the hollow, the rescue party would find only the hole, when they came.

His feet were numb with frost, but he took the crumpled form in his arms and made his big try. With a running start, he glided onto the ice and ran. He heard it snapping behind him. He knew it was broken;—that the water was in the hollow, rushing after him, licking at his heels. He felt the ice sinking beneath him and, with a supreme effort, he threw the body in a sprawling heap to the firm bank of the other side. As his feet broke through the shivering glare, he pitched forward and gripped the flipper of a dead seal, frozen to the floe. His body sank into the frigid water, but he dragged himself out.

He gathered O'Neil's body into his arms and stumbled blindly toward the faint sound of the ship's horn. The air seemed filled with siren sounds, and he staggered as he walked, staggered and fell; fought his way to his feet again, reeled in a circle, lurched on a few shambling steps, and sank to the ice. He dragged himself forward until his body shielded O'Neil from the wind—and lay still.

When the rescue party found them, the blizzard had banked the snow against the Sculpin's body; but O'Neil was still alive in the shelter of the human wind-brake.

In the Sculpin's pocket they found his commission as lieutenant in the Newfoundland first contingent for overseas duty, and a newspaper clipping:

> WOUNDED IN THE HAND
>
> Lieut. Burns, first Newfoundland, is dishonorably discharged—wounded in the left hand.
>
> Hand wounds in war are common, and nearly all alike: through the palm of the left hand, with powder marks around the hole. The military authorities know such wounds are self-inflicted—a sign of lost nerve. In desperation, the cowards shoot themselves in the left hand in order to be sent out of the trenches.
>
> Lieut. Burns has branded himself for life as a craven. His protests are in vain; His Majesty's troops must not be commanded by cowards."

They found the powder-marked hole in the Sculpin's palm and buried him with his gloves on.

The whole gang enlisted as a "pals platoon," and are now with the old crew, "somewhere in France." They know now that the Sculpin got the brand hurling a bomb from the trench. It exploded just after it left his hand. A fragment drove through the palm, and the powder finished the indictment. The wound was not serious; but the military records did not show that he was left-handed.

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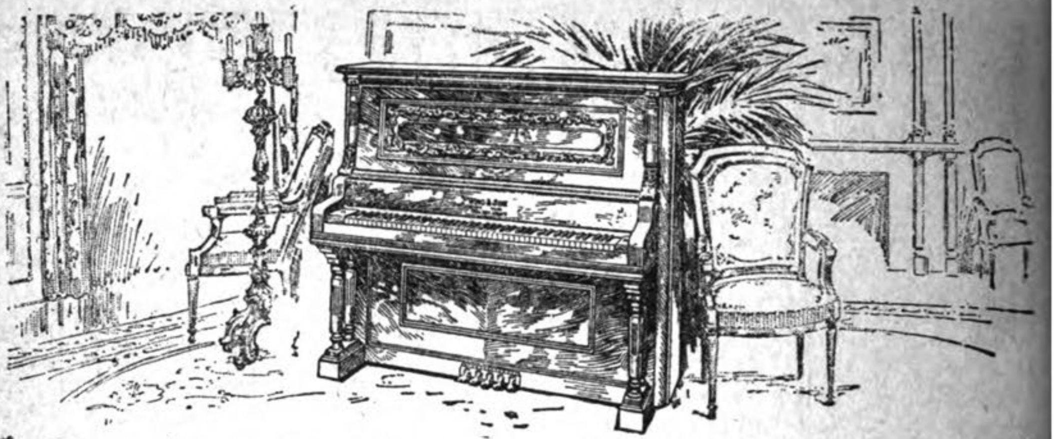

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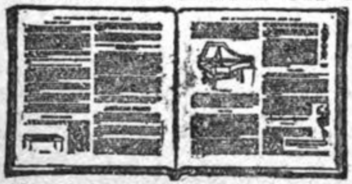

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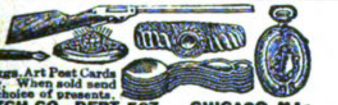

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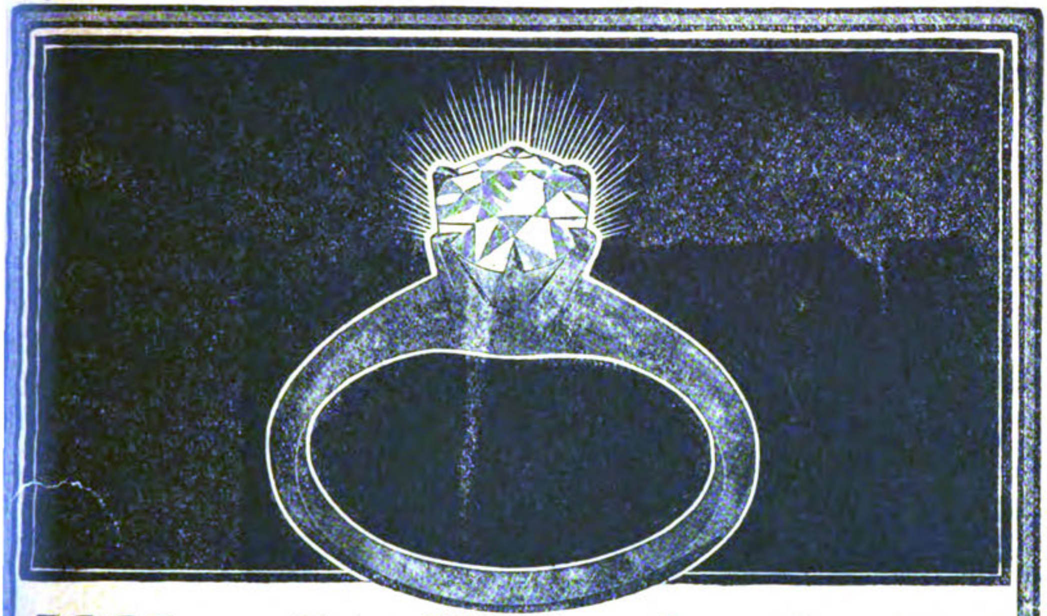

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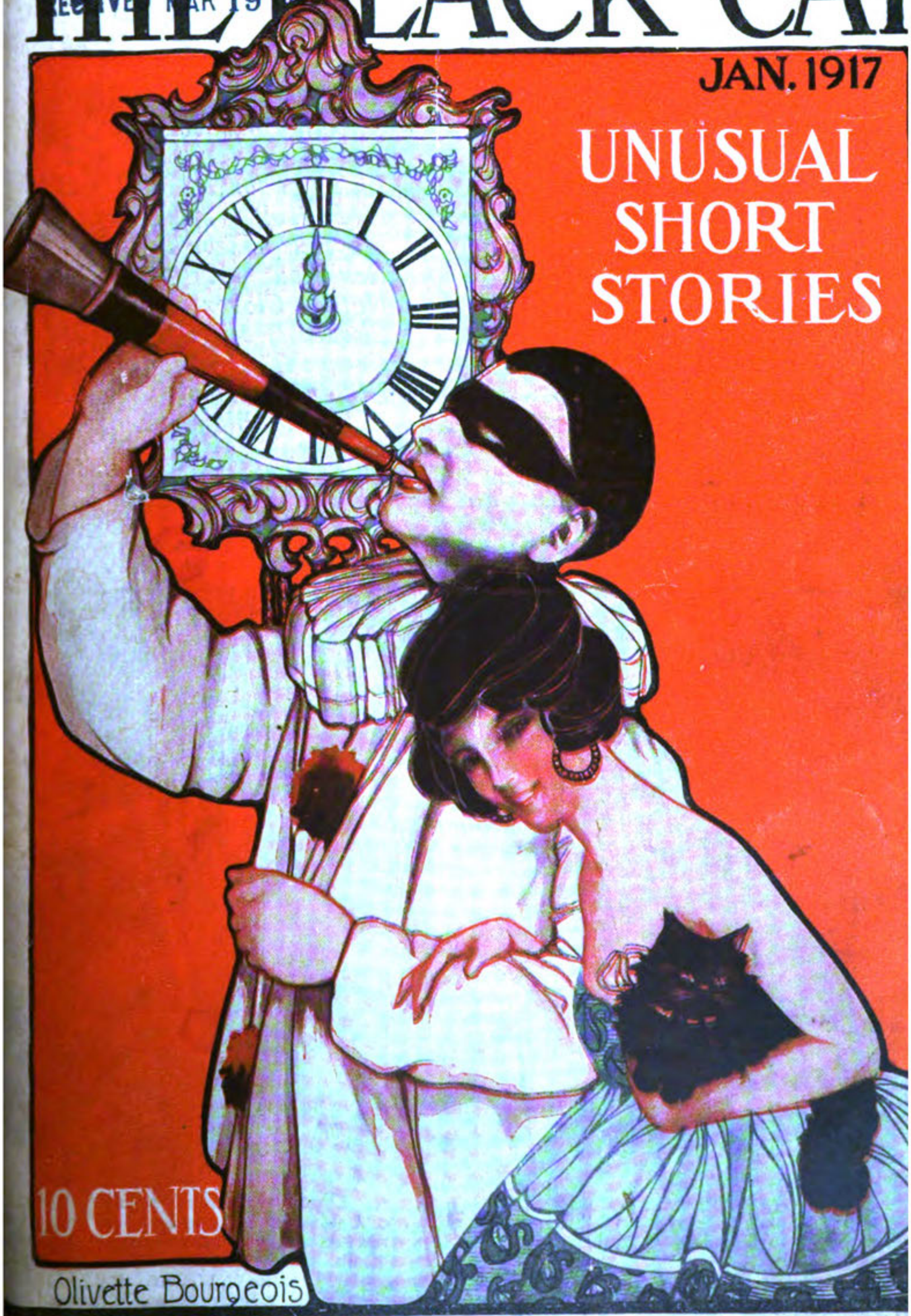

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ACK LONDON'S FIRST STORY AND HOW THE BLACK CAT SAVED HIM IN THIS

The Black Cat

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Contents

Cover Design . . . *Olivette Bourgeois*
Editorial Page 2
A Thousand Deaths . . . *Jack London* . . 3
By Subterfuge . . . . *H. P. Holt* . . 9
A Real Sport . . . . *Hapsburg Liebe* . 15
It Happened Last Night . . *Rex Stout* . . 19
The Testification of Cynthyan Adams *Nathan Clover* . 23
Nine Points of the Law . . *Elwood Brown* . 28
The Two-mile Twins . . . *George T. Armitage* 35
The Burning Rivet . . . *Willard Bradley* . 38
After Thirty Years . . . *Robert McBlair* . 42
The Black Cat Club 46

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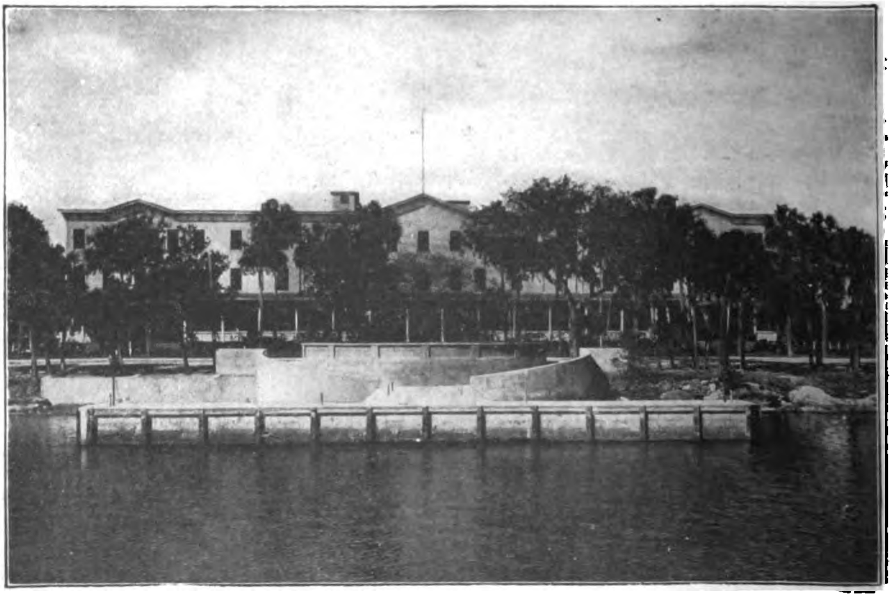

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The Black Cat's Editorial Page

Jack London ---- The Story of a Story

Vagabond, explorer and oyster pirate; fisherman, gold prospector and toiler down among men; sociologist, student of metaphysics, and country gentleman,—Jack London was all of them—Jack London who died the other day. Perhaps his varied activities would fall into three classifications. First and always, he was the adventurer, following many trails and working at many trades; then the country gentleman, living in a more refined, if less invigorating atmosphere; and finally, the professional man of letters, doing his daily stint of a thousand words year in and year out, and making all other pursuits subservient to this one.

It is said of writers that they need not tramp over half the world in order to write great books. But it is quite probable that the man who does see half the world or all of it, for that matter, will sit down to write with a sub-conscious mind overflowing into note books, will in the actual labor of composition command a style of more than ordinary vigor. Jack London died at forty-one, at an age when many men are just starting out to test the broadening effects of travel. Seventeen years before his stories had begun to appear in print, and even at this time, he was drawing upon personal experiences and first-hand knowledge for the raw material which goes into stories. And at that time he had been seeing life in its broader aspects for nearly ten years, dating back to the end of his grammar school days and his entrance to man's estate as a longshoreman.

Thus from the first he experienced none of that writer's sterility which comes from lack of ideas. His struggle was not with matter, but with form. His years of apprenticeship were wholly dedicated to the mastery of technique and the cultivation of style; while other writers who lived less strenuously, butchered the former and worried along with a hybrid form of the latter as they put all of their energy into the pursuit of an idea that would be sure to take with the editors.

More than seventeen years ago, in May 1899, Jack London's first story, "A Thousand Deaths," was published in THE BLACK CAT. Doubtless many of our readers are already familiar with the facts concerning its publication as they are here set forth.

In *Martin Eden*, the book which more than any other of his is autobiography, London tells the old story of an author's struggle for recognition. Martin Eden is about to go back to coal heaving, despairing of fame as a writer, when a letter from "The White Mouse" informs him of the acceptance of his story, "The Whirlpool." That is the story in fictional form.

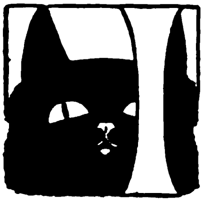
Here is the way London tells of his first acceptance by THE BLACK CAT, written as an introduction to "The Red Hot Dollar," a collection of tales by the founder of the magazine, the late Mr. H. D. Umbstaetter.

"As I say, I was at the end of my tether, beaten out, staved, ready to go back to coal-shoveling or ahead to suicide. And then one morning I received a short, thin letter from a magazine." (Mentioned as *The Transcontinental* in *Martin Eden*.) "This magazine had a national reputation. It had been founded by Bret Harte. It sold for twenty-five cents a copy. It held a four thousand word story of mine, 'To the End of the Trail.' I was modest. As I tore the envelope across the end, I expected to find a check for no more than forty dollars. Instead, I was coldly informed (by the Assistant

(Continued on page 8)

A THOUSAND DEATHS

BY JACK LONDON



I HAD been in the water about an hour, and cold, exhausted, with a terrible cramp in my right calf, it seemed as though my hour had come. Fruitlessly struggling against the strong ebb tide, I had beheld the maddening procession of the water-front lights slip by; but now I gave up attempting to breast the stream and contented myself with the bitter thoughts of a wasted career, now drawing to a close.

It had been my luck to come of good, English stock, but of parents whose account with the bankers far exceeded their knowledge of child-nature and the rearing of children. While born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the blessed atmosphere of the home circle was to me unknown. My father, a very learned man and a celebrated antiquarian, gave no thought to his family, being constantly lost in the abstractions of his study; while my mother, noted far more for her good looks than her good sense, sated herself with the adulation of the society in which she was perpetually plunged. I went through the regular school and college routine of a boy of the English bourgeois, and as the years brought me increasing strength and passions, my parents suddenly became aware that I was possessed of an immortal soul, and endeavored to draw the curb. But it was too late; I perpetrated the wildest and most audacious folly, and was disowned by my people, ostracized by the society I had so long outraged, and with the thousand pounds my father gave me, with the declaration that he would neither see me again nor give me more, I took a first-class passage to Australia.

Since then my life had been one long peregrination—from the Orient to the Occident, from the Arctic to the Antarctic—to find myself at last, an able seaman at thirty, in the full vigor of my manhood, drowning in San Francisco bay because of a disastrously successful attempt to desert my ship.

My right leg was drawn up by the cramp, and I was suffering the keenest agony. A slight breeze stirred up a choppy sea, which washed into my mouth and down my throat, nor could I prevent it. Though I still contrived to keep afloat, it was merely mechanical, for I was rapidly becoming unconscious. I have a dim recollection of drifting past the sea-wall, and of catching a glimpse of an up-river steamer's starboard light; then everything became a blank.

I heard the low hum of insect life, and felt the balmy air of a spring morning fanning my cheek. Gradually it assumed a rhythmic flow, to whose soft pulsations my body seemed to respond. I floated on the gentle bosom of a summer's sea, rising and falling with dreamy pleasure on each crooning wave. But the pulsations grew stronger; the humming, louder; the waves, larger, fiercer—I was dashed about on a stormy sea. A great agony fastened upon me. Brilliant, intermittent sparks of light flashed athwart my inner consciousness; in my ears there was the sound of many waters; then a sudden snapping of an intangible something, and I awoke.

The scene, of which I was protagonist, was a curious one. A glance sufficed to inform me that I lay on the cabin floor of some gentleman's yacht, in a most uncomfortable posture. On either side, grasping my arms and working them up and down like pump handles, were two peculiarly clad, dark-skinned creatures. Though conversant with most aboriginal types, I could not conjecture their nationality. Some attachment had been fastened about my head, which connected my respiratory organs with the machine I shall next describe. My nostrils, however, had been closed, forcing me to breathe through the

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mouth. Foreshortened by the obliquity of my line of vision, I beheld two tubes, similar to small hosing but of different composition, which emerged from my mouth and went off at an acute angle from each other. The first came to an abrupt termination and lay on the floor beside me; the second traversed the floor in numerous coils, connecting with the apparatus I have promised to describe.

In the days before my life had become tangential, I had dabbled not a little in science, and, conversant with the appurtenances and general paraphernalia of the laboratory, I appreciated the machine I now beheld. It was composed chiefly of glass, the construction being of that crude sort which is employed for experimentative purpose. A vessel of water was surrounded by an air chamber, to which was fixed a vertical tube, surmounted by a globe. In the center of this was a vacuum gauge. The water in the tube moved upward and downward, creating alternate inhalations and exhalations, which were in turn communicated to me through the hose. With this, and the aid of the men who pumped my arms so vigorously, had the process of breathing been artificially carried on, my chest rising and falling and my lungs expanding and contracting, till nature could be persuaded to again take up her wonted labor.

As I opened my eyes the appliance about my head, nostrils and mouth was removed. Draining a stiff three fingers of brandy, I staggered to my feet to thank my preserver, and confronted—my father. But long years of fellowship with danger had taught me self-control, and I waited to see if he would recognize me. Not so; he saw in me no more than a runaway sailor and treated me accordingly.

Leaving me to the care of the blackies, he fell to revising the notes he had made on my resuscitation. As I ate of the handsome fare served up to me, confusion began on deck, and from the chanteys of the sailors and the rattling of blocks and tackles I surmised that we were getting under way. What a lark! Off on a cruise with my recluse father into the wide Pacific! Little did I realize, as I laughed to myself, which side the joke was to be on. Aye, had I known, I would have plunged overboard and welcomed the dirty fo'k'sle from which I had just escaped.

I was not allowed on deck till we had sunk the Farallones and the last pilot boat. I appreciated this forethought on the part of my father and made it a point to thank him heartily, in my bluff seaman's manner. I could not suspect that he had his own ends in view, in thus keeping my presence secret to all save the crew. He told me briefly of my rescue by his sailors, assuring me that the obligation was on his side, as my appearance had been most opportune. He had constructed the apparatus for the vindication of a theory concerning certain biological phenomena, and had been waiting for an opportunity to use it.

"You have proved it beyond all doubt," he said; then added with a sigh, "but only in the small matter of drowning."

But, to take a reef in my yarn—he offered me an advance of two pounds on my previous wages to sail with him, and this I considered handsome, for he really did not need me. Contrary to my expectations, I did not join the sailors' mess, for'ard, being assigned to a comfortable stateroom and eating at the captain's table. He had perceived that I was no common sailor, and I resolved to take this chance for reinstating myself in his good graces. I wove a fictitious past to account for my education and present position, and did my best to come in touch with him. I was not long in disclosing a predilection for scientific pursuits, nor he in appreciating my aptitude. I became his assistant, with a corresponding increase in wages, and before long, as he grew confidential and expounded his theories, I was as enthusiastic as himself.

The days flew quickly by, for I was deeply interested in my new studies, passing my waking hours in his well-stocked library, or listening to his plans and aiding him in his laboratory work. But we were forced to forego many enticing experiments, a rolling ship not being exactly the proper place for delicate or intricate work. He promised me, however, many delightful hours in the magnificent laboratory for-which we were bound. He had taken possession of an uncharted South Sea island, as he said, and turned it into a scientific paradise.

We had not been on the island long, before I discovered the horrible mare's nest I had fallen into. But before I describe the strange things which came to pass, I must briefly outline the causes which culminated in as startling an experience as ever fell to the lot of man.

Late in life, my father had abandoned the musty charms of antiquity and succumbed to the more fascinating ones embraced under the general head of biology. Having been thoroughly grounded during his youth in the fundamentals, he rapidly explored all the higher branches as far as the scientific world had gone, and found himself on the no man's land of the unknowable. It was his intention to preempt some of this unclaimed territory, and it was at this stage of his investigations that we had been thrown together. Having a good brain, though I say it myself, I had mastered his speculations and methods of reasoning, becoming almost as mad as himself. But I should not say this. The marvelous results we afterward obtained can only go to prove his sanity. I can but say that he was the most abnormal specimen of cold-blooded cruelty I have ever seen.

After having penetrated the dual mysteries of physiology and psychology, his thought had led him to the verge of a great field, for which, the better to explore, he began studies in higher organic chemistry, pathology, toxicology and other sciences and sub-sciences rendered kindred as accessories to his speculative hypotheses. Starting from the proposition that the direct cause of the temporary and permanent arrest of vitality was due to the coagulation of certain elements and compounds in the protoplasm, he had isolated and subjected these various substances to innumerable experiments. Since the temporary arrest of vitality in an organism brought coma, and a permanent arrest death, he held that by artificial means this coagulation of the protoplasm could be retarded, prevented, and even overcome in the extreme states of solidification. Or, to do away with the technical nomenclature, he argued that death, when not violent and in which none of the organs had suffered injury, was merely suspended vitality; and that, in such instances, life could be induced to resume its functions by the use of proper methods. This, then, was his idea: To discover the method—and by practical experimentation prove the possibility—of renewing vitality in a structure from which life had seemingly fled. Of course, he recognized the futility of such endeavor after decomposition had set in; he must have organisms which but the moment, the hour, or the day before, had been quick with life. With me, in a crude way, he had proved this theory. I was really drowned, really dead, when picked from the water of San Francisco bay—but the vital spark had been renewed by means of his aerotherapeutical apparatus, as he called it.

Now to his dark purpose concerning me. He first showed me how completely I was in his power. He had sent the yacht away for a year, retaining only his two blackies, who were utterly devoted to him. He then made an exhaustive review of his theory and outlined the method of proof he had adopted, concluding with the startling announcement that I was to be his subject.

I had faced death and weighed my chances in many a desperate venture, but never in one of this nature. I can swear I am no coward, yet this proposition of journeying back and forth across the borderland of death put the yellow fear upon me. I asked for time, which he granted, at the same time assuring me that but one course was open—I must submit. Escape from the island was out of the question; escape by suicide was not to be entertained, though really preferable to what it seemed I must undergo; my only hope was to destroy my captors. But this latter was frustrated through the precautions taken by my father. I was subjected to a constant surveillance, even in my sleep being guarded by one or the other of the blacks.

Having pleaded in vain, I announced and proved that I was his son. It was my last card, and I had placed all my hopes upon it. But he was inexorable; he was not a father but a scientific machine. I wonder yet how it ever came to pass that he married my mother or begat me, for there was not the slightest grain of emotion in his make-up. Reason was all in all to him, nor could he understand such things as love or sympathy in others, except as petty weaknesses which should be overcome. So he informed me that in the beginning he had given me life, and who had better right to take it away than he? Such, he said, was not his desire, however; he merely wished to borrow it occasionally, promising to return it at the appointed time. Of course, there was a liability of mishaps, but I could do no more than take the chances, since the affairs of men were full of such.

The better to insure success, he wished me to be in the best possible condition, so I was dieted and trained like a great athlete before a decisive contest. What could I do? If I had to undergo the peril, it were best to be in good shape. In my intervals of relaxation he allowed me to assist in the arranging of the apparatus and in the various subsidiary experiments. The interest I took in all such operations can be imagined. I mastered the work as thoroughly as he, and often had the pleasure of seeing some of my suggestions or alterations put into effect. After such events I would smile grimly, conscious of officiating at my own funeral.

He began by inaugurating a series of experiments in toxicology. When all was ready, I was killed by a stiff dose of strychnine and allowed to lie dead for some twenty hours. During that period my body was dead, absolutely dead. All respiration and circulation ceased; but the frightful part of it was, that while the protoplasmic coagulation proceeded, I retained consciousness and was enabled to study it in all its ghastly details.

The apparatus to bring me back to life was an air-tight chamber, fitted to receive my body. The mechanism was simple—a few valves, a rotary shaft and crank, and an electric motor. When in operation, the interior atmosphere was alternately condensed and rarefied, thus communicating to my lungs an artificial respiration without the agency of the hosing previously used. Though my body was inert, and, for all I knew, in the first stages of decomposition, I was cognizant of everything that transpired. I knew when they placed me in the chamber, and though all my senses were quiescent, I was aware of hypodermic injections of a compound to react upon the coagulatory process. Then the chamber was closed and the machinery started. My anxiety was terrible; but the circulation became gradually restored, the different organs began to carry on their respective functions, and in an hour's time I was eating a hearty dinner.

It cannot be said that I participated in this series, nor in the subsequent ones, with much verve; but after two ineffectual attempts at escape, I began to take quite an interest. Besides, I was becoming accustomed. My father was beside himself at his success, and as the months rolled by his speculations took wilder and yet wilder flights. We ranged through the three great classes of poisons, the neurotics, the gaseous and the irritants, but carefully avoided some of the mineral irritants and passed the whole group of corrosives. During the poison régime I became quite accustomed to dying, and had but one mishap to shake my growing confidence. Scarifying a number of lesser blood vessels in my arm, he introduced a minute quantity of that most frightful of poisons, the arrow poison, or curare. I lost consciousness at the start, quickly followed by the cessation of respiration and circulation, and so far had the solidification of the protoplasm advanced, that he gave up all hope. But at the last moment he applied a discovery he had been working upon, receiving such encouragement as to redouble his efforts.

In a glass vacuum, similar but not exactly like a Crookes' tube, was placed a magnetic field. When penetrated by polarized light, it gave no phenomena of phosphorescence nor of rectilinear projection of atoms, but emitted non-luminous rays, similar to the X ray. While the X ray could reveal opaque objects hidden in dense mediums, this was possessed of far subtler penetrations. By this he photographed my body, and found on the negative an infinite number of blurred shadows, due to the chemical and electric motions still going on. This was an infallible proof that the rigor mortis in which I lay was not genuine; that is, those mysterious forces, those delicate bonds which held my soul to my body, were still in action. The resultants of all other poisons were unapparent, save those of mercurial compounds, which usually left me languid for several days.

Another series of delightful experiments was with electricity. We verified Tesla's assertion that high currents were utterly harmless by passing 100,000 volts through my body. As this did not affect me, the current was reduced to 2,500, and I was quickly electrocuted. This time he ventured so far as to allow me to remain dead, or in a state of suspended vitality, for three days. It took four hours to bring me back.

Once, he superinduced lockjaw; but the agony of dying was so great that I positively refused to undergo similar experiments. The easiest deaths were by asphyxiation, such as drowning, strangling, and suffocation by gas; while those by morphine, opium, cocaine and chloroform, were not at all hard.

Another time, after being suffocated, he kept me in cold storage for three months, not permitting me to freeze or decay. This was without my knowledge, and I was in a great fright on discovering the lapse of time. I became afraid of what he might do with me when I lay dead, my alarm being increased by the predilection he was beginning to betray toward vivisection. The last time I was resurrected, I discovered that he had been tampering with my breast. Though he had carefully dressed and sewed the incisions up, they were so severe that I had to take to my bed for some time. It was during this convalescence that I evolved the plan by which I ultimately escaped.

While feigning unbounded enthusiasm in the work, I asked and received a vacation for my moribund occupation. During this period I devoted myself to laboratory work, while he was too deep in the vivisection of the many animals captured by the blacks to take notice of my work.

It was on these two propositions that I constructed my theory: First, electrolysis, or the decomposition of water into its constituent gases by means of electricity; and, second, by the hypothetical existence of a force, the converse of gravitation, which Astor has named "apergy." Terrestrial attraction, for instance, merely draws objects together but does not combine them; hence, apergy is merely repulsion. Now, atomic or molecular attraction not only draws objects together but integrates them; and it was the converse of this, or a disintegrative force, which I wished to not only discover and produce, but to direct at will. Thus the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen reacting on each other, separate and create new molecules, containing both elements and forming water. Electrolysis causes these molecules to split up and resume their original condition, producing the two gases separately. The force I wished to find must not only do this with two, but with all elements, no matter in what compounds they exist. If I could then entice my father within its radius, he would be instantly disintegrated and sent flying to the four quarters, a mass of isolated elements.

It must not be understood that this force, which I finally came to control, annihilated matter; it merely annihilated form. Nor, as I soon discovered, had it any effect on inorganic structure; but to all organic form it was absolutely fatal. This partiality puzzled me at first, though had I stopped to think deeper I would have seen through it. Since the number of atoms in organic molecules is far greater than in the most complex mineral molecules, organic compounds are characterized by their instability and the ease with which they are split up by physical forces and chemical reagents.

By two powerful batteries, connected with magnets constructed specially for this purpose, two tremendous forces were projected. Considered apart from each other, they were perfectly harmless; but they accomplished their purpose by focusing at an invisible point in mid-air. After practically demonstrating its success, besides narrowly escaping being blown into nothingness, I laid my trap. Concealing the magnets, so that their force made the whole space of my chamber doorway a field of death, and placing by my couch a button by which I could throw on the current from the storage batteries, I climbed into bed.

The blackies still guarded my sleeping quarters, one relieving the other at midnight. I turned on the current as soon as the first man arrived. Hardly had I begun to doze, when I was aroused by a sharp, metallic tinkle. There, on the mid-threshold, lay the collar of Dan, my father's St. Bernard. My keeper ran to pick it up. He disappeared like a gust of wind, his clothes falling to the floor in a heap. There was a slight whiff of ozone in the air, but since the principal gaseous components of his body were hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, which are equally colorless and odorless, there was no other manifestation of his departure. Yet when I shut off the current and removed the garments, I found a deposit of carbon in the form of animal charcoal; also other powders, the isolated, solid elements of his organism, such as sulphur, potassium and iron. Resetting the trap, I crawled back to bed. At midnight I got up and removed the remains of the second blacky, and then slept peacefully till morning.

I was awakened by the strident voice of my father, who was calling to me from across the laboratory. I laughed to myself. There had been no one to call him and he had overslept. I could hear him as he approached my room with the intention of rousing me, and so I sat up in bed, the better to observe his translation—perhaps apotheosis were a better term. He paused a moment at the threshold, then took the fatal step. Puff! It was like the wind sighing among the pines. He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap on the floor. Besides ozone, I noticed the faint, garlic-like odor of phosphorous. A little pile of elementary solids lay among his garments. That was all. The wide world lay before me. My captors were not.

Jack London - - - The Story of a Story

(*Continued from page 2*)

Sub-scissors, I imagine) that my story was 'available' and that on publication I would be paid for it the sum of five dollars.

"The end was in sight. I was finished—finished as only a very young, very sick and very hungry young man could be. And then, that same day, that very afternoon, the mail brought a short, thin letter from Mr Umbstaetter of THE BLACK CAT. He told me that the four thousand word story submitted to him was more lengthy than strengthy, but that if I would give permission to cut it in half, he would immediately send me a check for forty dollars

"I told Mr. Umbstaetter he could cut it down two halves if he would only send the money along. He did, by return mail. And that is precisely why I stayed by the writing game. Literally, and literarily, I was saved by THE BLACK CAT short story.

"To many a writer with a national reputation THE BLACK CAT has been the stepping stone. The marvelous, unthinkable thing Mr. Umbstaetter did, was to judge a story on its merits and to pay for it on its merits. Also, and only a hungry writer can appreciate it, he paid immediately on acceptance."

That is the story of the story which marked the genesis of Jack London's career as one of America's most robust writers. We republish "A Thousand Deaths" as the first story this month and dedicate this number to the memory of Jack London, the author, and to the memory of H. D. Umbstaetter, the editor who gave him a hand.

BY SUBTERFUGE

BY H. P. HOLT

Forced into the ranks of vagabond navigators because of a series of costly misadventures with other men's ships, a hoodooed skipper casts his lot with a choice crew of cosmopolitan cut-throats.

THE day had passed when Captain Scarlett hoped to be skipper of a first-class liner. He had had unlimited ambition in that direction during his younger days, but circumstances were against him. His first command hit an uncharted rock off Haiti after the owners had threatened him with dismissal if he did not arrive on time.

As his ship sank he failed to arrive on time, and he consequently kicked his heels in New York for a couple of months, looking in vain for another confiding employer. Even his overcoat had been converted into current coin of the realm when he succeeded in getting signed on for a meagre salary as third mate; for, whereas an agile and intelligent camel might conceivably squeeze through the eye of a needle if the needle were large enough, a man holding an extra master's certificate and a bad record may tramp round among reputable shipping offices till his legs are but stumps before he finds anyone willing to entrust his floating property to him. If the pendulum of his luck always swings one way after that, the mariner may possibly regain the confidence of employers in the course of half a lifetime, but Captain Scarlett's luck was erratic. Black fever carried off most of the ship's officers near Para, and he found himself pacing the bridge, monarch of all he surveyed, during the homeward run.

He was just beginning to think that fate had something in store for him besides kicks, when his vessel was rammed by a steamer during a dense fog off Sandy Hook, and for twenty hideous minutes he was busy averting a series of impromptu funerals. As a matter of course, Captain Scarlett's "previous convictions" were raked up, and once more the unfortunate skipper did his bit toward swelling the ranks of the unemployed. For some time afterward his life was persistently uninteresting and colourless. He knew his business thoroughly; had no vices other than a taste for black cigars; and he had a wonderfully persuasive way with men when a critical situation cropped up. There was no lingo spoken on the wide ocean in which he could not curse dagos if necessary, and no man who had any respect for his own health would have paused lightheartedly to question an order of his. Captain Scarlett stood six-foot-three, had a chest like a young elephant, and usually wore thick-soled boots.

Still, he had been unlucky, and there are always far more good skippers wanting berths than there are third-rate berths needing good skippers. Scarlett had to do many humiliating things rather than starve, for a long time. Under a name that would have surprised his god-parents, he sailed before the mast, thereby, on one occasion, scandalizing a cook who had had the honour, in other days, of attending to the needs of his interior. Indiscreetly, the cook mentioned the matter to Scarlett, who found it necessary to give two distinct hammerings to the cook before the latter felt convinced he must have made some mistake.

Although Captain Scarlett fulfilled mean duties for the necessities of existence, he never failed to keep his weather eye open for one of the softer spots in life. The world is a comparatively big place, and even after the front door is banged in a skipper's face there are sometimes opportunities for him to creep round to the back entrance. The qualifications for admission via the back entrance are at times varied and peculiar, and the back entrance often takes a great deal of finding; but a persistent seeker can do astonishing things on this earth if he has a square jaw like that of Captain Scarlett and a growing family in an unpretentious villa at Boston to provide for. The unfortunate skipper found himself in an awkward hole many a time when his remittance to Laburnum Villa became due, and he often swore in a subdued tone when he realized how pitifully small the remittance would have to be, compared with what he would have liked to send. There were moments when he felt like standing in a dark corner, braining the first person who came along and including the proceeds with his remittance, but such moods passed quickly. He was too deeply attached to the little brood of Scarletts to picture them living on such tainted wealth.

For a while he prowled about the region of the Congo in various craft, hoping against hope to get command of one of the numerous small trading steamers that survive the myriad of pitfalls there by a series of miracles, but fever seemed to be having an off season just then. At least, if anyone died after an overdose of the odour of crushed marigolds, somebody else with an equal disregard for a free passage to the hereafter succeeded in getting the job before Scarlett had time to arrive on the scene.

One night he was bitterly summing up the disadvantages of being alive, wondering where he would be able to sleep, and watching the lights glint on the swiftly flowing tide at Durban, when a strange thing happened. There came over the water a curious scraping sound as of a small boat running foul of a buoy, an inarticulate scream of horror, and then silence. It happened so quickly and so unobtrusively that, for an instant, the skipper thought it must have been fancy, but he knew that neither seagull nor any other bird could have put such agony into a scream. There was a boat lying idle near, and in ten seconds he was thrusting it with all his gigantic strength across the face of the dark water. With a sailor's instinct he made for the place from which the sound had come, grazed past a huge buoy, and in another instant would have gone if something white had not caught his eye.

His ham-like fist grasped a rusty chain attached to the tilted buoy. Bracing himself, he bore the strain as the boat, dragging in the current, tugged to get free, and then with his other hand he groped for the white thing he had seen. It closed over something soft and cold, and a moment later, Captain Scarlett dragged out of the depths the form of a man who was three-quarters drowned.

With a few rapid strokes he pulled to the quay and then, to save precious time, set to work in the boat to coax life back into the victim. It was twenty minutes before the man sat up and wondered vaguely which world he was in.

"What's happened?" he asked.

Scarlett grinned.

"If you don't know, nobody does," he replied. "I found you out there clinging to a buoy as though it were the only friend you had."

"Yes, I remember some of it now. But what happened to Barnes?"

"And who might Barnes be?"

"He's the captain—captain of my ship, the Dorothy. He was coming ashore with me when—when something or other happened."

"I expect you hit the buoy and turned over in the tide. As near as I can calculate, Mr. Barnes is now about three miles out there," Scarlett said grimly, pointing into the blackness. "Unless he's a first-class swimmer someone will be entitled to draw his insurance."

"I always suspected that man was either a fool or a knave," commented the half-drowned person bitingly. "If he wasn't competent to row his owner ashore at Durban he certainly wasn't competent to—well,—well, if he's gone, he's gone. Meanwhile it doesn't break any ice to sit here shivering. I had better get back on board and change. Do you think you could make a better job of it than Barnes did? That's the Dorothy over there, with the riding light."

"I *might*," observed Scarlett with a touch of scorn, but glad of a chance to pick up anything that was going. A little later he had rowed the borrowed boat out across the tideway and was holding on to the side of the Dorothy.

"You had better tie her up there for a few minutes and come on board," said the man. "I reckon I'm in your debt pretty considerably."

Captain Scarlett guessed, as he made his way below, that the Dorothy was somewhere in the neighborhood of a 2000 ton boat. He had visions of being able to send a more satisfactory remittance to Laburnum Villa this time.

"I'm sure I'm mightily obliged to you," said the stranger, after changing into dry clothing and running his eyes keenly over the mariner, not omitting to notice an absence of any sign of prosperity. "You don't happen to be looking for a job, eh?"

"That's just what I am doing," was the reply. "My name is Scarlett. I hold an extra master's ticket."

"Then what in the name of thunder are you doing here at Durban out of collar?"

"I came out on spec, looking for a fortune, and found another fool had been here before me," commented Scarlett drily.

"Hum!" said the other man, after a slight pause. He was thinking hard. "Do you know these waters, Captain?"

"I ought to. I've been poking about in 'em long enough."

"Yes, yes, quite so," was the reply. "My name is Newman. It is unfortunate that Barnes is gone. It he doesn't turn up in the morning I should like to have a chat with you. I intended to sail tomorrow. You had better turn into his bunk for tonight unless you want to get ashore."

Captain Scarlett slept with an easier mind than he had had for a long time. Things seemed to be coming his way. As he had supposed, Barnes did not return to the ship. Mr. Newman was favourably impressed by his visitor's appearance in the daylight, and as there was a shipping office in Durban where Scarlett was known, Mr. Newman was able to make formal inquiries quickly. The mariner had a pleasant surprise, also, when he found that the individual who nursed the Dorothy's engines was a dour Scot, one Sandy Learoyd, with whom he had sailed years before. He knew Sandy to be a man with a powerful thirst and an infinite affection for his work.

Thrusting a little wad of money into Scarlett's hand, as a token of gratitude for services rendered, Mr. Newman engaged the mariner in place of the late lamented Barnes and, in the seclusion of the owner's cabin, Captain Scarlett learned what lay in store. The trip, it appeared, was a pure gamble. Newman had made one of those perilous investments which consist of buying a wreck without seeing it. The steamer Loango had ended her career on the uninviting coast of southwest Madagascar and, although there was bar gold to the value of 400,000 dollars in her, two attempts at salvage had failed utterly. The hull had been pounded by a succession of southerly gales until, in all reason, one could only suppose any treasure on board must have been swept away and, according to the latest reports available, the remnants of the Loango had slipped off the ledge where she struck and sunk in deep water. Highly speculative, was a mild way of describing the investment, but Newman had secured the services of one of the cleverest divers alive and chartered the Dorothy in a purely sporting spirit. He had made three fortunes and lost two. That left him one to the good. He considered, therefore, that he was entitled to take some risks.

"What sort of a crew have we?" asked Scarlett.

"A bit mixed," replied Newman. "The fact is,—they were scraped together in a hurry, but they don't count a lot. This is the fine weather season. Everything, really, depends on Mason, the diver. Kalmar, the mate, is a Swede. He is a rough sort, but I guess he'll be able to keep order. There are 43 hands including the stokers, and they've drifted from every corner of the globe. There's a Chink, two Portugees, a Kanaka or two, a man who says he is from Santa Cruz, a big one-eyed sailor from Barbados, and the rest are the usual scum, but Kalmar has them well in hand."

"I see," said Captain Scarlett dubiously. "And may I ask whether they think this is a pleasure trip we're bound on, or do they know that the stuff Mason hopes to pull up is worth a murder or two?"

"Nobody knows it is gold, except you, Mason and myself."

"That is just as well," observed the skipper, "if you aren't keen on seeing trouble. Personally, I'd have had a crew of Christians on a job like this, because you can get some idea which way a white man is going to jump, but a bunch of trouble like these would take some holding if they saw a fair chance to scoop the pool. I take it the ship is in ballast?"

"The hold aft is," replied Newman. "All the equipment, stores, and spare rations, in case we are away a long time, are in the for'a'd hold. Mason is going to blow the wreck up if necessary, so there is enough dynamite, besides other explosives, under the hatches there, to reduce the Dorothy to little splinters if it happens to go off. Kalmar caught a couple of the dagos smoking in the hold three days ago while we were taking in stores and, when I told him what might have happened, he explained to them forcibly what would be the result of a fire. They looked as scared as rats in a trap, and some of them would have tried to swim ashore if Kalmar hadn't kept his eyes open. They're mortal skeered of that explosive now."

Learning that the ship's armory consisted of one automatic, which Newman had locked up in his trunk, Scarlett went ashore and secured a couple of business-like looking weapons, handing one to Sandy with instructions to him to keep it ready in case of unexpected squalls. The same evening the Dorothy dropped her moorings and ambled under easy steam into the Indian Ocean, heading for the all-important point on the chart about 300 miles to the north of Cape St. Marie, where the Madagascan rocks had claimed toll of the Loango. Newman, who was an optimist by nature, refused to allow his spirits to droop when no trace of the wreck could be found at first. His faith in Captain Scarlett had grown every day, and as there was no particular reason for hurrying, he decided to take the skipper's advice and carry out a systematic search in the neighborhood.

Feeling blindly under water for bits of a wreck that was once somewhere about there, is the sort of work that demands grit after the novelty has worn off, but Newman stuck to it and, in less than three weeks, Mason reported that he had located the lost Loango. She had slipped off the ledge and, instead of dropping like a stone into the deep water, had drifted onto a rocky bed at a depth which, though considerable, was not too great to give the diver a chance. He could, however, only stand being down for a few minutes at a time, and the days dragged monotonously while he was endeavouring to locate the treasure. Many tons of sand had silted over the part of the ship that he was exploring, and it took him more than a week to get this clear.

Finally, he came to the surface wildly excited. He had reached the place where the gold was stored. There was a great hole near, in the side of the Loango, but the treasure boxes had been kept in position by their own weight. Mason had fixed a guide rope leading to the place and, while he was resting, Scarlett made a trip down.

"Barring bad weather, which isn't likely," he reported to Newman, "we ought to have the whole lot on board in ten days or so. We had better store it in my cabin and you'll have to come and occupy the spare berth there. There is plenty of room and, if these heathen get wind of what the game is, it will be necessary to keep our blinkers open. I wouldn't trust Kalmar as far as I could throw him."

Fortunately the sea remained as calm as a mill pond excepting for the long, steady swell, and the work of getting the gold boxes up was continued without a hitch until a piece of rotten tackle gave way. One of the boxes, weighing as much as a man could lift, crashed on to the deck, narrowly missing the Chinaman and, falling on its corner, burst open. All hands had been as curious as a drove of monkeys to know what mysterious substance was being pulled from the bottom of the sea with such care and, when the little yellow bars dropped out on deck, Kalmar and the Chinaman were among the first two to inspect them closely before Scarlett's burly shoulder intervened. He saw a quick look exchanged by Kalmar and the Chinaman, as though their suspicions had been verified, but it was not until next day that he felt convinced any danger lay ahead. All hands had begun to work in a curiously feverish spirit, displaying an interest in the proceedings which was ominous. When the skipper paid a surprise visit to the fo'c'sle that night, a babel of tongues struck his ears and he listened intently. At first he hoped it was only the natural outcome of excitement caused by the discovery, but the few phrases he caught were sinister.

"Gettee all up first. Muchee plenty for everyone," was one observation which fell from the Chinaman. Captain Scarlett had food for deep thought as he crept back unobserved. That trouble was brewing, and bad trouble at that, he had no room for doubt. Of the whole ship's company there were none on whose loyalty Newman and he could count besides Sandy Learoyd and the diver. Four men, even armed as three of them would be, would be sure of a distinctly exciting time when the storm broke, for more than two score lawless ruffians with unlimited wealth almost within their grasp, would need scientific handling. Captain Scarlett had not the faintest yellow streak in his composition, but he had grave misgivings about the position. For a moment his mind strayed to the corner chair in the parlour at Laburnum Villa where, at rare intervals, he smoked black cigars and listened to the little tragedies and comedies of his domestic circle. Then he came back to the grim realities of the moment and called a council of war.

"If they catch us napping, or separated," the skipper declared, "the only satisfaction we shall get is to pump lead into the hides of a few of them before we are knifed and slung overboard. Of course we shall have to finish getting the rest of this gold up. That's our job for the time being."

"I leave that entirely to your discretion, Captain," said Newman. "It would be hard luck to lose the treasure at this stage, but you can count on me now as only one of your side."

While the rest of the salvage operations lasted there was no open sign of defiance, but the subtle danger signals were there to read. It was agreed not to give any indication to the enemy that the diver's task was nearing completion. The last box was being stored away when an idea occurred to the skipper. The dagos must already have settled on some definite plan of campaign. If he could ascertain what the program was, as they had arranged it, half his difficulties would be removed. He scratched his chin reflectively for a moment and then picked on Jim, the one-eyed individual from Barbados. Hoisting a finger at the negro, he turned toward his cabin, beckoning Newman as he went. After they had entered he closed the door and Jim suddenly stepped backward in astonishment from a polished barrel that was pointed directly at his cranium.

"You going to die, one-time quick, Jim," snapped Scarlett.

"Why for, boss?" gasped the negro.

"You not an honest nigger. You means to steal white man's gold, eh? You know what gold is, you dirty black scum."

For an instant something that was either guilt or terror quivered in Jim's face.

"No, boss. Me the one only honest nigger on board," he whined, and a triumphant light came into Scarlett's eyes, for he not only saw that Jim was lying but that the negro was aware of the men's plans.

"We'll see," commented Scarlett, without taking the weapon from Jim's forehead. "Mr. Newman, you'll find some fine wire in that locker. Oblige me by running a noose of it over each of this heathen's thumbs. That's right. Now," he added fiercely to Jim, "if you squeal out once this gun will go off and you are a dead man, see? Lie down."

Puzzled and terrified, Jim sprawled on his back, and two more nooses were placed on his great toes. Acting under definite instructions, Newman tied the wires to a hook overhead just tighly enough to leave the victim's elbows and heels off the floor of the cabin. As long as Jim held his limbs up he felt no pain. As soon as he drooped, the wires would inflict exquisite agony. Scarlett, without speaking again, left him lying in that position long enough to find out the degree of torture he was likely to arrive at, and when beads of perspiration were standing on the man's brow he knelt down.

"You stop there all day and all night, savvy, until you tell me what I want to know," Scarlett informed him.

Jim groaned. His legs and arms were growing weary and the wire was beginning to do its work.

"Me honest nigger," he said. "Me tell boss one-time quick."

Scarlett eased the wire strands and Jim rolled his eyes in misery.

"What had you and the rest of the scum decided to do, eh?" the skipper asked, bringing Jim back to his senses with the aid of his toe.

"Me good nigger," wailed the captive. "Other boys set ship on fire, go ashore in boats and take gold. Ship go off bang and nobody tell."

A shade of pallor crept over Newman's face. He had been willing to face ten to one in a fight, but this revelation put a different complexion on matters.

"All right. You good nigger. Get out of this," Scarlett commanded.

"Is it safe to let him go?" Newman asked; at which the captain smiled oddly.

"He'll keep his mouth shut to save his own skin," was the reply. "I'm going to see Sandy Learoyd. You'd better slip up onto the bridge, Mr. Newman, and keep a look out for trouble of any kind, but take your gun with you."

For an hour Newman waited, expecting anything and everything to happen at any moment. The strain was beginning to tell on him when, to his horror, he saw smoke curling up from the hatchway for'ard.

Like a flash he leaped down the companion, shouting for Scarlett, and the crew standing near stared at the smoke for a moment as if stupified.

"Buckets and the pump, quick, Kalmar," roared the captain. "Get a move on 'em or we'll all be blown sky high."

The rest of the crew came tumbling out of the fo'c'sle head and grasped the danger in a second. The one thing they did respect on board, above all others, was the collection of explosives in the hold. There was a wild scramble for the boats, in which Kalmar joined, for the smoke was growing denser. Scarlett bellowed at the men, but they swept past like a stampede of bullocks. Some of them jumped overboard in sheer frenzy. The crew lowered or capsized all the boats but one, and into this Scarlett hustled Newman, Sandy and Mason, while the deserting scum headed for the Madagascan coast out of the danger zone. They were all some distance off when Scarlett brought his boat round quickly and made for the Dorothy again. He leaped over the side, followed by Sandy. Newman and Mason would have demanded some explanation, but the skipper and engineer were in too great a hurry for words.

"Tie that boat alongside and come on board," was all Scarlett said as he disappeared. A few moments later they heard the jarring noise of the winch heaving on the anchor. The moment it was clear the engines started and the skipper turned the Dorothy's head to sea.

Sandy poked his nose up over the grating leading down to the engine room.

"I'm thinkin' it would be just as weel to put that fire oot. It gives me the shudders," he shouted to the captain.

"Yes, it'll be safe to do that now," replied Scarlett. "Mr. Newman and Mason will give you a hand."

Sandy scrambled down into the hold for'ard, holding a piece of cotton waste to his mouth, and reached up to the others four buckets, each of which was emitting clouds of evil-smelling smoke. It was a mixture which Sandy and Scarlett had prepared with the greatest care, for there was no flame, and the Scot grinned as it was thrown overboard.

"We shall be three days or thereabouts in making Beira," shouted Scarlett from the bridge, "so if you gentlemen don't mind slipping below, taking your coats off, and helping Sandy with his box of tricks—"

Before taking on the role of fireman, Newman paused long enough to say a word which caused Scarlett to renew his faith in the ultimate prosperity of Laburnum Villa.

A REAL SPORT

BY HAPSBURG LIEBE

An old soldier wins a bet (not a common election bet, but a rarer bird, a wager on life). Incidentally, the shroud is torn from the still-warm corpse of an old love affair; and the veteran decides to seek out a girl he used to know.

THOMAS WILDMAN, one of the nurses in the hospital of a home for old and disabled volunteer soldiers, looked around quickly. Someone had called to him.

"It's me," said a thin voice—"over 'ere: Old Billy Light."

Nurse Wildman hastened across the ward. "What is it, Billy?"

"You see him?" Light jerked a withered thumb toward a huge and gaunt gray-haired giant who lay in a narrow white bed that stood to the left of his own narrow white bed. "Well, I want you to move me closer to him. We was boyhood friends up in New York State, me and Jonathan Langstree was, and we want to talk to each other about old times. You don't mind, do you, nursey?"

"It'll be all right, Billy, so long as you don't talk too much—nor too loud," smiled Nurse Wildman.

He moved Old Billy's bed until its rail touched the rail of Langstree's bed, and went away. Old Billy turned slightly under the white coverlet, and his wizened, good-natured mouth spread in a good-natured grin. He was a little man, smooth-faced, with kindly blue eyes; his hair was perfectly white, and not so thin as that of most old men.

"You're glad to see me again, aren't you, Jonathan?" he said, in a voice that was weak in spite of himself.

Langstree stared, and his cold gray eyes expressed no pleasure. Langstree believed that he had a great reason for hating Billy Light, in whose company a capricious Fate had thrown him for more than half of his life's journey.

"Better let me do most of the talkin'," Light went on, "because you're worse off than I am, I guess. Do you remember, Jonathan, when we was boys together up in New York State—"

"I'm no worse off than you!" snapped Langstree, childishly. He knew that his was a serious illness, and that the chances were many against his surviving it, and he had grown very bitter about it. Light had unconsciously touched a sore spot. Langstree had always been a narrow, mean man; and yet, there had always been something of the high-class dare-devil in him. He continued hotly:

"How much sporting blood is there in you, Billy Light?"

"I don't know, Jonathan," smilingly. "Not very much, I guess. But why do you ask me that, Jonathan, old friend?"

"You say I'm worse off than you," growled Langstree. "I'll lay you a wager of all the money I've got against all the money you've got that *I will live longer than you!*"

Old Billy laughed weakly. "Ah, that was always you, Jonathan! You was always the sport, the dead game sport, wasn't you? And now you're wanting to bet all the money you've got against all the money I've got that you'll live longer than me; eh, Jonathan? I remember very well, we're both the same age—sixty-nine. It seems a little foolish, Jonathan, but—if it will please you, we'll lay the wager."

He turned his white head and called to Nurse Wildman. Wildman put down a glass of water and came at once.

"In my clothes you'll find a little money, and in Jonathan's clothes you'll find a little money," Old Billy said to the nurse. "Me and Jonathan is bettin' on who'll live the longest. We want you to get the money, and act as stakeholder, nursey; will you?"

Wildman laughed queerly. It was altogether a new experience for him. But he agreed to hold the stakes.

Billy Light faced back to the man who had been the companion of his boyhood and the comrade of his four years in the Union army. Langstree lay tugging nervously at his full beard; only his upper lip was shaven, and it was broad and thin and hard.

"You always was the dead game sport, wasn't you, Jonathan?" Old Billy ran on garrulously. "At the old swimmin' hole you used to dive out of a tree and beat us all, didn't you? And you could ride the fieriest colt! My, my, but to me you was a real hero, Jonathan! Do you remember the time we blacked our faces and went beggin' and ate only the pies and tarts?"

Langstree said nothing.. He kept tugging nervously at his full gray beard. Old Billy continued pleasantly: "And do you remember the time—that Hallowe'en—when we filled the schoolhouse full of pigs and chickens and farmin' machinery, and tied a big brass bell to Farmer Henderson's stallion's tail? My, my! He! He! He! How that horse did run from the big brass bell! He'd have been running yet, I guess, if something hadn't stopped him. It was the same Hallowe'en that Micky Sanderson fell and broke an arm while tryin' to get a four-horse loggin' wagon on top of the Methodist church—don't you remember, Jonathan?"

Still Langstree said nothing. But he frowned and rubbed his broad, thin, hard upper lip reflectively. Old Billy went on:

"And then there was Mary, that we both loved nigh to madness. I gave up like a man, when she married you, though it fairly cut the heart of me in pieces—didn't I? I'll never forget that night when I first got the news of the weddin'. If anybody but my own mother had told me, I'd not have believed it. I just slumped down in the closest chair and sat there until the sun rose, and somehow I didn't know anything much about the passin' of the night. I never married because I never loved anybody else, Jonathan. I'd never thought you'd come to a home for old and disabled soldiers as long as you had an angel like Mary in your house. Jonathan, man, it—it can't be that she's dead!"

At this, Langstree raised himself upon an elbow, and it required an effort. His old face worked, and his old eyes blazed with his insane hatred for Billy Light.

"I haven't seen her for twenty years!" he growled. "She left me. There never was any children. She loved you all the time. I lied about you before we was married, and that's how it happened that she married me and not you! I don't mind telling you. I think I'd like to kill you, Billy Light! I've hated you for so long that—that I—"

His voice failed him and he sank back to his pillow.

"Why—why, Jonathan!" Old Billy cried smotheredly.

He was not quick to realize that the woman he had loved for almost a whole lifetime had loved him for almost a whole lifetime. But when the realization came it made him supremely happy. All the longing of his lonely years had not been for nothing, for Mary had loved him during all those years. He was not angry at Jonathan Langstree. Rather, he pitied Langstree because Mary had never loved him. He wished that he knew just where to find Mary.

Suddenly he looked toward Langstree. "It's all right, Jonathan, old friend," he said with great gentleness. "For the lies I can forgive you. Mary still loves me, and there is nothin' else that matters very much. Twenty years apart from you makes her no longer your wife. Will you tell me where I'd be most apt to find her?"

The huge and gaunt gray-haired giant rose again on his elbow. Unreasoning rage flashed like powderfire in his eyes.

"I don't want your forgiveness!" he cried hoarsely. "I don't—want—your—forgiveness!"

He fell back, straightened in bed, gasped, and lay still.

"Nursey!" cried Old Billy, alarmed. "Nursey! Over 'ere—quick with you—over 'ere!"

But Wildman could do nothing. Langstree had lost the wager that he himself had proposed.

When they carried Langstree out, Old Billy hardly knew it. When, a little later, Nurse Wildman dropped the wager money to the coverlet beside him, Old Billy was hardly aware of it. Mary had been loving him all the time, and nothing else mattered. If only he knew where to find Mary! He would go to her as soon as he got well. Sixty-nine—that wasn't so old, was it? Mary was only sixty-seven. He told himself that she must be up in New York State with her relatives.

Somehow, he felt better the next morning than he had felt for a long time. Nurse Wildman gave him his blue clothing and escorted him to a chair on the hospital's broad verandah. An hour afterward, when nobody was looking, he stole away and went to a little store that stood close to the north entrance to the grounds.

"See here, Freeling," he said weakly, to the storekeeper. "I've got a boyhood friend bein' buried today, and I want some flowers for him—and I want you to send to a florist over in town and get them for me. I want to pay eight dollars and eighty-four cents for them;—it's all the money I've got, and I won three dollars and two cents of it on a foolish bet. Have the flowers come a little before sundown, will you? I want to take them over to the Circle myself, and it'll be too hot for me if I go before sundown. Here's the money, right here. Say, Freeling, what kind o' shape ought those flowers be in, anyway?"

"An anchor, or a star," suggested the storekeeper, "or a cross."

"That's the best—a cross," decided Old Billy. "Get a cross for me, will you? And the flowers ought to be red and white and blue—for a soldier, you know. But you can't get any blue flowers, maybe;—red and white, then. I'm sure much obliged to you, Freeling."

Freeling went toward a telephone instrument, and Billy Light walked slowly back to the hospital to receive a chiding from Nurse Wildman. But what did Old Billy care for a chiding now?

Langstree was buried that afternoon, and Light, from one of the hospital windows, watched the little procession start. It was very tragic to Billy Light. He was intensely sorry for Langstree. Poor old Jonathan! Mary hadn't loved him at all! Mary had loved only him, Billy Light. What eyes she had had, and what hair, and what red, sweet lips! That her eyes were no longer bright save when they swam in tears, that her hair was thin and gray, that her lips were drawn and withered now—what difference did it make? To him she would be Mary, Mary.

A little before sundown, Billy Light stole away and went to the store that stood not far from the north gate. The cross of flowers had come, and it was bigger and more beautiful even than he had imagined it would be. He took it up to see whether it was heavy; it was, but he meant to carry it to the Circle himself, for all of that. He thanked Freeling, and set out with his burden along the winding road that led through a broad green field and to the burying-ground, which the old soldiers called the Circle because the graves were laid in rings with the faces of the dead turned toward a common center.

Along the way, here and there, now on one side and now on the other, were iron plates set on low iron posts; and cast in the iron of those plates were parts of stanzas taken from a famous poem, of which the first four lines are these:

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few—

Old Billy went on with a bare glance at the stirring lines. He knew that poem in iron by heart. The flowery cross grew heavier, and he caught it by a wire at its top and slung it carefully over his back. He met a flashily-dressed young man and a young woman with a painted face, visitors. The young woman stopped and laughed quite hysterically when she saw him. A little farther on he met another young man and another young woman—and the face of this one was not yet painted. When she saw him she cried, and even the young man wiped at his eyes.

Old Billy couldn't help wondering at that. What the devil was there to cry about, anyway? Didn't Mary love him, and hadn't she always loved him? Why the devil couldn't the whole world be as happy as he was? What was the need of being a cry-baby over nothing? When he had asked of the thin air all those questions, he tried to smile because the thin air could not answer any of them.

The cross of flowers kept growing heavier. He shifted it to keep it from hurting his back so much, and went on, staggering a little—on past the last iron plate, which bore this from the iron poem:

Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone
In deathless song shall tell
When many a vanished year hath flown
The story how ye fell—

When he stopped at the end of his journey, the golden sun was setting clear. Across a low green hill he saw Old Glory coming down, and to his ears there came faintly the strains of The Star-Spangled Banner. He laid down the flowery cross over the ashes of poor Jonathan Langstree, staggered erect and stood with his head bared until the band had ceased to play. Then he dropped to his knees and began to arrange the cross properly.

"We was boys together, wasn't we, Jonathan, old friend?" he murmured. "Boys together up in old New York State."

Somehow, it had grown dark quicker than usual after sundown. Old Billy struggled to rise. He was going back North to look for his Mary. That her hair was no longer brown, that her lips were withered, that her eyes were bright only when they swam in tears—all that made no difference; to him she would still be Mary, Mary.

Then there came a sweet voice from very near to him:

"Billy!"

He rose easily. The voice called to him again:

"Billy!"

He saw. In spite of the thick darkness that had come so suddenly, he saw. There before him stood Mary, bright-eyed, brown-haired, red-lipped, with her roundish young arms held out for him. She wasn't in New York State after all. He started toward her.

"I'm comin', little girl," he said softly, "I'm comin'—"

Ten minutes later Nurse Wildman knelt beside that which men had called Old Billy Light. With a reverent hand Wildman swept back a lock of snow-white hair that had fallen over one of the half-closed blue eyes. The little old man had smiled all his life, while his heart broke year by year; was it any wonder that he was smiling now, with the broken heart healed and at rest—and with his spirit at Home with the spirit of his Mary, Mary?

"He was a real sport," said Thomas Wildman, brokenly,—"a real sport."

A vagabond named Petey, and a girl named Peggy who has a liking for Petey, a green-checkered mackinaw, an old briar pipe and a red tobacco tin—with these materials and a few more, Louis Schneider has written a captivating story called CONSCIENCE STUFF FOR TWO. You will find it in the February BLACK CAT.

IT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT

BY REX STOUT

In this story, it looks as if smug respectability were about to have sundry dents made in its halo. Risking the loss of his wife's affection and with utter disregard for his neighbors' peace of mind, a man allows himself to become peculiarly enarmored of another woman and elects to play the gay and festive Lothario. Think of that!

I KNEW that she was inaccessible to me. When I first found the thought of her whirling about in my mind, the sensible thing would have been to go to the corner café for a drink and drown the fancy like a man. She belonged to another world, and anything I might do would be like a dog baying at the moon. I knew that; but I entertained the thought and caressed it, encouraged it. I was intoxicated.

I had seen her once or twice before, but from that afternoon on Fifth Avenue dated my obsession. I had come downtown in the subway and stopped off at Forty-second Street on some errand or other, when suddenly she swept into sight. I already knew her by name and reputation, much as you know a famous prima donna or a royal princess. I stopped and stared like a fool, and then, half unconsciously, drawn by an irresistible attraction, turned and followed her. She was dressed fashionably, but in faultless taste; her large dark eyes looked out from under the modish rim of a Doquet straw and her pale oval countenance and curved red lips, contradicting each other, imparted a piquant distinction to her appearance. Men turned to look at her. Knowing that I was making a fool of myself, I nevertheless followed her up the Avenue. Every now and then she stopped to look at a window display, while I stood a few yards away gazing at her from the corner of my eye. It was a senseless performance; I certainly had no thought of accosting her on the street, but I was impelled by an overpowering fascination.

After that the thought of her was constantly in my mind. Wherever I found myself, at the office in the morning, at home at night, on the subway, there was always before me that pale oval face with the red lips, to my torment. I dreamed of our meeting, of addressing her, of those red lips smiling at me in welcome, of the friendly pressure of her hand, and I thought of what I should say and how she would answer me. I composed a thousand speeches and turned each one over and over in my brain to perfect it and make it worthy of her. I was mad.

All that, knowing she was inaccessible, immeasurably above me. Humble as I was and of the poorest connections, the conventional channels were closed to me with insurmountable barriers. But I could not forget her. Heaven knows I tried; but in the end I gave it up, and one evening, gritting my teeth, I said to myself, as I was going home on the elevated:

"Very well, I'll meet her, somehow, and take my chance. Anything will be better than this ceaseless yearning."

My heart felt lighter after this resolution, but by the time I got home I was lost in contemplation of a hundred wild schemes that darted into my mind; so much so that I forgot to kiss my wife as I entered the flat. We had been married only about a year and honeymoon days had scarcely waned. Five minutes later, as I sat in the front room reading the paper, I suddenly remembered and jumped up and hurried to the kitchen, uneasy. My wife stood stirring something on the stove and I stopped and kissed her on the cheek before I noticed that anything was wrong.

She turned around quickly, and I saw tears in her eyes.

In the scene that followed, I was certainly not myself. It was not only that I had forgotten the kiss that evening. My wife had said not a word during the previous weeks about my preoccupation and brooding, but I learned now that nothing had escaped her notice. She accused me of neglecting her, of ceasing to love her, of being indifferent to her. I confess I acted a perfect ass. I should have told her everything, and she, sensible little woman that she is, would have seen the thing as I did and have done all in her power to help me out of my trouble. But the vanity and stupidity of man are boundless. I hesitated and evaded.

"It's only business, dear," I declared. "I'm worried, that's all."

As a matter of fact, things were very well at the office; but it could not be denied that I was worried. In the end, it was patched over somehow, though that was the most uncomfortable dinner since our marriage.

In the days that followed, I continued revolving in my mind schemes for meeting her—wild, impossible schemes—conceiving and rejecting them in endless succession. Nothing else seemed to matter but her, only her! If I could only speak to her! Only hear her voice and see her smile! Only hear the words that I imagined on her lips! One morning, at my desk in the office, I sat with these thoughts in my brain—they were never absent—quite unconsciously writing her name, over and over, on a sheet of paper, until it was filled. I was lost in my dreams, when suddenly I heard a voice at my elbow:

"What's that for?"

I looked up to find my partner, Harris, gazing in bewilderment at her name scribbled all over the paper. I jerked myself up in my chair and hastily turned the sheet upside down, while I felt the blood rush into my face or out of it, I don't know which.

"What's that for?" he repeated.

Then he saw the expression on my face, and his look of puzzlement changed slowly to one of incredulous understanding as he stood and stared at me. I said nothing, and he stared in silence for a long while.

"You're a damned fool," he said at length, calmly.

"It can be," I retorted and, seizing my hat, I jumped up and left the office.

I wandered about the streets for hours, and though I had several appointments for that day I kept none of them. I was wandering in the light of a glorious vision and was blinded by it. Of course Harris was right: I was a damned fool. But I couldn't help it. I walked at random, not knowing or caring where I went, with her face always before me.

Suddenly I saw her.

It was on Broadway, somewhere in the Thirties, about five o'clock in the afternoon. She was walking uptown, unhurried, with an assured, leisurely step that was, in fact, deceiving; for when I turned and followed her I found that she carried herself along faster than one would think. I threw caution to the winds and marched along almost at her heels. A happy chance came presently to my assistance, or I believe I should have been ass enough to accost her on the street and thereby have utterly ruined myself in her sight.

Luckily my timidity held me back until she had reached Forty-second Street; there she turned west and a few steps from Seventh Avenue entered the lobby of the Stuyvesant Theatre. I was close behind her as she approached the box office; I looked over her shoulder as she purchased two tickets in the orchestra for the performance of "Peaches and Cream" that night, and I noted the numbers on the coupons.

At that moment came my inspiration. I waited till she had disappeared again into the street, then approached the ticket seller.

"One for tonight, orchestra."

He turned to glance over the rack, pulled out a coupon and started to put it in an envelope. Meanwhile, I was studying the chart of the theatre under the slab of glass on the ledge.

"What row is it?" I inquired.

"Fourth. Aisle."

"Got anything in the eleventh, near the centre?"

He nodded, after consulting the rack.

"Right here. Fine seat." He pointed to the location on the chart. We were getting hot.

"I'd prefer the other side, if possible."

He frowned impatiently and mumbled something I didn't catch as he turned again to the rack. Out came another coupon; a quick glance showed me its number. A moment later, I had parted company with a two dollar bill and was emerging into the street with a ticket that called for the seat adjoining those purchased by her.

I didn't go back to the office that evening; I wouldn't even have gone home to dinner but for the necessity of changing my clothes. I forget what lie I told my wife, but it couldn't have been a very good one, for my mind was entirely occupied with the question whether or not to wear a dress suit. I knew that the audience at the Stuyvesant was usually about half and half, and I finally decided on my new grey business sack, for I had no desire to appear in false colors. Anyway, hired dress suits are generally of antiquated model, and I knew her eye would detect it at a glance, accustomed as she was to such things. I wished to give myself every advantage possible.

I had a hard time deciding just what to write, and the idea came to me that it would be better to go down to the office first and use the typewriter; but in the end I went out to a stationery and cigar store for a newspaper wrapper with mucilage on the end and used that. Before I finally copied it, as plainly and neatly as possible, I tried fifty different ways of saying what I wanted to in the fewest words, and even then I wasn't satisfied with it.

I was in an agony of suspense, and not disposed to sit around and talk with my wife till time to go, I went out for a walk. Then the thought struck me that something might happen on the subway to delay me, so I rushed to the station and took the first train downtown. I reached the theatre a little after seven and stood in the lobby till the doors opened. I was the first one seated.

Then I encountered my only difficulty. She had bought two tickets, adjoining mine on the left, but which one would she occupy? It was an even chance that she would occupy the seat next to mine. I felt certain that her companion would be some relative or woman friend, since she had bought the tickets herself. So I took the program from the arm of the seat next to mine and opened it at a page near the back, for I didn't want her to see it before the show began, and I knew that during the first or second intermission she would look through the whole program. They always do. So I pasted the newspaper wrapper on which I had written my appeal in a page near the back. The brown paper stood out conspicuously against the white. I closed the program and replaced it with a feeling that if the thing didn't work it wouldn't be my fault. I had done my best.

I tried to amuse myself by watching the theatre fill up, but I was horribly restless and turned around constantly to see if she were coming. At last she would know my name! At last she would speak to me! For I assured myself that she couldn't be so heartless as to ignore me. She couldn't! As the time passed my restlessness increased to a torment of suspense.

A minute or two before curtain time she arrived. I was watching the aisle to the right, but she came unexpectedly down the other side and was already pushing her way past the row of knees to her seat before I saw her. My heart leaped with joy as I saw that she was in front; she would sit next me, as I had hoped! Behind was her companion, a pleasant-faced lady of fifty-five or so, no doubt her mother, or possibly an aunt.

They had barely time to get seated and take off their wraps before the house darkened and the curtain rose. Out of the corner of my eye I could see her profile, delicate in its severity, and the soft rounded contour of neck and shoulders, her dark fine hair contrasting startlingly with the whiteness of her skin. I haven't the remotest idea about the first act. I scarcely breathed;—so close to her, almost touching her! There in front of us her breath was mingling with mine! And soon she would read my name. She would speak to me. I was a-quiver with excitement and hope. Would they never get through that foolishness on the stage?

Then the curtain, applause, and the house was light again. She spoke to her companion; they discussed the performers. I was in a fever of impatience. They talked so long that I feared the second act would begin before they finished. Finally she began turning the leaves of her program. She read, "What the Man Will Wear," "The Golfer," and "Here and There." She skimmed over the advertisements, turning the pages more rapidly. I could feel myself trembling in my seat, and suddenly I was aware that she had reached it. She was reading the slip of paper I had pasted in her program. I bit my lips to keep myself steady. She read it a second time, a third. I felt, rather than saw, her swift glance. There was a silence, a rather long silence, and then her voice came:

"Really, this is rather clever."

I turned. Yes, she was speaking to me! I swallowed hard and tried to answer, but couldn't. She saw, and smiled—a divine smile!

She spoke again:

"You wrote this? You put this here?"

I nodded, and stammered, "Yes, I did. Forgive me, but it was the only way." Suddenly my voice came, and I continued swiftly: "No doubt you think it bold and in bad taste, but I have been trying for months to think of some way of meeting you. To one in my humble position the conventional channels were closed. I knew no one that could or would introduce me. I thought of calling on you, but of course you wouldn't have seen me, and you would have been right. So I did this. It was the only way I could think of. I beg you not to be offended."

I stopped, wondering if I had said too much or not enough. But I could see she was smiling; at least she wasn't angry. She read the slip over again. I heard her murmur, "How amusing." No, she wasn't angry. Suddenly she turned to me:

"Really, I think you deserve—well, we'll see. You deserve respect for your originality, at least. Let's see; tomorrow's Thursday. Will you call in the morning between ten and eleven? Wait- smiled—"take this and use it as yo when you come." She tore out th had pasted in her program and ha to me.

I tried to stammer my thanks; sh them away smilingly and turned t to her companion, who had been re us in wondering curiosity. The ligh to go out for the second act. M was so full of elation I couldn't sit such a banal performance; besides it not be more delicate not to remai might feel obliged to converse w might think I expected it; it would sumptuous. And I wanted to get think it over.

I took my hat and coat and ed way to the aisle. In the outer put on my coat and hat, took the brown paper, read it over once m folded it; but before placing it pocket, I gaily carried it to my lip doorman, standing nearby, stared a amazement. Perhaps he would ha still more amazed if he had know was written on it:

> *"The man sitting on your r is Abe Goldstein, of Harris Goldstein. They are a new without much capital, but have an original and artistic with the punch. He only ask chance to show you."*

And that was the way I beca quainted with Sadie Levine, bu ladies' suits for the most exclusiv on Fifth Avenue. Usually it tak to get an account like that. It h last night. I called on her this and sold her a bill of fourteen numbers, three of each, for a $1,760.50. How's that for a first

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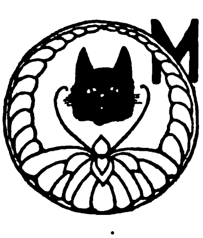
Next month: SLICKS AND SLICKERS, a western story with a brand new coat of local color.

THE TESTIFICATION OF CYNTHYAN ADAMS

BY NATHAN CLOVER

The element of sincerity is present in the revival inspired testification in about the same proportion that it is in the patent medicine testimonial. Cynthyan's testification was different, not only in the matter of sincerity but in the manner of expression.



MRS. McGILLICUDDY had many peculiarities, the chief one being an inveterate desire of requiring Cynthyan Adams to be upstairs when she was down and downstairs when she was up. It had always been so, ever since that dreadful day when she had, metaphorically speaking, taken to her ample bosom the frightened little orphan whose newly arrived parents had had the exceeding had taste to die in that small town whose papers daily boosted it as the healthiest town in the Union. It had given them nothing beyond typhoid fever and a grudging burial, yet to hear it talk one would have thought that it had at least given them wings to soar with, and a golden perch aloft.

Mrs. McGillicuddy's decision to adopt the child had raised a perfect storm of appreciation in the chapel which she attended, and had resulted in many testimonies as to Sister McGillicuddy's integrity as a woman and godliness as a saint, while the orphan, sitting beside that meek-looking lady, and thus dragged into the blinding light of publicity, was nervously twisting holes in her new black gloves and blinking hard in a vain effort to keep back the tears which would brim over and make criminal marks upon the flat bosom of her new black bombazine dress.

Later, having gone through the ordeal of shaking hands with every soul in the chapel, Cynthyan was led homeward, wondering vaguely whether anyone ever had or ever could have such a tireless tongue as her newly adopted parent, or such an unpleasantly fat, clammy hand. The talk, mostly about a child's duty to its "guardeen" had been far above eight-year-old Cynthyan's head and, beyond a few half-choked wholly blank "Yes, marms," Cynthyan had not ventured. Not that Mrs. McGillicuddy had minded for, in her world, children, especially homeless and moneyless ones, should be seen and not heard. On that maxim she acted, and that night when Cynthyan, tired and heartsick, had begged to be excused from washing dishes soiled by the thirteen hungry boarders, Mrs. McGillicuddy had sternly reminded her that "beggars could not be choosers, and dishes must be washed." So, mounted on a stool and shedding heartbroken tears into the hot soap-suds, Cynthyan Adams had begun "the day's work;"—a day that had begun early in the morning and extended far into the night, leaving no room for play, or school—only drudgery and work. The unaccustomed hardships had cruelly calloused hands and feet, and the hardening of a sore and tender little heart was in progress.

"You've got a good worker there, Mrs. McGillicuddy," an unusually observant boarder had once remarked, to which Mrs. McGillicuddy had acidly and vaguely made answer that "Cynthyan was a girl who needed keeping under."

If seeing is believing, then Cynthyan was indeed "kept under," so far under that sometimes, when kneeling beside her neglected bed to say the childish little prayer her mother had taught her, a passionate desire to go under all together would rise in her soul, but this looked like rebellion towards her guardian and wickedness towards Providence, so it would be passionately pressed down into her overflowing heart.

On Sunday afternoons, Mrs. McGillicuddy retired to take what she called "a well-earned rest," while Cynthyan washed the dishes. On Sunday night she went to church arrayed in a stiff black silk and a portentous black bonnet with one nodding white feather in it, attended by Cynthyan, in what Mrs. McGillicuddy called becoming, and the rest of the world, dowdy, attire. They sat in a front pew from whence Mrs. McGillicuddy could either conveniently beam upon the young minister during the service, or punctuate his earnest prayers with hollow groans of remorse, which made him feel that he really had no right to raise such strife in a sister's soul nor to so vex a godly spirit.

Cynthyan never groaned, for the simple reason that her "guardeen" did, and once, during revival time, when Mrs. McGillicuddy was stridently proclaiming that she was "one of the ninety and nine," Cynthyan found herself fervently praying that she herself might be classed as one of the hundredth.

"For if *she's* going to heaven," ran the prayer, "oh Lord, don't let me go there!"

"If you'd put it in her heart to give me a lil more time er a few less chores, Lord," ran a later petition, founded on a fervent sermon preached on the text, "Ask and it shall be given," and, her prayer apparently going unheeded, she went prayerless for a week in spite of the prickings of a very active conscience.

She saw little of the boarders who came and went, and when they met the little down-at-heel-drudge, on stairs or in corridors, they gave her scarcely a passing glance. She was so homely, they said. Her hair was red—"carrots" they called it; her figure painfully thin; her skin "sickly" and powdered with freckles; her eyes green, her teeth, though white, were far too large.

The summer she was seventeen was intensely hot. Mrs. McGillicuddy was more merciless, the boarders more numerous, Cynthyan more tired.

"Cynthyan," said Mrs. McGillicuddy, one day, as she stood frying pancakes on the stove, "Cynthyan A-dams!" She always spoke Cynthyan's surname as though it were a curse. "Cynthyan *A-dams!* Do you know you'll be seventeen come July?"

"No, marm," said Cynthyan, meekly.

"Well, you will, an' it's qui
took to testifyin'."

"Testifyin' what?" asked Cy
sently.

"Testifyin' as to your benefi

"Benefits! Why, I ain't got
Cynthyan's surprising comment
Gillicuddy swelled visibly. M
cuddy, as Cynthyan afterwards
it—"busted"—into speech.

"Cynthyan *A-dams!*" she shri
dast you say that? How dast
you got a roof over your hea
got a bed to lie on? Ain't yo
thing to eat? Ain't you got
your back, an' a hat to you
stockings to your legs, an' sh
feet, ain't you? Ain't you?"

Cynthyan might well have r
the roof over her head leaked
bed she rarely had time to ma
something to eat was more oft
either stone-cold or burned t
that the dress to her back wa
the hat a ten-year cast-off o
Gillicuddy; the stockings so r
there was little of the origina
and the shoes so small,—being
that they were almost as pai
historic boots of Nuremberg, bu
She had roused the sleeping c
ready regretting it, hoped to lu
again, so she said meekly, "Y

"Very well, then," with a g
what you've got to testify to
and testify you shall, as sure a
what it is!"

Late that night, Cynthyan Ad
to bed with a weight as of the
millstone pressing on her soul
as in a mirror, the little cha
high, old-fashioned windows
glory of the evening sky; she s
of giggling young folks; she sa
of self-consciously pious elde
saw the earnest young ministe
and exhorting; she saw brother
rising one by one to testify; sl
self urged to her feet by Mrs. M
—she fell in a dejected heap
tumbled bedclothes.

"Oh, Lord, don't *let* her
moaned. "Don't! Don't!"

June drew to a close and as July approached, Mrs. McGillicuddy, in the midst of preserving and boarders, began to think of a fresh gown for the double occasion of "revival" and Cynthyan's first testifying.

"And you can hev a new white bow, Cynthyan," she condescended. "It'll look sort of innocent on your black dress, and maybe 'twill touch hearts to repentance."

June ended, July began, and daily, nightly, Cynthyan's burden grew heavier, her terror greater. The hours passed, the days passed, the weeks passed, the "night before" came and—nothing had happened!

"Why, them boarders ain't teched the lobster salad," said Mrs. McGillicuddy, at suppertime. "I'll eat it. I always did hate to see a thing go to waste. Cynthyan, there's some beans in the oven for you."

They retired to rest, and Cynthyan's terror culminating sent her to her knees.

"Lord," she prayed, hands lifted, tears streaming, "oh, Lord! Don't let her do it! Make something happen! Make her sick—Lord—yes, make her sick—and then we'll be stopping to home!"

She went to bed, only to be roused at daylight by a peremptory call from Mrs. McGillicuddy, whom she found still in bed, her hair in curl-papers, her face a ghastly white, a large basin on the chair beside her bed.

"Cynthyan," said she, "I'm very sick. I've bin throwing up all night. Oh, you needn't pretend to be sorry, you thankless critter, 'cause I know you ain't! You will be before the day's over though, I'll warrant, for you'll have to do my work as well as your own. Now, go and fix the fire an' bring me a dose of 'pain-killer.'"

Cynthyan went and, not having sufficient knowledge to attribute Mrs. McGillicuddy's illness to the real cause, the lobster, felt with awe, that Providence had at length answered her prayer. The "pain-killer" rather increasing than decreasing the pain, Cynthyan wisely suggested the doctor.

"Him!" said Mrs. McGillicuddy, with scorn, "no, Cynthyan; I shall die—"

"When?" gasped Cynthyan, dropping into a chair.

"When my time comes and not before," stentoriously. "It might be now; it might be tomorrow, or it might be years off. Now, don't you set thar staring like a jack o'lantern, but get up and see if my laying out gownd ain't in the bottom drawer of the beaureau. Yes, that's it,—with the white satin ribbon run through it. Oh my! Oh, my!"

She lay back, white and spent, after the spasm had passed, and Cynthyan, believing her dead, opened her mouth and emitted a howl. Mrs. Mc Gillicuddy's eyes flew open, and—with a snap: "I ain't dead yet!" said she, "an' you needn't start hollering if I am, for I know *you* won't be sorry, Cynthyan *A-dams!* An' now go an' start on your work, an' don't forget it's fish for breakfast Sundays."

All morning, the weight of that guilty prayer hung like a lodestone around Cynthyan's neck, causing her to burn the dinner pork and drew down upon her devoted head a shrilly shrieked, pain-punctuated tirade from the hidden Mrs. McGillicuddy, who, as her boarders put it, "had a nose like a hound."

Having fed the boarders, washed the dishes, and fixed up the kitchen, Cynthyan went to spend the brief interval between then and supper with the sick woman.

"Draw down that shade a little, Cynthyan," faintly. Then, with a groan, "If this don't beat all, being sick on revival night—and that new silk dress I'd meant to overpass Mis' Boxom with, lying all wasted, in the drawer! Set down, Cynthyan, and don't dast to pop your eyes at me like that! I ain't a corpse yet am I?"

"No marm," stammered Cynthyan. She sat down, but found it impossible to keep her frightened eyes from Mrs. McGillicuddy's face. It looked so white and drawn and altogether strange that Cynthyan's heart contracted with fear. If Mrs. McGillicuddy died, would she, Cynthyan, be counted a murderer?

"Cynthyan," murmured Mrs. McGillicuddy, now on the verge of sleep.

"Marm?"

"There's a pair of white silk stockings—real silk—there too—an' Cynthyan—"

"Marm?"

"Don't let 'em take my teeth out, for *I* don't want to get up on the Last Day looking like old Gramma Gunter."

She slumbered, and Cynthyan, sitting on the edge of her chair, agonized for a while, then sinking to her knees began to fervently pray thus: "Lord, I didn't ask you to make her sick as this, you know I didn't! I only wanted her to be a lil bit sick—a headache or p'raps the misery in her bones, so'st I wouldn't have to go an' testify; so, Lord, won't you make her better, please, for you know I ain't really mean enough to want her to be real sick or to die! Make her better, please!"

She rose with a lighter heart and went to prepare supper, feeling sure that just as her prayer of last night had been heeded, so would this one be, but when, having cooked for and waited on the boarders, she creakingly ascended the back stairs to peep at Mrs. McGillicuddy, she felt certain that she would see the roses of health blooming on that lady's usually buxom cheeks, but instead, she found her looking a little more shrunken and a little more yellow than before. Cynthyan now felt that Providence had utterly deserted her and left her wholly desolate. She groaned, and Mrs. McGillicuddy, stirring in her sleep, murmured faintly, "Thar's them lady-fingers I made yesterday, an' a half-dozen bottles o' last year's ginger wine—that'll do for—*afterwards*—"

Cynthyan sank into a chair, terrible visions of the hangman's rope rising before her eyes, awful repetitions of the curse of Cain thundering in her ears. Involuntarily she put her hand to her forehead, feeling sure she would find the brand burned there. Yes, she had murdered Mrs. McGillicuddy; murdered her just as surely as though she had stuck a knife through her heart, for had not she, Cynthyan, prayed that wicked prayer, Mrs. McGillicuddy, clad in the new black silk with jet buttons, that was to have "over-passed" Mis' Boxom's, would now have been sitting in the foremost pew, groaning out Hallelujahs and Amens.

"If you'd on'y let me take it back," she moaned. "Oh, if you on'y would—I'd go an' testify—"

That word brought her to her feet. Was it possible that by going and testifying now, at the eleventh hour, she might make

reparation, and Mrs. McGillicud
mitted to recover? She didn't
on a hat but, clad in the old
which had so long done her yeom
she ran out into the scented nigl
the stile by the old stone wall, ar
field path to the church.

Never in all the visiting revi
cuit had he had a more succes
never had the penitents been so
Amens, Hallelujahs, or "Praise
so loud. He stood, flushed, t
and slowly and solemnly raising
opened his mouth to give his fin
It remained open, but silent, f
that exact moment Cynthyan bu
of the night. She had run so fa
hair, usually plastered to her
wound into a tight "door-knob" l
become loosened, and formed
frame for her white young face
suffering calico waist had given
the strain, showing the soft cu
budding womanhood.

Both congregation and minis
have been a second and third
Lot's wife so still, so frozen,
Only the young blacksmith in th
the harmonium seemed awake.
straight and looked hard at
Why had he never noticed befo
real glory her hair was, how
skin beneath the powdering o
how snappy bright her eyes, ho
lips, how white the teeth that s
tween? The mate-love stirring
his heart, flashed up into flame

"I've come," gasped Cynthyan,
to testify. I don't know how
come, an' I'd better testify righ
now that I prayed the Lord to
McGillicuddy sick and that he
made her so sick that I'm sure
to die an' me be a murderess, b
mean for Him to make her as si
I on'y mean for Him to make h
lil bit sick so'st she couldn't com
an' make me testify about my
I didn't believe I had none, but I
I do now! For even if the shing
and lets the rain in on my bed,
fall, even if my dress is too
pinches me cru'l under the arm

my hat is a ten-year-old and heavy, even if my stocking is old, one foot being an odd one of Mrs. McGillicuddy's an' one leg Miss Parsons's which she gave me, having lost the other down the well a year come Thanksgiving, even if my shoes does pinch an' wrap the lil toe under the big one a bit, ain't they a roof, an' a bed an' a dress an' stockings, an' shoes just the same, an' blessings? I want to thank Mrs. McGillicuddy an' the Lord for 'em right now! I want to testify that I'm a wicked sinner right now! I want to testify that I'm willing to go to prison an' be hanged right now! I want to testify that I'm a miserable critter an' didn't oughter be allowed to live! I want to testify that even if I do get up at half after four most mornings an' five on Sundays, I love Mrs. McGillicuddy an' want her to live an' come to church next Sunday in her new black silk gownd that's to over-pass Mis' Boxom's."

She was gone, out into the night and, swift as a kingfisher after its mate, the young blacksmith was after her. For a second the silence held, then it shattered and babel broke looes. "Mis'" Boxom fainted and had to be carried to the vestry; the constable thought it his duty to straighway go and arrest the erring girl and was only dissuaded from it by Deacon Grey's tense assurance that "a long-looked for visitation from God could not, in any legal sense, be looked upon as a murder;" the grocer called her shameless, the butcher called her brave, and the congregation called her everything from saint to sinner and back again.

"It was a splendid thing to do," glowed the resident young minister, "a noble thing, and I'm going after her."

But he didn't go in.

"I wasn't needed," said he, quietly, to his young wife. "One of the boarders directed me to Mrs. McGillicuddy's room and I went up and looked in,—but I wasn't needed. Cynthyan was kneeling by the bed, confessing, and Mrs. McGillicuddy, almost recovered, was sitting up with quite a tender hand laid on that wonderful flame of hair, and there were,—yes, I looked twice to make sure of it,—actually tears on those redoubtable old cheeks, so I knew I wasn't needed there and came away."

"And Joe, the blacksmith?" cried his wife, who had been a very interested spectator to that hurried exit.

"Was getting in the wood and water for morning," with a twinkle. "You've never believed much in revivals or testimonies, have you, my dear? Yet see what's come of the testification of Cynthyan Adams!"

A master mariner wishes to engage his ship in a business which offers larger dividends than the trade of common carrier. But he realizes that $3.15, cash on hand, will hardly purchase the needed equipment. He therefore sets out to raise his capital to the necessary *nth* power and in doing so succeeds in breaking up a lodge meeting. Look for GETTING IT, *by Frederic R. Buckley* next month.

NINE POINTS OF THE LAW

BY ELWOO

A title suggestion, "Thieves All," was written at the end of the ma script of this story. The remarkable point, however, is not that there several thieves in the story but that all are so proficient in preserv their "amateur standing."

AT seven P. M. Billy Cunningham entered the O. K. Garage and, quietly stepping to the row of stored automobiles, let his gaze travel up and down the line, searching for something in particular. The quest was not difficult, for though the row was long—a testimonial to the prosperous business of the up-to-the-minute institution—the little Red Rover was a bit conspicuous and Billy located its shiny bright front near the far end of the low-lying building.

"No, you don't!" spat out big Jim Burling as Billy started to climb into the diminutive car. A detaining arm blocked his further progress. "Nothin' like it—see?"

Billy squared his average-sized shoulders. "I guess she's mine, and I have the legal right," he shot back.

"Nothin' o' the sort," came the low rumble of Burling's heavy bass. "An' don't talk law to me. Ain't I set up nights learnin' the law an' the rights of garage 'prieters? I know all about these here leans, 'tachments an' garnishments. This car don't move out o' here until you come across with the repair bill. Get me, William?"

That William "got" the general purport of the exposition was patent. "Now see here, Jim," he coaxed, "I've never denied the bill, have I? Can't a man be legitimately hard up once in a while?"

"That talk's floated the boat for the last time. There ain't nothin' lawful in the way you're hard up. Now this night studyin' has hardened me an' from now on I claim all in sight. Run along."

"Well, I can't pay now, and I must have the machine," and a sudden clo
jaws changed the whole line-u
features. And, following the
again started to climb into the

A big, grease-stained paw s
upon his shoulders. "I exercis
o' lean on this car," came
weighed with import.

From infancy Billy Cunningh
herently claimed his right of
ible restraint was a stranger t

"Take your hand off me, B
said incisively. "I've got busin
This is my car." And he en
wriggle free of the garagema

The grip on his shoulder
"You get off that step before
off. My bill's got prior right
thin' else. The code says: 'B
pair—'"

"Never mind the code. My
urgent. This is my car and, b
roughneck—"

Burling, suddenly rememberi
him. "I'm no roughneck, an' I
to commit no 'sault an' batter
the law. You come under tresp
here garage is my castle an' th
car is a temp'rary chattel."
came forth with a relish. "No
move or I'll have a cop broug

"We'll see about this," splut
impotently. "I'll give this ma
attorney tomorrow."

"I don't need no 'torney,"
Burling. "You can't git her
puttin' up bond, an' I know
you can't raise one. You're
do."

"What are you going to d
car?" demanded Billy, changing

"Sell it to myself for repairs
accordin' to law."

"That's once you read your law wrong. This is a case of forcible detainer, and I'll have you criminally prosecuted," threatened the erstwhile possessor of the Red Rover car.

"That detainer stuff don't go. I read that too. You're goin' along. Good night."

In the face of the trespassing-castle exposition, Billy knew further argument was useless and, in high dudgeon, he walked out of the O. K. garage, breathing maledictions on its proprietor.

The evening's lark contemplated,—business was farthest removed from Billy's intentions,—probably would be compulsorily curtailed. The joy-ride finish, planned for his own little racer, loomed as a vanished allurement for, after paying the evening's entertainment, Billy knew there could be no surplus for the hiring of a strange automobile.

Additional trouble, in the person of one Burney McWade, credit manager of the Red Rover Automobile Agency, lay in wait for Billy at his apartment. McWade, wholly soured by the depressing nature of his job and, at the present moment pessimistically vengeful, without even the grace of a perfunctory hand-clasp, announced: "I've come to take back our auto. Where is she?"

"*Our* auto?" retorted Billy sarcastically. "Since when?"

"The auto is still the property of the Red Rover Co.," replied McWade in the voice of one announcing a contemplated bankruptcy. "By the contract-lease terms we hold title until paid in full. You are badly in default of your payments and have not responded to our letters. I ask you to deliver the machine to me now," and the lemon-flavored voice carried the souring note of a hopeless melancholiac.

Billy scratched one ear contemplatively and with a sense of returning pleasure. Two difficulties may be no worse than one. Scylla had nothing on Charybdis and possibly if matched against each other, both might lose their venom.

"I do not know that I am prepared to surrender *my* car. Have you a court order?" interrogated the delinquent payer.

"It is not necessary."

"And if I tell you that my car is resting in a legal castle, impregnable and stormproof, what would you say?"

"We are wasting time," came the tone of an ultimatum. "Where is the car?"

"Fortunately, it's where neither you nor I can get it," returned Billy, now blissfully happy. "I doubt if even a bench warrant could remove it from its present legal entrenchment. That auto is in the possession of the Law, itself. You can't touch it."

"What are you driving at?"

"I don't care to tell you. McWade, you are a hell of a credit manager. I don't care to be guilty of ''sault an' battery,' so get out." Billy's words came forth in unctuous joyfulness.

"I'll not get out without our car."

"Your car, my car, or the other fellow's car, stays where it is. McWade, in addition to being a hell of a credit manager, you are also a trespasser. This very evening I learned the exact position of a trespasser. Get out, before I make you need all the accident insurance my company's got left."

McWade got out, and he got out wrathfully.

The affair had raised Billy's spirits again to normal, for he was now both evicted and evictor, and he dressed for the evening's pleasure with his usual lightheartedness. The legal status of the car's ownership was admittedly beyond his ken of knowledge.

The clink of glasses in a certain Bohemian Red-Ink Joint mingled with the hilarious laughter of early morning revelers and the raucous notes of the cabaret girls' alleged singing, and altogether suggested the general atmosphere of "the bars let down." But hardly "let down," only "lowered," for Billy belonged to that class that enjoys looking temptation in the face—and vanquishing it.

Billy's discourse with the girl at his side had ranged from insurance, which he had earnestly tried to sell her, to the influence of emotional singing on the nervous ganglia, of which he knew a shadowy little, to a very brief discourse on psychiatry and psycho-analysis, of which he knew still less, to carburetors, transmission, differentials, and the whole subject of automobiles, in which line of useful knowledge he was ahead of the voluminous latest books.

Altogether, Billy had enjoyed himself, and, though he had learned precious little of the girl at his side, she had responded with an intelligent understanding and enthusiasm that added zest to the conversation. At length, as the two were preparing for their departure, the restaurant door of the Palace swung wide and in breezed Jim Burling, dressed as a garage proprietor has no license to dress. Billy took in the ample starched shirt, long, flowing, full dress with its abnormally lengthy swallow tails, bright red carnation, and the complete detailed splendor of adornment. And, dangling on Jim Burling's arm, lending further grace to the whole, was a petite, highly colored bit of feminity, as to gown and face, daintily tripping her way in and smiling the gaudy smile that foretold nothing of good for her cavalier. Plainly, it was to be seen that Jim Burling and his days profits were promised a separation.

Billy glanced out of the window and his heart bounded within him. In the moonlight, the little red racer, *his* red racer, by right of his long love for it, glistened invitingly in the moonlight. Billy's blood went hot in his veins. Whatever the garage man's right of lien, by the Great Carburetor, no right of joy-riding was appurtenant thereto! And Billy resolved on a hazardous course.

"We've certainly spent a delightful evening," the girl beside him was remarking. "Only one thing is missing. Do you know, I've dreamed joy-rides, and this evening, if only—"

"Are you game for an adventure," broke in Billy excitedly,—"a real one!" Billy had noted Burling swagger to a far corner of the room without his being seen as he, Billy, retreated behind the wine list.

"Depends upon the limitations—"

"Such as temporarily borrowing another man's car?"

"You mean stealing?"

"Not so harsh. I care for my reputation."

"But if you got caught?"

"We won't. It's as safe as a risky thing dare to be."

"Are you talking paradoxe
surance?' '

"Neither,—joy-riding."

"For one short hour then.
straight to my home. Then
your chance of returning tl

Soon they were out in the
hovering over his Red Rover
ing if she were in good trim
must be, for Burling was in tl
business.

"Here we are. Hop in,"

From his pocket Billy pul
key, the one that throws on
and called by the Red Rov
magneto key." It was all
Billy had been able to retai
and the legal Burling had
trespass on his person to tl
removal. Billy turned on the
his foot on the self-starter,
clutch, and they were off.

"How were you able to sta
the girl pointedly.

"I owned a Red Rover o
kept a key. I thought some
want to do this very thing.

"Regular professional, aren
beamed, with an admiring lool
"How superlatively clever yo
don't you embark in the bu
sell insurance to people who
to keep up payments. One for
is no worse than another."

Down the street they dashe
clip, and a gladness, the swe
venge, sang in Billy Cunning
Of speeding and the exhilarati
wind stinging his cheek, Billy
and the warming presence of
young woman at his side add
light. And thoughts of the so
ing Burling, completed the
ecstacy, of which Billy was
fill.

Out on the suburban road d
ing lull Billy gave fuller th
companion. He had known
short time; met her at a lit
of the insurance clan, and ha
to her good looks and pleasin
He guaged her a strong-willed
of excellent control, and capa

nating between a surprising degree of reserve and a surprising freedom. He had enjoyed her little sallies and, even more, her artistic compliments on his driving skill. Her last one: "Your mathematical accuracy in giving the sand-pile just the wistful touch and farewell," thoroughly pleased him, and a touch of seriousness, for the moment, was interrupted by:

"I am getting cold. Really, quite chilled. Let's run back to the city and get something piping hot."

"A good toddy?" he invited.

"No. Boiling hot soup," she answered instantly. He felt his judgment of her correct.

They drove in, stopped at a restaurant some distance from the Palace and ordered a light repast. The girl, somewhat tired, with a dignified reserve listened to Billy's running small talk, dropping in an occasional comment as she sipped her soup in quiet enjoyment.

"You did wrong to borrow the auto, even from a friend," she remarked after an interval. "Wherein will he find anything humorous in scouring the city, only to have his wrath stifled when he runs upon your beaming face?"

"All in the lark—my lark," responded Billy, carefree and happy. "And now, if you are rested, shall we drive you home?"

They walked leisurely to the sidewalk, Billy's face wide spread in a grin as he mused further on the discomfiture of the burly garage proprietor.

The grin suddenly died. Billy looked forth into an empty gutter. The street was void; the car gone.

"The miserable hound!" exploded the insurance man.

"Tit for tat," she chuckled merrily.

"That's not the point," wailed Billy. "It really was my car!"

"Your car? That explains. I thought you were too green to be a live one." Her voice was lightly taunting.

"A live one! Of course I'm not a low down—"

"Amateur," she derided. "Take me home first and then go steal it back again. I'll bet you see the police station before the break of gray dawn."

Her musical laughter rallied Billy and he quickly regained his good humor and, for good or evil, resolved to follow her advice.

When Jim Burling, heavied with surplus food and drink, and lightened of intelligence and ready money, wended his wavering footsteps from the Palace, bearing on his more or less weakened right arm, the wavering bit of colored feminity, now blending a genuine carmine with the spurious in her cheeks, and found naught in the line of red automobiles, he let loose a cultured treatize on the law. "Stealin' is felony," he began to his companion. "No misdemeanor 'bout this. Grand Larceny, an' worse. Stealin' at night-time gets a bigger penalty than in daylight. An' I know who done it!" he suddenly burst out, his clearing senses bringing forth sudden wrath. "He'll get a jail sentence, too—"

"Free board, free lodgin'—" began the wastrel at his side. "Get me home, will you?"

"I'll put you on the street car an' goodnight to you. I'm goin' to get back my car an' 'rest the law-breakin' cur!"

The home going of the illuminated vagrant is an incident that in no way pertains to the vital elements of this story, but that there may be no ragged remnants to account for, it is necessary to state that the requisite carfare, and not one cent more, was advanced by the garage proprietor. J. Burling, henceforth, was bent on serious business.

Following the resolve to sell the car to himself for repairs and storage, Jim Burling had become firmly imbued, by repeated suggestion, with the idea that the act was as good as accomplished and the machine his by countenance of the law. It lent a powerful motive force to his actions.

And a measure of luck awaited the garage man, though not as expected. Reasoning that Billy Cunningham would probably take a spin into the country and then return to the city, Burling concluded that the insurance seller would possess sufficient sheer nerve to return to the very café from which he had stolen the machine and celebrate. It was very like Billy to do just that thing. So, with the Palace café as headquarters, Burling made short incursions in various directions, covering a radius of several blocks and noting each and every automobile. In the thinning traffic this was not difficult and Burling suddenly thrilled for, not a block away, he spied the little red racer, leisurely picking its way along and heading for that genial harbor, the friendly Palace of Red Ink.

The garage man scurried for the nearest policeman, and, by wizard luck, found one, fully awake and eager for business.

"Quick, officer! A stolen machine! Get the crook!" he shouted.

The policeman gave chase. He happened to be a lean one and of good digestion. The machine stopped on his demand, the driver indignant and demanding explanation.

Burling, coming from the rear, began his tirade while still some feet away. "You law breakin' pup," he boomed. "This means from two to ten years accordin' to the penal code. You robber, you, stealin' a car from under the very nose of a lady an' gentleman!"

He stopped suddenly and choked in his amazement. The man in the car was credit manager Burney McWade! And by his side was a woman. Evidently the couple were joy-ride bent.

"Who in hell are you?" blurted Burling.

"I do not know that I have the value of your acquaintance," returned McWade icily, "and what do you mean by this brawling interruption?"

Burling knew not the man, but he knew the car. To make doubly sure, he looked it over, noting evidences of his own repair work.

"I thought you were somebody else," he began more mildly, "but that don't give you no legal right to steal my car!"

"Steal your car! Officer, this man is crazy. Will you kindly get out of my way! You are detaining a lady! This car belongs to me, always has belonged to me, and is mine until I sell or trade it."

Slowly Burling came to. "No, you don't, slick one," he began. "The smooth crooks are the biggest ones. Officer, I am owner,
in fee simple, of the O. K. Gara
my recommend," and he hande
card impressively to the police

"And I am salesmanager o
Rover;—my card. Note this
Rover machine."

"Officer," said the woman,
"this is very annoying and ins
lady."

"I'm sorry for you wimmin,
Burling, "when we men mix u
law, but officer, I demand you
till we find out where we're at
was doing plainer and harder th
night lesson work, for the pre
problem concerned the subjec
rights *versus* lien right, and
spite of his superior informatio
he was in waters very deep, and
bottom beneath.

But the garage man's brain
soon interrupted while dealing
premises and the little gathering
the Palace was further shocked
pected climax.

Billy Cunningham, with a se
trailing,—a fat one this time and
shortened of wind,—bore down
gathering. "Arrest him for s
car!" blazed the insurance ma
the garage proprietor first.

Billy's second remark was s
its infancy as his subsequent gaz
the prim visaged McWade, the
the world to be expected before
at three A. M.

"Ah!" he beamed forth.
man of credit! And now a k
riders! McWade, I didn't know
a thief. Officer, both of these
are thieves. Arrest them both."

"What you doin' here, Jerry?"
lean cop of the fat one.

"Same as you," responded
encouragingly.

Jim Burling, fighting for his
ests, struggled for the floor.
jobbin' done here, officer. These
planted this whole thing. That
garage this evenin', with me
'phone my place. "Look up the
self. Don't let either of them
away."

Burney McWade, badly handicapped, and desiring no undue publicity, began in his most business-like tones: "Officers, this car was sold by me on lease payment to Mr. Cunningham here. He has not met his payments. Automatically we come into possession—"

"Automatic possession by thievery at three o'clock in the morning," shot forth Billy. "Not on your life. That's my car and my name's on it. Officer, let me show you—"

Burling's powerful voice broke through again: "Officer, I know the law. Whatever those other chaps say, I'll show the repairs I made all over that car. Here you," to the woman on the seat, "get off that a minute. I'm goin' to show these officers—"

The fat cop turned to the lean one. "Percy, what'll we do?"

"Run 'em all in, Jerry," returned the lean Percy. "All three of the gents is stealin' the car from every other gent. It's a nest of crooks. I don't like that McWade chap, anyway."

"Me neither," returned Jerry.

The three midnight adventurers began to hedge. Particularly did McWade trim his sails.

"Gentlemen," he argued, "this seems to be—ah—er—a bit complicated. Possibly we all think we have rights to this machine. Mr. Cunningham has his name on my car. I have in my pocket the same signature to a lease contract, which I will show you. I will admit I took the empty car from in front of the Imperial—solely because I believe it my right by automatic abrogation—"

"Anything but that word," broke in Billy.

Jim Burling, hoping to get the car back to his garage in preference to the Police Station, again fought his way in. "I got a proposition for you. I got some law books out at my garage. Supposin' we all go out an' look up our sides an' settle it between ourselves: What do you cops say?"

"Nothin' doin'. You fellers may be all right, but this whole thing may be a plant. Then, you see, we get credit for the number of arrests we make. We're havin' a contest now an' I'm way ahead and Jerry has agreed to allow me to pull in any joint stuff we get. You fellers and the boat all go in. Exceptin' this; Jerry can take the lady home."

Burney McWade sighed the sigh of intense relief.

The program was carried out, and about four A. M. the three owners, equity holders, parties with inherent or acquired rights, lined themselves up before the desk sergeant.

"Hello, Billy," greeted the sergeant, "what you mixed up in? Come in to sell me another policy?

"And you, Jim Burling, as I live!" he greeted again. "Got a second-hand Pearl at a knockdown?"

"And if it ain't McWade himself," he beamed still further. "This is what I call pot luck. Come in boys and we'll have a little game. The ante's off; only for fun, you know—"

"Serious business first," announced Billy. "I wonder if you couldn't act for the judge. We'll place our facts before you."

"Sure. Take my decision, no protest?"

And each litigant put forth his argument; Burling, in particular, releasing gems of legal acumen.

"I'd like to see this little red racer," announced the sergeant. "Maybe just the thing I want to buy. I'll get the flashlights and we'll look her over."

Two police officers and three widely variant business men sauntered out upon the sidewalk to take a look at a very interesting little red car. The moon, now party hidden by a rift of clouds, cast an uncertain light upon the scene, a light that, because of its changing shadows, was hardly better than no light at all. The grim walls of the police station bulked to one side and the dirty street flanked the other. All was quiet and still.

Two flashes blazed a light where the little red racer had been left, and then flared up and down the street.

Five startled "Ohs" filled the stillness of the night. For the third time the car was gone!

Blankly the disputants looked from one to another. The situation was too tense for speech. Finally, the garage-lawyer remarked, disconsolately and with feeling: "Our three equities must of jointly an' sev'rally gone to blazes."

Billy Cunningham, puzzling the loss, suddenly felt a deathly sickening within, as he groped toward the solution. He plunged his hand into an upper pocket, searching for his magneto key. The pocket was empty.

"She's the only professional thief in the lot," he muttered dejectedly. "We're all raw amateurs," and he told his miserable story.

Out on a well paved highway a neat little red racer was humming her way along on a real joy-ride at last. A young man and a young woman, husband and wife, experts in the wrong business, sat in blissful comfort, admiring the changing night.

"The easiest city we've struck," remarked the woman. "Sixteen jobs, every one a success and we crown our efforts by making our getaway from under the very nose of the Police Station,—the safest place for a crook in all the wide world. I only have one little regret," she concluded. "He was such a likable, spontaneous chap and really meant me no wrong. I hope he never owned the car."

THE MIXED QUARTETTE, *by Octavus Roy Cohen,* is a theatrical yarn which will be included among next month's stories. It is about two song and patter artists. One is for uplifting vaudeville; he thinks he is prostituting his talent unless he makes a young Grand Opera out of the act. The other insists that "nut stuff" is the thing that "goes over big." Matters are further complicated when they team up with two girls, bill the act as The Operatic Quartette and start shouting selections from Verdi at the poor, bewildered public.

THE TWO-MILE TWINS

BY GEORGE THOMAS ARMITAGE

Did you ever run the "two-mile" in a track meet and feel that you would have to be revived with a pulmotor after the race? If you ever did, you will appreciate this tale, in which a runner gets not only a second wind but a third, fourth, fifth and then some.

"THE score is tied—last call for the two-mile!'

"The fellows nearly wilted. It was the last race, and the last chance—the strain was sickening."

Shorty was telling a gang of yapp-mouthed freshmen, gathered in the gym the night before "track," about the Moker twins and their famous two-mile race, run in almost prehistoric days. The fresh didn't know Shorty; they didn't even know his name. It was sufficient that he had been at the "U" in its infancy.

"At the last minute the unexpected had to happen," he continued. "Our crack hurdler, Dago Roben, spiked himself, and Pat Sheed twisted an ankle, just when he had cleared eleven feet, and the Aggies beat us by an inch. Possum Craig lost his form in the weights. He'd been throwing 'em up the Hill and letting 'em roll back to him in practice. The Farmers grabbed almost every field event; even beat old Punk Owley in the broad jump. We fought 'em all the way and sometimes we were ahead, but we couldn't get the lead we were counting on. The crowd stuck to a man. They cheered like maniacs when they felt more like weeping.

"Cam, our captain, had taken the mile in an awful drag and was carried off the field, limp as a dish rag. Old Faithful Pete plugged right in behind. That was eight points for us. The bunch in the bleachers went nuts. Then Dago grabbed the low hurdles and Jimmie copped the 220 dash. The crowd went to pieces. Luck was breaking our way again when Stoddy made his terrible announcement that the score was tied.

"The Aggies were betting three to one on their man Morgan to take the two-mile. Who wouldn't bet on him? He'd won it three years in a row. If he won again it would be five points for the Aggies against our four, if Cam and Moker finished second and third. We'd lose by a point, even if Moker finished; but no one counted on him. He was only a puny little runt who'd always been nothing but a social butterfly like his twin brother. His training for track was a joke, but they didn't know what he had up his sleeve, and he wasn't telling. Cam had been training for four years to beat Morgan and this was his last chance. Both were Seniors.

"'One man left to win the championship,' yelled the cheer-leader. 'Altogether now, nine rahs for Cam!'

"If there was anyone in town who didn't hear the splitting yell that shook the sagging grandstands that day, he was in the graveyard. The biggest crowd ever was there and everyone screeched. Moker in the dressing room, his twin over behind the signboard, heard that awful yell and trembled in their spikes. The Granges listened and smiled. But poor old Cam, he never heard a single whimper. The announcer hurriedly scanned a note from the gym. Then he lifted the big horn.

"'Cam is unconscious—can't run the two-mile.'

"There was a deathly silence; then a great moan. Stoddy might as well have said that Prexy had been killed or dancing abolished in the University. The Aggie bunch did a snake dance. Their band played the 'Conquering Hero' stuff that it had blared when their special train pulled into town that morning, two hundred strong. We wouldn't have cared so much about the meet, if it hadn't been the deciding event. The Farmers had won the basketball pennant in the spring and we were football 'champs' the fall before.

"It was pretty tough to have the championship snatched away without a parting fight. No one thought of Moker. They just sat still and waited for his slaughter. Some went home. What was the use of staying? The meet was lost!

"The boys had to carry Moker to the starting post. He trembled like a stuck pig when they pulled off his blanket. He'd never stood before such a tremendous crowd. And imagine how you'd feel if the championship was tied up in those eight laps and you knew the crowd was sneering at you. But the air braced him a bit and the crowd gave him a cheer, more of sympathy. What could he do against that terrible Morgan who ran like a machine? But they admitted he had lots of sand to try.

"After the cheer, Moker's ribs expanded some. The runners stood at the starting line. Moker's legs looked like toothpicks beside Morgan's. The little shaver couldn't even cast a good shadow.

"Bang! The starter's gun popped. They took the turn. Moker the second, got busy on the other side. Behind the big advertising signboard which they had induced Kelly, the down-town merchant for college boys, to put up to get the track week business, he was hidden from the crowd. He pulled off his clothes; no one could see him. Underneath was a track suit the same as his brother's. The Mokers were always being confused around the campus, but if their own mother could have seen them then she would not have known them apart.

"Morgan's style was to take a firm stride and never change; he wouldn't look back. The Mokers counted on that, for it gave them their best chance. The starting Moker kept right behind Morgan. At the signboard he slowed a trifle. Morgan dashed past. He didn't see the big robe behind the sign. For an instant the first Moker dropped out of sight. The other popped out like a jackrabbit and the race was on for sure!

"Moker's head was high; his hair flying. He carried a confident look. W passed the grandstand for the firs got the ovation of his life. Th stood to a man and screamed. Th know on the sidelines that he hadn't They were surprised that he had st one lap at such a killing pace. Th proud of him but, of course, the dreamed he would keep it up.

" 'He can't keep that pace,' every dicted, 'but he's sure got guts.'

"The Mokers changed behind and back of the signboard every lap one was doing a quarter-mile sp other was getting his second wi course they had to be quick. (would see their finish; but they h planning for weeks and practicing b light. They dashed in and out like just as if it were the prescribed of scholastic competition. If th bunch had known, it wouldn't ha so hard, but the Mokers had to foo body and win the race, too. Wit after each lap, they managed to with Morgan and sure did fine fo runners. They were stepping on M heels half the time.

"The crowd's sympathy and changed to a last wild hope. Su little sawed-off couldn't win the ch ship! But there he was, right befo very eyes, tearing past periodically. pected to see him croak any min he didn't. Each time round the was greater. The roar in the sta came deafening. Morgan was worr couldn't understand how that pu runt could stick so close; plainly fussed. He quit his old form. He and Moker did, too. He'd slow c would the man behind. The Moke had his goat. But he wouldn't lo and Moker stayed behind.

"The gun cracked for the finish. the last lap! The students went up. The rooters were one terrific It seemed as though they would cords right out of their throats were wild—nutty—crazy. And th that little runt of a Moker peg pipestem legs right behind Morga he didn't look as if he had ru

Morgan was wobbling; his eyes were red; little beads of foam came through his set teeth; his face had that set look of a beaten man; he tried to sprint, but his feet were too heavy. The big Farmer staggered like he'd been kicked and Moker trotted easily. Why didn't he take the lead? The crowd didn't savvey that that would be impossible until the signboard was passed for the last time. There was no more music from the Aggie band; the players were too scared even to holler.

" 'If old Moke can only hold out,' everyone was praying. They kept yelling 'Hang on, kid, hang on;—don't quit now,—only one more lap,—at a boy, take your time,—you've got him.'

"Girls got white; coeds gasped; profs' fists clenched. Tears ran down Prexy's cheeks; our old Dean was too weak to wave his hat. The thrill that went through that loyal crowd will never be duplicated on the old Varsity field. And still Moker was flying along, but still behind. Men threw their hats away; dashed from their seats; jumped the fence; tried to run the race themselves; cops pushed, but it was no use. The climax was too great,—and to be decided in an instant. If Moker won, the U'd have the championship cinched by two points. The runners were half around. Morgan stumbled; Moker slowed down; the Aggie recovered.

" 'Take the lead, Moke, oh Lord, why doesn't he lead out?' was the cry from the crowd.

"The pair were nearing the signboard; they flashed behind. Morgan was tumbling again; Moker was passing him; the race was ours! We had won! We were the champions!—then—oh Lord—I can never forget,—it was terrible."

"For the love of Pete, what happened?" demanded his breathless audience.

Shorty stood up to knock the ashes from his pipe.

"Oh, nothing much. One Moker said it was a mistake; the other declared his brother was jealous. When the Moker on the last lap got to the signboard he ran right past. The world will never know why he did it.

"The hidden Moker was expecting his brother to stop as usual so he dashed into the race, fresh for a whirlwind finish.

"And there they came—the whole three, tearing down the last straightaway! The Moker twins were in the lead, struggling for first place. Morgan puffed way behind, an easy third.

"The students thought they were seeing double. The crowd gasped; their eyes stuck out a foot; they rubbed them and looked again. Judges hurried to the finish tape. No, sure enough, there were two Mokers. One was crowding the other for the pole; but there was only one Morgan.

"It was kind of funny and some laughed. But with most of the hoarse rooters, it was no joke. They saw the secret of the whole race. There wasn't a cheer as the Mokers came tearing down the stretch, fighting each other like mad for first. The Aggie rooters crowded to the fence with blood in their eyes. The Mokers broke the tape together. It was a dead heat. The sprinters were all in even though they had split the race. In silence they were carried from the track. One panted in the gym:

" 'Did we win?'

"And the other answered happily, 'We sure did!'

"Even then they didn't realize what they'd done."

Shorty poked around in the dark for a cap by his chair.

"I'm going out for a little walk. It always makes me dizzy when I remember that finish."

The freshmen looked curious.

One asked, "Did we win the meet?"

On his way to the door Shorty turned back to drawl, "I should say not. The stunt was so rotten that even our coach couldn't stick up for the Mokers. Morgan got first, second and third—all nine points—as a special distinction for running against a relay team. And he earned 'em, too."

The story-teller was closing the door when another fresh piped out, "How did you get all the dope if it was such a secret?"

As the door closed, an answer came floating back, more like a sob than a laugh:

"I was one of the Mokers!"

THE BURNING RIVET

BY WILLARD B

The girl's life was a seven-reel nightmare; her home was a $4.78 far
from Broadway; she had no money. She could only go out and let a littl
spring sunshine seep through her veins, with a big risk in doing even tha

CHINATOWN slept in the somnolence of spring. Here and there one caught glimpses of an almond-eyed brother squatted on the doorstep of his domicile, stealing a few precious minutes away from a sudsy washboard or white-hot stove to enjoy his afternoon pipe in supreme gratification. The pungent smell of steaming chop suey wafted on the faint breeze, and met one's olfactory nerves with a pleasant sting; and opposite the Twenty-Four Hour Mission, Tom Sing's be-whiskered Maltese basked in a shaft of warm sunlight, a welcome intruder in a glum, gloomy alleyway.

All was still, save for the periodic rumblings of a passing "L" train and the din from the hydraulic drills which were used in constructing a skeleton-like shaped viaduct, high over Chatham Square. Up there, a tan-faced, fennec-eared son of Erin sang ditties of his native land in a rich, tenor voice, as he toasted rivets over an acetylene flame and then tossed them with a rasping whoop down a long, chute-like strip of tin to an olive-skinned Sicilian, forty feet down. Occasionally, one would miss its mark and fall, a miniature pink meteor, into the blackened gutter of the Bowery below.

In Mulberry Bend, a veritable army of birds, fresh from the Blue Ridge, twittered in the trees; and on a fence hard by was stretched a 24-sheet litho, done in all the colors of the rainbow, that announced the coming to town of "The Greatest Show on Earth." Around the corner, in Mott Street, a dozen Italian pygmies were strenuously engaged in a vest-pocket edition of that all-absorbing pastime called the Natio
Horsehide struck wagon-tongue
dows were smashed, and right u
very eyes of peg-post Officer Mo
that! For Moynihan, at that
moment, was concentrating his
endeavoring to "make a date" fo
lowing night with a certain little
miss, who had smiled at him thri
the past forty minutes from he
three stories above the street.

Surely, it was spring!

Annie Ragan knew it. She c
it in her very bones, doped an
sodden as they were. She want
out—anywhere, and drink in the i
ing air. But there was Mock Le

Mock was Annie's yellow husba
since that storm-driven night six y
when Mock had resurrected her
streets and made her his wife,
had been law. She had never
him She dared not.

One of Mock's most stringent c
was that she should never go out
accompanied her. He was asleep
a battered, bug-ridden cot by the c
dow. He had taken a few more
hop than were good for him, an
earliest, could not awake before

She wanted to go out. The
her rotten soul, vague as it was, w
to the surface. Spring was call
The pipes of Pan had struck a cla
in her scavenger breast, and were
her, urging her on!

Mock, bulk of raw meat that he
his bloated face and sparse, mous
hair, slept steadily. The noise
drills directly above the window
annoy him in the least. In the pa
the Ghetto, he was "dead to the

Annie, frail, unfortunate creat

watching him, munching a bit of rice cake. Spring was calling her. *She wanted to go out.* But she was afraid of Mock. If he awoke during her absence there would be hell to pay. He would wait and wait until she returned, and just as sure as they burned incense in the Joss House around the corner, he would kill her! Annie knew it. Scores of scars that marked her miserable body had been inflicted by Mock for less serious causes than that. She shuddered.

Tears welled from the dissipation-betraying things she called eyes. She was a coward, a scurvy, cringing coward—afraid of a yellow, bulking bully she called husband! Her tousled head fell to the warped hardwood table with a nauseating thud and she sobbed as a child after having a leathern cat-o'-nine-tails applied to its spine by an over-exacting parent. She was a coward!

Spring was calling her! A train of pixies, carrying a daisy chain, seemed to enter through the sun-flooded window; pranced dapperly about the gloomy room, and then danced out again. From afar they seemed to beckon her. *Spring was calling her!*

Annie tossed the uneaten bit of rice cake bitterly to the uncarpeted floor, and grabbed a ragged shawl from a worm-eaten rack above her head. Wrapping it about her semi-bent shoulders, she cast a hurried look at the sleeping bulk—a look of supreme abhorrence—then darted out of the bleak, ill-smelling hole she called "home," for a few hours of freedom! As she moved, she endeavored to gather her thoughts, the wild, flighty thoughts of a hop fiend and a drunkard. She wondered and pondered as to what she should do next, like a friendless convict after his release from a long prison term. She had it,—she would go to Mulberry Bend Park and watch the Italian kiddies at their play, and drink in the winesap air.

As she ran down the rickety steps leading to the street, darkened by the blanketing shadow of the "L" structure overhead, a train passing by loomed, to her half-crazed mind, like a gigantic buzzard swooping down upon her. Then the thought that Mock might awake while she was out, entered her mind and chilled her spine;—but only for an instant.

She had now reached the open street, and was inhaling deep draughts of the intoxicating, exhilarating April air. She darted down the dreary thoroughfare that is celebrated in both song and story, and turned into sun-washed Doyer Street.

Just as she rounded the corner, she ran into the very counterpart of Mock, a veritable facsimile of the man she loathed. She trembled, poor degenerate that she was, but breathed a sigh of relief when, upon looking back over her shoulder to see if the Celestial were following her, she discovered he was nowhere in sight. Mock's double had disappeared as if the ground had opened up and swallowed him. "All chinks and coons look alike, anyway!" she consoled herself, and continued on her happy, romping way.

The yellow, piercing sunlight, the first she had seen in the open for weeks, shone full in her face as she moved and made her blink. Until she became accustomed to it, she shaded her eyes with her hand, and groped semi-staggeringly along that fantastic, mottled way. Nearing the outskirts of the Italian Quarter, she began to hum some old, half-forgotten tune. Unmusical though it was, it depicted the buoyancy of her spirit at that particular moment, and she surprised more than one matter-of-fact pigtail that she passed.

Her heart leaped for joy as she neared her destination. Mulberry Bend Park was filled with children and the ring of their happy, care-free voices. High in the air, in the centre of the generous tract, Old Glory, attached to a white-washed pole, shone in all its glad resplendence, as it fluttered in the soft, balmy breeze. The fires of spring burned in Annie Ragan's derelict soul; and for the first time in years, she felt almost happy.

She selected a seat on a bench which was enjoying the splendor of a recently applied coat of green paint and began to drink in everything about her. Next to her sat an old Florentine with the gout, and next to him, a little Madonna of the slums hugged and squeezed and pinched her first born.

Directly opposite her, in the middle of the roadway, a little knot of kiddies were playing ring-a-round-a-rosey. Suddenly, like an arrow shot from a taut bow, a large touring car came steaming along, headed direct for the circle of children. As the auto neared them, Annie's heart fluttered and she shrieked wildly to the tots to move. At her command, they scattered like geese in a country road, and she was glad. The maternal, mothering instinct that had been stifled long ago, was resurrected and reasserted itself!

Annie turned and gazed at the pink ball in the little Madonna's arms. She yearned to pinch its little feet, but she was afraid that her action would be resented; for Annie was of a supersensitive nature. Just now she did not have the appearance of a gentlewoman, so she refrained from touching the babe. However, she took pleasure in watching it as it squirmed about in its mother's arms. Soon she fell to dreaming of things that might have been.

In Chinatown all was still, save for the periodic rumblings of a passing "L" train and the din from hydraulic drills which were used in constructing a skeleton-like shaped viaduct, high over Chatham Square. Up there, a tan-faced, fennec-eared son of Erin sang ditties of his native land in a rich tenor voice, as he toasted rivets over an acetylene flame, and then tossed them with a rasping whoop down a long, chute-like strip of tin to an olive-skinned Sicilian, forty feet below. Occasionally, one would miss its mark—

Annie fell to dreaming about *things that might have been.*

Her thoughts wandered back a decade before, and in her mind's eye she viewed the things that had happened then, just as if she were watching them enacted before her on a moving picture screen.

In a little tank town in the western part of New York state, she had lived alone with her daddy, who was a recluse. After supper, it was customary for her to walk down to the village, a distance of about two miles, to the little post-office for the evening mail. On the evening in question, she tendered her box number and was told there was nothing for her.

On the way out, she paused fo
to glance over the stock of illust
cards displayed on a rack nea
She happened upon one that st
being quite funny, and she lef
office in an extremely happy fra

A yellow touring car of for
facture lay by the curb, snorting
ing steam like some giant mon
Stone Age at bay. Not being in
ular hurry to commence he
jaunt over the hill, Annie stood
at the deserted auto. Being fif
was privileged to do as she ple

She was taken more with
blend than with the car itself
motor cars were quite a rarity
of the country at the time;
Annie, the unsophisticated and
—looked upon one very much a
upon the bearded-lady at the

Presently, the monster's owne
He was a dapper, good-looking
his clothes and smile bespoke th
he was evidently enjoying.
Flor de Rina he sported in his
held together with a red-and-
Taking him all in all, he looke
the gentleman heroes she had
in the family story papers.

Espying the innocent eyeing
the dapper gentleman asked A
would like to take a ride in
said, simply, that she would.
happened.

Four years later found An
less and alone, wandering abou
like streets of the metropolis
throes of a midsummer storm.
tary fear of lightning had driv
an inviting doorway off Astor
it was there that Mock had f

Mock! The very name
When that saffron-hued mongr
in, she was contemplating a j
East River or a swallow of so
did not taste too bitter, but she
the courage. Rather than face
ful fate, she had consented
the wife of something she pl
equal footing with a snake.
been lenient, considering all
had introduced her to the supre

Hop, which Annie resorted to every time her conscience stung her, and that was often.

Suddenly, the old Florentine with the gout became uneasy and began to move restlessly about in the cramped space the municipality allots to one person. Annie looked at him. He reminded her of her father, who, she thought, was alone and uncared for, up there in the wilderness. Soon she became conscious that her eyes were wet. She dried them on her tattered sleeve, then, so as not to attract the inquisitive glare of the other occupants of the bench, she stifled the sob that swelled from her heart. A whiff of hop would have helped her now!

"Poor old daddy!" she thought. For the past five Thanksgivings, he had inserted a four-line "Personal" in one of the Park Row yellows, beseeching her to come home. She would have returned and braved the wagging tongues of the scores of Mrs. Grundys that abound in a town that boasts a population of only eight hundred—were it not for Mock. *And the fare was only four seventy-eight!*

The disc, that two hours before had been the color of molten yellow, was now a circle of blood-red cardinal. Slowly, it sank into its gigantic groove beyond the horizon; and then could be seen no more. With the advent of nightfall, the fresh-air fiends had left the park, and Annie was alone.

The clock a-top the New York Life Building struck six, and Annie wondered what Mock was doing. Perhaps he was still asleep. If he were, it was possible for her to return without his being the wiser regarding her brief vacation. But suppose he had awakened during her absence? She trembled like a condemned procurer awaiting the assassin's ax. Her heart sank and grew frigid.

Her musings were interrupted by the clanging of the bells and the shilling of the sirens on a dozen fire engines. They rolled madly toward Chinatown. The sky for miles around had become tinged with a pinkish glow and flared with the united force of a dozen sunsets, blotting out the stars. The sight enthralled her. Fascinated, she left the park and followed the flame, like a desert-thirsty man pursuing a mirage. As she moved, her shawl fluttered in the wind; her heart fluttered also.

Presently she arrived at Doyer Street and the Bowery. Here, pandemonium reigned. The engines chugged and spat burning cinders out of their bottle-shaped funnels, and the fire chiefs shouted commands to their nervy underlings. A fire line had formed and a big burly in blue and brass warded Annie back. She crossed the gutter, drenched with water sprayed from a score of nozzles, and then took her place amidst a labyrinth of craned necks.

She was swept off her feet by a veritable paroxysm of joy, and jumped up and down, clapping her hands, very much like a little lady of six after receiving her first lollypop. The very house she had emerged from earlier in the afternoon was in flames, and Mock, the yellow rodent she feared, was being roasted alive! The spell was broken!

A broken-nosed gent standing next to her nudged a cauliflower-eared friend of his. Indicating Annie, he spoke a solitary word: "Nuts!" Annie heard him, but gave no heed. What cared she what they branded her now? She was free, *free,* FREE!

Over the heads of the curious, she caught a glimpse of three bronzed balls glittering red upon catching the reflection of the tongues of flame that licked out of the burning shack directly opposite. She pondered for a second, and then exclaimed, aloud, "I have it!" The embryo alienist with the broken nose overheard, and was at once convinced of the veracity of his statement of the moment before. He repeated the words to his scavenger companion and thought, with the wisdom of his kind, that he understood. The other winked; he, too, thought that he understood.

Annie pushed through the mob and entered a door beneath the three balls. Inside, she removed the gold circlet that Mock had tendered on the night of their wedding, and all but flung it to the wizened Jew behind the counter. Ikey picked it up, shut one eye and examined the ring carefully.

"How much you vant?" he asked.

"Four seventy-eight!" said Annie. "And never mind the ticket!"

AFTER THIRTY YEARS

BY ROBERT McBLAIR

Our old friend, the Southern colonel, puritanical as is his sense of justice, is happily blessed with a social impulse governed by a code which is fully as rigid. Witness the case of this colonel who for thirty years, on the first of each month, takes oath to avenge the death of his mother.

CICERO!" yelled the colonel. It was shortly after dinner, and he was seated in the willow chair beneath the big magnolia, fanning his pink face with his panama between drafts on a black cigar.

No answer coming from the white house across the lawn, the colonel emitted another summons, this time peremptory and like a tremendous bark.

"*Cic*-ero!'

At this, the screen door on the verandah shut with a bang and Cicero, bent double with haste and the demands of his burden, shuffled rapidly across the lawn, balancing before him a tall, amber-and-ice filled, mint-crowned, frosted glass on a little silver tray.

"Had to go plum' to de ice house for dis here ice, Marse Henry," he apologized breathlessly, while he removed a magnolia leaf from the pine board table and deposited his precious burden. "Seem lak whenever yo' in a hurry sumpn gotta git up on its hine laigs an' bus loose. Hadn't no sooner—"

"Cicero!" interrupted the colonel. There was no mistaking the reminiscence of uniformed authority in the colonel's tone and in his eye. Cicero drew his expansive feet together, his skinny old body into a comparatively perpendicular attitude and stood at attention and saluted.

"Cicero," the colonel repeated in stern accusation; "have you forgotten again to remember what day this is? Must I take this important matter out of your hands after all these years and turn it over to that yellow nigger, Augustus?"

Cicero trembled in agitation. Death would have been sweet compared to this suggested disgrace.

"Fo' de *Lawd,* Marse Henry, I ain't done forgot it! I jes' didn't want to keep yo' waitin' fo' dat julep, dat's all, Marse Henry. Hit's a-waitin' on me right up dere in de hall." And Cicero, breaking abruptly from his military pose, started on a galvanic gallop for the house.

The hectic flush of displeasure giving way to the formal frown of authority, the colonel leaned back, crossed his white linen knees and slippered feet, and sipped his julep.

His eyes slowly brightened under the spell of memory as he sipped, and by the time that Cicero reappeared, bearing carefully and horizontally a long, heavy, ancient "horse" pistol, and under his arm a short ramrod and cleaning rag, the colonel's feelings were quite up to the pitch appropriate to this hallowed monthly ceremony.

"Cicero," demanded the colonel, the fire of a warrior lighting in his mild blue eye, "why do you bring me this weapon?"

Cicero's brow puckered until his scanty white wool almost met his eyebrows; painfully aware of the occasion's high demands, he answered with the gravity of an oracle:

"Dis here am de fust ob de month, Cunnel."

"And why do you bring me this weapon on the first of the month, Cicero?" thundered the colonel, as if talking before an unseen audience of hundreds.

"So's yo' kin load her up good an' fresh, Cunnel. An' so's yo' kin shoot her once to see if yore han' is stiddy."

"And why should my hand be steady, Cicero?"

"So's yo' kin shoot dat Yankee gemman."

"Yes, that damned Yankee, Cicero."

"Yas suh! Dat damn Yankee officer gemman, what burned yo' Pa's house down when yo' Ma was sick an' lef' her out'n de lawn on a cot where she done kotch her def."

"Correct," confirmed the colonel gruffly, pulling on his white moustache. "Now, who is this damned Yankee?"

"We don' know, Cunnel."

"Then why this monthly performance, Cicero?"

"'Cause we wanner be riddy ef we ever fine him, Cunnel. An' so we won't furgit."

"And—" prompted the colonel.

"An'—an'—" echoed his stumbling retainer.

"The oath, Cicero."

"Yas suh! An' we done swo' it, Cunnel."

"What did we swear, Cicero?"

"We swo'—we swo'—"

"—By the body and blood,"

"Body and blood," repeated the old darkey.

"Of those who have fallen in the great lost cause."

"Los' cause," said Cicero.

"By their spirit and their hopes and their memory—"

"Mem'ry," repeated Cicero.

"To eliminate such a cur."

"Limonascious cur," Cicero echoed.

"Whenever we may find him."

"Find him," Cicero finished.

"Have you got the new cartridge?"

"Yas suh."

The colonel took the pistol.

"Which knot is it, Cicero; the first or the second?"

"Dat one near de lil' holler in de lim', Marse Henry. De middle one."

"Very well."

The colonel aimed for a moment, then pulled the trigger. A thunderous sound entered the air, together with a cloud of smoke; the old horse pistol kicked high and hard; but right in the center of the dark middle knot in the limb a fleck of white wood showed where the bullet had gone true.

Cicero chuckled.

"Smack plum' 'tween de eyes, Marse Henry! Every month it's de same way."

"Best shot in my regiment, Cicero;" the colonel began the same remark he had made every month for thirty years; "and I'm not too old yet to fight for my state if she needs me,—nor to revenge a dastardly crime. Clean her out well, Cicero, put in the fresh cartridge, and hang her up in the hall again."

Some three weeks later the colonel was again seated beneath the big magnolia, occasionally sipping with appreciation at one of Cicero's juleps. It was late in June. The sun lay yellow and warm on the rich green grass, but a soft, cool zephyr stole in and out between the stately trees and stirred wisps of hair on the colonel's white head. High up in a nearby elm a cicada sang; a red bird pecked at the leaves near the road fence; and on the colonel's gold-headed cane a pale green measuring worm alternately made a loop of its back and waved itself about in the air.

The quiet, and an excellent dinner accompanied by some equally excellent port, finally made themselves felt; the colonel's head swayed slowly, and found a haven on his chest; a sound that somewhat rivaled the cicada troubled the afternoon solitude.

Cicero shambled across the lawn and touched the colonel on the arm.

"A gemman to see yo', Marse Henry."

"A gentleman to see me? What does he want?"

"Dunno, Marse Henry. He ast ef yo' was home an' guv me dis here kyard."

"'Captain Sherwood Horace,'" read the colonel, yawning; "'U. S. Army—retired.' What the devil!"

"Heerd him say sumpn bout some timber, Marse Henry. He's a Yankee gemman all right. Says, 'Thank *you*.'" Here Cicero squeaked out a rising inflection on the 'you.'

"Timber? Oh yes; he's from Horace and Archer, of Boston. Ask the gentleman out here, Cicero, and bring out another glass and some ice."

Shortly the stranger, a tall, elderly man of military bearing, with a close-cropped, grizzled moustache and fine dark eyes, came across the lawn, walking with a slight limp.

"Captain Horace," said the colonel, "I bid you welcome to the South. The war is over now these thirty years, and I consider it a pleasure, suh, to meet with an officer in the opposin' army. I hope you will be my guest while you are here."

"Why, I thank you very much indeed for your invitation, Colonel, but I expect to take the morning train back North, and I have left my bags at the inn."

"I refuse to consider the idea for a second, suh," said the colonel, with immediate heat, "that you should come to my village, suh, and have to put up at an inn. I insist, suh, that you consider yourself from this moment as my guest."

"With pleasure," agreed Captain Horace, dismissing the matter with a smile and a wave of the hand, and accepting a chair. "Now about that timber, Colonel. I see that you have been making some calculations there. Perhaps you have arrived at a figure that we may discuss."

"No suh. Those calculations refer to port wine, Captain. I have a bottle in the cellar known as number eight—old number eight. It has been in my possession for forty years, suh. But two years from tomorrow it will be eighty years old, and that day I shall open it, suh, in celebration of my sixty-fifty birthday. I have been figurin', suh, the number of minutes that must elapse before I can open that bottle. You see that they reach the tremendous total of one million, thirty-two thousand, six hundred and forty. It is not well, suh, to let the mind dwell upon such matters."

"No," smiled Captain Horace, "I imagine not. In our busy North we have not so much time to spare; but down here there is such a peace and sweetness that one might well be content to sit and wait for expected blessings."

"It is not so beautiful as it might have been," sighed the colonel. "That 'March to the Sea' did not help things any. There were some terrible things done on that march, Captain."

"No more than were demanded by military necessity," replied the captain with spirit, putting down his glass. "There are hoodlums in every army, Colonel, as you know; but everything that the officers did on that march was done under orders and for military reasons."

The colonel shrugged his shoulders as if to say that he did not agree, but saw that discussion was useless, and pushed the box of cigars across to the captain. There was a silence as the two men lighted up.

"There were certainly many regrettable incidents," agreed the captain reminiscently. "In fact, the whole campaign was regrettable,—but it was necessary. I was with Sherman on that ride, Colonel. My company passed through this very section. As I came along the road just now I saw a place that I burned down. A red schoolhouse has gone up in its stead, but I recognized an old broken willow and the stone top of a cistern in the yard. I remember that there was a lady ill in the house and we had to carry her out; it made my heart sick at the time; but—I give it to you as an instance, Colonel—what else, under our orders, could we have done?"

The colonel went pale. Suddenly he doubted if he were awake. Could it be real—this sufficient, distinguished man looking off thoughtfully across the lawn and letting fall these terrible words with such uncanny calmness? Little strips of thoughts fluttered by the colonel's eyes: glimpses of red flames licking out of familiar windows, of a pale, sweet, death-haunted face watching a tragedy too deep for tears; he saw a stone cross in the churchyard, and a star that shone brightly on lonely nights. Cicero, flying toward the house at something between a shamble and a gallop, was a figure in a dream.

The colonel leaned forward and gripped the table. "Did you realize, Captain Horace," he asked, in a voice that came to his ears as from far away, "that your treatment of this lady might be tantamount to murder?" His expression took on a grimness strangely out of place on his comfortably genial countenance.

"I gave you that as an example, Colonel. I, of course, could not know what might be the result upon the lady's already delicate health. But what else was to be done? We had information that papers were concealed in the house. We could not find them. So the house had to be burned. You are a soldier; you know that orders must be obeyed; you know that the soldier is under the heel of necessity, and therefore knows no law."

"There can be no necessity for the murder of an innocent invalid woman." Out of the tail of his eye, the colonel saw Cicero now near at hand. "Did it occur to you, Captain Horace, that this lady was some man's wife, was another man's mother?"

Captain Horace looked up at the colonel curiously. "I could have regretted the occasion no more, my dear Colonel, if the lady had been my own mother. But I was a soldier, Colonel, and I did my duty."

"Captain Horace," said the colonel, rising and taking the pistol from Cicero's hand, "that lady was my mother!"

The announcement lost nothing of dramatic effect in the manner of its delivery. The unseen audience that the colonel seemed often to act before might almost have been heard to applaud.

Captain Horace jumped to his feet, upsetting his glass and overturning his chair.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried.

"It means, suh," replied the colonel, "that retribution is overtakin' the sinner. Thirty years ago I swore to avenge this wanton crime against humanity and my house. Now the day of reckonin' has come."

"This is murder!" cried the captain,—"cold-blooded murder! Give me a gun and fight me like a man."

"An eye for an eye, suh; a death for a death. This is not murder, Captain Horace, this is justice."

"Do you mean that you are going to shoot me here like a dog?"

"I have sworn it, Captain," returned the colonel with the implacability of the mild man once aroused. "You may have a few minutes to prepare to meet your Maker."

Captain Horace drew himself up and folded his arms. "Death and I are no strangers, Colonel Tolliver. It is many a year that I have been ready to meet my God. If you see fit to proceed with this outrage, I am at your service, sir."

Colonel Tolliver paled a little and moistened his lips with his tongue. He cocked the big pistol.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"I am ready," returned Captain Horace in a steady voice.

Perspiration came out on the colonel's forehead.

"Cicero!" he thundered, "you black scoundrel! If you don't stop that tremblin' I'll put the next bullet through you. Get behind me.

"Now, Captain." He raised the pistol, then lowered it a little. "May I ask you to close your eyes?"

Captain Horace veiled his bright dark eyes and held himself erect, chin high.

The colonel planted himself firmly, and raised the pistol slowly. His hand trembled a little at first, but he found the bead, held it well for a moment, then lowered his arm.

"Captain Horace," he said, in a strained voice, "is there any message you would like to send to your folks?"

The captain opened his eyes, brilliantly dark in a pale face. "There is only my mother," he replied in a low voice. "Tell her, 'God bless her; and—and good-bye.'"

The colonel's blue eyes were misty. "Very well, Captain," he assented huskily; "it shall be done."

He raised the pistol again and centered the sights between the captain's brows. He held the bead for a moment, then lowered his arm once more.

"Captain Horace," he said, "you are a brave man. Have you any directions for me after—afterwards?"

"As your guest," replied Captain Horace with a bitter smile, "I feel that I may safely entrust my ultimate disposition to your good judgment."

"Guest," repeated the colonel. His mouth was open a little, his face pale; a drop of perspiration ran from the end of one eyebrow down his cheek and dropped on the lapel of his coat.

"Guest!" he repeated, with more animation. "By gad, suh; no Southern gentleman would shoot a guest under his own roof-tree. I hope I know enough about the sacred obligations of hospitality for that!" He uncocked the gun and threw it on the grass. "Cicero," he directed, sitting down rather weakly and mopping his forehead, "go down in the cellar and bring out that bottle of number eight port."

The Black Cat Club --- Second Contest

In the days when the writer was an amateur bill collector, when the literary bug was just buzzing around casually, he once cornered a delinquent tenant. He had taken up a position where he could watch both doors of a barn on the waterfront where the fellow had hidden and from which there was only one other means of exit. The man had his choice between coming out through one of the doors or dropping out through a window and landing in the cold waters of the harbor.

He came out. And while he was exchanging four dollars for a piece of paper which said, "Received payment" etc., on it, he addressed this remark to a fellow workman who was trucking a sack of potatoes upstage:

"For Gawd's sake, Bill, don't never get married."

"Hell, Dan," Bill replied, "I been married seventeen years," and there was that extreme disgust in his manner which implied that he would have been much obliged had Dan come around just seventeen years sooner with his advice.

That is going back a long way to establish a point; but we wish to impress upon you the fact that we want your advice now, not seventeen years hence or at some vague time in the future when you think that you will have more time. The confidence which we have in our ability to handle our job is no reason why we shouldn't solicit your friendly advice. Moreover, we think that you will get a lot more fun out of the magazine if you assume the mental attitude of the critic and write an occasional letter to the editor.

The proper thing to do is to become a member of The Black Cat Club, which was started in the November number. The object of the club is to stimulate interest in short stories. There are no dues. The duties of members are first, to read The Black Cat and submit criticisms of each issue with the stories arranged in the order of their merit, and second, to interest their friends in the club. Those members who have the impulse to write should submit their stories to the editor. All available stories will be paid for on acceptance. A club button has been designed and will be ready for distribution soon.

The first contest conducted by the club closed on December 1st. The result will be announced in the February issue, out January 15th.

The Second Contest comprises the stories in this issue (January) and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem Mass., before February 1st. Prizes will be awarded February 5th and the result of the contest will be announced in the April BLACK CAT, issued March 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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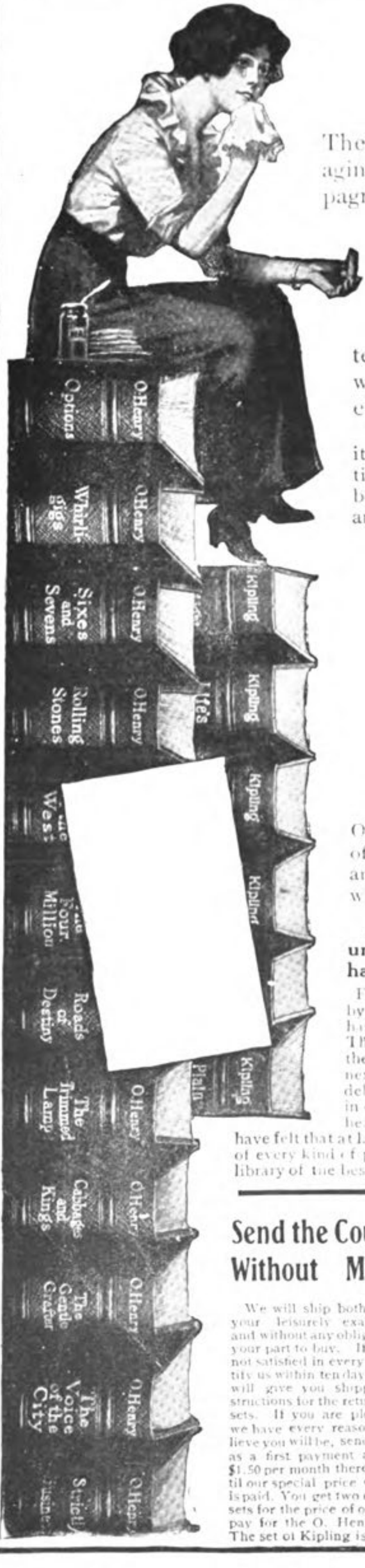

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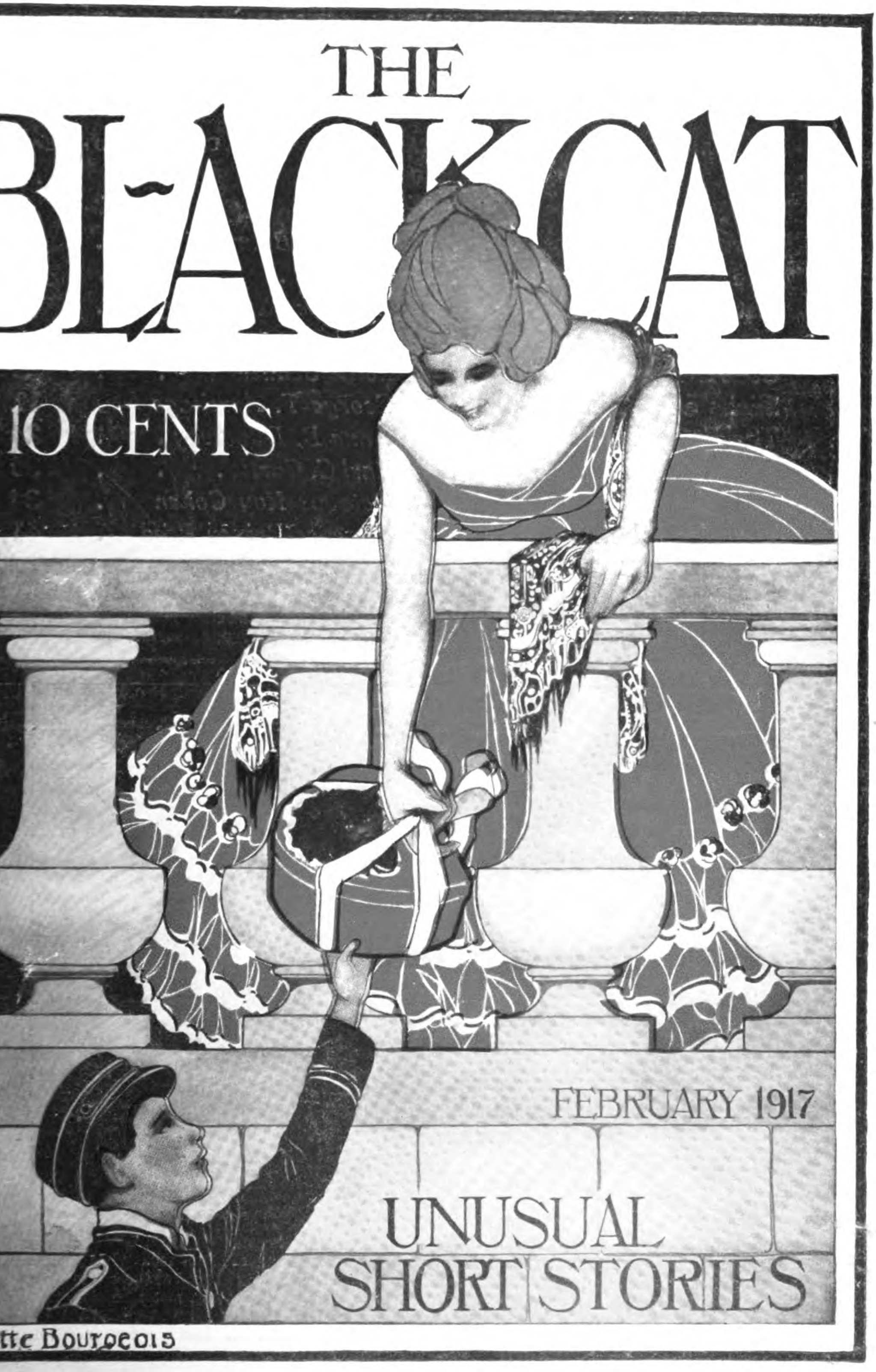

THE BLACK CAT

10 CENTS

FEBRUARY 1917

UNUSUAL SHORT STORIES

tte Bourgeois

The Black Cat

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Contents

Cover Design . . . *Olivette Bourgeois* . .
The Black Cat Club 2
Getting It . . . . . *Frederic R. Buckley* . 3
The Acquittal of Doctor Guidas *Ladd Plumley* . . . 9
Conscience Stuff for Two . *Louis Schneider* . . 13
Slicks an' Slickers . . *George T. Armitage* . 17
The Fairy Wand . . *Anna B. Dunaway* . . 24
The Evidence in the Case . *Earl G. Curtis* . . . 30
The Mixed Quartette . *Octavus Roy Cohen* . 34
Tante's Valentine . . *Florence Briney Reed* . 41

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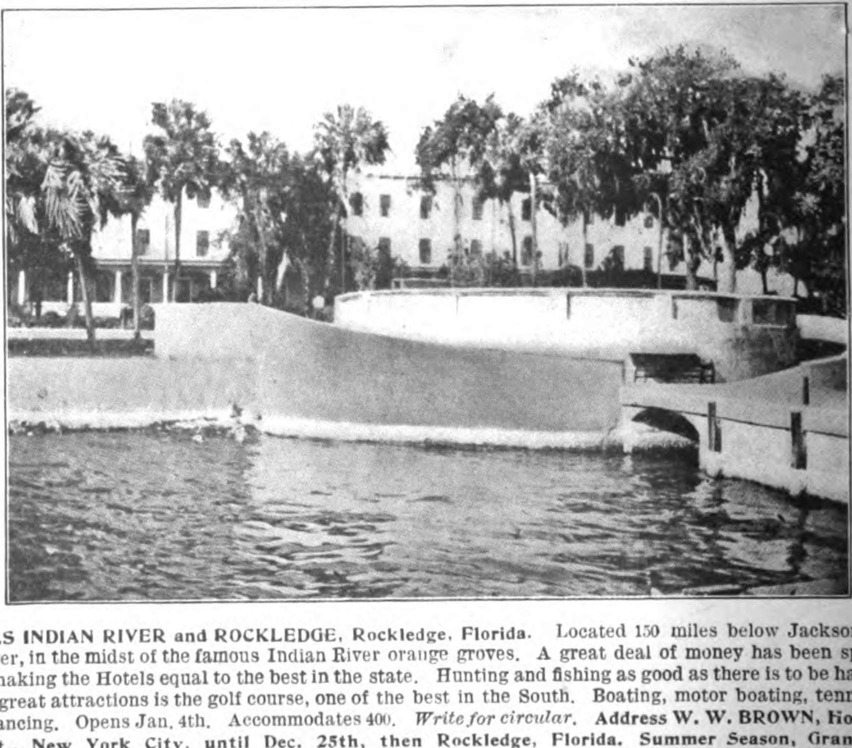

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

THE following were prize winners in the first club contest, conducted in the November BLACK CAT:

The prize of $25 for the best story in that number, determined by vote of the club members, went to Francis W. Dever, author of the story, HAZARD & O'CHANCE: LIGHT COMEDY.

The five prizes of $5 each for the best criticisms of the stories in the issue were awarded to the following: J. Charlton Smith, Greenfield, Ind.; Carrie Gorrell Hunter, Newton, Iowa; Hubert W. La Due, Los Angeles, Cal.; F. G. Davis, Richmond, Va.; J. Willard Ridings, Columbia, Mo.

THE winning letters are much too long to fit the space which we have alloted to The Black Cat Club this month. For that reason a brief synopsis of points brought out in the letters of criticism will have to suffice. Perhaps that would be the better way, as many of the members who did not win prizes contributed much interesting comment to the discussion. The five prize winning letters by no means stood out like electric advertising signs. It took a great deal of sorting and shifting and checking of points before the final selection was accomplished.

HAZARD & O'CHANCE: LIGHT COMEDY was easily the winning story. Criticism was so favorable even in the letters of those who did not think it the best one that more interest will attach to the adverse comment which was received. "Most immoral, putting a premium on dishonesty,"—"the motiff is displeasing and against all precedent of fiction that should preach a moral,"—"wouldn't let my son read it as it approves of badness and gambling,"—"would like it better if the author had his characters do good, humane things," were some of the phrases which summed up the opinions of four people who live in the same city. Curiously enough, these four who were so prudish as to question the moral effect of the story voted for another story which was fully as efficient in exploiting the unrighteous, though it did not exactly put a premium on dishonesty. One suspects such criticism to be the result of solicited prejudice rather than honest inconsistency. Moreover, it is an unconscious jab at O. Henry's "Gentle Grafter" stories. Anybody whose morals are likely to be affected by the gentle grafting of Dave Hazard and Terrence O'Chance or their famous prototypes, Jeff Peters and Andy Tucker, should never read the newspapers until the bad things have been edited with a pair of shears.

THE GENIUSES OF THE SUN was adjudged the second best story of the November number. Here is what some of our readers said about it: "I like its realism, and something unexpressed, a moving quality." "It rings true and will find a ready sympathy in the tired hearts of many who are struggling to keep their places in the mob racing toward the mirage, success." "I place it first on account of its natural human interest element,"—"because of its simplicity of construction and its elements of youth, love and success,"—"because it comes out of the world of real men and women and leaves a lingering sweetness in the mind of the reader." And here is the opinion of one who didn't care for it. "It would interest only those who are interested in publishing. I think that is how the story got over. Let it be ninth."

THE SCULPIN was a close third, receiving one less vote than The Geniuses of the Sun. The letter of Carrie Gorrell Hunter, one of the five dollar prize winners, is worth quoting. She gives this story first place because there is a "complete change of the reader's mental attitude toward the Sculpin during the progress of the tale. This is the real test of the short story."

While we do not agree that this is the real test in the sense that it is

(Continued on page 45)

GETTING IT

BY FREDERIC R. BUCKLEY

Resolved: That a long barreled revolver is superior to a short barreled revolver in accuracy, moral effect, and other respects. That is the resolution which the captain and first mate of the S. S. Leviathan debate upon, the former taking the affirmative. It is the corner stone of a good story.

THE peculiar attitude of the perfectly friendly officers of the "Leviathan," as they sat in that steamship's cabin under the smoky oil-lamp, each with a revolver pointed in the general direction of the other, was only one of the things about that dishevelled two-thousand-tonner that needed explanation.

The port authorities of San Pablo, for instance, would have appreciated an official explanation of why the battered looking old tramp that had lain up for repairs to her engines had left so quietly in the night, just before the De Corza revolutionists started up with such astounding quantities of ammunition. The port authorities were asking for these explanations by cable, over several thousand miles of sea, at the time the ship lay quietly at her berth in Brooklyn. The fact that the "Leviathan" was, in those cables, insulted by the title of the "Bubbling Wave," seemed to worry her officers not at all. With a bottle of kummel between them on the table, they were working for the welfare of the crew.

"And after all, Sven," growled Captain Webster through his whiskers, "you have to say that the long barrel gives you more accuracy. It must. And then—the moral effect! You baboon! A fine lot of bums we'd look, roaming the high seas with nothing better than your sawn-off peashooters! It's hard times when mariner-men have to pack guns for the sake of their wives and children; but they have to; and by gar! they shall have good guns while they're at it. There shan't be a gun-barrel less than nine inches long on this ship, Sven Kill—not a one. You can use that there plaything of yours for a paper-weight."

The big Swede eyed with disfavor the huge Colt with which the captain tapped the table in emphasis of his remark.

"Dey are so ugly," he said; "so handless; and dey so bulge de pocket—"

"You ain't goin' to take tea with the Queen of Sweden with yer gun on," said the captain sarcastically.

"I don't move it quick enough, again," protested Sven; "somehow it strains me at the wrist. I don't blow off his head at a moment. I don't like."

"You just show a man one of these things," said the captain, tapping the demi-cannon persuasively on the table, "and you don't have to blow off his head—not unless so be as he's contumelious, as the good book says. He caves in. It scares him. But that teaspoon of yours—he'd try pitching pennies into it. He'd inquire if you could be hired for the Fourth. No, sir. My crew shall shed as little of the gallows-warrant as possible; they shall carry big guns. You can keep that thing of yours for use in private life, if you wanta; but you don't use it in my business. I need dividends."

The mate filled a glass of kummel. He was a man of few words. The captain was not. Since Sven had said all he could, and since he knew that the captain was only just getting in form for the reaching of arguments from the earth and sky and the waters under the earth, he gave in—ungraciously.

"You der master are," he said. "Hand out your guns. Dey may look fierce, but dey don't shoot. Give me der short barrel; der big bullet; quick work. But you go on."

Only full conversion ever satisfied the captain. He proceeded with his arguments and the distribution of the kummel.

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He had reached the point at which he was telling Kill that nothing in the world would induce him to force any views upon anyone contrary to their conscientious convictions, when his mate fell gently asleep. His much-disputed bull-dog revolver still lay on the table in his grasp; but it had to do its arguing for itself. Sven Kill, with kummel, was outward bound for dreamland.

Captain Webster, in whose brain, also, the cordial was beginning to take effect, stood up and regarded, through the skylight, a patch of shimmering stars in the sky above the river. He cast one glance at his slumbering opponent, and walked toward the companion-ladder. A little of the night air would cool him. The cabin, he had already decided, was too stuffy for a man who would, within a few weeks, need all his wits about him to carry out a risky enterprise. He was crossing the gangway when he realized that his nine-inch barreled pistol was still in his hand. Absently, he stuffed it into the side pocket of his pea-jacket.

"They won't arrest a family man," he told himself dreamily, "with whiskers and a face like mine, for carrying a gun in this part of the city. It they do, I can say, 'Cap'n Webster; fifty-seven; white; S. S. Leviathan; married; not murderous.' That'll do it."

He turned to watch the arch of Brooklyn Bridge, with its crawling lights and their counterparts in the water beneath. Few tugs were around; the water looked untroubled. The commerce of the river had been overtaken by the calm which very rarely falls upon it, even so late at night as this—the midnight hour. The captain decided to take a stroll over the bridge. Perhaps he would return by the ferry.

Captain C. V. B. Webster was of the type of mariner not given to deep reflection on any matters not brought by circumstance immediately under his slightly red-rugged nose. He had a certain beautiful practicality which the addition of alcohol in its more concentrated solutions served only to render more evident. It was part of his philosophy to consider seriously the exact section of any circumstances in which he might find himself. As he neared the New York end of the bridge he was glowering into his whiskers over the problem of the increased cost of living—the particular application of the problem which applied to him. The fact was, the "Leviathan" had to make more money, and that quickly.

Mr. Webster and his mate of the ominous name had decided on a more lucrative method then the humdrum business of transporting goods from one point to another; that section of the problem was forgotten. What worried him now was the thought that in order to embark on her new career, she would need equipment of a peculiar nature; mainly accoutrements for the crew, and an artillery-adornment for a certain secluded portion of the deck; all of which would cost money.

The treasury of the "Leviathan," that commonwealth among ships, was in a decidedly depleted condition, boasting exactly three dollars and fifteen cents. So that the aspect of the higher-cost-of-living problem, which occupied the captain, resolved into the blank question, "Where am I going to get some money?" In order to give this the clear-headed consideration which it deserved, Captain Webster had taken this walk. Whether the July air was not sufficiently bracing, or that the kummel had been a little stronger even than usual, his head did not clear so easily as he expected. He turned a dark and clammy corner into East Third Street, remarking to himself that he was "woozy."

Save for a mild fight that was proceeding a block away, and the common noises of sirens and the tackle-blocks of cranes, early morning saw perfect quiet in East Third Street. The windows of the tenement houses which towered up into the ten-mile deep blue sky, were dark. Their darkness brought a feeling of pleasant isolation to Captain Webster. Here was the place for a pipe and a little quiet consideration; besides, his head might feel clearer if he sat down a while.

The mud of the street squashed for a moment around his decided bootsoles, and he sat down, back against the wall of a cement yard on the north side of the street.

A passing policeman, catching a glimpse of the bearded face lit by the glow of the pipe-bowl, crossed the street, one hand in hip pocket, to investigate. Peculiar things, not altogether unconnected with incendiarism and bombs, are liable to happen in East Third Street.

"Y' better move off there," remarked the policeman. "Stand up, and let's have a look at y'."

Captain Webster trained two bright eyes into the glare of the flash-lamp.

"I'm harmless," he said; "and if it's all the same to you, I'd like a moment's peace. Webster;—captain of the 'Leviathan,' yonder. I'm just sitting here. It's all right."

The apparent respectability of his garb reassured the officer.

"What y' doin'?" he asked.

A gentle dignity, born of drink in moderation, possessed the captain.

"I am contemplating the heavens," he replied. "I feel a little tired."

"Y' better go home," said the officer, and passed on smiling.

Captain Webster was as dimly conscious of his going as he had been of his presence. What obsessed him was the thought of equipping a whole crew with big revolvers that would terrify, and fixing on the foredeck of the "Leviathan," (or "Bubbling Wave" or "Arethusa Jane"), a coy but effective gun of some sort. Perhaps, he decided, an honest living might be made with the aid of the revolvers alone; but three dollars and fifteen cents—

Something caught his eye.

Against the blackness of the tenement house across the street, blazed a bright square of yellow,—a lighted window with the blind down, he told himself; and from the general direction of this lighted square came a peculiar sound. It was as if a number of men were saying the same thing over and over in subdued voices. As he watched, shadows began to fall on the blind, as though a procession were passing it. The shadows of the men were so clearly defined that he could perceive that they held in their hands objects that looked like daggers. Some of them had tridents. One had an axe, which he flourished as he passed the curtain.

The thoughts of Captain Webster dropped suddenly from revolvers to earth.

"That's funny," he observed.

The procession continued, and Captain Webster watched it with a curiosity that finally bordered on indignation. He was a Mason himself; and this looked to him, in his slightly elevated condition, like some discreditable distortion of the ancient craft.

"I'll go and look into this," he murmured.

Slowly he gathered himself together, rose to his feet and crossed the road. It required a little exploring to find the door of the house. When he reached the stairs, he found they were dark, and crooked, and most unholy-smelling. There was a greasy feel on the banisters which made the captain more indignant than ever with the pageantists above. The "Leviathan" might be falling to pieces, as the marine insurance inspector had said when he last looked her over at her owner's request; but at least she was clean. Captain Webster spat eloquently on the stairs and applied an adjective to the inhabitants of the house.

He reached the fourth floor, panting, and stopped to listen for sounds of the procession; all that came to his ear was the sound of a heavy snore. Evidently the noise of the lodge in session did not carry well inside the building. Merely as a precautionary measure, he drew from his pocket the mighty Colt and made the cylinder spin clicking around.

He ascended another flight and listened. From above he seemed to hear the faint likeness of the monotone. Over the smell of garlic and general cooking another odor, faint and penetrating, came to him.

He sniffed it with disgust.

"Incense!" he said. "Oh, gar!"

It was on the eighth floor he found them, busily intoning; and, as far as he could judge by the gentle shuffling of slippered feet behind the door, still marching slowly around. The idea annoyed him. He was tired and out of breath; and in the back of his brain had formed a definite message which he desired to deliver to the Grand Master in person, having first assured him it would take but a moment of his time. Having got this message fixed above the high-water-mark of the surging kummel, he knocked at the door. It was designed to be a hard, firm, summoning knock, suggestive of police; but, as it reached the panel, it was merely a succession of taps. Captain Webster was annoyed. He raised his fist and smote heavily on the thin wood.

The shuffling sound had stopped at the first tap. Now, after the final bump, he heard the slither of feet approaching the door. There was a slight delay. The captain grew still more annoyed. He would deliver the message as soon as he clapped eyes on any member of this singularly disgraceful lodge.

A light flashed upon him. A square foot of the door resolved itself into an opening, through which protruded a rather grimy hand. A voice said something in a foreign tongue. It seemed to be asking a question.

Captain Webster delivered the message that hung on the tip of his tongue. It was not so clearly enunciated as he would have liked.

"You—gotohell," he said. As the hand still lingered, he hit it with his revolver-barrel. Then he awaited the chance to fight everybody concerned.

To his intense surprise, the hand was withdrawn not rapidly, but as if it had been expecting the blow and was now satisfied. In a minute it reappeared, holding out to the waiting captain a large envelope, the string fastening of which was supplemented by a dozen big red seals.

"Gar!" said the captain under his breath. He took the package. The hand was withdrawn. He could hear noises which indicated that a number of men were clustering up to the inside of the door. As he stood there, his big gun drooping in his hand, a wailing chant, like unto the concert of many cats, fell on his ear. It seemed to be reiterating some question in the weird language he had heard at first. At last it stopped. The singers seemed to await some reply.

He let them wait a moment. He would teach them to serenade him.

He repeated his former remark, more clearly, more loudly, and twice.

A pained silence fell upon the lodge. Then arose a mighty hubbub. The next instant, the door was flung wide open and a horde of men burst out. They waved gleaming steel and shrieked. They had but two yards to cover to be at the captain's throat; but the South Seas train a man to rapid action. Before one of those daggers could approach him more nearly than the doorsill, Captain Webster, revolver in hand, was four steps down from that landing, plunging recklessly downstairs. As he went, he thought to his sobered self that this was a dern nice thing to happen to a peaceful man.

As he turned cyclonically into the landing where he had heard the heavy snore, something bright clattered from above to the boards at his feet.

"Throwing knives," he muttered; and classified his pursuers, "Wops."

They were after him hard. The rushing feet of the mob, and their remarkably husky yells, were very close behind when he took the last flight of steps at one leap and stumbled into the street. He was up in an instant; and the first of his pursuers saw him disappearing around a corner of the cement-yard building. The chase followed, with a roar; but when it reached the corner, Captain C. V. B. Webster was not in sight.

He listened to the excited council of war from behind the rampart of empty sacks which was masking his examination of the package. Quite sobered, but very curious now, he broke the seal and removed the contents of the envelope.

At the sight of them, he sat astounded for a moment. Astonishment, awe, and wonder, came into his eyes. There was a moment of silence in the dark corner, and then, with an irrepressible yell of joy, Webster arose and, with the speed of lightning, was past the group of counselling pursuers, speeding up the street again. He noticed as he passed that they still held their knives, and muttered to himself a profane prayer that their armories did not include firearms.

They were after him.

He dodged around another corner; and, before the triumphant yell could reach him, saw that he was in a cul-de-sac. He had barely time to back up against the wall at the end of the alley before the crowd of foreigners filled the mouth of it.

A charitable moonbeam saved his life.

By its light, the men with the daggers saw that the squat and whiskered man held something that glittered in his hand. They stood and yelled at him.

So long as he was not running and out of breath, nothing could shake the equanimity of Captain Webster. Slowly and surely he levelled his revolver. To see its muzzle rise was oddly reminiscent of those war pictures which show a howitzer being trained on the foe.

"You come any nearer, you bunch of wops," he said calmly, "and I'll fill you all so full of lead you'd do for ballast. You—tall feller! Don't you throw that knife."

The tall man yelled at him. He did not throw the knife. Instead, he turned and yelled in a dismal key for the police. One by one, his companions stopped their chatter and joined their voices with his. At the combined cry, the neighborhood awoke. Lights flashed into being at the windows. Ragged additions to the executive gathering flew up from nowhere. At the moment the captain decided to take a chance on breaking through in the confusion, the police arrived.

Two officers pushed through the crowd and halted in front of the tall man.

"What's all this?" said one of them, waving the crowd back with his club.

The tall man's doleful voice wailed out above the answering babel.

"We Branch Number Four, Polak Cloak Suit Tie Maker Lodge," he wailed. "We are in session when messenger arrives from Lodge Fifteen, which is striking. We have envelope—most important—to go to Lodge Fifteen. Messenger gives us pass-word; we hand out envelope; he cannot give us word for receipt. We open door. He run. Not lodge man at all. We chase. There he stand, envelope in pocket. Oh, take away and give to us, please, at once. He steal it."

The captain had moved from his place at the wall; and, revolver still in hand, now walked up to the policemen.

"I wouldn't believe that feller, anyway, sergeant," said he calmly. "I don't know what excuse he's been offering for rushing out on me with a gang of armed murderers, but I don't think he—has—a—truthful—eye."

His own eye fixed the tall man with a baleful glare.

"You throat-cuttin' heathen!" he ejaculated.

"What's your side of the tale?" asked the sergeant. "I suppose he didn't chase you for nothing, did he? Him and his pals?"

Innocence beamed from the face of Webster.

"All I know," said he, "is that I was sitting by the wall yonder—where the other officer saw me—contemplating the heavens, in which, as master of the steamship "Leviathan," I am interested, when suddenly this bunch comes rushing around the corner, stops near, and talks bloody murder to each other. Then, not wishing to be party to their plans, I arise with a cry, and they chase me—"

"Why did you run," said the sergeant, "if you had no reason to?"

"Would you want to be cut to ribbons?" asked Webster with interest. The policeman subsided.

"All the fellers had was shears," he said, pointing to the gleaming metal in the hands of the tall man. "They carry 'em for insignia at lodge meetings of the tie-trade."

"Well, anyway," said the captain, eyeing the shears and ignoring them, "they didn't chase me far. I backed up against this wall and asked what I was being chased for. 'Excuse me, sir,' I said to them—"

"Well," said the sergeant, "his complaint is that you stole an envelope."

"Envelope? Me? What envelope? Have I been chased this far for a condemned penny envelope? Why—"

The sergeant turned to the tall man.

"What was in that envelope?" he asked. Before the tall man could unloose his eager consonants, the captain took the floor in haste.

"Say," he cried, "I got to get back to my ship. I can't stand here talking all night. I understand that chap to say—" he skated rapidly over this thin ice—"that he didn't got a good look at the man who took his envelope. If he's willin' to take the risk of havin' you arrest me on the strength of what he saw, he can take it, and Gawd help his lodge when I bring suit against it for wrongful arrest. Or, if you want, search me for his envelope in front of him. Here's my card—Webster,—'Leviathan,' Brooklyn; and there's my proposition. Let him take his choice. I got something better to do than talk to wops all night."

The policeman took the card—it was engraved—and saw the mighty name "Leviathan." It sounded like a Cunarder at least; and the sergeant was about due for relief.

"Say," he cried to the tall man, "if we frisk this gent right here, will that satisfy you? Right here before you? You don't mind, Captain?"

"It goes to my heart," said Webster, "but no."

The tall man consulted with the group; and the captain, watching them with an agonized unconcern, gathered from their manner that the identification was actually not very complete. Confronted with policemen and uncompromising law, the Polak Cloak Suit Tie Makers faltered.

"They say 'All right,'" the sergeant said, turning from the group at last, "providing you'll come back with them over the ground they said you ran. We'll go there first, if you don't mind, Cap'n."

They went to the pile of cement bags; members of the lodge snooped with a frenzied diligence in all the corners there and along the road where a package might have been thrown, but found nothing.

Then, under an arc-lamp, the two policemen—in whose breasts something about the whiskers of the captain seemed to kindle suspicion—gave him such a searching as would have brought to light even a pinhead of unauthorized property. They searched him twice, down to his skin and his boots; and, when the tall man suggested places for a third search, the sergeant noticed that Webster still held his revolver in a steady grip.

"You let me hold this," he said. "It might scare the crowd."

He held it while the other finished the search.

Save for sixty-three cents and a locket—which, Webster explained with offensive candor, contained a lock of his poor dear dead aunt's hair, the pockets of Captain Webster were empty. Of envelope, or of the possible contents of one, there was not a trace.

"Satisfied?" asked the sergeant, turning to the lodge members.

They were not, but the sergeant was tired. In his reasoning mind, he acquitted the captain entirely. Whiskers and rather too innocent mild blue eyes were not, he told himself, admissible as evidence.

"Well, you ought to be," he told the crowd sourly; and to the captain said, "You can go, sir; not our mistake."

He handed over the big revolver.

"Some cannon!" he remarked. "I bet you got a well-behaved crew."

"Oh, they're good lads," said the captain, "they wouldn't give *me* trouble; I ain't so young as I was, and it wouldn't be fair. Goodbye. Take the Eiffel Tower there home to cool off. If you want to know what I think of him and his envelopes—bein' a rheumatic man—"

He told them to such effect that even the sergeant smiled.

Sven Kill was still heavily asleep when his superior officer clattered light-heartedly into the cabin. The yelling of his name in tones of raucous quality and the utmost delight, only made him stir and say, "Uh!"

The captain sat down on the opposite side of the table, and shook him, until he awoke. Rubbing his eyes dazedly, he saw the captain draw the big revolver and tap with it on the table just as he had done at their previous interview.

The tapping continued and, as the astounded mate watched, he saw a roll of gold-colored paper emerge from the muzzle of the gun.

"In the barrel of that gun," said the captain, "is two thousand dollars in five-hundred-dollar bills. I'll tell you all about it in a minute. Where'd you have been if you'd had to hide 'em in your two-inch-barrel popgun? Now which is the better length?"

Before the mate could answer, a new thought struck the captain.

He bawled with glee, and nearly rolled off his chair.

"My gar!" he cried. "They didn't know their own money when it was pointed at 'em!"

THE ACQUITTAL OF DOCTOR GUIDAS

BY LADD PLUMLEY

A man who has been acquitted of a serious charge from lack of evidence is likely to find that some people are not convinced of his innocence, people who are never satisfied unless the prosecuting attorney secures a conviction. In this case, the real acquittal did not come until thirty years after the trial—a long time for the jury to be out.

YOU boys asked about the monument that you noticed when you came up the turnpike from fishing the stream. The monument is mixed up with the murder trial—the only murder trial I had while I was sheriff. While mother is cooking your fish for supper we'll sit out here under the horse-chestnut and I'll tell you the story.

"We've all got a streak that is born with us and I guess my streak is being awful absent-minded. And if it hadn't been for being absent-minded the night before I found the woman's body I'd never found it at all and folks wouldn't have known what they know about Doctor Guidas. Folks called him Geedas, though the real way to say it is Gydas—that's how he said it.

"It was the November when sister Sara's first came and mother had gone over to Hillsdale to take care of her. I wrestled my own dinner and stayed alone that night. And what with having prison things on my mind I made a mistake and didn't set the kitchen clock. I twisted the hands round so I could put in the winding key, then I forgot to turn the hands back again. So the clock was three hours fast and the alarm went off in the night instead of four in the morning.

"I made coffee and got my breakfast and started for the jail. It was a miserable night, black as pitch, with a dizzle of sleet and rain.

"There's a path through the meadow out to the turnpike beyond the railroad track, just over near that bunch of cattle. Beyond, you can see the top of Doctor Guidas's house, almost hidden in the maples.

"I got to the track and stumbled down the bank, but I got twisted in the dark. In them days both sides were thick with bushes and when I had crossed the rails I couldn't find the path. So I lit a match—the sulphur kind that flickers into a blue light and then flares out yellow. As the match flamed out, I saw a bundle on the rails, not fifteen feet from where I stood. I stumbled over the ties to where the bundle lay and lighted another match. I jumped back as if a black snake was lashing at my face.

"The bundle was a woman's body, wrapped in a long red cloak. It lay neat and straight right across the rails and that proved sure she hadn't been killed by a train. If she'd been killed that way she would have been thrown to one side. How the creeps ran over me! For the woman's head was cut clean off. I can't chuck it how I felt or how long I stood there before I made up my mind to do something.

"I couldn't leave the poor thing on the track. I stumbled forward and lifted the bundle and lugged it up into the bushes, dropping it mighty quick. Then I stumbled down to the track. It seemed plain that somebody had put the body on the track to cover up a killing, planning that folks would think that the woman was sitting there and was killed by an engine.

"While I stood there wondering what I'd better do, I heard a train coming. It was what we called the 'Nighthawk,' that came through about two o'clock, though, what with the clock mistake, I didn't know which train it was. I stumbled into the bushes and waited until the cars roared past. And before the rails stopped humming I heard someone coming through the bushes back of me. I kept as quiet as a ghost in a graveyard. I thought I understood. Whoever had put the body across the track was taking the chance of coming to find out what had happened. The cut being pretty deep he hadn't seen the matches I lighted.

"I heard the fellow stumble past me and down to the ties. A moment later a match flamed out and I saw him groping here and there. Then he lit another match and a third and sneaked along in the ditches.

"I slipped the revolver I carried after I was sheriff into my side pocket and made sure I had my handcuffs with me. It was so dark I couldn't use a gun, so I lit right out and made a rush for my man.

"He heard me coming and was ready. We grappled savagely and he tried to trip me, but I wormed my hand around his throat, and when I got my grip I didn't let up until he fell on the ground with me on top. Then I pulled out my irons and snapped them on, and what with the choking he'd had and the fall on the back of his head, he was pretty much all in.

"In five minutes he began to come round, gasping and choking. Then I pulled him to his feet.

"'Keep in front,' I ordered. 'Go down the track to the signal light. My gun's nudging you in the back.'

"When we got to the light above the crossing I got a look at his face.

"'By heavens! Doctor Guidas!' I broke out. Then I asked him, 'What the devil does this mean, Doctor?'

"He answered cold-like, the same as he always spoke, 'I was on my way to see a patient. You must let me go.'

"'Perhaps it's a mistake, but it doesn't look so to me,' I answered. 'Sorry, Doctor, but it's the jail for you till there's light let in on this woman biz.'

"'You'll regret this, Sheriff,' he clicked, and beyond that he said nothing. He turned and stumbled on ahead of me.

"Doctor Guidas had come to this part of the country about ten years before the night I arrested him. He bought out the practice of old Doctor Hunt, who went to live with a son out west. Guidas was a good doctor, but from the first nobody took to him. There was something about him that gave you a kind of chill. He was thin and tall—must have stood six feet two,—and always carried his head far back and high. And when he nodded to you and said, 'Good morning, sir!' you felt that he had sized you up and that you didn't mate with what he had a right to expect. Nobody knew anything about his past and there was lots of gossip. But by the end of ten years he had made his foothold and when I was elected sheriff he was elected county doctor, and was county doctor the night I put my irons on him.

"By daylight we had three deputies out looking for the head of the woman, but it wasn't found then and it never was found, head nor skull. After the coroner's inquest the body was buried in the furthest corner of the cemetery. This shows how folks thought about it. The grave, old Deacon Middleton, before he died, made his folks promise they'd have his plot changed from near the corner and bury him way off from the grave of the headless woman.

"At the coroner's inquest the doctor wouldn't make any defense. From the time I got him to the jail that November night he begun to give us the kind of silence he gave us for thirty years. At the coroner's inquest you wouldn't have supposed that any man could keep such hobbles on his tongue. When they asked him a question they got no answer. If the question had nothing to do with finding the body he would nod or shake his head, and if it did, he'd stare at the foreman of the jury as if the foreman was the person under suspicion.

"Even before the inquest, folks got excited. I saw how things were going and swore in a lot of deputies. This is New York and people don't get worked up over a murder as they do in the South, judging from what we read. But folks didn't talk about anything but the doctor and the woman they said he murdered. Long before the trial, there were plenty of good and lawful citizens that lost their heads. I kept my deputies at the jail. They slept there and ate their meals there. And for a long time I stayed at the jail myself. When the trial came, I used to bunch my prisoner with the deputies and march him back and forth to the courthouse. We heard plenty of threats that the doctor would never live to be executed by law. In the eyes of most folks, killing a woman is a thousand times worse than killing a man. Then to do what the doctor was thought to have done made him a kind of devil. And he had always held himself away from folks and had seemed to think so much of himself. Folks talked as if burning on a bonfire was none too good for him.

"Who the woman was no one knew, that is, they didn't know her name. But even before it was proved at the trial, folks believed that she was a young woman who had been seen lots of times at the railroad station and always bought a ticket to New York. Several times she'd been seen coming out of the doctor's office. There were two or three young men in town who gave her a nice high-flavored reputation. Folks said that she was a bad one, and that the doctor's private life hadn't been what folks supposed it had.

"At that time the county had the most 'get-there' prosecuting attorney this county ever had. Good as he was, though, it was proved at the trial he was no match for the lawyer who was assigned to the prisoner. For Doctor Guidas wouldn't employ counsel; said he would be his own counsel. But the judge appointed Amos Nichols. A couple of years afterward Amos went down to New York and we hear that he's a big lawyer down there, one of the biggest that ever came from up the state, and we've sent our share of big lawyers to New York.

"If it hadn't been for Amos the jury would have brought in a verdict of guilty. But though feeling against him ran so high that it must have counted lots with the jury, Amos won out. Lots of things the state proved. It was shown that the woman had come up from New York on a morning train the day before I found the body. It was also shown that she spent the afternoon with two of the town's giddy young fellows, drinking in a saloon near the station. It was proved that she was seen going into the doctor's house just about dark, but nothing more was proved. From the time a groceryman, who was driving up the street near the doctor's, saw her go up the steps of the doctor's office, nothing more was seen of her until I found her body.

"So the doctor got off by the fringe of his eyebrows and for years we expected that other evidence would poke up its head and bring a new trial. I thought that when we let him out of jail he would be lynched, but you can't figure on public opinion. From the time the jury disagreed, folks settled down and began to talk about something else. He didn't go away,—stayed right here,—but he took no chances. It was months before he showed his face, and when he did, he walked the streets just as he always had, holding up his head same as he always did. Proud as ever—that's what he was—perhaps a mite prouder. But during his jailing and the trial his hair went from coal black to snow white. And as far as his practice was concerned he was ruined. No one thought of sending for him. The wonder was that he didn't move away.

"This is a fine horse country—it's the water—and the doctor was always fond of horses. He started a stock farm and within ten years he was making big money. It was about then that he began to give his services to them who couldn't pay for doctoring. And for the next twenty years there was never any one sick that the doctor wasn't ready to help, day and night. Once in a while he was called to assist at an operation, for the other doctors set a lot of store by him. But no one ever heard of his sending in a bill.

"But the silence he gave this town! It was like meeting a dumb man. And the thought of what lay in the corner of the cemetery made lots of people keep away from him as they would keep away from a man with the smallpox. There were silly young folks who said that they were afraid to go past the doctor's house at night, but as years went on there was less and less of that talk, until the time came when, unless you was a stranger and folks wanted to tell you about everybody, you heard nothing about the doctor.

"Then came a wreck on the railroad that was the most fearful wreck we ever had in this part of the state. The doctor was in the wreck. He had been asked to help in an operation down the line and had started as he always did when he was needed. He was hurt bad. Although he must have suffered something fearful, he managed to crawl here and there and do things for others. When the relief train got to the wreck they found Doctor Guidas, fainted dead away, over a man whose mashed leg he had been trying to bandage. They brought the doctor home and ten days later he died.

"During the ten days there was a string of folks that the doctor had helped coming all the time.

"You glimpsed the monument. We think it's pretty nifty. The money was raised by subscription and the committee said that it would have been mighty easy to yank in ten times what it cost. And the thing about it is that when the money was raised folks didn't know but what Doctor Guidas was a murderer. After all, though, everybody had forgotten they ever thought that. Things hang together. Murderers don't act the way the doctor did for thirty years; so folks weren't surprised when it all come out.

"A month after the monument had been put up, I went over to the doctor's place to look at a horse that his executor had for sale. As there were no near relatives, his money was left for a town hospital. We've never had what you might call a real hospital. They've broken ground and if you come up for the fall shooting, you'll see in brick what Doctor Guidas left our town.

"As I began to say, I went over to look at the horse. It was a hot August day and the old housekeeper asked me if I wouldn't like a glass of cold milk. I stepped into the doctor's office and waited. It is in a wing, with a long passage that runs back to the house. While I waited for the milk I looked around. Except when we was searching for evidence, it was the only time I was ever in the doctor's office. The room was filled with the things that you would expect to see in a doctor's office, only the doctor, being a breeder of horses, there was horse books mixed in with doctors' books. There were some other things in the office that were not mixed with horses or doctoring, and I noticed an old army musket above the fireplace. At the murder trial it had been brought out that when he was nothing but a boy the doctor had been in the civil war.

"I walked over and looked at a picture of three soldiers with only a hint of hair on their lips, on the mantel. Then, being a gun sharp, I reached up and lifted down the musket. I wondered if it was a smooth bore or rifled and I saw that it was smooth. I pulled out the ramrod and pushed it down the barrel, and when I tried to pull it out it stuck fast; so, bracing the stock between my feet, I gave a good yank and out came the ramrod, and wrapped around the head of it was a wad of stiff, white paper. I smoothed the paper out and I saw that it was one of those three for a quarter photos, of a mighty pretty girl. There was a letter scrawled on the back of the picture.

"The picture is a part of the county records now. That night I turned it over. A gun barrel was about the only place that the searchers for evidence at the time of the trial would never think of.

"The letter on the back of the picture told how a daughter had brought the most awful disgrace on a father that a girl can bring. It asked for his forgiveness and said that she had come to the place where her death would be the only way out. She put it that she would lock herself in and use a pistol that she carried with her. She said that the picture would remind her father of how she used to look, but the doctor must have known it would prove who she was. Proud as he was, he tried to fix things up so nobody could find out, no matter what happened. But I figure it that he'd always kept the confession in the gun barrel so that he could save himself. Most likely if he hadn't been acquitted he'd have used it.

"You'd like to know about what was never buried in the corner of the cemetery, —the poor thing's head? I don't think any one will ever find out about that. The doctor knew how to keep a secret just about as well as a secret can be kept."

CONSCIENCE STUFF FOR TWO

BY LOUIS SCHNEIDER

Petey's case of wanderlust was as chronic as arterio sclerosis. One day he flipped a fast freight; and shortly after, friends viewed a shredded corpse and a green-checked mackinaw. The mourners' bench wasn't particularly crowded; a girl named Peggy did most of the weeping, and even she didn't stay there long. Perhaps she suspected a sequel to Petey's demise.

EVERYBODY in Goveland knew the rod-riding flea's life that Petey Streams led, and everybody expected almost anything of him, but nobody expected him to turn up safe and sound after a trackwalker somewhere south of the Junction had found the gruesome remnants of what had been a human being scattered along the track for several hundred yards, also the tattered remnants of a showy green-checked mackinaw in a pocket of which were some of Petey's letters and his much-becarved pipe.

Even without the mackinaw the evidence would have been considered conclusive, and the verdict in Goveland was that Petey had hopped his last train—that he was now finally free from the pangs of periodic wanderlust. No one particularly mourned for him,—not even his elderly, simple-minded aunt, with whom he had dwelt when he took a momentary rest from his travelling. So long as she had had a home she had been satisfied. Now that she had none—

To say that no one mourned Petey may be putting it too strong. Peggy Morton doubtless did, in her odd way; but where Petey was concerned, Peggy had always been odd. She got possession of and treasured up, the old pipe that had once been Petey's, and her face began to have a lean, hungry look, very similar to the lean, hungry look Petey always had.

She made no open demonstration, but people noticed and remarked. That Peggy, the only child of the town's richest banker plus skinflint, considered something of a flapper and just out of high school and her teens, ever should have taken the slightest fancy to a will-o'-the-wisp like Petey, was more than the proverbial nine days' wonder. Why, Mrs. Gault, with all her other troubles besides, didn't take it so hard!

Mrs. Gault was Petey's aunt. She had had a very neat little house on a very neat little street, left to her by a late husband. Petey, being her only known kin, ordinarily would have been expected to assume the role of provider of the house, but this he failed to do. When the open road called, Petey sent no proxy or substitute. So Mrs. Gault, having been in the eye of old Morton for some time, considered and accepted an offer made by him, her funds in the bank having dwindled until there threatened to be as few figures to the left of the decimal point in her balance as there were to the right.

Morton proposed, since Petey could not reasonably be depended on and she herself might not be able to make her own living, that she deed the property to him. He would pay her a stated small sum each week as long as she lived and she would also have full use and control of the house. At least, that is what she said afterward, but the contract which both she and Morton produced when she entered complaint because he wanted to put her out of the house, said nothing about the use and control part. So she was ousted from her own house, for Morton knew where he could rent it for more than twice as much a week as he was paying her.

Petey was out on a rod-riding jaunt at the time, and when he came in at dead of night and tried to slip in at a rear window of the house that had always been home to him, he was met by a fusillade of grimly-intended but laughably-directed cold lead from the new householder. The scare and indignity served quite as much to stir his anger as did the facts which led up to the incident, and for once in his life Morton heard at least a part of the town's convictions regarding himself. Petey delivered them.

"Old man," he summed up, "with scoundrels selling at twenty-seven cents a gross, retail, you'd be worth a million bucks, bankrupt manufacturer's price."

Morton had a snappy way of his own, but on this occasion he didn't put any of it into words. He wasn't a large man, but his thirty per cent more of compact flesh than Petey's whirled on his revolving chair, laid hand on Petey's arm, and rushed Petey toward the open door. Almost there, Petey stumbled and did a fancy twist. Somehow he got mixed up with Morton's legs, and the next second the back of Morton's head thumped the floor, while Petey stood with his hands flaring the skirts of his coat away from his hips, his feet set far apart.

"Ex-cuse me," he bowed. "Slippery ways are bad for old feet. Use Square Deal calks,—reminds me,—are you going to give aunt a square deal?"

Morton had abandoned silence when his head quit spinning and, aside from what was purely personal, Petey gathered that Aunt Gault had had as square a deal as she was going to get in the matter. That Petey should get out of the office instanter didn't need gathering; it came in an unmistakable lump of words.

Petey drew a long breath, and his hunching shoulders forced his chin out in a manner that made the old man back away. After ten seconds Petey let the breath escape in a short laugh.

"Right. Gone. Not even staying long enough for you to tell me this time to keep away from Peggy. And, say, listen. I'll fix you. You'll see. Right, too."

He strutted out. Ten steps ahead of him on the street was Peggy. He doubled his pace to catch up to her. At the approaching staccato of his heels she turned. Mutual smiles of pleasure were exchanged, and her raised sunshade changed hands.

"Which way?" queried Petey.

"Anywhere."

"In particular?"

"No."

"Straight ahead, then."

They proceeded to the end of the street and to the crown of the hill overlooking the ball park. Petey whipped off his coat and spread it on the ground. Peggy snuggled down on it.

"Like old times," he said, as he stretched himself at her feet.

"Just."

He rummaged in a pocket of the coat and drew out pipe and tobacco tin. With the pipe well going, he began to talk.

He went into the details of his latest jaunt, talking leisurely and making illuminating comments as he went. Peggy listened in silence. Finally he stopped, his pipe dead, his head cradled in his clasped fingers against a mossy stone.

"Sometimes—I almost wish—I could hit the road too," breathed Peggy.

He turned his head lazily.

Far beyond the ball grounds a train whistled a crossing and Petey sat up suddenly. A freight was creeping out into the open country, slow on an up-grade, the lazy shimmer of midsummer heat investing its length with the lure of dancing outlines.

"There'd be a peach of a place to flip her," he commented.

With a tantalizing slowness the freight dragged itself through a cut and called again from beyond, faintly.

"You were gone ninety-three days this last time," said Peggy, in a little voice, after a time.

He took the tobacco tin from her hand and surveyed it. All the lines of lettering had been scratched neatly from its sides, and the red fields left between. Down from the top the fields had been scored with crosses; some with more, some with less. He checked off the lowest line of them with his finger.

"Ninety-three—yes."

"You're staying away longer each time."

"Longer I stay—farther I get away—harder I hit it when I get started back. Say, I beat it back a hundred miles once this trip to get this old can. Left it setting under a culvert by a camp fire."

"You didn't want to lose your tally of the days?"

"Well, there's this piece of art work of yours on the lid."

He indicated two hearts transfixed by an arrow, scratched on the bright tin.

"Why do you stay away longer every time? Some time you'll—starve."

He gave her a quick glance, but she was tracing the design on the box. "If anybody eats, I eat," he laconized. Then he laughed shortly. "Don't you worry. Some day I'll maybe stay away so long I'll never want to leave when I get back."

After a while she broke the silence. "You—your aunt must feel—Dad—"

"Never mind," he put in. "That's nothing between you and—anybody. Let's get back to town. Say, Billy Lockput tells me there's a home talent show on day after tomorrow night. Let's see it."

The night of the show very naturally came around, but, almost quite as naturally, Petey did not. By that time there was a new scratch on a new field on his red tobacco tin.

Peggy and the home town experienced many happenings before they saw Petey again, but the feelings and actions of the two did not correspond, for when Petey dropped out again, the town scarcely noticed it; Peggy did.

When word came three days later about the human remnants and tatters of the green mackinaw having been found below the Junction, the town callously said the fitting thing, as it saw it; Peggy drooped, and her face took on the lean and hungry look.

When, three months later, old Morton's safe was blown open and rifled while a political jollification was on, the firing of numerous anvil salvos hiding the explosion, the town threw a young fit and Morton tried to find a clue by which to trace the offender, but without result; Peggy kept calm, grew thoughtful, won back some of the roses in her cheeks, and no longer carried flowers to place on Petey's grave.

When, about a month later, old Morton made his annual trip East with a grip full of farm mortgages to sell, and while he was away a package of banknotes to the amount of about two thousand dollars came to Mrs. Gault by plain mail, the town remarked that that was about the value of the property that Morton had beaten the old lady out of, and said something about "conscience" in a wondering tone, as though they had suspected nothing of the sort in his makeup; Peggy got some of her smiles back. She also got hold of Mrs. Gault and turned the old lady's thought to the buying of a small farm just outside town.

Then, after almost everybody had forgotten Petey, to the surprise of everybody —except to Peggy, who took it calmly—Petey came back. He told a rapid tale of having crossed the ocean on a cattle-ship —having been picked up and chucked into an English prison,—" 'count of the war, you know,"—of finally being freed, and of having worked his way back. "B'lieve me, I shined more brass and peeled more spuds that trip than I ever thought there were in the world!

"That green mackinaw and my letters and pipe? Traded that to Canada Jack for this red one. Ain't it a beaut? Must have forgotten the pipe and all that.

"Heard somebody cracked old man Morton's box and got away with some coin. Darn old shark! Serves him right. Wish it had been me. Darnfidon't! Eh? No! Two thousand dollars? Say, I'm going to stay and help her spend it. She put it in a chicken ranch? Oh, cackle! Where's the place?"

That afternoon he came into town again, carrying his aunt's copy of the contract between her and Morton.

"Here y'are," he clipped as he shredded the paper under the old man's nose. "Wrong to have you making any more payments to her when your conscience hurt you so bad you had to come across with the worth of the property you beat her out of. Glad to know about that,—not like you,— good sign, though. Maybe it means you'll mend your ways. I have mine."

The pressure of Morton's feelings seemed to rise to the danger point, but Petey's little air of seeing quite through the old man's soul out of the corner of eyes which seemed to be concerned with nothing but the view framed by the window, was too much. He curbed himself and swung back to his desk.

"Get out!" he husked.

Petey's wide-set heels clicked together and he brought an akimboed hand to a salute.

"Gone."

He went around to see Peggy.

"I'm thy Petey's ghost," he announced dramatically, as she answered his ring. "Surprise you? Scare you?"

"No. I knew your step. The only difference is, your heels come down quite a bit surer. Come in here, and tell me about—everything."

"Wish we could go out to the hill," he remarked as he settled down in a chair. "Too cold, though."

"Here's your old pipe. Start it going."

He turned the old brier this way and that, brought out his tobacco tin, filled up, and applied a match. Then he started his story while she played idly with the tin.

"When was it you started across on that cattle-boat?" she asked at one point.

He said nothing for several seconds. He fixed his eyes full and steady upon her, but she did not look up.

"Let—me—see; sometime late in October, I think."

She nodded, and he went on with the story. When he had finished, she looked up with a little shudder.

"That—that Candy Jack—"

"'Canada' Jack," laughed Petey.

"Well, Canada Jack, then, but— Oh, Peter, if that had been you!"

"'Peter!'" Petey dropped the dead pipe with which he had been toying, and bounded to his feet. "Whew! 'Peter!' Since when?"

"Since, oh, ever so long!"

He swept quick arms about her. "Listen to me, Peggy. I'm through. Seen lots of the world, and there's nothing to it. Nor to the way I've seen it. I'm through, and that's straight. Listen. Anybody can make aunt do anything. She's easy, and I'm going to do her for the good of everybody concerned. Get your bets down she's going to let me raise two eggs out on her place in nests where not even a cackle grew before. Peggy Morton, you're going to get your wraps on—right now—and we're going to dig up a license and face the first preacher we can find. I've gathered a little moss of my own while I was rolling, but at the best, it'll be some come-down for a banker's daughter. I hope the old man won't cut up too rough."

"He won't. I know he won't. He's—he's different since people here know about that 'conscience' money your aunt got fixed on him. Oh, it couldn't help but get around to us, in a town like this, Peter."

"You'll do it?" He shook her.

"If—you'll—let me go."

When she came back, ready for the street, Petey was rummaging about, the old pipe in his left hand.

"Is this what you're looking for?" she asked, extending a tobacco tin.

"Surest thing. I'm so flustered I need it for my nerves."

"How long were you gone this last time, Peter?"

"Long enough to scratch up three red streaks on the old can. No more of that for Pete,—Peter, I mean. See here,—two hundred and sevent— Why, say, that's not the can I—"

"I know it isn't, Peter," she said, as she calmly held his overcoat ready for him to slip into. "But it is the right can. I happened to go down to the bank with Dad on the morning after the safe was blown, and I found this can where you had come through the window at the back. The record of days had been kept right up to that time, so I knew."

"And after knowing all that—" gulped Petey.

"It's done us all a world of good," suggested Peggy.

"If it wasn't that the property's worth every bit of what—what the old man was stung for, I'd feel worse than I do; might have to take a big dose of that conscience stuff myself. As it is, if you go ahead with this, Peggy, you may be a convict's wife some of these days."

"I'll risk it. I'm the only one that has real evidence, and—they can't make a wife testify against her husband, anyway. No—no—stop! Get into this overcoat, Peter Streams!"

"Yes, ma'am," acquiesced Peter. "Afterward, though, there's a true story I want to tell you."

SLICKS AN' SLICKERS

BY GEORGE THOMAS ARMITAGE

In the cattle country, men who put their brands on other men's cows are as common as their city brothers who sign checks with other men's names. You will meet one or two in this tale and you will find as much action as in all the other stories of the issue combined.

"ROLL out!"

The dish-pan echoed a wild tattoo.

Cheyenne Bill's lanky two yards wiggled—just a trifle. It was "Cheyenne" for short.

"Ugh-gosh," followed another volley from the much abused tinware.

Watt yelled: "Come alive you punchers! Goin' ta lay on bed-groun' all day?"

Watt was boss; his command bore weight.

"Damn!" ejaculated Cheyenne, emphatically. His bed was canvas to canvas with Watt's.

"Same here," said Watt, "but she's gotta be done."

Cheyenne kicked back his "tarp." Dew-stiff it crackled. Stars blushed at his *exposé;* clear-topped hills hinted daybreak.

Regretfully, protestingly, the cowman's lean prayer-shanks drew slowly from a warm hole cuddled under the sougans; shot back again for one last cosy "feel," then braved the chill of a Montana morning—in the open.

Watt's bed was already rolled.

"Big doin's t'day, Cheyenne—and t'night, too," he said, in a low tone. "Better get a move on."

Cheyenne wagged his tousled "bean." "Nothin' stirrin', Watt. I been thinkin' all night an' I can't do it."

"S—h," the boss nodded warningly toward the animated open-air bedroom where a dozen punchers cussed into belts and boots.

"We'll fight it out on the Ridge," he added.

In a greasy "vest," serving the double role of carry-all and nightshirt, Cheyenne discovered "makin's." Matches were popping in the semi-darkness of 4 A. M. Cigarettes glowed and Cheyenne inhaled about a quart of the aromatic fumes. It warmed him; it cheered his slumbering corpuscles. He sprang up and his shirt-tail snapped with the breeze.

"Come an' get 'er 'fore I throw it in th' mud!"

Sap Eye bellowed his "last call." Cow-puncher haberdashery flew. No one doubted the cook's ultimatum.

Beds plunked into the wagon box. Chaps were hastily buckled and spurs jammed on heel.

Watt saw the remuda. "Throw 'er inta ya quick, boys, here's the horses!"

Blear-eyed punchers fought through the grease-wood toward a hazy blotch where a burning stump of tallow mussed a cracker box.

"Grab yer Java an' don't be slow," was Sap Eye's "good morning."

Toilet? No! It was a "dry" camp; water was scarce—cold, too.

The sputtering wax showed the crew squatted, Indian-fashion, in the corners. Cheyenne's eyes sought Watt's, clashed, and looked back to beefsteak.

"Where's th' 'cow'?" the Duke whined.

"Drink yer Java straight, granger. It'll make hair grow on yer chest." Sap Eye spoke convincingly. Cheyenne nodded approbation.

For the Duke and the Duck, who bunked together, had stumbled in last, as usual, and got no smiling welcome.

Cheyenne's think-box rattled. "I gotta turn Watt down; I gotta ditch my pal," clicked in his "dome" and it wrinkled.

In a tin cup was Watt's whole morning meal. His cast-iron stomach warmed with the boiling coffee—unembellished, and topped by many "pills." Dark lashes seemed closed, but flitting pupils saw everything, mostly Cheyenne. He called a mental roll of the cowboys—coatless, shivering. They'd be sweating soon enough, he mused.

"Where's the flap-jacks?" demanded the Duke.

Something was always missing around that chuck wagon for the Duke and the Duck.

"Ferget it!" Sap Eye leered through his one good and glowing orbit.

The Duke did.

Watt sprang from his "crouch." Five minutes was too long for breakfast.

"Rope top horses. You'll need 'em t'day," he ordered.

Tinware bombarded the dish-pan. The Duke and the Duck sadly scraped their "leavin's." Cigarettes dropped from lips shortly crossed with spuds.

Two hundred mounts, fresh from their all-night graze, tore the dust in the rope corral. The horses jammed, breasts out, as tangled lassos went flying; ears ducked and wiggled.

There was a whirl and a snap; Cheyenne's "R. L. Baldy" backed out like a gentleman. His eyes popped comprehensively as the loop flew high over the mass of manes and nicely noosed his nose.

The Duke caught four heads in his wild throw and nearly stampeded the bunch. Cowboys cursed to the rescue when the Duck tried for a head and got a front leg.

Horses were "sunfishin'" in the rocks, taking out the morning kinks. The Kid had fallen on some cactus bushes, but said nothing. Cow-punching was something rather new for him.

The Duke and the Duck jointly jeered at the fallen one.

"Shut up, you Muntgumery Ward cowboys," Cheyenne commanded, glaring hotly. "He's learnin' anyhow. Youse guys ain't got guts enough ta tackle a bad 'un!"

The Duke and the Duck had the tamest "string" in the remuda, and "pulled leather," at that.

Four beefy browns stamped at the bed wagon tongue; four monstrous greys were in collar at the "pie" wagon. Cowboys grabbed bridles as the traces snapped.

"Got yer cayuses?"

"You bet!"

"Down corral!"

Ropes disappeared; the mess tent vanished. Sap Eye's last pan banged into the grub box. Half a beef went aboard in canvas. Hands grabbed the stove. They weren't the Duke's nor the Duck's.

Sap Eye's dirty ball of bacon grease and denim rolled up to the spring seat. Trampled buffalo grass, a few tin cans and some ashes, were the only evidences of a one-night stand. The leaders snorted and pawed the earth.

"Gimme the ribbons!"

Seattle Sid tossed Sap Eye the reins.

"Tu'n 'em loose!"

Eight brawny necks smashed their collars. Brake-beams clanged free; two lashes squirmed. Watt waved Seattle Sid ahead of the four-in-handers.

"You're pilot t'day. Throw 'em on Dry Springs an' wait fer me."

"Foller my dust!" Sap Eye yelled, and Lee answered, "Get outa my way!"

The race of fours was on; so was the round-up!

The boss loped up the Ridge; cowboy consorts followed. Already goose-fleshed skins were thawing. The sun suggested a scorcher as Watt waved his men by twos, down into the distant ranges. The big circle had started.

"Bring every hoof," he commanded them. "Gotta clean up in here t'day. Throw 'em into the Basin an' wait fer me."

Always it was "wait fer me" with Watt.

As the last cowboy vanished in a deep canyon to skim its ridges and to take its offering of hide and hair to the round-up, Watt pulled up on "Walkin' Man." Cheyenne knew what was coming. Together their eyes slid for a moment down the long slopes and peeked into cracks and crevices of the range-land.

"She'll be a hummer, Cheyenne," Watt evaded the big issue.

"I'd tell a man!" Cheyenne admitted.

They twisted a smoke.

"I'll take a look at the Pocket like I said yesterday," Watt told his top hand. "You beat it down and see Seattle puts camp on decent water. We'll be about needed at the round-up then, and wait fer me."

Cheyenne unlimbered for the ride.

"Goin' ta brand them slicks with me t'night?" the boss stopped him.

"I can't do it, Watt, like I told you 'fore breakfast."

"Why, ain't we friends?"

"Sure, an' so's me'n the Ole Gent."

Watt eyed Cheyenne carefully.

"You'n me's been on the trail a long time together."

"You bet!"

"What we got for it?"

Cheyenne didn't answer; Watt did.

"What we got? I'll tell you. I get $75 a month fer wagon boss; you drag $50 as top hand. The Duke an' the Duck get almost that an' they don't know beans. Is that square? Not by a darn sight. Then ya don't owe the Ole Gent nothin'. Buy yer saddle an' fixin's; ain't much left fer Christmas, huh?"

There was a dullness in Cheyenne's eyes that admitted Watt's argument, but there was determination, too."

Watt continued: "You take the kid, fer instance. He ain't much better, but he's got the idey and tries. You bet the Duke and the Duck don't."

"I told 'em where ta head in when they guyed the Kid this A. M. "There was a temporary gleam in Cheyenne's eyes. "But this shore ain't shovin' them critters outa the coulees. Let's be driftin'."

"Pretty pronto, Cheyenne, but how about stickin' yer brand onto them slicks in the Pocket?"

"How do ya know them mavericks's there?"

Watt scrutinized Cheyenne carefully before answering:

"Ever since the Duke and the Duck passed up the Pocket at the spring round-up I've suspected there was some calves there what didn't get branded."

Cheyenne looked squarely at the boss.

"I was leadin' circle that day, Watt, an' I remember sendin' 'em to the Pocket, an' tellin' how to get in. I think they did."

Watt went on easily: "I don't. They swore they brought that buncha white-faces outa there, but I know the white-faces was in Cottonwood canyon. Nope, them slicks is there now, 'less some un else's grabbed 'em. Anyhow, I'll know darn soon."

"You're kiddin' me, ain't ya, Watt?"

"Do I act like I's kiddin'? Throw in with me and we'll pull the deal."

Cheyenne straightened in his stirrups and "R. L." felt a tightening of rein. The grey-eyed range roamer peered down into the valleys that were giving him $50 a month and keep. Why should he buckle down for years to a millionaire company that almost hated to give him a winter job? But a whiff of breeze braced him and he smiled back at Watt. His mind was free.

"What you do is Jake with me, Watt. Go to it. But I've looked the Ole Gent in the eye too long. Mebbe I ain't worth more'n $50 a month. He ought ta know." Cheyenne took a long breath for it was a long speech for him. "But it's just like ya never told no one with me knowin', Watt. I'm mum."

A peculiar light that Cheyenne did not exactly understand entered Watt's eyes; something hard went up and down in his neck and he stared vacantly far out into the cow country spaces where the valleys were already belching forth their full quota of hoofs and hides.

"Put 'er there, Cheyenne; I'll play the game alone," he said feelingly.

Two calloused paws clenched; two pairs of eyes met and looked away; two cow ponies jogged apart.

In the Pocket Watt found just what he expected to find.

"Jest what I figgered," he explained to Walkin' Man, who didn't care what Watt "figgered," with plenty of high grass here for an occasional mouthful.

"Jest what I figgered. It sure is easy pickin's."

A small but impressive army of red-skinned, pot-bellied old mammies whirled into action front and stood staring with a row of belligerent horns presented at the strange horseman as he approached. Cowboys came seldom to this tiny hidden haven of water and shelter and grass; no visiting bovine ever braved the cool reception offered at the canyon's mouth by this seclusive set. The dozen odd cows had "squatted" here and they were not to be "unsquatted" without a fight. Of course a man was different, but he needn't come too often nor get too gay. The mothers baaed for calves as Watt inspected them. Thoughts of the searing iron that had scorched their own sides in infancy made them nervous for their still unbranded young. But the calves fed right on.

Watt counted fifteen calves; thought a moment; then whirled Walkin' Man out of the luxuriant pasture, with no apologies to his indignant mount, and hit a high lope for camp and the round-up where it was, "Wait for me."

As if a terrific whirlwind had devastated those hills and vales, blowing every living thing into the center of the storm, the circle riders had combed the rocks and ridges for their quarry and pushed them into the valley. The hills rained cattle; dogies poured from the plateau; gullies took up the torrent of beef and flooded the mad, indignant stream into the Basin. Critters piled into a hot, bawling mass of dust and alkali as drive met drive and hide rubbed hide.

Watt rode around the flood of flesh. The last drive was bellowing into the melee; lathering horses raced to hold the tide; thousands of hoofs tore the earth to cast it up in a great storm of dust and muck; hundreds of range-prowlers were angry and they said so—loud. The surf of horns rolled; the waves of heads sparkled in the sun as Watt rode up to Cheyenne and told him the calves were in the Pocket.

Cheyenne's voice was calm, but his eyes twitched as he answered, "All right, let's hit the round-up."

Into the crowding hordes rode Watt, now captain of the round-up. Cheyenne followed. Cowboys tightened their watch. Watt pointed Walkin' Man at a "79" cow with calf, and out of the herd they shot and into the branding "cut." Cheyenne and R. L. found another mother and baby, and so the "cuttin" went on.

Heat poured down into the boiling caldron of dirt and sweat; dust lifted at times, seasoned with alkali, and showed the stamping critters and the cowboys holding them at bay. But the spring round-up had been thorough—outside the Pocket—and most of the branding had been then. By eleven o'clock Watt followed the last cow with calf from the maelstrom. Around the undulating mass he loped, picking up cowboys as he went. Nosey and Seattle and Doc stayed to hold the herd during dinner.

"Last one ta camp's a sheepherder," Watt yelled suddenly.

Out over the cacti, through sage-brush, past an alkali flat, tore the hungry rangers. Mounts knew their day's work was through and their nostrils dilated for the race. Cutbanks, prairie dog holes, rocks and boulders, had no terrors for them. Watt led on Walkin' Man, now a "Runnin' Man," the fastest horse in the remuda. There was a mile of flapping stirrups and a "yip-yip-yip." The Kid's Arab reeled in a badger hole; Cheyenne ripped past, righting the white-faced boy and the falling horse. They raced into camp and saddles hit the ground. The Kid was the "goat." Horses went flying to freedom.

"Darn glad I ain't no sheepherder," the Duke told the Duck loudly.

Their usually uncalled-for remarks were continually irritating Cheyenne.

"Youse guys wouldn't even make good wooley-wranglers. They gotta know somethin'," he sharply informed the boasters.

Watt ate until he could hold no more; drank deep of cold spring water and staggered erect. "Rope yer cuttin' horses and hit fer the round-up," was his terse order, and the dash was on again.

If Cheyenne imagined anxiety in Watt's eyes as they rode to the branding, he was wrong; if he thought Watt was worrying about the night's work he also missed it. Automatically Cheyenne roped and dragged the bawling chunks of tender flesh to the branding fire as he marveled at the sudden change in Watt.

The sun was setting when the last throbbing little side was marked in signs of fire and the herd of branded babies wobbled back to the big bunch to the tune of mothers' indignant bellows.

But there was another branding party ahead for Watt, a party with unheralded developments.

The men were at supper when two horsemen approached.

"It's the Ole Gent," Watt cried, springing up to welcome his boss.

The Ole Gent shook hands around and found a plate and cup.

"Eastern land buyer," he said, with a wave towards his companion.

Shortly they were in their saddles, on fresh horses.

"Stay the night," Watt said. "We can rustle a bed."

"Gotta make the home ranch t'night," the Ole Gent explained. He looked at the sky. "May rain, too. We'll have to ramble some."

They were gone. Cheyenne breathed easier—for Watt. Cheyenne knew that nothing would stop Watt if he had made up his mind, but burning hair smells a long way and calves bawl loud.

At ten o'clock Nosey poked Cheyenne's slats, growled, "Second guard," and Cheyenne came to life. Watt still slumbered, but Cheyenne saw that the boss's night horse was saddled, picketed, and ready for midnight work. In two minutes Cheyenne and the Kid were riding side by side to relieve the first guard punchers.

The herd had quieted to a brown blotch, showing up dark and irregular in a little hollow under the moon. Steers were down and only one stray cow wandered aimlessly, with doleful mooings, in search of her baby, lost in the shuffle.

The Kid and Cheyenne separated to meet periodically on each side as they ambled quietly around the night herd. Cheyenne thought about Watt and the Pocket, of $50 per, and being "straight." The Kid mused of a little girl down at the Crossing who admitted she always had liked cowboys. Suddenly the adventurous youth spurred his "Tiny" up to meet Cheyenne.

"I heard something t'day I think I oughta tell ya," he said.

Cheyenne was in no mood for conversation, but the Kid usually kept his mouth shut.

"Spit 'er out," he commanded.

"I heard the Duke and the Duck say somethin' 'bout meetin' at midnight in the Pocket. What's that for?"

The Kid might just as well have kicked Cheyenne in the face.

"Goin' ta meet in the Pocket?" he said, disbelievingly.

"Yep, an' there was somethin' else 'bout it's bein' their last chance an' bein' the biggest haul yet."

Cheyenne blinked—yapp-mouthed, stunned.

"They're on third guard, right after us, ain't they?" continued the Kid.

"Yep," Cheyenne answered the question absently. "Boss put 'em there 'cause then the herd's asleep just like them," but mentally he questioned wildly, "Fer God's sake is Watt in cahoots with the Duke and the Duck?"

It was too great a shock for Cheyenne's already troubled sensibilities to grasp immediately. He sat staring at the Kid while the scheme percolated through his dazed mind.

"They've found Watt's cache in the Pocket," he reasoned, "an' don't know it's his. They think they've got a sure thing and they'll run into Watt. Then there'll be hell ta pay. Somethin's gotta be done, quick—but what?"

"I wanta ask ya just one more question," said the Kid, "an' then I'll beat it 'round the herd and see if everything's O. K."

"Shoot!"

"Why's the stock inspector with the Ole Gent?"

"He ain't. It's a eastern land buyer."

"Land buyer, nothin'! He's the new inspector. I saw him at the state fair last fall."

Surprises were coming too fast for Cheyenne. "What was the inspector doin' with the Ole Gent? An' passin' off fer some un else!"

It was past him. The whole proposition was a muddle. He'd better keep his hands out of the mess. But could he, with Watt liable to discovery by the Duke and the Duck. No! Way back in his brain an idea formulated; suddenly it crashed out: "Stick the grangers and save the boss."

Action was Cheyenne's middle name.

"Kid, how'd ya like ta make a fast ride, right now,—the fastest ya can?"

"Where to?"

Cheyenne looked at the guard watch. Ten minutes of midnight,—almost time!

"You call the Duke and the Duck now for the third guard, then hit fer the home ranch. Ride like hell an' don't stop till ya ketch the Ole Gent."

The youthful puncher sat straight and ready. "What'll I tell the Ole Gent?"

"That I've gone to stop some cattle stealin' in the Pocket!"

"Can I come back with 'em?" the Kid asked, turning his Tiny to camp.

"Sure!" yelled Cheyenne at the flying horseman.

When the Duke and the Duck appeared, Cheyenne silently resigned the guard watch to them. They were silent,—and nervous, too, Cheyenne thought.

Cheyenne picked his way noiselessly among scattered spots of white about the bed wagon to his own "tarp," where he took out his old .45. With the big gun buckled at his hip he thrilled. This was real business, the same as the old days. His blood tingled for the clash.

"Big business t'night is right," he grimly reiterated Watt's own assertion.

Carefully he led his "Sickem" out of the maze of bed and stake ropes and found the trail that led toward the Pocket, where he expected to catch two tenderfeet in tender business; where unbranded, unsuspecting calves, dreamed peacefully, and where he hoped that Watt would "wait fer me."

Cheyenne swung through the dark shadows of the moonlit canyon into the Pocket at a fast gallop; Sickem bounded out into the pen grass and up to the shaky remnants of an old horse corral. "Slicks," awakened from their sleep, scampered up. Mothers, unaccustomed to midnight intrusion, lunged to hoof from the tall grass. In a clump of pines near the corral, Cheyenne hid Sickem. There was no sign of Watt.

"Queer where the boss is," he ruminated. "Sure don't look like he was havin' any brandin' party."

Then he started forward and listened.

"Horses, sure! Bet it's the Duke and the Duck!"

Cheyenne's eyes strained through the pine needles as the hoof beats slowed, then ceased. The horses had left the hard path for the soft grass. Shortly the little "cavee" of mammies and babies were milling inside the corral. Cheyenne recognized the Duke and the Duck. He wasn't a minute too soon; still no Watt.

"Start the fire while I practice heelin'," Cheyenne heard the Duke say to the Duck. Cheyenne thought there was considerable shakiness in the tone and chuckled softly.

"Guess he'd better try, all right," he whispered to Sickem, who was also all attention. "He needs lots of practice from what I've seen, you bet."

The hidden cowboy, with eyes glowing and pulse quickening, saw the flames leap. Cedar smoke went up from popping posts. The Duke had thrown several times. Finally he dragged a calf to the fire; enraged mothers were mooing. Cheyenne saw no Watt; things had gone far enough. He felt his sixshooter and crept cautiously out of the protecting shadows. The calf was complaining. Cheyenne crawled through the corral bars and almost reached the fire before the Duke and the Duck saw him.

"Throw up her dooks, boys," came a command from the other side of the fence. Up shot the Duke's and the Duck's hands.

Cheyenne's hand sought his gun. Who were these strangers?

"You, too, Cheyenne," ordered a strangely familiar voice at the other end of an automatic. It was the Ole Gent. Peering over the top rail were Watt and the stock inspector, with pistols leveled. Cheyenne stared—transfixed.

"Fer God's sake, ya don't think I'm in this deal," Cheyenne gasped.

"I ain't thinkin' nothin' 'cept you're totin' a mighty big gat," answered the Ole Gent. "We'll argie after I get yer Colts."

"How did they come here and what was Watt doin' with 'em?" Cheyenne wondered. "The Kid couldn'ta caught 'em so soon. And where was the Kid, anyhow?"

"You'd better stick up yer paws, temporary only," Watt told Cheyenne.

The stock inspector scrambled over the fence to appropriate the guns.

"There's yar evidence," the Ole Gent told them when the artillery had been confiscated, and the trio rested their arms. The Duke and the Duck stared askance at Cheyenne.

"There's yar evidence," the Ole Gent said to the stock inspector, pointing to the crude mark seared on the heretofore unblemished hide of the former "slick" that had scampered out of the noose.

"It's plenty to send them to the 'pen,'" the state official said.

Watt's eyes showed what pity can be expressed in a cowpuncher's orbits as he drew Cheyenne to one side and explained: "They told me you was in on the deal, but I never did believe it. Why, when I tried you out t'day, Cheyenne, I was plum' certain you was straight."

Cheyenne was sick at heart from the disgusting mess. He didn't care whether he explained or not, and could he explain?

"Anyhow, it was pretty raw, Watt, the way you fooled me this morning," he said bitterly. "I don't savey why you lied to me so."

"I only did it to save you if you was plannin' the trick," explained Watt feelingly. "If you had fell fer my proposition this mornin' I woulda got you outa the mess even if I had missed catchin' the Duke and the Duck. The Ole Gent and I've been plannin' fer months to nab the guys that's been stealin' so many '79' calves. But you seemed so innocent that I was sure you was straight. I couldn't tell you then 'cause the Ole Gent said 'No.' An' here you've been plottin' with the grangers all the time behind my back."

"You're a damn liar, Watt."

"You'll have ta prove that ta the Jury, Cheyenne, not ta me."

Suddenly the seriousness struck Cheyenne. "I ain't goin' ta jail, am I?"

"I hate this as much as you," the Ole Gent spoke up, "but you're here an' we'll have ta take ya ta town, I guess."

"Let's be moving," said the inspector.

The silent crew swung into their saddles, the grangers evading Cheyenne, who made one more appeal to the Ole Gent. "Gimme a chance to explain," he said.

"At the trial, Cheyenne," answered the Ole Gent, not unkindly. "Nothin' you'd say now'd keep ya from goin' ta town fer—"

The sound of rapid hoof-beats down the canyon caused him to hesitate. Cheyenne looked up, indifferently. No more surprises could arouse him. He'd had enough—but had he? It was the Kid who came tearing up the dust.

"I figgered after I'd ridden away that the Ole Gent an' the inspector 'as comin' ta the Pocket themselves," he panted excitedly to Cheyenne, "so I beat it back."

Cheyenne suddenly sat up and yelled, "Don't say another word, Kid. Shut up tight." Then the cowboy prisoner turned to the Ole Gent. "I'm asking fer this one chance. You ride out a bit with the Kid an' he'll tell ya the whole yarn in darn few words. It'll explain everything."

The inspector objected: "Let's be moving. He can tell his story in court."

But Cheyenne hadn't labored faithfully for years for nothing in the service of the "79." The Ole Gent beckoned the Kid to one side and when he rode back he returned Cheyenne's gun.

"Business is business, an' I hope ya don't blame me, Cheyenne," he said, and turning to Watt continued, "Cheyenne was only going ta save us the trouble."

Watt grinned broadly and stuck out his paw. "I'm sure tickled, Cheyenne. I couldn't get it outa my bean that you was straight."

The pals shook hands understandingly.

The Ole Gent started his party down the road, then stopped and said, "An' by the way, Watt, you get a hundred from now on and you, seventy-five, Cheyenne. I meant ta do somethin' fer ya boys as soon as I got straightened 'round."

Cheyenne bowed and so did Watt, low and humbly. Far down the road Watt yelled to the Ole Gent, "We've got a little present fer you, too."

"All right, shoot!"

"Fifteen slicks!"

All smiled except the Duke and the Duck.

Watt turned to Cheyenne and the Kid.

"I wouldn't be surprised if the Kid gets a winter job and a raise, too, this fall," he predicted, "but let's show a little speed. We'll hear somethin' a darn sight worse than all the rest in about two hours."

"Fer the love of Mike, what?" demanded the already punctured puncher.

"ROLL OUT."

THE FAIRY WAND

BY ANNA BROWNELL DUNAWAY

In this story we have a girl who was a Venus by name and a Cinderella by inclination, though she resembled neither in facial beauty nor physical contour. But after all, clothes make the woman as often as they do the man, perhaps oftener; and a Prince Charming may be found in almost any boarding house, though his name may be Smith in the city directory.

WHEN one has often been characterized in charitable asides, as "a plain Jane," it is hard to bear up under the name of Venus. Miss Ramsey never wrote it without a shrinking of her sensitive soul. "If it could only have been Moll or Jane or Sue," she was wont to wail despairingly, "but Venus, when I am so small and so ugly. What could my mother have been thinking about?"

But the young mother of tender memory had lingered only for a while, and, youthfully romantic, she had seen in her baby's dazzling skin and red-gold hair, promises of beauty, and so she called her Venus.

No doubt if she had lived, the name might have been eminently fitting, for she had been a beauty and her mother before her. Venus, herself, narrowly escaped being remarkably pretty. Her hair was a beautiful reddish brown with glints of gold, her eyes reflected yellow lights, and her skin was exquisite. But there her good points ended. Her eyebrows almost met and her mouth was far too wide for beauty. Nevertheless, she might have been attractive had she not become apathetic to herself and her surroundings. Early orphaned, life had not been kind to Venus. She had become self-conscious and self-centered.

In addition, she was a schoolma'am of the proverbially uncertain age. In reality she was twenty-five though she looked thirty. Colorless as is this terse and brief biography, it is no more so than her life had been up to the present time.

Now, as she brushed her coppery hair before the mirror in her room at "The Boarders' Rest," she dreaded the ordeal before her. She was a new teacher in the Milford schools, chosen to fill a vacancy. This evening would be her initial appearance and she hated to think of entering the dining room of the boarding-house for the first time. Twisting her hair into an unfashionable knot, she wished devoutly that she had had time to look about and engage board in a private family.

After she had slipped into a plain and unbecoming black wool gown, Venus lingered at the door nervously. The clatter of dishes and the hum of voices reached her distinctly. Finally, she turned the knob and entered timidly. She would rather have faced a cannon than the staring eyes that greeted her.

As she stood flushing painfully, the landlady, Mrs. Todd, bore down upon her with a tureen of soup. Having deposited this, Mrs. Todd assigned her to a seat, at the same time announcing dramatically, "Gentlemen and Miss Perkins, let me make you acquainted with Miss Venus Ramsey, the new schoolma'am. Miss Ramsey, meet Mr. Bundy, our star boarder, him bein' allus puntool to his vittles. Next is Mr. Springer, first floor front. Mr. Springer is turrible opposed to buckwheat cakes and infant baptism."

As the loquacious landlady paused for breath, Venus, under the amused scrutiny of the men addressed, felt her knees shaking. She tried to drop into a seat, but the introductions were not yet over.

"That there lady to your left," continued Mrs. Todd, "is Miss Perkins, our leadin' milliner, and last but not least, is Perfessor La Violette, the only one of our select company what takes his eggs soft biled three minutes."

Blushing furiously, Venus sank into her chair, which chanced to be next to Mr. La Violette. The self-consciousness that now enveloped her was akin to stage fright. She put out her hand awkwardly and, in doing so, knocked Mr. La Violette's coffee from his hand.

There was a crash of china, and through the tears of humiliation that filled her eyes, Venus observed Mr. La Violette hastily dabbing at his neat gray suit with his napkin.

Although he reiterated, "It is nothing, nothing at all," she kept repeating, "Oh, I beg your pardon," till Mrs. Todd observed good-naturedly, "There, there, no harm did, I'm sure. Who'll know in a hundred years from now that he got coffee spilt on him? That's what my grandfather use to say to my great-aunt when she like to grieved herself to death because the guv'nor of the state ketched her drinkin' out of the nose of her teapot."

"Haccidents will "appen," remarked Mr. Bundy brilliantly, "hin the best regulated families."

"Kindly pass the butter down this way," spoke up Mr. Springer, with an amiable desire to enter into the conversation.

"Let hit walk," suggested Mr. Bundy facetiously.

"Go long with you," laughed Mrs. Todd playfully. "It ain't old enough. Heavings, Sadie"—this to the maid of all work—"bring Mr. La Violette another cup of coffee, do, and renew the pickled pigs' feet."

"Speaking of accidents," observed Mr. La Violette pleasantly, "I am reminded of an aunt of mine who walked into church with her green parasol over her head. She never thought to lower it until she had reached her pew."

After an interval of several seconds, during which Mr. Bundy appeared to slowly assimilate this information, he burst out explosively, "That was a blarsted thing to do."

Miss Perkins tittered behind her hand. Venus, observing her suddenly, noted her fearful and wonderful array. She was very bald at the temples, which gave her a sort of skinned appearance. But she wore a Psyche knot with curls and large jet earrings. Sadie, under cover of handing Venus the mustard, whispered, "Ain't she just grand? She's leadin' on both gents, Mr. Springer and Mr. Bundy."

The landlady now broke in: "Sadie, bring in the dezzart. What do you know about that? It's a surprise for you—strawberries—and them dear. Not that the dishes kin be overly full. Let's see, they's five of you—"

"And one dead," interpolated Sadie accurately.

Here Miss Perkins sniffed audibly.

"Go long with you," cried Mrs. Todd feelingly, "and don't be stirrin' up memories of the departed. There, there, Miss Perkins, lamb, here's the biggest dish and don't mind a foolish girl what if she had a little more sense would be half-witted. If Mr. Beanblossom is no more, him bein' took off in his bloom by appendiceetus, there is others."

Venus found herself smiling in spite of her embarrassment. There was a genial hominess about the Boarders' Rest and its sympathetic landlady that she appreciated. She glanced surreptitiously at her neighbor and met his answering gaze. The blush deepened in her cheek, for she, Venus Ramsey, with whom no one had ever "kept company," had actually surprised a look of admiration in the eyes of a man!

In her room that night, Venus sat pensively gazing at a rug before her dresser that represented a gentle-looking dog admiring a bunch of roses. But it was not of the dog nor of the roses that she was thinking. Indeed, her thoughts were rather chaotic, involving Miss Perkins's amazing record as a heart-breaker, the genial atmosphere of the Boarders' Rest, the excellent cooking, her own awkwardness and—the admiring gaze of Mr. La Violette.

She had the second floor front and there drifted in through the open window from the porch below, the scent of cigars. It was one of those warm evenings in February that have in them a hint of spring.

"I should say," the unmistakable tones of Mr. Springer floated in clearly, "that we had in our midst a Cinderella instead of a Venus. She looks as if she'd played hooky from a graveyard."

"Hall she needs to be a Venus," answered Mr. Bundy, "his a fairy wand. She's there and then she ain't. Hy say, ain't 'er 'air rippin'? Miss Perkins would give 'er 'ead to blush like that. But she'll never see thirty again."

"You're on," agreed Mr. Springer. "She's like a turkey without the fixin's. What she needs is a few trimmin's. A fairy godmother, a glass slipper—a prince." He tossed his cigar with an eloquent gesture.

"For tuppence I'd be the prince," declared Mr. Bundy, "if somebody would shake the wand. A little dolling up now—"

Venus, coming to herself suddenly, ran blindly to the bed and tumbling over on it, lay face-down among the pillows, her fingers in her ears. After a time she got up, turned on the light and studied her face attentively. How coolly appraising they had been—these two comparative strangers. And yet, in a way, kind, she was bound to admit. No one had ever before spoken of her possibilities. Rude as the shock was it stirred her into action. She determined to accept their challenge. She, herself, would wave the fairy wand that was to change the leaden outlook of her future.

With her determination a new confidence in herself stole over her. She had never tried in the remotest degree to be attractive. Well, perhaps now— She smiled as she shook out her burnished hair with girlish vanity. And the smile deepened as she noted the rose-leaf oval of her cheek. "A little dolling up now," she quoted demurely but, strange to say, she was not thinking of Mr. Bundy but of Mr. La Violette.

Venus was not at breakfast on the Saturday morning following. Instead, she took an early train to the shopping metropolis twenty miles away. She could not remember when she had felt such a pleasurable thrill at the thought of a day spent in buying finery. Formerly she had bought as a matter of course when her clothes grew shabby or worn. Then, there had been no one to care how she looked, but now she had a duty to perform. She would no longer sit among the ashes, a forlorn Cinderella. She would make herself attractive. More than all, she would justify the admiration of one man's eyes.

Fortunately she fell into the hands of a discriminating saleslady; one who was quick to note her good points and make the most of them. She selected for her a suit of blue that went beautifully with her exquisite skin. A chic little hat and red fox furs quite transformed her. As she stood before the mirror, Venus hardly recognized the vision in the glass. The tawny tints of the red fox furs reflected the yellow lights of her eyes. Beneath the delft blue of her hat her face looked dazzlingly fair. The saleslady nodded approvingly, but Venus, with an exultant thrill, did not stop there. She bought a string of beads, some pretty blouses, gloves, silk hose and stylish boots. A sudden feminine delight in pretty clothes obsessed her. She could even afford to smile now at Mr. Springer's simile, "a turkey without fixin's." She would leave nothing out. Cranberries, pumpkin pie, plum pudding—Mr. Springer should have them all at once.

The return train was late and it was after six when Venus entered the hall of the Boarders' Rest. The clatter from the dining room told her that supper was in progress. Leaving her bundles in the hall, she went directly to the table. Strange to say, none of her old diffidence possessed her. She was becomingly clothed and, as she said to herself whimsically, in her right mind.

Her entrance had almost the effect of a bomb. Miss Perkins gasped at the blue vision that swept past her; Mr. Bundy craned his neck to get a better view; Mr. Springer all but choked in his glass of water.

"Lor' bless us!" cried Mrs. Todd, "if it ain't Teacher. Heavings, Sadie, don't stand there gawking. Bring Miss Ramsey's tea and dish up some fresh weinies. An' if it's all the same to you, Mr. La Violette, pass Mr. Bundy the stoo."

"I have butter, thank you," declined Venus, smiling composedly at Mr. Springer, who was frenziedly proffering her the plate for the third time.

"Excuse me for hornin' in," snapped Miss Perkins acidly, "but I have asked twice for the ketchup, Mr. Springer."

The gentleman addressed jumped guiltily and reached for the bottle, but Mr. La

Violette was before him. "Allow me," he said gallantly, and passing it, leaned toward Venus. She had not looked at him before, but now she met his eyes, and in their depths was admiration, warm, sincere and ardent.

The effect of her brilliant coup was evident to Venus when she found herself the object of rivalry between Mr. Springer and Mr. Bundy. The former was first in the field with an invitation which he had delivered to her by messenger. Evidently he had consulted a practical letter writer for the envelope bore across the lower left hand corner, the inscription, "Kindness of Spook Wiggins." The contents were as follows:

Miss Venus Ramsey,
Kind Friend:
If agreeable to you I would be pleased to have the honor of your company to the entertainment tomorrow night at the schoolhouse.
Hoping for a favorable reply, I am
Yours sincerely,
(Although merely) Alvin J. Springer.

"Because it is the first note of its kind I ever got," said Venus to herself, laughing, "I'll go if merely for the experience." She lingered like a girl of sixteen over her toilet for the occasion. Her rose chiffon blouse heightened the pink of her cheeks. "Now for the cranberries, O fairy wand," she laughed gaily, and caught up fan and gloves and lacy handkerchief. Was this vision really she, Venus Ramsey? Was not Miss Perkins, peeping sourly over the banisters, one of the ugly sisters, and was it not just possible that the pumpkin coach was waiting at the door?

The next evening Mr. Bundy, not to be outdone, had carnations sent to her room with a request for her company to a lyceum lecture. Miss Perkins renewed her efforts at fascination and gave it out as her opinion to those who cared to hear, that Venus was a "catty thing."

"Some men," she observed pointedly at table, "would get stuck on a pin. A girl rully hasn't no protection from the sex. They wink at one and all indiscriminate."

"None of 'em," defended Mrs. Todd charitably, "has winked at me yet."

"They 'ave too much sense," observed Mr. Bundy gallantly.

Though this remark was capable of a double meaning, Mrs. Todd accepted it in the chivalrous spirit in which it was given. Venus could scarcely contain her merriment. In her spasmodic efforts to keep from laughing outright, she turned to Mr. La Violette. His eyes were regarding her intently and there was in their amused gray depths, a certain look that set her pulses beating.

And now Venus awakened to the fact that one cannot be too popular with the opposite sex without incurring jealousy and spite. Miss Perkins's manner grew distinctly hostile. Then, too, the attentions of Mr. Springer and Mr. Bundy, now that the charm of novelty had worn off, were growing a trifle irksome. The latter's final triumph was achieved when he concealed in a bunch of carnations—they were cheap at fifty a dozen—the following tender missive:

"A Wenus doth among us dwell,
A Wenus with a beauteous spell,
O goddess, smile upon me, do.
Or else my heart will break into."

There was a sort of intoxication in her sudden popularity. She smiled upon all alike, though she could not be said to be flirting. She was merely gracious, agreeable and wholly charming. She was thrown much with Mr. La Violette in connection with their common school interests, yet he alone, withheld his attentions.

She wondered, with a sense of pique, at his impervious manner, for she felt intuitively that he admired her. She read it in the ardent looks he often bent upon her, in the thousand ways a woman learns to know.

Could it be possible that he was interested in Miss Perkins? Venus noticed that they were often together and Miss Perkins seemed to exude an air of proprietorship. She hung about him in a sisterly, not to say motherly, way. Indeed, it was evident to everyone save Mr. La Violette himself, that she was fairly throwing herself at him.

Venus, innocent in the ways of the world, did not profess to understand it. "She is certainly not his equal," she told herself, miserably, and then blushed at her own unwonted interest in Mr. La Violette.

"The work here is certainly agreeing with you," he said to her one day with an approving glance at the flushed cheek turned toward him. They were walking home from school together.

"It does," assented Venus. "I love the work and I love the Boarders' Rest. It is the homiest place in the world. For the first time in my life I seem to be really living."

"You have grasped one of life's fundamental principles," said La Violette. "You have solved the riddle of yourself."

"I have turned it into a fairy tale," smiled Venus enigmatically, "all that it lacks now is—Prince Charming."

They were in the hall now—a narrow entry—and in closing the door, they were crowded close together. For a second he stood looking down upon the tiny figure as if he would have liked to take her in his arms, to hold her there till time should cease. Then he turned away abruptly. On the table lay the afternoon mail. La Violette picked up his with an inscrutable expression on his face.

When Venus entered her own room she could not take her mind from one letter that had lain on the hall table. The sight of it or its counterpart had grown familiar. Every few days just such a letter came for Mr. La Violette. She had been unconsciously jealous of Miss Perkins. Now, perhaps, there was someone else in his life. Yet, after all, what was it to her? Her cheeks suddenly flamed. Why, she was getting as bad as Miss Perkins.

Suddenly she heard a door close and steps approaching. A knock sounded and Miss Perkins came in without ceremony and disposed herself angularly on a chair.

"Not that I kin stay long," she observed graciously. "Mr. Bundy and me have a date this evenin'. It's rully all I kin do to keep them two fellers from beefin' over me. It takes policy, I do assure you."

"Does it?" inquired Venus, and smiled, remembering Mr. Bundy's poetic effusion.

"As for La Violette, of course you know he's engaged," went on Miss Perkins maliciously. "He's as good as married. If he ain't married, he'd ought to be."

Something like a sob caught in Venus's throat.

"Are you sure?" she asked directly, the yellow lights in her eyes deepening.

Miss Perkins shrugged her shoulders. "It was gave out when he come that he was engaged. Gets letters from her frequent. But then, men ain't to be trusted. It's my private opinion that La Violette's quite a flirt."

She rose and sauntered out with a curious look at Venus's white face.

At supper, that evening, Venus bore herself toward La Violette with an odd restraint. She had puritanical ideas in regard to engagements. She wondered that Miss Perkins could so obviously ignore a fact of which she was so confident. Instead, she seemed to tacitly appropriate Mr. La Violette. She brought a best seller to the table and engaged him in a lengthy discussion of its merits. Venus, passing the dining room some time later, saw them still bent over the book in question. It was certainly inexplicable.

One evening Venus sat at her desk long after the closing hour. She had work to do, but her hands lay idly in her lap. All her lately-acquired spontaneity had deserted her. She was feeling unaccountably tired and worn.

A shadow fell across the door and, looking up, she met the smiling gaze of Professor La Violette.

"I—I am not going home now," she began, fighting back the desire to be with him again. "I have work to do."

"You are working too hard," he said, advancing to the table and trying to speak sternly. "If you keep on you will lose all your pretty color,"—he swept a pile of reports away with a quick movement,—"and we will have you looking like the little gray mouse you were when you first came. I can't have you overworking yourself."

Venus was startled at the sharp note of

anxiety in his voice. She did not answer, but toyed nervously with a pencil and an odd silence fell between them.

"Allow me," remarked La Violette at length, in a voice that he tried to make bantering, "to wish you happiness. I understand that you are engaged to Mr. Bundy."

"Why—why—" stammered Venus, "I haven't the remotest idea of such a thing. Surely Mr. Bundy did not tell you that?"

"He did not," responded La Violette with a curiously glad note in his voice. "He did not, but if he had been so fortunate I surely would not blame him for shouting it from the housetops."

Before the indescribable look in his eyes, Venus dropped her own.

"Allow me," she murmured hurriedly, as if sparring for time, "to congratulate you upon your engagement. I understand—"

"My engagement!" cried La Violette laughing. "Why, the thing is in the air. I most certainly am not engaged—"

"But—but—the letters," faltered Venus, her cheeks like roses now.

"From Mother. We are great pals, Mother and I. She is the only sweetheart I'll ever have unless,—" he forcibly took possession of the fluttering hands and held them close,—"unless you will be my sweetheart, little girl. Venus, I love you."

For the first and only time in her life the name, as it came from his lips, sounded like sweetest music. Never again would she hate it. The fairy tale had ended with the coming of the prince. Heaven lay around and about her.

"Of course," said La Violette some time later, "you just guessed at my engagement from the letters, I suppose?"

"On the contrary," smiled Venus, "someone informed me that you actually were."

La Violette laughed.

"The plot thickens," said he. "I was given to understand that you were engaged and evidently the same person told you I was."

"Let us defy the allegator," cried Venus. They had reached the Boarders' Rest now, and boldly they entered the dining room. So ridiculously flushed and happy they looked that Miss Perkins was surprised into an audible aside to Mr. Bundy, "and him engaged!"

"Yes, I'm engaged," admitted Mr. La Violette brazenly, "but, for that matter, so is Miss Ramsey."

"Of all the nerve," gasped Miss Perkins.

"But of course," proceeded Mr. La Violette smilingly, "we are engaged to each other. Allow me to introduce to you my promised wife, Mrs. La Violette that is to be."

"What do you know about that!" cried Mrs. Todd. "To think of it going on right under my nose. Bless the sweet life of her!"

"Hit reads like a fairy tale," chuckled Mr. Bundy.

"It is a fairy tale," laughed Venus. "You see, I was Cinderella and Mrs. Todd the fairy godmother—"

"Gad!" exploded Mr. Springer, glancing at the landlady's ample proportions.

"And all the rest of you set the wand to waving," continued Venus, "and Mr. La Violette is the prince."

"Hurrah!" cried Mr. Springer, "a toast to Cinderella!"

When the toast had been drunk, Miss Perkins leaned over suddenly and squeezed Venus's hand warmly.

"Forget all them mean things I've said and did," she whispered. "I was tryin' to play La Violette off against Mr. Bundy. He's bound to declare hisself now that you're out of the way. I sure wish you joy, dolling."

"Heavings, Sadie," admonished Mrs. Todd, wiping her eyes, "bring in the dezzart and change the plates. I am that upset. A fairy godmother did you say? Well, rully, I ain't no fairy, but when the time comes to stand as godmother, why, I must say I'm ready and willin'."

Next month: AN HONEST THIEF, a story with an O. Henry touch.

THE EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

BY EARL G. CURTIS

The title of this story might well have been, "And a Little Julep Shall Lead Him." It is another tale flavored with mint sprigs. A whiskey julep is Exhibit A, and the locale is a town where the best people have been forced to stock their cellarettes and post themselves on the contents of "The Bartender's Guide."

THE Honorable Marcellus Pogue, J. P., sat upon his broad veranda and frowned. On the steps, a few feet from and below him, sat Jessica, his daughter. By her side sat Jerry Bowden. The Justice did not like young Jerry, hence the deep corrugations in his brow. Indeed, something of a feud existed between the two men, for Jerry had more than once decisively informed the rotund Justice that he fully expected to marry his adorable daughter. The Justice knew that Jessica would not marry Jerry without the bestowal of his fatherly blessing, but the fact that she was, to all appearances on the side of the enemy, so to speak, was somewhat disconcerting.

"Confound the boy!" muttered the Justice. It was as difficult to quench a julep thirst with water as to discourage him. The haughtiness that congealed the genial features of the Justice when Jerry came near, made no outward impression on that persistent suitor. To himself the Justice swore that the lad was encased in the hide of a crocodile. He could not comprehend that the atmosphere, refrigerated by his august demeanor, was warmed by the sunny smile of Jessica. The Justice had, in his most forcible manner, tried to impress upon Jerry that he could not have Jessica. In fact, no one could. The truth of it was that the Justice was a spoilt old man. He was horribly selfish. He could not imagine an existence that did not include the capable Jessica.

The Justice listened to their care-free chatter and scowled still more viciously. He was miserable in mind and body. Aside from this boy and girl affair that must be nipped before it blossomed fully, another complication disturbed his tranquillity.

For several months now Brucemont had been "dry;" for nearly the whole of that period the Justice had been in the same arid condition. The unexpected transposition of the state from black to white on the prohibition map had caught the Justice in a state of unpreparedness. Being absolutely certain that the state, famed as the home of a draught that made even Paradise seem unnecessary, would retain its sable hue on the before-mentioned map, he had not considered it necessary, or advisable, to lay in a stock of the liquid that is the basis of the mellowing julep; long since the little his decanter had contained had gone the way of all good liquor.

Before the catastrophe, the Justice had promised Jessica, in a moment of ill-timed consideration for her views, that in the event of the ballot's deciding the saloon must go, the dignity of his office would be upheld; he would not indulge as in past days. Sometimes there flashed in the Justice a sense of humor. He looked upon the unsought promise as a freak election bet—with the odds fifty to one in his favor. Jessica, intuitively looking forward, had seriously accepted the promise. The Justice might desire his julep and might drink his julep, but he would desire and drink like the gentleman he was; the lightly-given promise bound him. So it had come to pass that the Justice was debarred from the juleps with which his days had been frequently and pleasurably interspersed—and he missed them sorely.

Be it known that Jessica, who was a half head taller than her father, was the leader of the female coterie of Brucemont that had spoken and argued and fought—no, not fought for, but coaxed for, prohibition. And alas for the Justice's certainty of a never-ceasing supply of juleps, based on his knowledge of the thirst of man. The ladies of Brucemont, and of the state, could not cast a single vote; but they had proved on the decisive day that they could control many of the votes that were cast. The Justice himself had, to please Jessica, cast his vote in opposition to his principles.

The Justice respected the beliefs of Jessica and, be it told in a whispering echo, stood just a little in awe of her. Being several inches below the average height, he had, when a young man, firmly decided that when he married, as of course he would, he would take care not to bestow serious attention upon any woman taller than himself. He owned a theory that a man's dignity suffered when he was compelled to look up to his wife. And as a wife, the late Mrs. Pogue had been the least in his thoughts when he had attained position in the community and thought it time to settle down. But Mrs. Pogue, even as a girl, had had a way with her, and a will as well. Jessica had inherited her mother's queenly statue, her will, and her ways. Until this evening the thought had never occurred to the Justice to break his promise to her. Yet how he wanted a julep,—just one. The Justice assumed a hypothetical viewpoint in his musings. Suppose he were at liberty, how could he attain his great desire? The Justice was ripe for the fall.

Jerry and Jessica had wandered off, and the dejected gaze of the Justice strayed over the spacious lawn and focused on the street. Deep shadows spread about and beneath the trees that lined the sidewalks, and the solo of a blithesome cricket whirred across the silence. A lanky figure detached itself from the gloom and shambled part way up the graveled path. It paused and a voice came to the Justice:

"Is you dere, Jedge?"

"Yes. Who's that?"

"Me, Jedge. Mose."

"What d'you want round here this time of night, you black scalawag?"

"I'se got somethin' to show you, Jedge."

The Justice held down the arms of his easy chair until he unwedged himself, then advanced to the steps.

"What is it?"

"It's a suit-case, Jedge."

"Go way from here, Mose. Come back in the morning. Quit bothering me."

"Please, suh, come down to de office, Jedge. Dish here is important."

Grumbling, the Justice led the way to his office, a neat little box-like affair that faced the street from a corner of the yard. Mose shuffled after. The Justice unlocked the yard door and lit a lamp.

"Now, Mose, what's all this mystery about?" he demanded.

"'Tain't no mystery, Jedge. I 'spects 'tis likker."

"Liquor? Where on earth did you get it?'

"I'm a-tellin' you, Jedge. Jest now I druv a man down to de train in my hack. After he done gone, I happens to look inside de hack an' dere was dis suitcase. I opens her up an' dere was a quart bottle an' glasses and sugar. Reg'lar trab'ling barroom."

"Why'd you bring it here?"

"Why'd I brung it here? Sho' Jedge, whar else must I brung it? S'pose some white man ketch Mose Harris wida suitcase full of likker an' glasses an' sugar, whar you reckon I gwine be in de mornin'? Right here in dis office, dat's whar. I grabbed time by de front-lock an' brung it myself."

"Are you sure it's liquor, Mose?"

"Is I sho'? Yessir, Jedge. Good likker. I smelled her."

Mose smacked his lips. The Justice moistened his.

"Set the case on the table, Mose, and open it. Let's see what it really contains."

With alacrity, Mose lifted from the case a quart bottle. Then came two julep glasses, a small can of sugar, and a long-handled spoon.

"Ah!" the Justice commented. "Only the mint is lacking."

Mose cocked his head knowingly.

"I knows whar de mint is, Jedge," he eagerly declared.

"What d'you mean, you black scoundrel!"

"Nothin', Jedge, nothin'," Mose hastily apologized. "I don't mean nothin' a-tall."

The Justice forgot Mose as he reflectively eyed the lay-out on the table. Why not? A kind fate had sent to his door a goodly quantity of the liquid without which a julep is impossible. A promise even though lightly given, was a promise, but—a julep was a julep. Many a man had pawned his soul for a good deal less. Again the Justice wet his lips.

"Mose, get the mint," he suddenly commanded. "And while you're in the garden you might step into the area and bring a lump of ice from the box. Mind, now, no noise."

"Yessir, Jedge, I understands," Mose assured him, and disappeared.

A few minutes later he reappeared, in one hand, a generous lump of ice, in the other, luxuriant green sprigs of the fragrant mint. The Justice hummed a little tune. Somehow, his conscience refused to function as a well-bred conscience should. He felt no qualms whatever. Anticipation of a regal moment crowded from his thoughts any forebodings that they should have held. Slowly, enjoying to the full every moment and movement, he mixed himself a julep. He inhaled a deep breath as his lips for an instant caressed the edge of the beaded glass, and to him came full realization of bliss as the nectar irrigated his parched throat.

"Good liquor, Mose," he commented amiably, contemplating his half-empty glass.

Before the covetous Mose could formulate a suitable reply, Jerry Bowden strolled into the office. Truth to tell, Jerry was as welcome at the present moment as a revenue officer at a moonshine still. Jerry glanced about and his eyes opened wide.

"Quick, Judge!" he breathed. "Hide your liquor. Jess is coming!"

The Justice made a wild dive for the bottle, but Jerry caught his arm.

"Too late!" he rapidly whispered. "You must run a bluff. Make believe that Mose has been arrested for selling the stuff. You hear me, Mose?"

Jessica stepped across the threshold.

"Why Dad!" she exclaimed. "You've broken your promise. You are drinking!"

"Oh, no—that is, not exactly," the Justice stammered, desperately eyeing the glass in his hands. "You see—"

"It seems," Jerry quietly interrupted, "that Mose Harris here has been arrested for peddling liquor. The Judge thought it better to sample the contents of the bottle so to be sure that it really contains whiskey. Otherwise, Mose could claim that it was vinegar. Someone had to verify the evidence, so the Judge, to withhold temptation from his deputy, took upon himself the duty. That's about right, isn't it, Judge?"

"Entirely correct," the Justice beamed, recovering his composure. "It's real whiskey, all right." He gazed at Mose, but not in his judicial manner. "Now, Moses, what about it?"

Mose tried his best to look downcast.

"I ain't got nothin' a-tall to say, Yo' Honor, Jedge," he whined. "Jest like I done tole you befo', I found dat suitcase in my hack. Dat white man what was de cause of me bein' here, he done tole you diffrunt, and you ain't goin' to b'lieve Mose, nohow. Dat's all I got to say, Jedge, Yo' Honor. I throws myself on de mercies of de cote."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the Justice, vastly relieved by the aptitude of Mose. "Of course you found it. None of you black boys ever come here except when you find something. You can go on home, Mose. I'll try you in the morning. Meanwhile, the court will hold the evidence in the case."

"Is you got to keep all dat evidence, Jedge," Mose asked, the whites of his eyes registering consternation.

"Every drop," the Justice replied, with dignity.

"All right, Jedge, you de boss. I reckon it's best for me if de evidence *do* disappear."

Mose faded into the night, fleeing before the wrathful retort that he knew would be forthcoming if he tarried.

"Confound the rascal!" the Justice muttered, glancing uneasily at Jessica.

Jessica did not seem to give the matter any attention. A few moments later, she and Jerry took their leave. All the way up to the veranda they whispered excitedly. Arriving there, Jerry left her. The Justice was mixing his second julep when Jerry strode in again.

"Ah, my boy," the Justice genially greeted. "Let me mix you a julep. I claim that none excel me in the art."

"And rightly so," Jerry agreed. "But first I have a few words to say."

"Say them, my boy, say them."

"Several times I have asked you for Jess." The curtness of Jerry's voice caused the old man to pause in his hospitable task. "Each time you have refused me. You have done everything a gentleman could well do to discourage me, but I have refused to become discouraged, for the very good reason that Jess loves me. Now, Judge, I ask you—I appeal to your sense of fairness for the last time. Can I have Jess?"

The Justice gracefully suspended a spoonful of sugar in the air.

"No, my boy, you can't," he solemnly answered. "You ask of me a boon I cannot persuade myself to grant. How could I get along without my little girl? You are young and have your life before you. Against you there is nothing, except that you want to take Jessica away from me. I must tell you once more you cannot have her. I know she will not marry until I give my consent."

"I know that better than you," Jerry ruefully confessed. "To speak plainly, Judge, you are utterly selfish. Therefore I have decided you must give your consent tonight. I am becoming impatient."

"I must, eh?" the Justice growled. "Young man, I will not!"

"You will, I think," Jerry coolly stated. "Listen. Suppose I inform Jess of the deception you practiced for the sake of a julep? Suppose that she learns that the father she blindly obeys has deliberately broken his promise to her? If she were aware of all this, do you think she would still obey you and let your selfishness stand in the way of our happiness? No! If she learns the truth, she will scornfully reproach you and leave you."

The Justice opened his mouth to roar, but instead, he emitted a feeble gasp.

"Judge, be reasonable. Would it not be better to freely give her permission to marry and have her retain her respect for you? Or will you force me to shatter her ideal?"

"Blast it all, Jerry, you wouldn't tell her, would you?"

"Wouldn't I? Why not?"

"But I can't part with Jessica. How could I do without her?"

"She wouldn't leave you, Judge. We'd be glad to live here in the old homestead. Jess would be the last one to willingly leave it, and I, unlike you, bow to her wishes in all things."

"All right, you young villain," the Justice surrendered. "All right, I consent. I knew you'd get the best of me some day."

"Thanks, Judge," Jerry responded. "I'll call Jess."

For the second time that evening the office was honored by the presence of Jessica. Her cheeks glowed as Jerry bestowed upon her a solemn wink.

"Jess, darling," he said, "your dad has at last relented. He consents to our marriage."

Jessica did not seem at all surprised, and without favor, played her sunny smile upon her two good men.

"We welcome the momentous decision that gives us permission to reap the golden harvest of our love," Jerry oratorically continued. "The justice of our plea and—er—force of circumstances, were powerful enough to turn the most flinty heart. Pardon, Judge."

The Justice arose to the occasion. He placed the willing hand of Jessica into the more than willing hand of Jerry and lifted his own benevolently.

"Bless you, my children," he intoned.

Then he handed Jerry a julep and, possessing himself of his own, he bowed before Jessica as grandiloquently as his pudginess allowed.

"To you, my dear," were his words.

The glasses were drained.

Inside the office the smiling Justice mixed another julep. Outside, two happy lovers, aglow with youth, peered through the window that faced the lawn.

"Are you sure Mose will keep the secret?" Jessica whispered.

"He'd better," Jerry answered.

"It was awful of us to trick Dad."

"But it had to be done, sweetheart."

"And, anyhow," Jessica added, "the old dear was dying for a julep."

THE MIXED QUARTETTE

BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

Two comedians team up with two girls and put on an act billed as "The Operatic Quartette." At best, however, it is only about fifty per cent operatic, as one-half is rather weak when it comes to uplifting vaudeville. Nor is that the only respect in which the quartette is mixed.

"YOU'VE sure done it now," I says to Johnny when we got to our room an' was safe behind long, black cigars.

"Done what?" he asks, real innocent, even though he knew perfectly well what I meant.

"Played hell," I says.

"That," he answers, in Johnny's grand way, "is a matter upon which one is entitled to his personal opinion. An' *I'm* satisfied!"

I waved my hand airily. "You're the czar," I says, "an' since it's your funeral I should worry seven days an' be a little week. Go to it, Johnny," I says, "but I've seen better men than you make mistakes on account of a crown of golden hair, a peaches-an'-cream complexion an' a Venus de Gorgonzola form."

Johnny's eyes twinkled at that. "She is a stunner, ain't she, Dan?"

"An' then some."

"An' she's got a swell soprano."

"Fine."

"Can't you just see her an' I singing The Sweetest Maiden, from La Boheme? It'll knock 'em dead."

"Yes, Johnny, it'll knock 'em dead all right. They'd have a chancst, though, if you'd cut this grand opera stuff an' stick to Irving Berlin."

"Dan, the trouble with you is you ain't got a soul. Why do you think I got these two dames in the act, anyway?"

"Because Mae Morrison looked good to you, that's why, Johnny. You just quit kiddin' yourself. Get me now; I ain't blamin' you none, but you roped in Morrison an' this Linette Larue kid because they was partners an' you liked the blondeness of aforesaid Mae."

"I got 'em in the act, Dan," he says, real sedate, "because vaudeville is being uplifted an' if I stuck to my act I'd be in the discard in another five years. Vaudeville audiences are asking for class now. Look at the way they supported Nazimova an' Annette Kellerman an' Gertrude Hoffman an' Orville Harrold an' them artists. Class is the word, Dan, an' I'm the one to give 'em class. You got me all wrong, Dan. I did like Mae Morrison's looks, but principally I like her soprano singing—an' Linette Larue's contralto. She has a swell contralto, Dan; perfectly swell. Why, say,—we'll eat that Rigoletto Quartette alive,—just eat it alive."

"Ye-es. Maybe so. Just about that. I guess when a man's got a bug the best way to do is to let him chase it. You're a good vaudeville man, Johnny—a corking good one—when you stick to your sort of work. But when you butt in on the Caruso stuff you're way off. Think it over, Johnny," I says, "think it over."

"I'll have plenty of time," he says, "seeing that the contracts are signed an' we're booked for twenty weeks."

Of course that was the way the land lay an' there wasn't any use having an argument about it. Besides, I'd rather argue with a lop-eared Maud-mule than try to convince Johnny Devine of anything. Success has went to that Jasper's head an' he's sort of got the idea that he's infallible.

For instance, take his act, that is, before he got these two dames in on it. It wasn't any sort of an act. Him an' me sang a few songs together, ranging from the latest rag-time parody to Love or Fancy, from act one of Madame Butterfly, me being quite some shakes as a baritone if I do say it myself. An' between songs Johnny would pull his musical specialties—playing on the one-stringed fiddle, tinkling a ukalele, tooting an ocarina, harmonizing on the mouthorgan, pumping a trombone eighteen inches long, tickling a banjo with the usual head-waving variations an' a dozen other little oddities that always made a hit. An' that's what Johnny Devine never could get through his head—his act was a headliner because of his little musical sidelines an' not because of his voice. If he'd cut the highbrow stuff altogether an' stuck to comedy with his little instruments, he'd have been a riot.

It was natural—of course. I never yet seen a man with a pretty good voice that didn't think if he offered he could team up with Geraldine Farrar an' make Caruso mad. Johnny 'most ruined his voice getting it cultivated, an' after he learned to pronounce a few grand opera names in the native tongue he wouldn't have nothing more to do with Tin Pan Alley stuff an' all that went to me. Of course I used the parodies—an' parodies will last as long in vaudeville as buck-and-wing dancing, which is forever an' then a few days. Of course I got a bunch of the laughs an' an extra hand all 'round, which Johnny couldn't understand, seeing as the act was booked "Johnny Devine and Company,"—Yours Truly being the company.

When I cornered him one day an' told him the answer was that he was letting the rough stuff slip, he says, real sorrowful, "It's art, Dan, it's art. Vaudeville is being uplifted an' I cannot prostitute my talent by ragtime any more. When the public gets educated to the highbrow stuff they will be able to appreciate me better. My ambition, Dan," he says, serious as a judge, "is to be able, some day, to forsake those foolish little musical instruments of mine. They are lowering to one with an artistic temperament." Johnny don't always talk that grand—only when he's thinking about art—in a foreign language an' high C.

An' it was while Johnny Devine was in that unfortunate mood that we happened to work on the bill with Morrison an' Larue at Proctor's in Newark. They was two girls: Mae Morrison, who Johnny fell for right from the jump,—one of these real models with a haughty expression an' real blonde hair and a corking good soprano voice. Linette Larue was just the opposite,—dainty, vivacious, brunette, an' a contralto. My Gawd! she had a good contralto. They had a straight singing act way up on the bill,—you know the stuff,—Whispering Hope, Barcarolle, from Tales of Hoffman, Abide With Me, Oh! That We Two Were Maying, an' the rest of that repertoire, the same stuff that's pulled every time a contralto an' soprano run foul of each other.

That finished Johnny Devine. An' as our bookings expired two weeks later an' theirs in three weeks, nothing would do for him but to make them a team-up proposition, act to be billed as "The Operatic Quartette with Johnny Devine." At first he wanted to make it "John Devine," saying that the Johnny was too undignified for such an act, but he finally listened to reason.

Of course they took him up. Johnny, you see, was worth almost as much single as the quartette would be getting an', besides, I always had a sneaking idea that both of them girls was laying for him. Johnny was a good catch—an awful good catch. Teamed with a good woman singer, an' having the grand opera foolishness knocked out of his noddle, he'd have been one of the biggest winners in the country.

Somehow, those two girls pursued different tactics in letting Johnny see that he'd be welcome as the flowers in May when it came to the Lohengrin stuff. Mae Morrison, the queenly one, assumed the indifferent attitude,—the I-don't-give-a-hoot pose that drives a man crazy. An' right from the jump,—that is, after we got going an' started out on the road,—little Linette Larue threw herself at his head. Crude tactics, I call it.

The act? Oh! it got by pretty good. Never been a vaudeville actor, have you? Then you won't understand this—but there's a certain sort of vaudeville turn that gets applause because the audience thinks it ought to clap. That was us. We'd screech out the Rigoletto Quartette as hard as we could go it an' the poor audience wouldn't know what it was—except them that had phonographs. An' when we'd finish everybody would look at everybody else as much as to say, "That's classical stuff an' I'm the guy to appreciate real art." Then they'd applaud—just to show their neighbors that they didn't have nothing on them in the way of culture. An' you know what the poet says about the gink that won't use his eyes bein' the original blind guy—that was Johnny Devine. He'd hear that applause an' trot us out to bow an' then we'd pull a mess of stuff like The Spinning Wheel Quartette an' the Good Night Quartette from Martha, an' that dope from Verdi's Masked Ball—an' they'd clap a little more, wearing a My-Gawd-I-got-to-do-it expression.

But what really saved the act was Johnny Devine's little dinky musical instruments. He was a regular human being when he'd trot out with them things an' toot an' fiddle away. They'd laugh then an' the applause they'd give would rock the house. Oh! Johnny was goin' fine, he was—but the act was a flivver, only it got across because people like to like the highbrow stuff even though they don't know what it's all about an' none of them ain't never seen the tune.

At that we might have run on indefinitely if it hadn't been for them two girls an' Johnny Devine.

I don't care how friendly two girls have been—when a man comes between them there's bound to be a sort of coolness. Me, being right friendly with both, an' especially with Mae Morrison, was in a position to get the inside dope. I got it, too—you bet your life.

I'll admit that I was partial to the Morrison dame. She was queenly,—you know the type;—regal they call it. An' there wasn't nothing crude about her tactics,—not on your life there wasn't. She knew the ropes, that Jane did. She didn't throw herself in Johnny's arms an' say, "Kiss me, kid, I love you to death." Not her. She left that sort of stuff to Linette Larue, knowing that Johnny would get sick an' tired of it after awhile an' chase the girl that wasn't caught so easy.

So Mae an' me got to be right good friends. We travelled all in a bunch you see, an' we always occupied two Pullman sections, so's we had to sit around in pairs. I thought it'd be nice for Johnny an' me to sit together, but Linette wouldn't have none of that, an' between towns she'd fasten her lunch-hooks on Johnny an' never so much as let him peep. An' so, of course, Mae an' me was together all the time. We got to be right friendly. I remember the first time the subject was broached,—Linette an' Johnny was sitting with their heads close together across the aisle, talking right confidential. I says to Mae: "Crude stuff, huh?"

"Crude stuff? What?"

"The way Linette's making a jump for him."

"Oh! *him?*" The way Mae's patrician nose curled up you'd of thought she didn't care a snap of her fingers for Johnny. "Linette's a fool."

"She sure is," I says. "There ain't a man in the world will fall for that sort of stuff. A man likes to pursue the woman," I says, having read all that out of a book. "He don't care nothing about having the woman throw herself at him."

"No?" she answers, looking at me kind of peculiar. "Is *that* so? I thought it'd tickle their vanity."

"A man ain't vain," I remarks curtly. "Vanity is for women only."

"No," she says slowly, "a man ain't vain when he tackles Verdi an' Puccini an' them ducks, with a barbershop tenor. That ain't vanity at all."

"I mean vanity regarding women. The most desirable woman is the woman who must be chased."

"Spell it," says Mae.

"C—H—A—S—E—D," I comes back, grinning. "I ain't saying that it don't tickle Johnny right now to have Linette making a dead set for him because Linette sure is a pretty girl an' I'm crazy about brunettes."

She flushes red as a beat. "You're scarcely complimentary."

"Oh! I don't count you," I says. "I mean thinking of marriage, I'd choose a brunette, bein' blonde myself. Now Johnny has always liked blondes. That's why you stand a heap better chancst than Linette."

"Chance? Chance for what?"

"To land Johnny."

Her eyes narrowed an' she gave me a slow once-over. "You think that's what I'm after?"

"Well—"

She rises at that an' makes for the back of the car. "Mr. Howron," she says, "you're positively *insulting!*"

And if that ain't like a woman, I don't want a cent. Leading me on to talk turkey an' then getting mad when I do it. "Well," I says to myself when she does that, "wimmin is too temperamental for me. It'd suit Johnny, but me—nix!"

There was some more of this eternal triangle stuff with Johnny bein' the rose with two thorns in it, as the saying goes. It was right interesting to watch, although I knew from the beginning that Linette didn't have a chance. Naturally, Johnny hung around Mae Morrison quite a bit—you got to, being in the same act an' travelling together, an' lots of times I caught them with their heads together talking, an' it didn't make Linette happy a bit, which was natural.

Also, it was natural that that sort of stuff didn't make them two girls any too fond of one another. When two girls is trying to marry the same man,—well, I *was* disappointed a bit in Mae. I never would of thought she'd throw herself at a man. No, that ain't fair—she didn't throw herself at Johnny, not direct. But there's more than one way of doing a thing. For instance, if a man wants to hit the earth real hard, he goes up high before he jumps, an' the higher he goes, the harder he hits. Mae was playing the dim distance stuff with Johnny, knowing that when he discovered that she was the dame he was after he'd come a-running an' they'd get together so hard that there wouldn't be no separating them,—until after the better-or-worse stuff had been safely pulled.

There was the two old methods of the female of the spe-chees chasing the male: Linette with arms opened wide an' lips ready for diamond-ring kisses; Mae just as ready, but working the opposite sort of a come-on game. It was a two-to-one bet on Mae.

Then one night Mae Morrison comes to me in the dressing room where we was playing,—Johnny an' Linette was out by the fire exit so's Johnny could puff a cigarette,—mad as a wet hen.

"They're going too far," she says.

"Is that a fact? How so?"

"I just seen him talking to the orchestra leader."

"I've seen him do that many a time."

"Don't get funny, Dan. I'm serious."

"I take my cue," I says. "What was he saying to the orchestra leader?"

"He was telling him," she sizzles, "that when he gets an encore for that one-string fiddle stuff, him an' her—Linette—is coming on to do that Home To Our Mountains stuff they been yowling in the boarding house for the last week. Beat that if you can. Now I ain't saying that highbrow singing ain't all right, but for her to be hogging it all—I won't stand for it, that's all."

It was tough, although I wasn't giving myself away by no sudden talking. Talking without thinking has lost many a man a good home.

"What you thinking of doing?" I questions, playing safe.

"Much more of that an' I'll quit the act," she half sobs. "I don't get any appreciation, anyway. More an' more I have seen that I am being relegated to the background. More an' more has it become evident to my eyes, an' Linette has succeeded in entrapping him with what you yourself termed her 'crude methods.' I am disappointed in him; an' as for her—as for her—" she sort of choked like she had swallowed too much camembert. "Well, you'd think when I an' her has been teamed up as long as we have, she wouldn't be doing no such low-down trick as to take advantage of his affection for her—"

"Whoa! Mae,—you're in the right church but the wrong pew."

"I ain't in any church nor yet any pew," she flashes, kind of ugly. "An' if you'll talk straight, plain English, maybe I'll make you better."

"He ain't stuck on Linette," I says, real positive.

"No?" An' then again, real sarcastic,

"No? Nor she on him, I suppose."

"Well, that's different—"

"An' I suppose she made him kiss her out there by the fire exit? I suppose she *made* him, huh? Not that she wouldn't. That's the way a woman has to do these days to rope a man—just throw herself at his head an' make him see that she thinks he's the only shirt in the laundry."

"Mae!" I says, "I'm plumb surprised that you admit that your theory is all wrong."

"My theory? Whadaya mean, my theory? Huh?"

"About courting a man."

She shook her head an' frowned sort of puzzled-like.

"Come again, Dan. I didn't get that."

"Your theory about making a man fall in love with you. I thought you was under the impression that the right way to do to win a man was to play in the distance—indifferent an' I-should-worry, an' all that sort of stuff; like you been doing with Johnny."

"Like I been doing—doing—with—*Johnny?* Oh, *Dan!*" An' with that she starts laughing, hysterical-like, until the tears run out of her eyes.

"Don't take it thataway," I says. "They ain't announced their engagement yet, an' maybe what you seen was sort of—sort of premature."

She looks at me kind of funny. "I guess it was—if they ain't engaged."

I got right up. "The Musical Moretti's are on now," I says, "an' when they finish comes that nut comedian, an' after him is us. There's eighteen minutes between then. Meanwhile—" an' I starts for the door.

She was after me in a jiff. Her hand grabbed my arm.

"Where you going? What you going to do?"

"I'm going to have a plain talk with Johnny," I answers right back,—"a plain, straightforward talk."

An' as I walked away I heard her laughing some more—same choky, hysterical laugh. I was worried.

I got more worried the minute I rounded the alley entrance kinder sudden an' caught Linette an' Johnny breaking away from a long-distance clinch. They was kinder flushed an' happy-looking, but one glance at me an' Linette beat it sort of swift. Johnny fidgeted from one foot to the other an' looked at me with a what-the-hell-business-is-it-of-yours expression.

"Johnny," I says, real severe, "you hadn't ought to do it."

"Do it?" he comes back petulantly belligerent. "Do *what?*"

"Fool them poor girls."

"Fool—them— What the devil are you talking about?"

"Linette right now. What right have you got to make love to her when you're going to marry another woman?"

With that he steps close an' sticks his face almost in mine, looking real serious. He drops back an' shakes his head. "I *thought* you didn't drink," he says, "an' I don't smell nothing, but these days—"

"I never drink an' you know it. An' when I try to talk to you for your own good you try funny stuff. Well, I'm telling you now, Johnny Devine—if you'd try more of the funny stuff *on* an' less of that grand opera, you'd have a better act. I just heard of this Home to Our Mountains yodle you put in for a fiddle encore an'—an'—"

"That yellow-domed sorehead sent you to me with a howl because it cuts her out of the spotlight!" he rasps. "I make you now, all right, all right. Well, I ain't saying nothing against your girl, Dan—"

"Hey there! Hold on, Johnny. You're three miles ahead of me—what do you mean,—my girl?"

"How many you got? I mean Mae Morrison, of course. There ain't a bone in her body that ain't jealous of Linette. Linette says so. She's jealous of Linette's better voice an' she's jealous because I'm giving Linette the chancst that she—Mae—never would of given her if they'd of stayed teamed up."

"Come again, Johnny," I says slowly. "You got the ropes all twisted. Mae Morrison is *your* girl, she ain't mine."

He looks at me for a long time, his lower jaw kinder separating slow an' gradual from the upper.

"Quit your kidding."

"I'm trying to talk sense. If you, now—"

"You honest to goodness mean you got the nerve to stand there an' tell me that you think I'd marry that bleached blonde."

"It's natural blondeness," I says coldly, not caring to hear that poor, unfortunate, jilted woman traduced; no, not even by Johnny Devine, which same I like immensely an' am good pals with.

"Allowing that it is; as far's I'm concerned, she ain't in the class in no way with Linette. You brought this on yourself. I wouldn't of said nothing against your girl—"

"Johnny Devine—which one of them dames are you engaged to?"

"Linette!" he answers, prompt but sheepish,—"as far's I know."

"You serious?"

"Don't be a damned fool. Of course I'm serious. Why?

"It ain't according to Hoyle or Laura Jean Libby. You ought to be engaged to Mae. She suits you better."

"Thank you, I'd rather splice with Linette; not that I blame you for liking Mae the best, but, strictly between you an' me, Dan, Linette an' me have been talking an' we think that a real classical two-act of operatic stuff such as her an' me could put on would make a sensation—"

"So does a busted garter."

"Does what?"

"Make a sensation."

"As I was saying,—Linette an' me in a two-act—"

"Two from four," I says, soft an' easy, but mad clear through, counting on my fingers. "Two from four makes—two."

"You know the old saying," he says, embarrassed, trying to gloss over the situation, "that no pay envelope is big enough for two families. Now you an' Mae would make a swell rough-stuff two-act. Of course you ain't got the temperament, and she's just a block of ice with a fair voice."

"You an' Linette get spliced an' leave me to make a new act with Mae Morrison —a girl who's in love with you."

"With *me?* Dan Howron—you're deaf, dumb, blind, an' an ass. Will you do me a favor?"

"For old time's sake," I says, with dignity,—"just once."

He thinks for a minute, an' then speaks slow an' deliberate. "This is it, Dan— you go straight back to Mae now—before our call. You go to her an' say—just like this: 'Mae—Johnny an' Linette are going to get married. They want to break up this quartette an' have a two-act. What do you say to teaming up with me indefinitely?' You say that to her, Dan,—say it in the dressing-room so them nosey Parker Sisters won't get wise. Then you come back an' tell me what she says."

It was a bughouse thing to do—but little enough he'd asked, an' I thought it'd lay what these here diplomatic fellers call "a basis for further negotiations." So I breeze into Mae's dressing-room, after knocking of course, an' I sits down on the trunk beside her.

"Mae," I says, according to my lesson, "Johnny an' Linette are going to get married. They want to break up this quartette an' have a two-act. I know it's a shock to you, but what do you say to teaming up with me indefinitely?"

Yes sir, I said it just like that; not laying no emphasis on any of the words, because they was so silly. An' what do you think that woman done? You'd never guess in a million years. She flung them perfect arms of hers about my neck an' holds up her lips for a kiss.

I kissed her. I'll swear I couldn't help it.

"Oh, Dan," she sobs, "I'm so—so-o happy!"

With that, she ups with her lips again an' I kissed her once more. There was something dog-goned final about the taste of that kiss, too.

"An' Dan—I—I—thought—you never would—"

"Never would,—what?"

"Never would—*propose,*" she cries. "An' I'm so glad you've done it—because I love you, Dan. D—d—d—do y—y—you l—l—l —love me?"

I looked into them eyes of hers.

"Uh-huh," I says, an' kissed her again.

We got married. Mae an' me an' our act is immense,—nut stuff an' a strong line of patter written specially for us.

Linette an' Johnny are going good, too, over the Big Time. We are on the same bill this week, with them in headline position, but our pay envelopes nearly the same. An' only this morning I was talking to Johnny.

"You happy?" asks Johnny.

"You betcha. An' you?"

"As a lark," he says. "An' the act going stronger every day. It's all in educating the public. Say—once I thought you really wasn't in love with Mae—"

"Did you?"

"Uh-huh. But I knew she'd land you."

"You've made fool remarks like that before, Johnny," I says. "What do you mean?"

"Wasn't you an' her together all the time when the quartette was doing business?"

"Yes."

"An' didn't she do all the chasing? Wasn't it her that sought you out always?"

"Pretty nearly. That was while Linette was making a dead set for you."

"Sure — it always works. When a woman rushes a man real hard he's bound to fall for her. I'll admit I fell for Linette's campaign,—an' I'm glad of it. But the way she rushed me wasn't even a circumstance to the way Mae went after you."

I scratched my head a bit. It was a plumb new idea.

"You mean Mae was in love with *me* from the *first.*"

"Of course, you nut—"

An' then I understood for the first time.

"Well, I'll just be dog-goned," I says. "Honest to Gawd, Johnny—I never thought of that!"

Three stories to look for next month:

SHAD'S WINDFALL, *by Ramsey Benson.* It is about a man who could neither read nor write, but who, somehow, had learned one verse of the Bible. He insisted that even this scant Biblical knowledge would have a certain surrender value some day.

THE HIDDEN BUILDERS, *by Louis Schneider,* which has to do with two bridge builders who were eternally at odds, yet who successfully co-operated in building the greatest bridge of their time.

FATE'S TEETOTUMS, *by Raymond Evans,* a little romance in which a fly and a daddy-long-legs play important parts.

TANTE'S VALENTINE

BY FLORENCE BRINEY REED

When rags saturated with oil are carelessly left in unventilated places, something happens which we call spontaneous combustion. Romance is just like that at times. It is not only sudden, but it is the result of somebody's carelessness.

IT is all perfectly plain now, and everybody is satisfied that a couple of alleged antiques like Tante and the General can go back into the Garden of Youth without making any more fuss than they would on an ordinary holiday excursion. Of course it took an outside influence to get them started, and it was just like Bob to be the outside influence without knowing it. He provided the necessary impetus all right, but he balled things up so that for a time one could almost detect a smoky odor about our own little affair—Bob's and mine.

You see, Tante was the beauty of the family—and I really think that she's the best looking of all of us even yet. Handsome and distinguished you know—with such glorious white hair, and pinky white skin, and lovely eyes. And her profile—my goodness! Artists just rave over it and one of them (a friend of ours) always wants to paint her as a Colonial Dame or something. But Tante just sticks her nose in the air and says, "Not today," or words to that effect. I'd faint with joy if he'd offer to paint me—but he doesn't. They never do. I'm hopelessly modern, and all I can do is to follow the styles to the limit, and get by with my clothes.

Dad says they named me for Tante, hoping I'd inherit her good looks, but I didn't, so they had to change the name to suit my style. So she's Elizabeth Mayday Hollingsworth—while I'm just "Betty May."

We—Bob and I—have been sort of semi-engaged ever since I can remember almost, and I was eighteen this January. We've always been terribly congenial—but of course we don't agree about everything. We'd bore each other to death if we did. I'd so much rather be a girl now then in the old days. People have so much more sense. Nobody goes in for broken hearts and misunderstandings and all that kind of stuff nowadays. It simply isn't done. If Bob and I don't like something the other one has said or done, we say so, scrap it out and forget it. Mother pretends to be awfully conservative and to be shocked sometimes, but Tante is a good fellow and says she thinks we have the best of it.

Of course Tante had stacks and stacks of proposals and a perfectly wonderful time when she was a girl. And it didn't stop then either; there was always somebody ready to try for a kind word, but she's always been the most indifferent thing you ever saw. We always thought she had never married because she couldn't decide which one she wanted. We never for a minute suspected that the General had anything to do with it. He is perfectly grand and has been in two wars and has decorations, and everything. We've always known the General and I've always been crazy about him; he is the best looking creature and has such old-fashioned courtly manners.

Every time the General comes North he stops over a day or so with us; and we all adore him, but Tante treats him perfectly arctic! Once I asked Dad if the General and Tante had known each other when they were young, for they came from the same place, and he said they had. And then he said that he thought he remembered him as one of the moths, and I asked Tante, and she said she had never noticed him particularly.

Well, when Bob had to go to New Orleans for the firm after Christmas, this year, I was wild to go along. I was born in New Orleans, and that's how I learned to call my aunt "Tante," from a little Creole playmate. I love New Orleans, but of course I couldn't decide to marry Bob all at once, just for the sake of the trip. And I do hate a mid-winter trousseau; it has "marked-down sale" embroidered all over it. So there was nothing for me to do but to stay home and make Bob promise to bring me all sorts of things from there, and the very last thing I told him was to send me a valentine from one of those darling curio stores on Royal street.

"Sure will, Bettie May," he said,—"a surprise."

Well, Bob sent me perfect showers of post-cards and pictures and he'd write that he had picked up this or that to bring home, and when Valentine's day came I almost froze my nose standing at the window watching for the postman. He's always the slowest thing when you're watching for him. When he finally got here I had the grand disappointment of my young life. Not one solitary thing from Bob. There were a couple of letters for Mother and some bills for Dad, and a great big thin parcel for Tante, and a Valentine card for Angie, our maid. I was so mad I couldn't talk and I threw them on the table and stormed out, but all I said was, "I should worry about Bob Martin and his old valentines."

No one paid any attention to me (they never do) so I went into the music room and began to play the gangiest piece I knew.

Pretty soon I heard Tante go scooting through the hall and upstairs as though something were after her. Then Dad and Mother began to talk. Presently Mother called me and I went in.

"Betty May," said Mother, "did you notice that parcel the postman brought for your aunt Elizabeth? You got the mail I believe."

"Why no," I said. "I had troubles of my own. It was addressed to her—printed letters—good and plain."

"Where was this parcel mailed from," says Dad, as though he were cross-examining a witness, "can you tell us that?"

"I can," I answered, getting mad again, for it made me think of Bob, "it was New Orleans, Louisiana."

"Oh," said Mother, "it must have been from Adele Louvain. She promised to send her a picture of her daughter in her wedding dress. It was just the size a large photograph would be. Yes, that must have been it."

"But Elizabeth would not choke and grow red and white and scamper out of the room with her breakfast half eaten just because she got a picture of her old school chum's daughter."

This from Dad.

"Maybe she found a fly in the cream pitcher," I suggested, for Tante is very dainty, and things like that make her positively ill.

"Betty May! How can you say such things! Finish your breakfast at once." Mother was indignant.

I suppose a girl of the old days would have said she didn't want any breakfast and have gone upstairs and wept. Not I; I was mad clear through and I needed food to brace me up for the letter I was going to write Mr. Bob. Here I had spent fifteen dollars and hours of perfectly good time posing for a very special photo at Brunellis's, for his valentine, and he hadn't even sent me a post-card of the French Market.

Tante didn't come downstairs again. She said she had a toothache. Mother went to the Wednesday club luncheon, and Dad went down town, and I wrote pages to Bob. Tante wrote too, for when I went to her room to ask her if she wanted anything, I heard her pen just scratching away. After the afternoon mail came—nothing from Bob of course—Tante came down all ready to go out. She looked so queer and excited, I thought her tooth must be awfully bad.

"Are you going to the dentist's?" I asked her, and she answered, "Why no." Which struck me as rather queer, under the circumstances, and then she added:

"Have you a letter? I am going to the post box."

"Here's one, and be careful or it will scorch your fingers," I said, giving her Bob's. She turned and looked at me very earnestly and said:

"Betty May, did you really tell him that—that—"

"That I was peeved at not getting a valentine? I hope I did. Any time I sit up and try to look pretty with Brunellis's camera staring me in the face, and give fifteen for one and get nothing in return,—well, I hope I told him."

"Oh you modern girls," she said, "I wish—" Then she went off with the letters without saying what she wished.

Well, a few days after that, the bell rang and here were two telegrams—one for me and one for Aunt Elizabeth. Mine was from Bob and went something like this:

"Cheer up and cut the sob stuff. Sent Valentine. Be home right away." So I cheered up a whole lot and forgot to wonder who had been telegraphing Tante. Then one afternoon about a week after Valentine's day, the 'phone rang and I answered. It was Bob, just in from New Orleans and coming out after a while to dinner. He asked right away about the valentine, and seemed surprised when I told him it hadn't come. He said he'd tell me all about it when he came. Then I got a book I'd been reading and curled up on the couch in the recess back of our telephone, and was having a perfectly lovely time, when all of a sudden the door-bell rang! Before Angie could get there Tante came running down stairs and called that she'd go. Then she opened the door and who was there but the General!

"Will you come in?" says Tante, and—

"I will," says he, and back to the library they marched while I dodged behind the curtains for I was in my kimona, and my hair was in piggy tails and I knew the dear old General would be shocked. Young ladies should not appear before gentlemen in such style, he would think. So I just dodged and thought I'd hide till he left. I didn't think he'd stay long, remembering that Tante was not given to conversing much in his neighborhood. When they got in he dropped his traveling bag with a bump and said in a queer kind of voice:

"Elizabeth!"

And Tante said, in the same way: "Robert!"

Imagine how I felt! And then he said:

"My darling! I could not believe my own eyes. Can it be true? Did you mean it truly?"

And while I almost perished from excitement and trying to keep back a sneeze (you know how you always feel like sneezing at those times) Tante said very meekly that it was true and she did mean it, and there was silence. At least what I should say was they did not talk any more. It was up to me to sneak out of there. So I held my breath and slipped along the wall behind the curtains, and got to the hall (the recess is really a short passage between the big hall and library) and managed to get upstairs safely. While I was dressing I heard Tante open and close the front door and when I came down the library was empty. Then Bob and Dad came and Mother next, and it was dinner time. As we were sitting down to the table Angie said:

"Miss Elizabeth telephoned that she will not be here to dinner, and to please not wait." Mother looked surprised and said:

"How strange!" and I nearly burst trying to keep from telling the whole thing, but, after all, I didn't know much and I thought I'd give the two old dears a chance to talk for themselves if they had any talking to do. Then after dinner Bob began right away about the valentine.

It seems that in one of those queer old curio stores he'd found a book of prints, and in looking them over he discovered a darling old-fashioned valentine,—one of those home-made affairs that are too deliciously quaint for words. It was poetry written in a fine, clear hand on satin paper all yellow with age, and there was a gorgeous border of gold lace paper around it and roses and cupids and things painted on it. Bob said the poetry wasn't bad (Bob hates poetry, himself) though, of course, it was terribly old-fashioned and sentimental. But the best of it was, it was written to "Elizabeth" and signed "Robert." So he thought it would be fine to send it to me. And here it never came!

"Did you address it yourself?" said Dad.

"Sure," answered Bob; "printed it all out as clear as day."

"To Betty May Hollingsworth," said

Mother, who always likes to be precise.

Bob started to say "Sure," again, but stopped, and looked sort of silly and said:

"No, by George, I didn't. Betty is always howling about people not calling her her right name, so I thought it was such a queer old-fashioned thing that it would be appropriate and please her, so I sent it to Elizabeth Mayday Hollingsworth."

"Oh, we-e-e-e—" I broke in, "Tante got it! Tante got it! and the General's got her!" They thought I was crazy, of course, and just as I got through telling them all about that afternoon, in came Tante and the General. My, they looked handsome and happy! I could have fallen in love with either one of them myself in a minute; there was a good deal of everybody talking at once for a minute and all we gathered out of it was that the General had something to tell us. So we settled down and he began. He said that many years ago there was a very beautiful girl whom everybody loved, (who was Tante of course), and how one of her sweethearts sent her a valentine once. And then that night, at a valentine ball, she had treated him so coldly and had refused to dance with him, so that he thought she was offended at his boldness and, being as proud as Lucifer, he gave up and faded away. "Passed out of her life"—is the way he put it. Wasn't he a silly? I'd like to see Bob doing any such stunt as that.

Then Tante told her part of the story. She had watched all day for that valentine (they seemed to mean really serious things to folks in those days) and it didn't come and didn't come. So she went to the ball mad and hurt and worried and everything, but looking,—that was her way,—as if it didn't bother her at all, and the first thing she saw was he—the General—dancing with another girl. He explained why it happened, too, but I can't tell everything they said. This girl was named Zozephine and she was almost as pretty as Tante, and crazy about the General. He didn't say that, but we knew it, of course. So as soon as the dance was over, or as soon as she could, this Zozephine came up to Tante and showed her a lovely little gold locket, and called it "My valentine," and then, in the next breath, begged her not to tell as "Robert—I mean—he doesn't want it known just yet." Can you beat it? Just like girls do now. Of course, after that, Tante was a perfect iceberg to him, and both of them being so awfully proud, Love's Young Dream ended then and there.

So all these years Tante has thought the dear old General was a heartless deceiver, but being older and wiser, when the valentine came that day, thought, I suppose, "What's the use? If he wants to make up, let's forget it," and so she wrote and thanked him for it and said, "Welcome to our city," or something, anyway, that was why he came posthaste. Of course, neither of them suspected at first that the valentine was the one, the very one which should have reached her ages ago, but it was, the real original document, which Bob had found in the old store and bought for me. Why didn't Tante get it at first? And how did it get to the store and in the old book? Nobody knows, but Bob and I think Zozephine had something to do with it. She's dead now, but we don't care if she is. She must have been a cat, and she was determined if she didn't get the General, nobody else should, so I'll just bet she managed the valentine some way so Tante didn't get it. I think she'd have been capable of holding up the U. S. Mail coach if there had been no other way; but that is what makes it so thrilling, to have some mystery left in it, don't you think?

Well, that's the whole story except that Bob and I are going to visit Tante and the General on the old plantation when we take our wedding trip next June. For we decided pretty quick that we might as well get married, too, and Dad let him give me my engagement ring, to make up for the valentine I didn't get.

THE CHINK, another unusual story for March.

(Continued from page 2)

the only true one, we do think that the author achieved something akin to art if he succeeded in thus changing the reader's attitude toward the major character in the story.

Hubert W. La Due, another prize winner, considers it not only the best story in the November number of The Black Cat but also one of the strongest stories published by any magazine during the month. "It is one of the few 'war' stories so far published that can be called a work of literary art. As for novelty of idea, strength of theme and plot, atmosphere, characterization, unity and surprise ending—they are all there, and equally well wrought out."

THE SKAGPOLE VENUS and A BULL MARKET IN FIDDLES received the same number of votes for first place.

Of the former, one club member writes this: "Its sequence is happily arranged; and the single keen, puzzling hint—Derrington's permitting Belford to overhear him ask the name of the pretty clerk—used as a subtle clue to the denouement, stamps the author as one who knows his technique." On the other hand, a reader who is less analytical places the story last on his list because it is merely a "space filler."

This comment is made anent the story, A Bull Market in Fiddles: "The author is an artist at description, and plays upon the feelings of the reader as unerringly as 'the tall, gaunt, emaciated' customer wields the bow on the strings of his stolen, pawned, and apparently beloved violin." This story is likewise commended for its technique and strength of plot.

THE remaining stories rank far below the five stories mentioned above. NUMBER ONE ON THE SUCKER LIST is next in order. DEMATERIALIZATION and LOST—A STAR received the same number of votes, and THE BONE OF A CAMEL is last.

THE interest which our readers have taken in the club is more than gratifying. The letters of criticism have been interesting and in some cases entertaining. We hope that we shall have the pleasure of hearing from the same people and a great many others who may read this number.

The Third Contest comprises the stories in this issue (February); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before March 1st. Prizes will be awarded March 5th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the May BLACK CAT, issued April 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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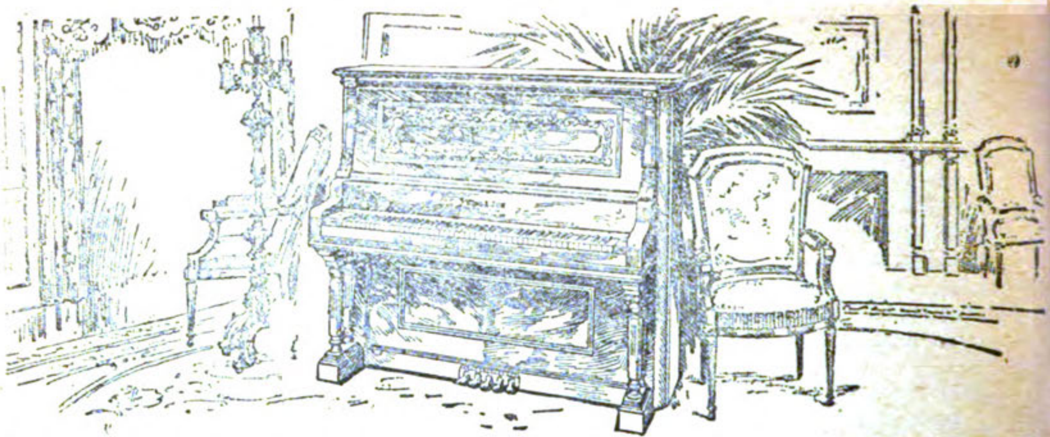

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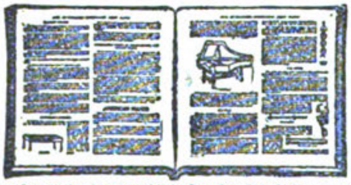

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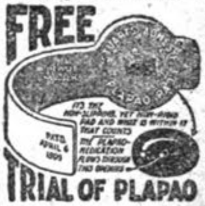
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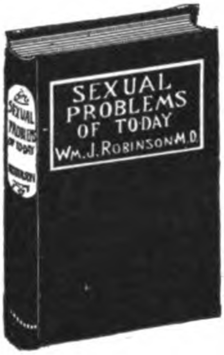

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Contents

Cover Design . . .	*Olivette Bourgeois* . .	
The Black Cat Club . .	. . . .	2
The Clod	*John Barry*	3
The Corpse Delicious .	*Paul Wilson*	10
The Epic of Old Cark .	*Horace J. Simpson* . .	15
The Terrible Brink . .	*Archibald Rutledge* . .	20
The Subscribers' Serial .	*Frank V. Stump* . . .	24
Soft Soap	*Newton A. Fuessle* . .	30
The Selfishest Woman .	*Blanche Brace* . . .	36
The Female of the Species	*David A. Wasson* . .	40

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

IN REPRINTING Jack London's story, *A Thousand Deaths,* in the January Black Cat, the editors merely attempted "an appreciation." They did not foresee that the story might be considered an entry in the club contest and that many of the readers, desiring to register an appreciation themselves, might select it as the best story in the number. It did surpass all others in popularity; but as it was obviously not up for comparison, the twenty-five dollar prize was awarded to the story which, aside from this one, received the largest number of votes. Criticisms of the story reveal the fact that it is "too pedantic and impossible." It is pedantic; but as one critic points out, the author was cutting his hands with his tools. As for its being impossible, an intentionally impossible story should not be contemned too severely; for often, as in this case, the tale may be a studied piece of nonsense the very absurdity of which saves it from the oblivion of the commonplace.

"It Happened Last Night" by Rex Stout was the next story in order of popularity and the one which therefore received the twenty-five dollar prize. It was commended for its strength as a genuine surprise story, although there were some readers who thought that the clever ending did not wholly redeem a bromidic beginning. They were disappointed that a seemingly spicy affair should develop into nothing more than a commercial venture. "The author plays 'Hearts and Flowers' nearly all the way, then plunks two bars of ragtime," says one reader. "Yes," says another, "but working up to a logical climax like that and then discarding the climax for something else is false art."

In *A Real Sport* we have a story that appeals to the heart rather than the intellect. The strength of the story lies in the nobleness of one character. Humor and pathos are finely interwoven. The only serious fault seems to be that the character of Old Billy is slightly overdrawn. Here is testimony on that point. "I suspect that Billy was one of those people who are so good that they are good for nothing. He should have investigated things and found out before it was too late whether or not Mary loved him."

The key-note of *Nine Points of the Law* is speed. The rush of events sustain the interest. The treatment of each character is whimsically humorous; in fact, the portrayal is so good as to make this the strongest story in point of realism.

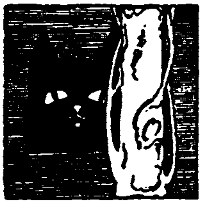
After Thirty Years is a tense and interesting study of retributive justice, in which our old friend, the Southern Colonel, and his nigger perform entertaining variations on the war reminiscence motif. It has a dramatic intensity from a start that is crisp to a climax that is powerful. "There is grim purpose here—and there is whimsical humor, each hiding the other and giving poise to the whole. The straight forward movement of Southern vengeance to its deadlock with Southern hospitality's sacred obligation, and then, without overdoing things, the relieving of the strain—all make the story a bit of artistry worth a place in the best short story text books. If the characters are exaggerated it is intentional exaggeration which adds just the right amount of seasoning to the tale." (Editors' Note: The order of the stories in the January number did not represent our opinion with regard to their respective merits. Although this story was the last story in the magazine, it ranked first in editorial opinion because of the superior craftsmanship, novelty of idea and strength of character portrayal. It is not our idea to place the best stories first. The lead story is one which we are pretty sure our readers will like best. The other stories are placed in a way which will lend balance to the whole. Thus the January number concluded with as good material as it contained in the first pages.)

(*Continued on page 45*)

THE CLOD

BY JOHN BERRY

There is a certain standard of perfection attached to murder or suicide that is overlooked by the person with no sense of the aesthetic. That standard is set down in this story, in which a man's conception of excellence in either the one or the other amounts almost to an ideal.



In these, his last days, which he was dreaming away in the New Mexican sunshine, St. Vrain was whimsically fond of studying poisons. Kindly old Daddy Dan, the drug clerk, let him make himself at home in the prescription room behind the pharmacy; and St. Vrain, white-faced, coughing, would gaze, fascinated, at the sinister labels on the long rows of brown bottles for many minutes at a time. And Daddy Dan, who was something of a chemist, smilingly told him all about them, their properties and action: about strychnine, opium, cannabis, cyanide of potassium; and all of them seemed miracles to St Vrain; but most of all cyanide seemed miraculous. Cyanide! The very name thrilled him. Was it not the magic password to the Sleep?

One day Daddy Dan's employer, Gomez, the proprietor of the drug store, came back from dinner earlier than usual and found St. Vrain worshipping like some latter-day Borgia at the altar of poison. Gomez was a fat, greasy Mexican, dark, sneering, cruel in looks, cruel in essence, with an ugly, servile, expedient smile and a supreme contempt for the rights of others. He was a saloonkeeper who had evolved into a druggist. Everybody in Capulin, the Mexicans in adobe town as well as the Americans in "new" town, hated him. Fortunately for him, his drug store was the only one in the place.

St. Vrain was Gomez's best customer; hence he was treated with marked consideration. But it always irritated the Mexican to find him in the prescription room chatting with Daddy Dan; for that meant that Daddy Dan was neglecting his work. So today, Gomez, as usual, promptly proceeded to take out his wrath on his old clerk, scapegoat of fate.

"What of Martinez's prescription?" he snarled. "Been waiting half hour. You slow as snails and seven-year itch!" He muttered an oath, then turned to St. Vrain with a smile that made his frown seem a beautiful thing. "Ah, *amigo,* you like to look at poison, eh? Going to kill somebody, yes?"

"I hadn't thought," answered St. Vrain.

"Yourself, no?"

"Perhaps."

"As favor to me, no! Dead men buy no medicine."

St. Vrain gave a shrug. He was still gazing at the rows of brown bottles.

Gomez laughed. Craven-hearted himself, he fancied the other too cowardly to commit suicide. "What kind you use, *amigo?* Strychnine? Cyanide?"

The dawdler in toxics showed interest.

"Well, that's a question. Poison should be suited to one's temperament and personality—just like religion, food, clothes. I haven't made an exhaustive study of my own case—yet."

It was a moment before the Mexican grasped the meaning of this speech.

"What kind you use on me? Carbolic acid? Rough-on-rats?"

St. Vrain regarded the swarthy, bloated face intently. Daddy Dan, in the brown-bottled background, looked on with his famous twinkling smile.

"Gomez," said the consumptive with odd incisiveness, "there is no poison in all chemistry and *materia medica* that suits your particular case. To kill you I'd have to resort to a—*clod.*"

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Gomez stared. "A—what?"

"A clod." And St. Vrain, for some occult reason of his own, turned and gazed directly at Daddy Dan.

"A clod?" repeated the Mexican, still floundering. "You mean piece of dirt—?"

"Exactly."

"But why you kill me, *me*, with dirt?"

"Think it over, Gomez." And St. Vrain turned to the brown bottles again.

Gomez was hurt. In a vague way he even felt he had been insulted. So....the direst, the most barbarous of poisons, even rough-on-rats, was too good for him. And he was not even worthy to die by drowning, by fire, by bullet. He should perish by *dirt*. A clod was a queer weapon of death, very queer.... Was St. Vrain's "clod" really a clod? Wasn't the word used to mean something else, something mysterious, hidden, terrible, unheard-of, something that would doubly distil the bitterness of death and multiply its horrors?

Gomez shivered in his layers and folds of greasy fat. Then he gave his little piggish grunt. Bah! it was a stupid joke, that was all, the kind that that crazy, half-dead St. Vrain was always springing. He looked at the sharp, chiselled profile with a scowl, his stumpy fingers twitching, eager to choke the life out of that white, emaciated throat, what little life was left. But the sick man had money, he was a good customer; so the Mexican turned to handy Daddy Dan.

"How about Martinez's prescription?" he foamed. "You stand around all day when work pile up, pile up. Talk about old bones like you! All ought to die at age sixty. No good. Eat, sleep, and some more—that's all. You are not worth a dollar a month. Look at showcase; need cleaning—and at soda fountain; ice out in street, melting in sun! Meestar St. Vrain I tell you......"

But St. Vrain, heartsick, had gone. It hurt him to see dogs kicked, cats stoned, and Daddy Dan abused.

The old clerk, whistling "La Paloma," in a heroic effort to placate the implacable Gomez, saw to Luis Martinez's prescription, the dirty show case, the ice that was melting in the sun, the polishing of the windows, the dusting of the counters, Grandma Sanchez's liniment, the making of a new supply of soda-fountain syrups, the mopping of the floor—while the Mexican raved and roared, cursing his luck and wishing to God he had a clerk twenty years younger who could turn off some work!

And this was the story every day in the year. Daddy Dan, under-valued, underpaid, toiled early and late; and Gomez, over-prosperous, overfed, scolded unceasingly. St. Vrain, a literary man who had come to this New Mexican village for his health, had long been aware of the old clerk's smiling martyrdom; and often in his long, wakeful nights and short, sleepy days he half-banteringly quizzed Fate and indicted the jade for setting the seal of death on his own brow and leaving the parasite Gomez to feed on Daddy Dan's incomparable heart.

All Capulin loved the quaint old man with the wistful smile, baby bald head and paradoxically beautiful, homely face. He was everybody's friend. Like St. Vrain he had come to sunny New Mexico on account of lung trouble. But that had been years ago. The climate had wrought a miraculous cure. Brought to Capulin on a stretcher, he lived to bury his wife, who was in perfect health at the time of their arrival. The desert had made a new man of him.

St. Vrain, who was by temperament an appraiser of human values, took a connoisseur's delight in Daddy Dan. His feeling was not based on gratitude or even on congeniality. It was impersonal. Daddy Dan was a perfect type; and perfection of type was St. Vrain's passion. Time was when this sick dilettant had been interested in people as people: he had loved women, made friends of men. But that was back in New York, in the heyday of his health and happiness and success, when the gods singled him out for splendid blessings. Now since he had come to this New Mexican desert and had broken every human tie, forgetting and forgotten, he found it impossible, in the shadow of his impending doom, to form new attachments. But if his heart was dead, his artistic instinct was not. For still, even in these, his last days, the old quest lured him, the quest of the perfect type.

And he had found not only one perfect type in this enchanted land of painted sunsets and futile hopes, a perfect type of embodied goodness in Daddy Dan; he had found another also, a perfect type of evil in Daddy Dan's employer. And one filled him with quite as much enthusiasm as the other. As he loved pure, abstract, impersonal goodness, so he loved Daddy Dan. And as he hated the principle of evil, so he hated Gomez. And as it is a characteristic human instinct to desire ardently, religiously, the perpetuation of good and the extermination of evil, so St. Vrain, quite ingenuously, would have made Daddy Dan immortal and Gomez food for the crows.

The first was impossible. But the second? How easy! To rid the world of Gomez would be no trick at all. St. Vrain was already a clever dabbler in toxicology: he could pilfer some strychnine, cyanide, carbolic acid from Gomez's own store any day, and there would be dozens of opportunities to administer it. Detection? What of that? The slayer would be as dead as his victim—for St. Vrain had long since taken the pagan resolve to slip quietly and decently out of it all before reaching the horrible last stages of his disease. So then: cyanide for himself, strychnine for Gomez!

Why not? He had no scruples, none whatever. If he believed in anything at all, it was in man's inherent right to change the course of events in the name of justice, man's privilege to interfere intelligently in the monstrously blind and stupid workings of fate. For humanity's sake a poison-bearing germ is exterminated. For humanity's sake Francisco Gomez should be killed.

Yes; but he must be killed appropriately, killed according to the inviolably eternal and the eternally inviolate fitness of things. St. Vrain, still passionately searching for the perfect type, demanded of himself—and of destiny—that the taking off of Gomez should be ultra typical. His punishment must fit his crime. He must perish by a *clod*. And if this particular mode of punishment were out of the question, if no clod of the requisite kind could be found, then Gomez could live on! Such was St. Vrain's devotion to his æsthetic ideal.

St. Vrain's little tent-house was perched on a high, dry, windy ridge overlooking the town. Here a rude little garage had sprung up like a mushroom; and two native carpenters, under the sick man's surprisingly expert direction, had built a sun-porch in a few hours. The tent-house was furnished comfortably, almost luxuriously. There were books and engraved copies of modern French and Flemish artists, marvelously colorful views of adobe town from the small windows, a lively airedale terrier, a philosophic Persian cat—and Pedro. Pedro was a quick-witted, sparkling-eyed Mexican lad, a protegé of Daddy Dan's, who attended to St. Vrain's wants. It was a harmonious household, almost a happy one. St. Vrain, the seeker, had found two perfect types—Daddy Dan and Gomez. Now if he could only find a clod, *the* clod, he could die in peace.

One morning Pedro had some news for his master.

"Wanos dios, Senor," he said musically when St. Vrain, languid and elegant in a lavender dressing-gown, sat down to his eggs and milk. "Gomez go to *rancho* today—down by Manero. Daddy Dan he tell me. Gomez gone all day. Happy Daddy Dan! Eh, *Senor?*"

St. Vrain gazed into space. "Get the car ready at once, Pedro," he said, making short work of his breakfast.

Pedro had the smart little red roadster at the door in an incredibly short time, and St. Vrain, white and smiling, drove away. When he reached the drug store he heard Gomez's shrill tenor voice, raised to falsetto fury, in the prescription room.

"Look here, old man," he was shrieking, "yesterday it was mangy cat, today it's crippled dog, tomorrow it's sick child. *Carrambo!* I'm d—d tired of this crazy trick of bringing in all sick and dirty trash from adobe town to treat and cry over and give my medicine to! Medicine it cost money. Ah, *amigo!*" catching sight of St.

Vrain and hurrying forward, "just in time! I take you with me to my rancho. Beautiful ride, not too far. I go out to collect rent from my tenant, José Garcia. Garcia he dog. He pay no rent for two months and more. You come, *amigo,* and fill lungs with fresh air and give germs ha-ha, yes?"

St. Vrain, coughing, excused himself. Gomez, with a last black look at Daddy Dan hurried out.

"Don't forget prescriptions," he called from the curb, after cranking his ancient car. "Plenty work today—no loaf on job!" And he rattled off.

A customer came in to take up Daddy Dan's time and attention, and St. Vrain went back into the prescription room, straight to the fascinating brown bottles, to one in particular, the one labelled simply, thrillingly, tremendously: "Poison, Cyanide." He opened it, hesitated, listened to Daddy Dan's genial laugh, then poured into a smaller bottle enough of the miraculous white powder to kill himself,—a dozen men; then with beautifully flushed cheeks he went back into the store toward the front door.

"What's your hurry? You haven't been stealing poison?" laughed Daddy Dan.

St. Vrain flung him a gay rejoinder and drove away. He laughed softly as he sped through picturesque adobe town and up the ridge. The blessed cyanide in his pocket assured him an ideal way of taking the Long Journey. Now if he could only find the clod for Gomez—

That afternoon St. Vrain's comparative serenity of soul gave way to disquiet. From a bewildering succession of supernally bright days, such as only the desert country knows, the weather changed suddenly to rain and cold. Dispiriting grey clouds pressed close upon the earth, smothering it; and a droning wind that was full of lamentation blew down from the Purgatoire mountains. The temperature dropped incredibly; and St. Vrain, who was a child of the sun, hating and fearing rainy days on account of the grisly distempers of imagination with which they afflicted him regarded the immediate prospect with a species of dismay. He pressed his face against the pent-up window pane, his gaze roving earth and sky Both were unspeakably dreary. The clouds, merged into a pall, hung low, like an imminent doom; the snaky *arroyos,* the adobe huts with their turquoise-blue wooden trimmings, the ugly "new" town beyond, all swathed in gloom, looked like the last picture of an *ennuied* painter, who, in a fantasy of the prosaic and familiar had decided to depict the end of the world by rain. So it seemed at least to the misanthropic St. Vrain.

"How long is this cursed rain likely to last?" he asked Pedro petulantly.

"Perhaps for three days, four days. *Senor.* They sometimes do at this season."

"Four days! And St. Vrain, the poor, sick, unreasonable child of the sun, would be forced to drag through the interminable hours, a prisoner within these walls! What could he do, he, dying by inches, he, loving the sun and the out-of-doors, mortally needing them to lift the melancholy that otherwise must drive him mad? True, there was the cyanide—handy, at his call; but Gomez—and the *clod?*

"Build a big fire, Pedro," he cried, in an excess of spurious gaiety, "a big, red, blazing one. Then bring in something to eat. We'll laugh at the rain."

He did laugh at it—for awhile. But when it continued through the next day and the next, throughout the week and into the week that followed: when it drizzled and poured, and dripped, and misted, with never even a pale little patch in the leaden sky to make one remember that there was such a thing in all the universe as sun, then indeed, his courage failed him utterly.

Pedro drew his great easy-chair up to the window for him and here he sat through the endless days, gasping, coughing almost incessantly; mutely begging Fate for a glimpse of his beloved sun, one glimpse before he died. He could not walk out, as all the country was a morass; besides, the dampness would have killed him. Motoring was out of the question His car would have sunk to the hubs in the deep mud.

He remembered how another rain, just

such a deadly rain as this, had driven Ibsen's "Oswald Alving" mad; and now he himself would surely have to resort to his precious cyanide were it not for the Hope that bade him live yet a little longer. His life, from the viewpoint of his innate possibilities at least, had been a comparative failure. He had not written a great book; he had not had a transforming adventure; his friendships and love affairs had ended in disenchantment or disaster. But there remained one thing, one supernal thing, that he might do and do perfectly. He could kill Gomez, kill him beautifully, fittingly, in a way that God Himself would approve and Destiny envy.

Pedro watched him, sad-eyed and anxious.

"Ah, *Senor,* there never was such rain, I swear it by Our Lady of Guadaloupe and all the rest of saints! This is dry country; it dry up and blow away. Now it is ocean, all wet. Ah, end of world, that is it!"

But it wasn't. There came a day when the rain ceased! The next morning the sun shone, the sun, the miracle sun, St. Vrain's sun! Then a devil-may-care wind sprang up, sharp and zealous, and the drying process began in earnest.

Pedro placed the big chair on the sun-piazza, and St. Vrain, a gay wraith in the red afghan, luxuriated like a cat in the mellow yellow rays—Pasht, the philosophic Persian, stretched near, purred no more contentedly! The late shut-in breathed the sunshine, ate it, drank it; and it gave him new life. With new life it imparted also a mad desire, a wild ambition.

"Pedro," said St. Vrain one morning not long after, "get out the car."

Pedro's big black eyes popped out. "The *Senor* is not going out in car—yet?"

"Why, certainly."

"Ah, no, *Senor!* Hard dry crust on mud fool you—like false friend. Mud and water beneath. Wheels of car get stuck. Then the *Senor* have to walk home. Please wait two days, three days."

St. Vrain smiled happily. "Put the chains on the rear wheels, Pedro, and see that there's plenty of oil and gas and I'll take the consequences. No, not another word." Pedro did as he was bidden.

It was no trouble to drive the car from the garage to the front door of the tent-house, as the soil of the ridge was sandy.

"But wait," warned Pedro, helping his master in, "till you get down hill. Mud-holes by thousands."

St. Vrain laughed joyously. He courteously declined the boy's eager offer to go with him, explaining that he did not need his services and that he wanted to be alone.

The car darted off saucily and flew down the sandy slope. A bit of bad road stretched ahead, but this was negotiated with ease, St. Vrain not even having to resort to low gear. He waved to Pedro and sped away.

Ah, this was life! The sun, one of those fierce, untamed suns of the desert, St. Vrain's sun, was shining brilliantly, brutally; a strong, fresh wind was blowing; the air was ticklish and tangy; and the sand-packed road comfortingly gave the lie to Pedro's pessimistic predictions. To be sure, there were still plenty of reminders of the unparalleled rain. Much of the country was flooded; some of the streets in adobe town were canals on which improvised rafts were being propelled; and a few of the huts were completely isolated in the water.

But the most havoc had been wrought in the *arroyos.* The continuous downpour had loosened the earth, and the banks had shelved until they had lost all semblance of their former outlines. Indeed, in some of the deeper *arroyos* there had been regular landslides. St. Vrain, to whom the unusual appealed strongly, regarded this phenomenon with interest.

He reached the crossroads and then hesitated, undecided whether to go on toward Capulin or turn off in the direction of Manero. Toward Manero was the open country; there he would be alone. That decided him. Besides, the road seemed to be in even better condition than the one he had just travelled.

He had gone about a mile and was congratulating himself on his good fortune when he noticed that the road was becoming somewhat sloppy. He slowed down—just in time to prevent the car from turning a somersault. As it was, the wheels sank into a mudhole up to the hubs. St. Vrain was hurled against the windshield, but escaped injury. He smiled grimly, recalling Pedro's warning.

He did not even try to start the car. There was no use. It was planted. He was too weak to walk home; all he could do was to wait for a passing vehicle to pick him up. Well, waiting wouldn't be so bad. The sun was warm, the wind exhilarating.

Half an hour went by, and just as the sun dipped over the jagged crests of the Purgatoires, leaving a chill that penetrated to the sick man's bones, he heard the sound of wheels behind. He turned and saw—Gomez.

"You! Caught like rat in trap!" cried the astonished Mexican; and he burst into a laugh.

"Will you give me a lift?" asked St. Vrain, shivering.

"Why, yes, *amigo*," answered Gomez, secretly pleased by the other's mishap. "To save you life it make me happy. But crazy thing to do, eh?—coming out in car? Too much mud, deep mud. I leave my car behind like smart man and hire horse. Car no good in mud. Yes, come with me, but we go to my rancho on other side of Manero first, then we come back. That dog José Garcia he still put me off, always put me off. He pay rent today, or I put him out. Come, *amigo*. I wrap laprobe around you. It's only little way, then back home." And he helped St. Vrain up on the seat and made him comfortable.

They had gone a short distance when a sudden gust of wind blew Gomez's hat off. Cursing, he jumped down and went after it. St. Vrain, amused, held the reins and watched the chase. Gomez, fat, lumbering, awkward, lost his breath immediately, the hat impishly evading his bungling stabs. Driven by the wind, it bowled exasperatingly toward a deep *arroyo*. Fired to fury, Gomez made a lunge after it as it disappeared over the brink. The earth, cracked and shelving from the recent rains, gave way, and the Mexican plunged out of sight into the ravine.

St. Vrain gave a wild little cry, leaped to the ground and then, despite his weakness, ran—flew—toward the abyss. One glance proved that the conditions were even more favorable than he had dared hope. A huge landslide was imminent. The earth was cut with large cracks which needed only the pressure of a human foot to send the mass crashing below. At the risk of his life, St. Vrain ran to the brink and looked over. Some sixty feet below, Gomez's face, distorted with terror, was just emerging from the earth in which he had been buried.

"Go back!" he screamed. "You send rest down on me!"

St. Vrain smiled. He placed his foot on the nearest crack.

"It's the *clod*," he said. "Do you remember?"

He pressed his foot on the shelving earth, then drew back. Gomez gave a cry of mortal fear. The earth shuddered, loosened, slipped, slid, plunged, crashed below, then......silence.

St. Vrain, fascinated, stared at the landslide; then suddenly he had a vague feeling that the particular spot on which he stood was moving, trembling as if from an earthquake. He turned and was horrified to see a huge crack extending fifty feet from the brink, widening, ever widening and completely cutting him off from solid ground. What a doom hung over him! In a moment he would go down with the earth, a companion to Gomez, buried alive. No, never! The clod for Gomez, yes, but cyanide for himself!

He rushed toward the crack, leaped it, just in time. Then he turned and saw the enormous mass, the mastodon *clod*, dislodge itself and then sullenly, malevolently, inevitably, crash down on Gomez's new-made grave, superimposing on that sepulchre another grave, ten more, a hundred more, burying him as deep as Hell forever......

And St. Vrain, coughing, sat down and smiled, satisfied.

But he did not thank God.

He felt that God ought to thank him.

That night they found him there, dead,

the cyanide bottle beside him, a written note clutched in his hand.

The note read:

The garden of life is choked with weeds. But now and then one finds a flower, a rare flower exhaling the fragrance of good deeds, without which any garden, though ever so beautiful, is a desert. Villagers! There is a flower, one flower, the rarest, blooming here. There has been a heavy, cruel, hard clod pressing against the root of your flower, crushing out its life. The clod would have killed the flower in the end. So I have removed it.

Most of us have at one time or another been harassed by the raucous sound of a worn and cracked phonograph record and can readily sympathize with a fellow being who is tortured nightly by such an abomination.

In THE SCRATCHED RECORD *by Grace Van Braam Gray* in our next number, you will get the story of a chap who was not only assaulted each and every night by defective music but was also mystified and unnerved by the freakishness of a record which never went bad twice in the same place.

THE CORPSE DELICIOUS

BY PAUL WILSON

This story was written some time before Bernstorff began "putting two of everything into the old suitcase" and is therefore somewhat prophetic. It is about Seaman McGoogan, who received the rating of a petty officer and went ashore to celebrate in a manner befitting the occasion.

THE little navy tug *Oskalusa* lay moored to the dock at Port-au-Prince, her war color blistering and cracking in the Hatian sun. The Coy Canuck, perched on the after capstan, frowned darkly. He was suffering from *ennui*—though *he* would not have called it that. Above his soft brown eyes the perspiration trickled down unwonted furrows and from time to time certain facial muscles contracted viciously upon a huge cud of "ship's," and a jet of amber sped accurately between the mooring bitts and over the channel rail. Thus he expressed his deep and soul-destroying disgust, as only an expert masticator can.

"Some life," he soliloquized. "Some outfit, huh! Join the navy an' see the worl', learn a useful trade, get free lodgin', free chow—that a razorback hawg wouldn't eat—an' on top of all these blessin's, a dollar a day to spend for court-martials. Say 'Ay, ay, sir,' to ever' idiot you meet an' always be ready to lay down an' be a doormat for some fetus-brained lobcock to walk on. Oh, it's a gay life, me lads. Yo, ho, ho, an' a bottle of grape juice."

He glanced down at the "hash mark" on his left sleeve, which recorded a previous enlistment. "Five years in an' never had a furlough. I wisht to—"

He was interrupted by a tired voice intoning, "'Hail to the chief who in triumph advances—' Hey there, my gentle flatfoot, come out of the twilight sleep. Ain't it enough that I gotta be a mother to you all the days of me life, buy your grub, clothes, and chewing tobacco, give you liberty and spending money and take you to the mast and comfort you in your last moments? But even when I want to make you a petty officer I gotta blow mess-gear to find you."

The ship's writer paused for breath and the Canuck slid, crab-fashion, off the capstan. "Whaddye mean,—petty officer?"

"'Come thou with me and thou shalt see,
While breaking hearts beat louder—'"

As he followed the scribe to the office, it penetrated his dazed intelligence that, either through the oversight of Providence or an incredible leniency of the examining board, he had been recommended for the rating of coxswain.

The ship's writer borrowed the makings and two dollars, quoted more verse, and proceeded with the initiation. "'Petty officers shall show in themselves an example of sobriety and obedience,' and all that stuff. Savvy? All right, sign here. Shove off an' leave muh to muh sorrow. Liberty's up at nine p. m. If you're going to celebrate your meteoric rise in the service, make a date with some strong arm guy to recover the *corpus delicti*. The Old Man's just waiting for a chance to crucify somebody. His mother hated him in his cradle and when he sees a fellow getting on in the world it makes him as happy and full of gladsome glee as a chewing-gum demonstrator with a busted jaw. So, go thy way in peace and beware the 'cup that clears today of past regrets and—' much obliged for the ten *gourdes;* I gotta encourage Mom before she stops my grog."

"Don't mention it, yeoman. An' nemmine about the corpse delicious. When they ring two bells I'll be here in large numbers." The new petty officer departed in search of someone who might loan him a rating badge.

As soon as possible after supper, the Coy Canuck was sitting by a little round table at the High Life Bar, consuming a cold one. A brand new "Crow," borrowed from the Texas Deranger, adorned his sleeve, proclaiming him a third-class petty officer in Uncle Sam's navy, and he was careful not to conceal the emblem from the bright eyes of the "Ray of Sunshine." In fact, he took pains to explain to her in Canadian patois the significance of the rating badge, and broadly hinted at even greater things to follow. However much the Canadian idiom may differ from the Haitian Creole, the discourse was well understood thus far, but when the Canuck ventured to prophesy with regard to Madamoiselle's share in his future good fortunes he met with the reply *"Pas comprendre,"* and it became evident that further conversation would have to do with trade.

Despondently the Canuck ordered another cold one, and his brown eyes, as they followed her movements, held the look of a scolded collie. He was not alone in his suffering, nor was he among the first. Many a marine and many a bluejacket came there to worship and to woo, bringing strange gifts and extravagant promises. Louisiana "cagin," Canadian patois and night-school French sang her praises and besought her compassion. But still the maid was fancy-free, and still the quarters flowed into the High Life while the beer flowed out. Some called her the "Golden Venus," some, the "Ray of Sunshine," and some, the "Haitian White Hope;" the one who gave her the last name had worn a black eye as his lady's favor.

The Canuck, sitting alone in his corner, received more refreshment, with which he proceed to drown his discontent. He did not deign to glance toward the other end of the room where several marines were demonstrating a taste similar to his own in the matter of liquids and love. Between draughts he thrust his fists against his ears to shut out their French-at-a Glance and stared glumly into space.

There is peace in Haiti when the dogs howl at night and the *tambours de voudou* strike the rhythmic swing of the boatmen's chantey; but tonight the dogs were silent and, away off in the "Caco district," could be heard the voodoo drums, beating a slow and sinister measure as if calling the devil's priestesses to the celebration of these horrid rites.

There had been rumors—there always *are* rumors, for that matter—and a few more marines, while possibly a few less of the native gendarmes, were on sentry duty. The gendarmes, with fixed bayonets on their carbines, walked post in their usual nonchalant manner; a Caco uprising was no treat to *them*. And the marines, on duty and off, gave more attention to wireless baseball scores from the States than to local rumor, even in those days when wholesale interments customarily followed the confirmation of such a warning. There were orders forbidding marines and sailors to be uptown unarmed, but a regulation automatic, with holster, belt and clips, is as heavy as an overcoat and seems to add as much to one's susceptibility to the heat; also, it is a dangerous thing to carry around when one is making a "first-class liberty" and wrestling with the spirit. So they generally ignored the order in question and armed themselves only with "cocomacacs," a kind of bamboo cane, elegant but solid and heavy.

The Coy Canuck slumped forward on the table, lost in reverie; he was trying to remember whether anyone had agreed to see him home before liberty expired, but something else persistently obtruded itself upon his mind—something agreeable but with a foreboding of disappointment, too. What the deuce was it? He could not recall, for when he almost had it, there returned the refrain, "Gotta get back before nine, gotta get back before nine, nine p. m., nine p. m. What was I thinking about? Back before nine, nine p. m." A colored gentleman at the piano was playing one of the earliest rags, the marines were singing, and the lights were dancing. The dancing lights made the Canuck dizzy; he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. That was better; that coon sure could tickle the celluloid, but he wished he knew something later than "Jungle Town." He slouched farther down in his chair and slumber claimed him.

Sleep, too, at that moment, should have been comforting the well-known Caco general, Codieau, who, with two hundred and forty other rebellious patriots, had been made a ward of the watchful, though never waitful, government of Haiti. But information had trickled through the thick stone wall of the general's prison.

Four regiments of marines had been withdrawn from Port-au-Prince and sent to reason with the Dominicans, and another regiment had gone to Port-au-Paix on a similar errand of mercy; all ships of the Expeditionary Forces, except the tug *Oskalusa,* were distributed among Cuba, Santo Domingo and Mexico.

In the latter republic the Yankees were losing men, material and influence at a highly gratifying rate. German submarines filled the Atlantic and Baron Bernstorff was putting two of everything into the old suitcase and advertising for a caretaker. Were two companies of marines, down with malaria, and one little tugboat without ordnance, to crush into subservience the proud Black Republic? *Mais non, mes enfants!*

And so it happened that, just when our hero was falling asleep at the High Life, a certain sergeant-of-the-guard was wildly chewing his nails at the Caserne while General Codieau was charging down the Rue du Centre at the head of some two hundred odd followers, variously armed and bound for the custom house where ample sinews of war lay deposited.

There was a scattering rifle-fire and a cry of *"Les Cacos! Les Cacos!"* and within fifty-eight seconds practically every shop window, door and shutter in the city were closed and barred. If you want to see the best emergency drill in the world, fire a gun in Port-au-Prince and shout *"Les Cacos."*

The marines whom we left diverting themselves at the High Life heard the commotion and charged forth, cocomacacs in hand, just in time to encounter the head of the column.

Corporal "Hefty" Schleikowitz broke his cocomacac over a kinky poll and immediately went down under a rusty saber. His companions, a little groggy on their feet but still enthusiastic, were laying about them merrily when a fusillade from a dozen long single-shot French rifles, made in 1877, sent fragments of brick, concrete and glass hailing down upon them; they fell back into the barroom, closely followed by the rebels. Flinging chairs and tables behind them in their path, they dashed through the room and into the back yard, and although the wall there is ten feet high, they ignored it.

The Canuck, who had been partially awakened by the noise of battle and was trying to regain possession of his scattered faculties, was sent to the floor by the fleeing marines and trodden upon by their pursuers. He rolled into a corner and eyed further proceedings in profound, though silent, disapproval.

At the street crossing, five gendarmes and one native secret-service man armed with a "Young America" thirty-two, together with half a dozen marines, gave battle. General Codieau was unhorsed and came down with a sprained ankle. As two burly aids led him into the barroom he barked a short command to his followers. They rushed past and on toward the custom house, sweeping all resistance before them.

The rebel chief sat down, rubbed his wounded ankle and smiled ruefully at his lieutenants. "It is nothing," he said. "I shall feel all right presently. You go ahead with the work at the custom house, Fabre. Take it and hold it. Get all the rifles and ammunition there and distribute them. Send all your unarmed men, together with the others you do not need, to the old rendezvous. That is all for the present."

He turned to another. "Dixon, you take command at the rendezvous; those who have been waiting will gather there, bringing their small arms. There will be two thousand there before daylight. I shall make this place temporary headquarters; it's as good as any other. The Yankees are scattered among the police stations and can't get together for two or three hours, if then; by that time you can have two hundred men here and the main force at the rendezvous ready to move. Everything according to plan, and keep me informed as you go."

The subordinates saluted and sped away. Half a dozen barefooted natives searching the living apartments adjoining and above the barroom. Madamoiselle was discovered, led into the general's presence and bidden to serve him. The convalescent Canuck was dragged forth and found to be alive. A black man clubbed his rifle to remedy the oversight, but madamoiselle dashed between him and his intended victim.

"Just like Pocahontas," murmured the Canuck; he was dead sober now, and his temperature dropped almost to zero. Madamoiselle imperiously waved the black man away.

"My house is not an abattoir, my general."

"Pray forgive my rough soldier, madamoiselle," Codieau responded absently. He sipped his wine, apparently at ease, but ever he hearkened to the sound of scattered rifle-fire which reported, now near, now far, the activities of his followers and the enemy. A volley from the Palace.—the guard was seeing shadows; a single shot from the Caserne,—someone had been slow in answering the challenge; isolated exchanges between French rifle and Springfield,—erstwhile peaceful citizens were resurrecting hidden weapons, while truant marines were dispersed at large and sniping where sniping was good.

Then came the noise of combat from the direction of the custom house. It did not last long. Twenty obsolete Krags, in the hands of loyal gendarmes, stopped the rebel advance; then a squad of bluejackets charged up the open street, firing as they came and laughing and shouting like little schoolboys on the campus. The rebels ran back as they had come, back toward the High Life where their general awaited them, already aware that the first stroke had failed.

The Canuck leaped to his feet and dashed madly for the back door, encountering in full career the little mulatto general. The latter, his finely chiseled features still immobile except for a slight distension of the nostrils, merely attempted to step aside, but his injured ankle betrayed him and he stumbled, tripping the sailor as he fell. In his wild struggle to extricate himself, the Canuck encountered a cocomacac.

Since 1914, it is not considered essential to have all the bloody work done off-stage: still, in deference to a public long accustomed to a delicacy in narrative bordering upon squeamishness, I should like to say that our hero had done nothing shocking—or, if so, not by intent. But, no; when he arose and resumed his flight the little general was dead; right peaceful he looked now—and right pathetic, too, in his neat khaki and pretty riding boots. The trace of the jungle snarl had faded from the slender brown face; the hair, preserving the kinkiness of his African forbears, was still neatly parted. He lay in the litter of broken bottles and overturned furniture, like a tired child asleep in a field of flowers. Here the Canuck should have come to attention, looked soulfully toward the ceiling and slowly removed his hat. And he might have done so, too,—for he was a devotee of the movies,—but his agile feet, all unbidden, were bearing him rapidly away from the scene of his late entertainment.

The rebels, leaderless and defeated, joined the main body at the rendezvous, then the whole force withdrew to the Plain of Abraham, where, a few days later, a punitive expedition busied them.

At 9.15 p. m. the Coy Canuck reeled on the dock alongside the tug *Oskalusa* and shouted, "Q. M. on watch! Heinrich Francois McGoogan, coxswain, U. S. Navy, returnin' f'm liberty on time, clean and sober."

"Jigger," warned the man on watch, too late. A harsh voice was heard somewhere in the darkness:

"Make that 'seaman' instead of 'coxswain' and mark him fifteen minutes absent overleave. Take the rating badge off the damn fool and turn him in."

Morning came hot and close, as always. A penetrating, sickening odor of human untidiness floated out upon the bay; fetid mists arose along the water front where naked families embarked in their clumsy sailboats. Beating with sticks upon the gunwhales in accompaniment to the boatmen's chantey, pickaninnies and women took up the chorus, high and clear and oddly beautiful. From the valleys beyond the city, clean white cloudlets straggled up the mountainside, formed ranks at the crest and marched away.

The ship's writer, glancing from his door, saw McGoon sprawled on the starboard "Spud-crate," and raised his voice in song.

"Oh, we little miss the music
'Til the sweet-voiced bird has flown."

"Aw, lay off that stuff," growled the unhappy Canuck. Then he took up his chant of hate. "Some outfit, huh? Some navy! Join the navy an' see the worl'; learn a useful trade in the floatin' university, such as holy-stonin' decks, cleanin' spitkids and takin' abuse. Free chow—if you can eat it; free place to flop—if you can find one; free medical 'tention, 'cept you have to pay for it and then you get it from a hay-shakin' apprentice that don't know ipecac from nitroglycerine. An' on top of all these blessin's you get the huge sum of a dollar a day to give to the starvin' Belgians, an' the privilege of washin' your own clothes. Some outfit!"

The scribe carefully dogged his door and then retorted through the porthole: "That's what they all say, Henry, but they come back just the same."

In the Black Cat for May: THANKS TO THE CAPE COD FINN, *by Charles Boardman Hawes.* Three lumber jacks, longing for a change of atmosphere, divorce the "forest primeval" with its sheltering pines for the heaving decks of a lumber schooner. Their nautical education begins under a skipper whose gentle ways are most distinctly not their ways.

THE EPIC OF OLD CARK

BY HORACE J. SIMPSON

It is possible for a man to be a prig in the path of progress, if he happens to be one who has a taste for clams. Old Cark was such a person. He associated his taste for clams with his distaste for Jerry-built houses.

THIS is really the tragedy of Three Cove—of its premature birth as a select resort by the salt sea, of its blasted infancy, and of its early and lamented demise. Perhaps though, it would be a little unfair to its fathers to speak of Three Rills Cove as dead; let us compromise and call it a case of suspended animation. For possibly when there lives no longer an obstinate and artful Old Cark—

But let us get back to the beginning.

Clamfleet, juxta-mare, had outlived its day. Men of clear vision had foreseen the setting of its sun behind the mountain of a railway company's avarice when the first cheap excursion had turned a thousand trippers loose in its select streets. When a short-sighted town council decided to allow the reek of fried fish and the glare of three-penny cinemas on the very Marine Parade, Ossa was heaped on Pelion and, as a select resort for the great middle classes, Clamfleet was no more.

Mr. Chaplin Church, a town councillor, who had hotly opposed the transportation to Clamfleet of London's back streets in bulk, convened a public meeting and told the townspeople to their faces that they possessed less imagination than the municipal steam-roller.

"Good for trade, is it?" he roared at them. "Let me tell you that a bigger turnover doesn't necessarily mean a larger profit..... All right! Go on attracting the riff-raff of the metropolis with your cheap trips and your cinemas and your fried fish. Make Clamfleet the slum she deserves to be. In less than a dozen years Three Rills Cove will be proudly wearing the mantle of prosperity that Clamfleet has been blind enough to discard. Three Rills Cove! That's the name of the place that in a few years will have taken its position as the most select seaside resort within easy reach of London!"

Clamfleet sniggered. It remembered that, in the days before Mr. Chaplin Church took so burning an interest in local affairs, he had been a speculative builder. It remembered that he had bought some marsh land by the shore at Three Rills Cove; that he had put up a score of bungalows there; and that those same bungalows were still standing, empty and decayed. For Three Rills Cove was seven miles from Clamfleet, which was the terminus of the railway, and the roads were impossible.

So Clamfleet sniggered again, and went home.

"All right!" Mr. Chaplin Church told his wife in bed that night. "Let 'em snigger. A hundred thousand pounds invested in Three Rills Cove—and nobody above a costermonger will ever spend a holiday at Clamfleet again. I'll show 'em."

"Chaplin," she demanded, thoroughly alarmed, "you aren't mad enough to throw away any more money over that forsaken place, I hope?"

"Who's talking of throwing money away?" he snorted. "I shall invest it—and invest it in the best and biggest thing that ever happened my way. Don't you worry. Three Rills Cove will come into its own. When next season opens, it will have its first-class hotel, two score or more attractive villa residences, its golf links, and its tennis courts. The season after, visitors will find the accommodation and the attractions trebled. In a few years more, no place on the coast will be able to hold a candle to it; everybody who is anybody will spend their holidays at Three Rills Cove."

Mrs. Chaplin Church was converted. Being an excellent wife, she never persisted in throwing cold water over any enthusiasm of her husband's. Once she had heard a street-corner orator assert that mighty empires had been built on the flimsy foundations of men's dreams. At any rate, Chaplin's dream was modest by comparison. He did not propose to build an empire, but a select resort for holiday makers. She dropped off to sleep and dreamed that he had done it.

Mr. Chaplin Church was not a man to allow grass to grow when once he had made up his mind to do a thing. Indeed, many a street of villas at Clamfleet and elsewhere testified to his dislike of growing grass where bricks and mortar could be profitably cultivated instead. Early next morning he had an interview with Messrs. Lone & Deeds, solicitors, with the result that the title and the amount of capital of the company for the development of Three Rills Cove were decided upon there and then.

In six weeks from that morning, the Select Resorts Syndicate Limited, drafted a regiment of workmen and much material to the Cove. The decayed bungalows were demolished, the foundations of a commodious and splendid hotel and of twenty attractive villas were started. Fearful and wonderful slashes were made in the flat dreariness of the landscape to provide future visitors to Three Rills with recreation on select golf links and tennis courts. In short, the wonted silence and solitude were invaded by a builder's yard run mad.

Nobody minded. There was nobody at Three Rills to mind. Nobody lived there except Old Cark—and he didn't mind. On the contrary, he welcomed the invasion. It was splendid thing for him; he had never had such a time in his life. He now sold more cooked cockles and clams in a week than he had formerly sold in six months, and without the trouble of taking them to Clamfleet.

Those carpenters and bricklayers and navvies liked nothing better than to see Old Cark stagger aboard the rotten old boat which had been moored for forty years in the middle one of the three rills from which the cove took its name. Generous chaps they were. There was a canteen on the job, and they treated the old clam-digger to as much drink as he could carry—and more.

All that winter the marshlands echoed with the ring of trowels and the bang of hammers on rafters and floors. A brand new town welcomed the spring with brick-red smiles and the breath of shavings and new mortar. Later on, pantechnicon vans rumbled along the fresh-metalled roads from Clamfleet and deposited heaps of furniture at the doors of the imposing hotel and at most of the attractive villas. Later still, yet before the holiday season had well commenced, smart motor char-a-bancs awaited the express trains—not the cheap excursions—at the terminus and conveyed well-dressed and obviously superior passengers to the splendid accommodations and select attractions offered by Three Rills Cove.

Mr. Chaplin Church and his co-directors often awaited the arrival of the smart char-a-bancs with a personal welcome for the visitors, so proud were they of having converted dreary marshlands to an up-to-date resort for the better classes, in a few months. As soon as the season commenced, all building operations were suspended and Three Rills Cove swept and garnished for its guests. Nothing was allowed to mar the comforts of the select people whom discrete advertising had attracted there.

To be sure, Old Cark caused a little unpleasantness at first. On the day of the opening of the Hotel de Luxe, and the bricklayers and navvies having departed, he shambled straight into the luxurious lounge and importuned a party of ladies there to buy his cooked cockles and clams. He was sternly warned that he must never commit the unpardonable sin again and conducted outside. In fact, Mr. Chaplin Church hinted strongly that the sooner he took his rotten old boat and his disreputable self from Three Rills Cove, the better it would be for everybody. However, the smart people who stayed at the Hotel de Luxe seemed amused rather than annoyed by the vagaries of the old scoundrel whose only home was the ancient craft moored in the rill opposite the main entrance. And so Old Cark was allowed to remain unmolested—for a time.

It was when warm weather set in that the real trouble commenced. It has been said that the new resort owed its name to the presence, in the vicinity, of three rills. They intersected an expanse of salterns at the head of the cove, and meandered from the seawall down to low-water mark, draining the low marshlands of storm water. In the middle rill, which was in places fifty yards wide, Old Cark's boat, the *Hornet*, had squatted many a year, only lifting from her mud bed at spring tides. On each side lay vast heaps of shells, the refuse of almost a century's clam digging and mussel and cockle gathering; for Old Cark had known no other occupation in all his seventy years, and it had been his father's profession before him. There was a certain effluvium from the shells when the sun played warm upon them; and that, combined with the odor of shellfish cooked once or twice a week in the old *Hornet's* cabin, offended the delicate nostrils of the guests of the Hotel de Luxe, and they complained to the suave, immaculate manager. He in turn carried their complaint to Mr. Chaplin Church, who went to Old Cark, and peremptorily demanded that the nuisance be abated.

"Oh!" said Old Cark, puffing a cloud from a noisome black pipe into the gentleman's eyes. "So that's the lay of the land, is it? And who might you be, Mister Jerry-builder?"

"Don't be foolish!" snapped Mr. Chaplin Church. "This nuisance must be removed. I'll see that the shells are carted away—though I'm not sure but what I ought to charge the cost of the job to you—but you will have to move your old boat yourself. If you must cook clams and cockles and other offensive things, you must do it at a decent distance from other people's noses. You understand me? You and your old boat must clear out. I'll give you till high-water tomorrow afternoon. If you don't shift then, you will be shifted."

If Old Cark was upset by the stern order, he showed it strangely. He removed his evil smelling pipe, tucked it away in the folds of his grease-smeared jumper, and burst into a cackling guffaw.

Indignant Mr. Chaplin Church strode away, firmly resolved that, for the old scoundrel's insolence, he would show no leniency.

"Here!" called Old Cark. "Come back. Let's talk this out."

Mr. Chaplin Church was at heart a man of peace. If that old scoundrel and his rotten boat could be gotten rid of without fuss, so much the better. He went back.

"Well," he said, not at all unkindly, "what is it?"

He ought to have been warned by the sneering curl of Old Cark's upper lip, but he wasn't.

"You built all these houses and that slap-up public-house, didn't ye, Mister Mortar-hod? Reckon to make Three Rills Cove a better place than Clamfleet,, don't ye? Ye wasn't asked to, was ye? I didn't send for ye to come and build a town close to my old boat, did I?"

Mr. Chaplin Church was still inclined to be pacific.

"Oh, come now, Cark!" said he. "You are talking nonsense."

"Am I, Mister Whitewash-bucket? Not half as much nonsense as your gas about shifting me and my old boat out o' this rill. You jest try shifting us and see."

"You mean to tell me that you are going to be foolishly obstinate? I'd hate to have to resort to force, you know. And I'm afraid that if the police do come to shift you, and you oppose them, they won't be any too gentle about it."

"The police!" sneered Old Cark. "They got no more power to shift me than you have. The blamed Government itself couldn't do it. When a man's got rights, he's got rights. And I've got the rights o' mooring a craft in this rill and using these salterns for my shells, and so had my father afore me. They come from the lord o' the manor; and ye can't take 'em away, Mister Putty-knife."

Mr. Chaplin Church was very angry; nevertheless, he saw the usefulness of showing the high hand. The old reprobate meant to give trouble, possibly with the idea of inducing a bribe. Well, his peaceable departure would be cheap at a sovereign. Mr. Chaplin Church offered it suavely.

"Garn!" sneered Old Cark. "Go and spend it on drain-pipes. I'd only be robbing ye by taking it; for I could come back when I liked. I tell ye it was left in a will that my father, and his sons, and their sons, forever and ever, have the right of mooring a boat in the middle rill and using the salterns for shell heaps. Ye can't get away from what's put in a will."

Mr. Chaplin Church sighed and departed. It was obvious that the old scoundrel had a bee in his bonnet; otherwise he wouldn't have lived all his life in squalor aboard that rotten old boat, feeding mainly on shellfish, and spending what little he got from the sale of them in getting gloriously drunk.

Mr. Church had a friend to dinner that night, an old gentleman who had lived the whole of his eighty years at Clamfleet. To him he spoke of his trouble with Old Cark.

The old gentleman rubbed his chin.

"Now you mention it," he said, "I remember that he gave Standish a lot of trouble about thirty years ago. You bought the property from Standish's son, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Mr. Chaplin Church.

"There was some question about the right of Old Cark to use those salterns," said the native. "I remember that Standish was going to build a house there and use that middle rill as a permanent berth for a small yacht he had, but he discovered that he couldn't legally shift Old Cark and had to abandon the idea."

"Absurd!" said Mr. Chaplin Church. "I bought, not only the marshes, but the salterns and foreshore, right down to low water mark. Next winter we shall convert the sea wall into a smart Marine Parade and build a causeway right across the spot where that old rascal has his heaps of stinking shells. I tell you the whole blessed show is mine, and I can do what I like with it; rather, the Select Resorts Syndicate can."

Notwithstanding his conviction on the point, Mr. Chaplin Church saw Messrs. Lone & Deeds next day and instructed them to look into the matter. His caution was amply justified. Undoubtedly Old Cark had some sort of a right to use the rill for his boat and the salterns for his shells. The privilege apparently had been granted to his father for some trivial service by a former lord of the manor. This had been overlooked when the property was conveyed to Mr. Chaplin Church; but Messrs. Lone & Deeds were of the opinion that the old clam-digger could be induced to renounce his rights for quite an insignificant sum down. They would appeal to Old Cark's cupidity.

"Do," said Mr. Chaplin Church. "I'm afraid that if I saw the old rogue again I might lose my temper and spoil things."

So Mr. Jubal Lone went over to Three Rills Cove, saw Old Cark—and thought he had conquered. The promise of a brand new boat to replace the ancient *Hornet* appeared to succeed where the blandishment of hard cash failed, but the wily solicitor had been indiscreet enough to slip a half-sovereign into Old Cark's hand to seal the bargain.

It was the possession of so much money that enticed Old Cark to Clamfleet that afternoon and sent him back gloriously drunk. And had not Old Cark been gloriously drunk he would not have pushed his way into the Hotel de Luxe and insisted on being served with a "pot o' four ale."

His request was not granted, but he was taken firmly by his shoulders and put outside by the immaculate manager himself.

"Oh-ho!" gurgled Old Cark. "So that's your little game, Mister Whiteshirt, is it? Ye've been put up to this by Mister Jerry-builder Church! I know! All right! You may chuck Old Cark out o' your tin-kettle public-house, but ye'll find it's afore ye bought your shovel to chuck him and his old Hornet out o' that rill! Pull a blamed hornet out of her nest by the sting, would ye? You dam' well try it on!"

And so, when next day Mr. Jubal Lone took to Old Cark a properly-drawn-up document for him to sign, renouncing his rights forever, the solicitor got a set-back.

"When you have signed it," he wheedled, "you may go to Clamfleet and take possession of that brand new smack in Alder's shipyard."

He proffered the use of his fountain pen, which Old Cark seemed inclined to refuse. The old reprobate, after staring at the solicitor keenly, took the lower lash of his right eye between thumb and finger, and pulled it down with vulgar significance.

The solicitor was nettled. But he forced himself to be jocose. "Oh, I know there isn't a speck of green in your eye!" he said. "You want the new boat first? Very well; you shall have her. Come back with me and take possession."

Old Cark sucked furiously at his pipe.

"You hold hard, Mister Six-and-eightpence!" he roared. "What have ye put down on that paper about that new boat? Does it say I can bring her here and cook cockles and clams aboard her? Does it say I can keep on using them salterns for my shells, and stink out that penny public-house?"

The solicitor started. "Oh, come now, Cark! You don't expect Mr. Chaplin Church to make you an unconditional present of that new boat?"

"Him!" the old scoundrel screamed. "I wouldn't expect him to give me the smell of his dinner! But I'll give him the smell o' mine! I'll stink him out—him and his Jerry-built pub! You take that dam' paper back and tell him so!"

And before the crestfallen lawyer was half way back to Clamfleet, there wafted from the cabin of the old *Hornet* such an overpowering odour of stewing clams that the Hotel de Luxe and the attractive villas had to close all their windows.

"Chuck me and my old boat out of our home, would they!" muttered Old Cark, leaving the clams stewing and stinking on the fire, and shuffling down the mud to dig for more. "Chuck me out o' their stained-glass public-house, would they? Put their silly heads into a hornet's nest, they have! I'll show 'em."

And show 'em he did. For the warmer the weather became, the more shell-fish he cooked. One could not possibly expect people to stay in a hotel with permanently closed windows, any more than one could expect them to go outside and be choked to death by the reek of stewed clams and the effluvium from the heaps of long departed shell-fish. The superior visitors to Three Rills Cove did just what other people with offended nostrils might be expected to do. They held handkerchiefs to their noses until they got safely away from the nuisance; then called the Cove and the select Resorts Syndicate Limited all the bad names they could think of.

The story of Old Cark and his cockles and clams got into the newspapers. People chuckled—and remained content to take it on trust from the pens of descriptive reporters. Nobody wanted to go and smell for himself. Consequently, before the season was half over, the Hotel de Luxe was compelled to close its doors—as well as its windows. Pantechnicon vans again rumbled before the attractive villas—arriving empty, and going away full.

Whether Mr. Chaplin Church and his co-directors lost heart as well as money can only be surmised. What can be asserted quite definitely is that the Select Resorts Syndicate was wound up at the end of the season, and that the Hotel de Luxe and the attractive villas are now in a state of ruinous decay.

But the *Hornet* is still in her nest—Old Cark still digs for clams and cooks them in his cabin. As for the heaps of shells on the salterns, they do not grow appreciably; for nowadays Old Cark usually carries his refuse farther afield. There is quite a respectable heap in the exact centre of each tennis-court, and some smaller ones on the golf-links beyond. Sometimes—when he has been to Clamfleet and returned gloriously drunk—Old Cark will take a bucket and fill it at one of the parent heaps on the salterns. With unsteady gait he will lug it to the Hotel de Luxe, throw open a lower window, and make the night ring with the crash of falling shells on a hollow floor. Then he will lurch back to his old boat, shouting:

"Now, then, Mister Jerry-builder Church and Co! I'm ready for another bout with ye! One man agin a damned town—that's Old Cark!"

THE TERRIBLE BRINK

BY ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE

A man may look another man in the eye and tell him to sit on a tack; but when he is looking a rattlesnake in the eye, he should walk humbly and abstain from doing anything which the snake might look upon as an "over act."

FROM that thrilling moment when the heavy pine root, jutting from the sheer surface of the bank, had given way under him, Lee Rivers knew that he could not hope to descend the Fairfield bluff as he had descended it. But above him he found other supports and purchases which enabled him to climb steadily upward until he reached the last and most difficult stage of his arduous task. This was the delicate manœuvering that was necessary in order to climb over the shelving brink. His mainstay in this was the bleached root of a live oak. Rivers knew this to be dead, but he hoped it to be strong.

Fifty feet below him, pulled up on the shelving rocks on which the lazy yellow tide of the Santee river lisped and murmured, his small canoe rested. There Rivers had left it when he had made up his mind to climb the great bluff of Fairfield plantation. His purpose in doing so was to examine the surface of the almost sheer fall which, year by year, had been giving way, endangering, though remotely, the Rivers' home, which stood not more than a hundred feet back from the edge of the bluff. It would have been wiser if he had had himself let down over the edge of the high bank; but he had believed the other way possible, and he had attempted it. Now that he had climbed to the crumbling lip of the clay wall, he realized his mistake; at least he knew himself to be in a most difficult position. A slip on his part, a sudden cave-in of the rotten bank, a breaking of the dead root on which he stood, would send him hurtling fifty feet to the rocks below. His way out of the peril lay in going upward. So he summoned his strength and his self-reliance for the last and most dangerous effort.

The strength of Lee Rivers was young strength; and his thirty years of outdoor life on a plantation had made it resourceful strength as well. Looking at him as he carefully but painfully made his way up the baffling face of the Fairfield bluff, pausing now and again to examine the nature of the fall's surface, ascertaining how far the rock extended upward, and what was the density and the cohesive power of the clay, one would say that he was built for just such climbing. He was of medium stature, strongly knit throughout; and his clear features and dark-blue eyes gave assurance of steady foresight and calm courage. All his movements showed a swift and lithe control, and they hinted, as such things do, of a ready and resourceful nature.

Whatever strength and courage he had, Lee Rivers now urgently needed; for as he began to edge his way up to the final reach of the sheer bank, he heard a dry crackle beneath him and felt the live-oak root on which his weight was resting begin to sag. But his right hand and forearm were already over the bluff, groping there to grasp some support; and his fingers found and took hold of a small but strong green root, which the giant oak that hung over the precipice had, by some abnormal exuberance of growth, looped out of the ground. With such a hold, Rivers began to draw himself upward. The bank, he felt, would not give way, because through many years the oak roots had firmed it at this point; the particular root that he was gripping seemed, moreover, stubbornly tough. In a moment he would have his left hand and arm over the edge, and then he could pull himself up to sound footing and to safety. But before his eyes, moving slowly upward, cleared the rim, Rivers heard a sound that made him relax everything save the grip of his right hand. To relax that, he knew, would be fatal. Now his left hand, a little nervously, sought a hold in the smooth bank; his weight subsided on the dubious cracking root; and in his veins the warm blood was chilled.

His eyes had glanced downward, but there was naught beneath save the horror of the open air-space and the gleaming rocks below. But greater was the horror of the dry, insistent, penetrating challenge that was coming from the terrible brink above him. Rivers, in some subconscious way, tried to deny that the sound he was hearing was the one which, under the circumstances, he most dreaded to hear; but the natural honesty of his mind, even in such a stress, rejected the vain denial of his danger's reality. He knew that on the ledge of land just above him, the ledge which a moment before had promised him refuge from the jaws of the chasm beneath, was now heaped in his [illegible] coil a rattlesnake, which, probably aroused from his lethargy in the sun by the groping of the man's hand, had now become alarmed by the appearance of another hand coming above the brim of the cliff. Lee Rivers had not seen the reptile; but from his familiarity with every foot of land along the top of the bluff, he knew just what the snake's position would be, and from the tone of the vibrating rattles, he judged the serpent to be old and irritable.

Over the head of the climber on that fatal cliff, a massive live-oak extended powerful moss-draped limbs above the empty gulf. Against its trunk, Rivers knew, its roots were heaved high in fantastic forms; and he remembered two gnarled ones that ran out from the base of the tree toward the cliff, forming between themselves a sheltered space, bare and sunny. From his position in relation to the oak, Rivers guessed that the rattler was lying in this space; and this was the one spot accessible to him. Below, therefore, lay death on the rocks after a dizzy fall; above, inevitable death awaited in a yet more cruel form. He had no way to defend himself from the reptile; and, knowing the rattlesnake's nature, Rivers realized that the snake had viewed his approach over the cliff as presaging an attack, and forthwith had scalily heaped himself into a coil and had begun the warning whirr of his rattles. What was sure to happen if he drew himself up over the cliff, Rivers knew only too well; nor could he help knowing what was equally sure to happen if he continued to hang over that terrible brink.

At such a crisis in a brave man's life, the scenes about him become intensely vivid; and this is especially so if the scenes are familiar ones. One downward look, one backward glance across the broad placid river, had fixed on the doomed man's vision the ripple of the waves on the indolent black rocks far beneath him; the wavering lines of pale green marsh on the opposite side of the river; the deeper green of the cypresses, standing like sentinels on the lonely delta; the calm gold of the level rice fields below the Fairfield wharf; the white sails of a schooner near the river-mouth, floating idly on glassy waters. Never had life seemed more peaceful, more desirable; but because of the slow cracking of the roof under his weight and because of the sinister singing of the rattles above his head, life had never before seemed to Lee Rivers so perilously uncertain. This uncertainty was deepened by a realization that the desperate situation was in his hands alone.

If this fatal happening had occurred in the winter, he might have called for help with some hope of being heard and of being rescued. But he was the only member of the family left on the plantation, the others being at the summer home on the nearby coast. The only person likely to be in the house was the old negro caretaker, and his powers of hearing had long since left him. The other workers on the place were far down in the ricefields or out in the turpentine woods. The man on the cliff was alone; alone with his fate,—with the rattlesnake just above and the rocks far below.

More and more now, the strain of his weight was being eased from the breaking root below to the good right hand and arm above. Partly to change this painful position, and partly to satisfy himself that the snake was where he supposed it to be, he once again drew himself up very slowly and craftily until his eyes peered over the rim of the cliff.

All that his mind, acting on his memory of the place, had pictured, was there, even to the smallest detail. There was the great gray trunk of the oak; there were the heaved, rough-barked roots; and there in the small triangular space was the dreaded reptile. He was much larger than Rivers had anticipated that he would be. He was not a timber rattler; a genuine diamond-back of the swamp he was, formidable of proportions and grim of aspect. Rivers knew, from one swift glance at that broad malignant head, what a single stroke of those cruel fangs would mean. Nor did it seem strange to him that the snake was where it was: the dense Fairfield shrubberies were close at hand, and this particular spot was sheltered, sunny, remote,—just the situation a rattler would choose for basking and for a day-time retreat.

After sight of him, Rivers once more, and with a heart that could not, though courageous, but beat with failing hope, lowered himself to his old position. What chance there was for him, he could not see, though the urgency of his courage never forsook him. He could not safely advance; he could not with safety retreat. Of the two, to let go and fall seemed easier; but to climb on and battle to the death if necessary with the monster seemed the only course for a man to take. If there were any other thing to do, Rivers could not think of it. The situation as he saw it was so simple that it was elemental. Apparently it meant death either way. Rivers had the choice of two paths, and both led into darkness. But slowly, under the grim strain of hanging on without hope, a fine sense of manhood came to the rescue of his conflicting feelings. If he had to die, he would die fighting. Certainly he would not fall if he could help it; the only other thing to do was to draw himself up, and then meet with all the courage he could the dread creature that awaited him at the top of the Fairfield bluff. The reptile, he believed, would think himself cornered and attacked, and would strike while he was struggling to gain a foothold on the level space above the cliff; for the rattler could not but interpret such struggles, violent as they must of necessity be, as directly menacing him and launched against him.

To keep his present hold much longer, Rivers knew to be impossible. The root on which his weight had rested had now sagged so low that it was of practically no support, Into the clay wall he had kicked a small toe-hold; and this was of some help, though the purchase was slight and the surface slippery. He had to climb up; and the time to do so was at hand.

But what had to be done was to be done, Rivers determined, in no sudden mood of desperation. He was thinking coolly and clearly of his chances. Everything seemed against him; but something might break in his favor. He had always liked the axiom, "The worst turns the best to the brave," and now he thought of its truth. At least he would yield nothing until made to do so; and as he faced what seemed like a sure and cruel fate, he had in his heart that final hope which strong men repose in sheer nerve and in the grim purpose to see an ugly matter through.

As he drew himself up this last time, the dry whirring of the husky rattles was louder than ever; when the snake came within sight, he seemed to be in a higher and more tense coil than before. The big reptile was dreadfully well prepared. Rivers, brave as he was, knew that he was in no way prepared save by a certain naked courage which, bare and keen-edged, was now his only weapon and his only shield. There was no stick or stone within reach for him to use against the rattler;

and the moment for the encounter had come.

But instead of drawing himself up over the rim of the cliff, as he had determined to do, Rivers lowered himself once more to his old painful position.

It was not that the courage of his purpose had failed him. But a thought, carrying with it a dawning hope, had come to him. And this thought was a result of Rivers' accurate knowledge of rattlesnake nature. He knew that a rattler, unless cornered and continuously menaced, would invariably retreat from man. His hand above the cliff would continue to threaten the rattler, though not enough to make him keep his coil; and if Rivers could keep himself out of sight beneath the shelf of the cliff, the reptile might crawl away over the oak roots. But would the snake do it, and could Rivers hold on sufficiently long to enable the slow-moving rattler to escape? He trusted the snake to retreat, and he *would* hold on. Therefore all the strength he had summoned to meet the rattler he now meant to use in clinging to the face of the cliff. Thus, gripping his hold, the man waited,—waited for the sound of the rattles to cease. He was fighting two battles; one was the mere physical effort to keep his position; the other was the mental struggle of suspense. And it was none the less a true fight, though it was one of silent waiting rather than of action.

The strain was so tense that he began to lose the feeling in his right arm; it seemed like a bent rod of iron. So much the better, he thought grimly; for if it's rigid iron it cannot give way. His eyes ached, and his whole body seemed racked. But persistently, coolly, he kept his mind clear. All the thronging impulses to give way to fierce anger, to a fatal struggling upward, he resolutely crushed, though it took strength he ill could spare to do so. And all the while he was listening, listening.

A little breeze off the river waved the banners of moss over his head, and a sighing was heard in the boughs of the mighty oak. Far off in the island-marshes, a great blue heron gave a raucous call. Then,—then there was silence. Rivers awoke to it as out of a dream. The rattles' whirring had ceased. For a moment there was absolute quiet; then a sound of scaly movement was heard. This was followed by the soft rasping of snaky scales over rough-barked oak roots. Then again all was silence. Lee Rivers drew in a deep and steady breath. He knew that the diamond-back was gone.

Full consciousness that his life now depended on his strength alone sent a flood of power into his nerveless arms. He drew himself up, he got one knee over the cliff; with his left hand he caught one of the large oak roots. A moment later he lay exhausted but safe in that small triangular space which his resolution and his patient resourcefulness had transformed from a place of terror and death to one of peace and refuge.

GENTLEMEN OF GENEROSITY, *by Harrison Seville* is another story you will read next month. It is an amusing tale of two engineers, each of whom has a choice between opportunity without honor and honor without opportunity. They are generous to a fault, but it is a maudlin generosity which misses the sublime because it is merely a bird of passage.

THE SUBSCRIBERS' SERIAL

FRANK VERNON STUMP

"B. L. T.," newspaper columnist and one time prize story contributor to The Black Cat, would draw a line through the present title of this tale and caption it "Why the Editor Left Town."

THE editorial room of the *Martinsburg Herald* looked as though a cyclone had struck it. I had learned as a newspaper man that this was the normal state of a large number of editorial rooms, but somehow it seemed to me that on this particular morning the *Herald* office was somewhat more topsy-turvy than customary.

As I entered, Elisha Orcott, the stout, wheezy little editor, his glasses set a trifle farther out on the end of his nose than usual, was pounding with his stubby fist the much used and much abused desk that had served him for more than twenty precarious years. Upon noting my presence, he threw a few sheets of odd-shaped manuscript on the desk and tilted back in the dilapidated old swivel chair with a jerk.

"What's the matter, Mr. Orcott," I asked.

"What's the matter?" he repeated after me, glowering at me over his nose glasses, his flabby face red with rage. "Matter enough, thank you. You may be thankful that you quit the newspaper field, George, and doubly grateful that you have no fool son like Jack."

I admit that I was somewhat shocked to hear the irritated little editor speak thus of his only son. The last I had seen of Jack Orcott was two years ago when I was still working on the *Herald*. I remembered him as a lanky blond, just out of high school, impetuous, visionary, an athletic bug, with a strong leaning towards music, art and girls—strong accent on the latter. He had done some cubbing on the *Herald* and appeared well pleased with his own efforts. Yet, withall, he had always impressed me as a good-hearted, likable youngster who in some way would finally make something of himself.

"Why, Mr. Orcott, I am surprised to hear you say that of Jack," I remonstrated. "I have always considered him a fine young fellow."

"He is a fine young fellow," admitted the father, with a shade of appreciation in his voice, "but it is a settled fact that he never was patterned in the mould that produces good newspaper men. He is always scraping up some new-fangled idea to 'win the wily advertiser or to hold the patient subscriber,' and when he gets into it over his head and he can't see his way out he runs off and leaves me to wrestle with the job. That's precisely the predicament I'm in right now. There," he continued, pointing at the odd-shaped manuscript lying before him, "is the result of his last wonderful stunt; the last chapter of his 'Subscribers' Serial,' each chapter before it bad enough in itself and this last one a fright to even think of, to say nothing of publishing."

"Tell me about it," I said as I seated myself across the desk from the blustering editor. "You know I have been out of town for some time and have not kept up with local events."

"I'll tell you about it," said the editor, "and I'll leave it to you if a man hasn't a perfect right to lose his reason completely over this dang thing that Jack calls a 'serial innovation.' Serial hell would be a liberal way to describe it, especially this last installment.

"The trouble started three months ago when we finished running 'The Golden Nest Egg,' furnished by the Continental Press Bureau. I didn't enthuse over 'The Golden Nest Egg' as Jack did and I decided then to purchase no more stories. Jack was quite peeved over my stand on the question and sulked around for a week or more. You see, having been 'Campus Editor' on his college paper for a year, he returned home this vacation with the fool idea that he knows more about editing a country daily than I who have run this sheet since the year before he honored creation by his advent into this unguided world of ours.

"Well, to get down to the story, one day after he had recovered from his sulky spell, in rushed Jack with a wonderful idea. 'Dad,' he said, 'we are going to run another serial along an entirely new line.'

"'Are we?' I said. 'Well, I guess, sonny, we are not.'

"'Now, listen, Dad,' he insisted, 'you know we must do something to win the wily advertiser and to hold our subscribers. All the big city dailies run continued stories. I quite agree with you that Press Bureau stories are not just the thing, but I have something original, just got it figured out; it's never been tried before and I bet you will like it immensely when I tell you about it. Everybody I have spoken to about it thinks it is a bully scheme and several have agreed to help, among them Judge Hudson, the Reverend Peterson, and Tapper, the undertaker.'

"'What in Sam Hill,' says I, 'have they got to do with our running a serial story?'

"'Lots, Dad; they have each consented to write a chapter of the story, you see.'

"'No, I don't see,' I remonstrated. But that young rascal would not listen to reason. He went rambling on with the explanation that he would write the first chapter of the story, so as to get it started off right, and then it would be passed on to some other person well known about town to pick up the thread of the yarn and write the next chapter according to his own notion, and so on around until some day we would announce that the next chapter would be the final one and the last writer would have to wind up the serial as best he could.

"'And there is that last chapter,' he said again, pointing to the script lying on the desk between us. "If you can read that windup without suffering an attack of the 'Willies' you are more callous to editorial proprieties than I have ever suspected. But before you suffer the agony of reading it allow me to give you the necessary connecting links.

"You understand, we were to run a chapter in each Saturday's issue so that, as Jack said, people would have a chance to discuss it with their friends and neighbors over Sunday, thus giving the *Herald* much valuable publicity. Also, this would give each writer almost a full week in which to assimilate what had gone before and allow him time to write the next installment.

"Well, as I stated, Jack was to write the first chapter, and it wasn't such a bad start, either. Of course he had a handsome hero who was a college football champion, to be sure, and a beautiful butterfly of a heroine. He introduced the villian in the first installment for fear that important personage would be overlooked by the scribes to follow, and he had the unsophisticated little country lass who had come to town to work in order to help her poor 'Pap' pay off the mortgage held by a heartless old skinflint who was the guardian of the heroine. Besides, although I thought he needlessly complicated his story by so doing, he introduced into the first chapter all the near relatives of the leading characters."

"The story appears to have had rather an auspicious start, at least," I ventured encouragingly.

"Well, yes," agreed Orcott, as he removed his glasses and began to rub his smarting eyes. "But, believe me, my trouble began with the third chapter. Judge Hudson had turned in the second installment and had picked up the thread of the tale in pretty fair shape where Jack had left off. Before he concluded his part of the story he had found a job in a candy store for the little country girl, with the villian as one of the steady customers. He had brought the hero and the heroine to that store for an ice-cream soda, or something of the sort, just in time for the hero to lambaste the villian for annoying the unsophisticated lass, and this has ruffled the temper of the beautiful, but jealous, heroine. Everything was lined up in melodramatic style and a lively rumpus was in sight when the judge stopped writing."

"I don't see that you have any cause for complaint, Mr. Orcott," I remarked. "Your story seems to be moving along gloriously."

"Up to this point, yes. But wait a minute," he snapped back at me, as he readjusted his glasses and leaned across the desk in my direction. "I want you to understand that up to this point I, myself, was quite well pleased with the serial. The public seemed to be taking a surprising interest in the story. I had heard many complimentary remarks and had about concluded that perhaps after all Jack might have tucked away in some remote recess of his cranium a spark of real sagacity and foresight."

"That's good," I urged.

"What's good?"

"Your confidence in Jack's good judgment."

"You are wrong, and so was I," and he settled back in his chair again, a trace of disgust in his voice and manner.

"You see I placed too much confidence in the boy," he continued. "The next installment of the serial had been allotted to Mrs. Tugwell, the milliner. On the day she was due to hand in her effort I left the office in Jack's charge and went to Rockport to an editorial gathering. Say, mister, when I returned that evening and read Mrs. Tugwell's chapter of 'The Subscribers' Serial' I had the first real nightmare in twenty long years. Mrs. Tugwell is nothing if not thrifty and cunning. I knew that, but I didn't suppose she would allow her mercenary tendencies to carry her to such extreme limits."

"What's the idea—did she ask you to pay for her chapter?" I queried.

"Not much; she is too shrewd for that. But let me assure you that her chapter was one of the neatest advertisements that ever adorned the front page of any newspaper, big or little. You see, we had failed to stipulate that no local characters or advertising matter could be introduced into the serial. This oversight was an awful blunder on our part. Instead of taking up the story where Judge Hudson left off, Mrs. Tugwell shot the yarn all to pieces."

"Broke the continuity of the story," I suggested.

"You bet she broke the continuity. Say, man, she lost all sight of the story in her insane effort to get all the female characters into 'the corner millinery emporium with the white front,' so she could rig each of them out with the latest headgear. She even had some of the women relatives of the male characters in the crowd that clamored to see her showing of latest Paris models. Of course she did not use her own name, but she described the front of her store so minutely that the stupidest man would have no trouble locating it with his eyes shut."

The editor wheeled impetuously and gazed out of the window for a few seconds, slowly shaking his head.

"And to think that Jack would allow such stuff to go through without a lot of blue penciling," he continued with added vehemence. "Of course Mrs. Tugwell has four 'grand openings' every year—spring, summer, fall and winter. For each of these she carries about an eight-inch double column 'ad' for three days, and she runs an inch card the year round. Her spring opening is always the largest, and the last time she became real generous and took two columns of space for two days and has fussed ever since about the size of her bill. I suppose it was to humor her a little on that account and to encourage another double column spread for the next opening, that the boy permitted the chapter to go through as she had written it. Or else, perhaps, he knew no better."

"Perhaps Jack figured correctly," I suggested. "Maybe she will take another two column spread next spring."

"Maybe she will, but more likely, maybe she won't. She will probably consider that she received so much free publicity out of her chapter in the serial that she will take no space at all for the next opening."

"At least I trust the balance of your story ran along smoothly," was my comment.

"You're wrong again. The next chapter fell to Attorney Dunn. He's a bright fellow, and a good friend to this office, as you know, but he had to allow his spleen to get the better of him and the troubled waters became quite tempestuous by the time he had finished. You see, the milliner wanted to get another crack at free publicity in the next chapter, so she had wound up her installment with the statement that all the fancy bonnets purchased at 'the corner emporium with the white front' were intended to be worn to a party to be held at the home of the beautiful heroine. This party was left for Attorney Dunn to handle. It is my private opinion that she wanted, not only to receive the additional publicity, but to see a man flounder around in an attempt to describe a swell society event.

"Now lawyers are human, and some of them carry a grudge a long way. It so happened that when the milliner took her divorce case to court she employed an attorney over in Millville. Lawyer Dunn remembered this, so he straightway converted what was intended to be the heroine's swell society function into a picnic in Miller's grove and had all the women go bareheaded.

"But the lawyer rather collected the loose ends of the story and got it running smoothly only to have it smashed to flinders again by the undertaker, who killed off the hero and the heroine's skinflint guardian, so that he could bury them in the most approved style. Of course, like the milliner, he did not mention his own name exactly, but he referred to the 'Blue Cross Ambulance' that went to the scene of the accident and brought the remains to the 'Capper Morgue.' Now there is only one Blue Cross Ambulance in this neck of the woods and that belongs to Henry Tapper."

"Did you blue pencil it out?" I questioned.

"I did not. When I objected to his free advertising he flew into a rage, reminded me of the chapter written by Mrs. Tugwell, and threatened to cancel his advertising and hinted that his brother-in-law of the Creswell Furniture company would do the same if I did not run his installment as he had written it, so what could I do in view of the blunder made by Jack with the Tugwell chapter?

"But his killing off the hero right in the middle of the story was a blow that seemed almost unsurmountable," continued the editor after a moment's reflection. "You understand, Doctor Jamison had been scheduled to write the last chapter of the serial. He came blustering down here and wanted to know how in thunder we could expect him to finish a story without a hero. He was sore as a good-sized boil, and I didn't blame him. He said he would get even with Tapper if it were his last act on earth."

"It must have been rather novel to continue a story without a hero," was my comment.

"But we didn't continue without a hero —I wish we had. The one who was to contribute the next installment was Miss Nell May Marlow, a teacher in one of the grammar schools. She promised to find a new hero, so Doctor Jamison could make a swell finish to the story. And she did. Who do you suppose it was?"

"I'm sure I don't know," I admitted.

"My own son," he said with a snort, "and he has been nutty over it ever since. That's where he is now, down at Seal Beach at a week-end party with that bloomin' little schoolma'am. Why, man, I never felt so mortified in my life. My own son a hero in my own paper! She didn't refer to him as Jack Orcutt, but she described the big, raw-boned, taffy-haired, red-faced rascal, with such detail that a stranger would recognize him at a glance. To make matters worse, she introduced herself into the story as a friend of the unsophisticated country girl who had bloomed into a glorious womanhood and was cutting great capers in society, all within a few months. As the new character in the story, this schoolma'am helped to engineer a reception given to the victorious football squad, and it wasn't even football season. Of course the new hero

—my son, you know—was the champion of the team and at first sight of this teacher she had him begin to talk woozy-woozy stuff to her in the story, and I guess he has been at it ever since."

A shadow crossed his countenance as he again turned and gazed out of the window.

"Does the story end there?" I asked.

"No, man, no!" he blazed back, "it don't end there. Right here is the end of it, right here before you. And Lord, man, what an ending it is! After the schoolma'am cut loose with her mushy effusion, I determined to put a finish to the serial business in a hurry. You know I couldn't stand that son of mine as a hero—I know him too well—so I made an excuse to the preacher, the real estate man, and the president of the Woman's Club, who were in line for a chapter each, that owing to a lack of space, which was being crowded with increased advertising, it would be necessary to omit their installments and to close the interesting narrative quite prematurely. I then turned it over to Doctor Jamison for the concluding chapter, fully convinced that he would straighten the whole affair out, instead of plunging me into still deeper trouble. You see, I had entirely forgotten the threat he had made against Tapper, the undertaker."

"I venture it had an absorbing finish in the doctor's hands."

"Absorbing is right," he returned with a sarcastic smile. "However, if Doc Jamison hadn't been so hell bent on avenging the untimely death of the first hero, at the hands of the undertaker, there might have been a little more logic and good sense to the finish."

Gathering up the manuscript before us the editor thrust it into my hand. "Read it" he exclaimed.

It appeared that the last writer had scattered the characters of the story over a wide territory. It was clear, as I read, that it had required some skilful manœuvering for Doctor Jamison to land them safely back home in time for a boat excursion to Sea Gull Island. Gradually it became clear to me why I had found the grizzly little editor in such a state of perturbation, for, after rounding up his herd of fractious characters part of whom had come to be well known as persons about town and others purely fictitious, Doctor Jamison concluded thus:

"It was a merry crowd that had assembled at the pier where the *Cabrillo*, the magnificent excursion steamer which was to bear our hero and his friends over the foam-crested waves to the beautiful island resort, fretted at the cables that held her captive. All were on hand save Hank Capper, the undertaker, who was delaying the party. Finally word arrived that Hank must forego the pleasure of the outing for business reasons.

"It developed later that Capper had been momentarily expecting to receive news of the death of Mrs. Timothy Garland, who had taken to her bed, dangerously ill the night before. All morning he paced up and down the rough-floored parlors awaiting orders to take charge of the remains.

"Finally, in a round-about manner, word came. Mrs. Garland's son-in-law, David Marshall, had told a neighbor that, thanks to the efficient work of Doctor Jenson, Mrs. Garland was quite out of danger and that as soon as she had sufficiently recovered she would return to her home in Grand Junction.

"Then Hank remembered the boating party. Perhaps he would not be too late to join the jolly picnickers. He made his way to the pier, only to see the beautiful *Cabrillo*, with its precious human freight, steaming away a mile distant in the direction of the island. Capper was decidedly crestfallen. He had lost some valuable business through the skill of Doctor Jenson, and here he was standing at the wharf watching the boat he might have taken, gliding swiftly out of reach.

"As he stood there bewailing his ill-fortune, he was startled by the sound of an explosion out at sea. The *Cabrillo* was rent asunder as the straining boilers suddenly gave way. Human bodies were hurled through the air and were dropping near the wrecked boat, amid a mass of splintered timbers. That all on board were lost was beyond question. Though dazed by the realization of the terrible catastrophe he had just witnessed, Hank's mind instinctively turned to his chosen calling. Rushing to the little telegraph office in the wharfmaster's building, he sent a message to the county officials, telling of the wreck of the *Cabrillo* and urging the county coroner to grant him permission to recover and bury the bodies. Then he telephoned his man Baxter to rush the 'Blue Cross ambulance' down to the wharf.

"What seemed to Hank like an age, followed the arrival of the ambulance. As he paced up and down the rough-floored pier, the telegraph operator emerged from his little office and handed him a message. His face blanched as he read it, then he sank into a sitting posture on a shipping box. As he sat there, gazing into the depths of the azure sea, he started with surprise as he saw before him the rugged hero making his way through the water, bearing in his strong arm the unconscious pretty school teacher. The message dropped from Hank's nerveless hand as he turned on his heel and walked away. His man, Baxter, recovered the message which evidently had caused his master so much pain, and read:

Rockport, August 28.

Henry Capper,
Martinsburg.

Thanks for the message. Have ordered. Casey and Merritt to recover and care for bodies from wrecked "Cabrillo."
G. A. Toberman, County Coroner.

"Thus did Hank Capper suffer through his trait of avarice.

Finis"

I could not repress a smile as I returned the manuscript to Orcott.

"And I'm going to publish the blasted thing just as it is," the blustering editor thundered. "I'm going to have that glorious word 'Finis' set in twenty-four point black-face type, so the world may know that this bloomin' serial is eternally at an end. And," he continued as he donned his rusty Panama, "I want you to take charge of this shebang for a while; I'm going to the mountains until the trouble blows over."

Next month: SUNK BY A FLOATING MINE *by Charles Leroy Edson.* It is about a chap who gives up a fifteen dollar job in Kansas City to mine silver and zinc in Arkansas. He doesn't find much silver or zinc, but discovers something which he at once labels "fairy gold" without asking the opinion of an assayer.

SOFT SOAP

BY NEWTON A. FUESSLE.

Have you a little cake of soap in your home? The ordinary salesman might ask that question at every house in town in order to create a demand for his brand of soap. In this story, we have a salesman who found a better way to stimulate a sluggish market.

BUDLONG sighed contentedly as he watched the railroad yards of Clayton slip past like the tail end of an unpleasant dream. "Farewell, old town," he murmured, "I hope I never see you again."

The humming of the train's wheels was cut into faster and faster syncopated time by the tangle of passing switches; and never had cheerier music found its way into the cockles of the young man's heart.

He rubbed his eyes as if to erase the last lingering mental visions of the city he was leaving behind, gazed fondly at the oil-cloth sample-case and the pig-skin grip on the seat beside him, and beamed at the dingy day-coach and its motley occupants.

Then he reached into his pocket, pulled out a handful of letters and other truck, and ran idly through them. He smiled as his eye fell upon his membership card in the Clayton local of the Machinists' Union.

"Hello there, old friend," he said under his breath. "I thought I had torn you into a million pieces. No? Well, here's where your usefulness ceases."

On the point of tearing up the card, he stopped. "No," he mused, "I'll just keep you—as a little souvenir of sad and bygone days."

He returned the card to his pocket, regarded the increasing snow-flurries outside the car window, then resigned himself to the altogether delightful thought of—soap.

Hitherto the institution of soap had been nothing but one of thousands of trivial and inconsequential things of life to Budlong. But today it filled his sample case, dominated his thoughts, and constituted his deliverer from the land of bondage. Soap was the magic carpet which had whisked him out of Clayton. Soap was the wings of the morning on which he was soaring to new and greener pastures. Soap had redeemed him from an uncongenial and disagreeable job as a machinist's helper.

Pretty soon he rose and went to the smoking compartment. There he groped his way to a seat through the wreaths and festoons of tobacco fumes that garlanded it, and gnawed the end off a Colorado maduro.

"Light?" said a friendly stranger, striking a match and handing it to him. "Looks like we'd have a nice little bunch of snow for Thanksgiving," he added, looking Budlong over.

"Shouldn't wonder," agreed the soap seller, surveying the other's snappy sartorial appearance, his shrewd eyes, and engaging mannner. His language was quick and decisive. To Budlong he looked like a salesman. His finger-nails had been set a-glitter by the head manicurist at the Hotel Clayton. His lavender hose were chromatically matched by a bow tie, and again by amethysts in his cuff-links and lavender stripes in his spotless shirt.

A week ago Budlong might have taken him for anything from a first-class second-story man to a second-class first-baseman. It would never have occurred to him to index him mentally as a potential Gideon. But today, with his thoughts crowded into one compact cluster and revolving in giddy circles in the groove of traveling salesmanship, he naturally took the other for a commercial traveler, albeit he did not recognize the Travelers' Protective Association badge in the lapel of his coat.

"Going far?" asked the stranger amiably.

"Only to Jarvis today," answered Budlong.

"Oh yes. Jarvis, eh? The best thing about Jarvis is its limited population. You can get through with it quick, and beat it. Say, its merchants are so afraid of the dotted line that they even hate to sign for a registered letter. What Jarvis needs is a few dozen first-class funerals. I'm no crepe-hanger by temperament but I'd much prefer to show my samples somewhere else. What's your line?"

"Soap," replied Budlong. "I'm with the Aunt Sally Soap Company."

"Clayton firm. Well, don't let Jarvis get your nanny. Did you ever make Jarvis before—jolly little Jarvis?" asked the other.

"Never. This is my first whack at the selling game."

"Well, I wish you luck. How'd you happen to pick out soap?"

Budlong saw no objection to unburdening his soul to his pleasant companion, and was presently steam-shoveling reminiscent confessions into the listening ear. "Oh, it was all wrong—all wrong," he ended earnestly. "Did you ever stand in front of a big brute of a machine and grind valves? Don't ever do it. It's work. It's labor. Oh—oh!" he added solemnly. "Why, the day these Aunt Sally people took me on, I gazed into the friendly eyes of the dear old lady in the trademark, and she looked to me like the Statue of Liberty with a bar of soap in her hand."

"Wait till you've spent a few months trying to sell jay-hawk merchants," grinned the other tolerantly. "Every so often I take a solemn oath I'll never lug another sample-case, or register in another hick hotel. Here, smoke one of my cigars."

"What's the matter with it?" asked Budlong, accepting it.

"And say," continued the other, "if you've nothing better to do, why not improve your time by selling me your line? The practice will do you good. Shoot, I'll be the goat. Maybe I can drop-kick in with a few helpful little suggestions."

Budlong took heart, a long breath, and talked for the best part of an hour, not at all averse to rehearsing his interpretation of the merits of the various Aunt Sally products.

An inhospitable swirl of snow and wind hit him in the face as he got off the train. The icy hands of an old-fashioned blizzard reached impertinently for his sample-case and almost took it away from him.

"*Squeak,* squeak! *Squeak,* squeak!" said the sidewalk beneath his feet as he headed for the Central House, following the directions of the station agent.

The wooden stove in the dingy dining room rattled in the wind that rocked the old hotel when he entered to eat his dinner. The consummé was luke-warm, the pot roast pernicious, and the weak coffee both over-heated and heated over. Budlong partook warily of the fare with a cautious thought for his digestion.

Then he gnawed the end off a cigar, dropped into a wooden chair in the battered lobby, picked up the Jarvis *Clarion* and sought cheer in its pages. The headlines informed him of a strike at the lounge factory, a threatened walk-out at the brick-yards, and a Washington's Birthday basket social at All-Souls M. E. Church. He ignored this last criterion of Jarvis business conditions and turned to the editorial page. There he found a half column editorial on "Hard Times" and a string of advertisements of Sheriff's sales. Budlong grinned grimly.

He dropped the paper on the floor, settled back in his chair, drew hard at his cigar, and began mentally rehearsing his selling talk, going over all the alluring points of the soap to which he had duly sworn allegiance.

The next morning he picked out a likely-looking store, and entered. It was one of those nondescript general stores which a first-class funeral and the succession to power of an energetic son and heir may eventually transform into a department store.

"Wall, watta-ya-got?" piped the shivery old proprietor, scratching the G-strings of his long, gaunt neck.

"Soap," answered Budlong with well-timed alacrity. "I want to show you—"

"No ye don't. By gum, I've listened to soap drummers till my ears ache. I've got more soap stowed away in this store right now than I could sell in ten years. Ye couldn't sell me a bar o' soap if ye chinned me till midnight. By gol, the railroads ought to post up notices to keep traveling men out of this town. I tell ye, we've quit spendin' money. We're as flat as a pancake. Can't buy beer."

Budlong perceived the futility of further discussion, and the wisdom of retreat. His next stop was a drug store. The soda fountain, closed for the season, bore placard entreaties to try this and that cure for corns, spavins, dandruff, hang-nails, and asthma. Dealer-helps flourished. Over the framed registered pharmacist credentials hung a hand-lettered sign which read:

'Tis well to trust,
'Tis hell to bust,
No trust, no bust, no hell.

The air was laden with the composite odor of tincture of aconite, glycerine, hair-oil, epsom salts, pipe smoke, creosote, tar soap, wintergreen, and chocolate drops.

"Good morning, my friend, what can I do for you?" spoke the druggist, leaning over the counter with a beam of professional welcome in his pharmeceutical eye.

Budlong brought his sample case forth from behind his back with a sad, commiserating feeling of "I hate to do it but—"

"I'm handling the famous Aunt Sally line of soaps," he began, dropping lyddite on the pharmacist's hopes of selling something to this healthy-looking but potential disease-contracting stranger within the toll-gates.

The druggist shook his head with resentment. "I couldn't find room for another bar of soap if you made me a present of it. There was a fellow in here last night who talked me into laying in a supply that I didn't need any more than I need an elephant."

"But *my* soap," began Budlong with noteworthy pep.

"Nothing doing, brother. Your soap may be the greatest soap on earth, but I tell you I'm loaded to the guards and can't take on another bar—not even if it was guaranteed to wash away the sins of the world with one application."

"Give me a nickel's worth of that chewing gum," sighed Budlong, reaching for a coin.

Budlong left the place drearily regretful that he had never taken a course of study in one of the widely advertised colleges of salesmanship. He felt his shortcomings poignantly. Disgusted with the miserable efforts to entice Jarvis names into leaping off the springboard of desire, and on to the empty dotted line of his pad of order blanks, he pushed aimlessly on, trying desperately to marshal anew the routed phrases and sentences of selling which he had been earnestly rehearsing. Surely there must be some way to sell Aunt Sally soaps to the store-keepers of Jarvis.

The troubled troubadour of cleanliness visited store after store, and sang eloquently the alkaline bars of his sales song. He was determined to drag an order out of the set jaws of Jarvis. But everywhere he was met with impatient rebuff. The market was glutted with soap. It appeared that the verbose and convincing representative of a rival soap firm, Tabor and Son, had descended upon Jarvis the day before and made a commercial killing.

Everywhere, this Tabor person had been there ahead of Budlong. He had literally sold the town off its feet. He had dumdumed every drug-store and gatlinged every grocer. He had built battlements of soap on counters where soap had never frowned before. It would take Jarvis years to live down the defeat its commercial prudence had sustained.

That evening Budlong dragged himself into the hotel, weary and disconsolate, to behold his natty, smiling, confident traveling companion of the day before. A suspicious idea registered hard against the screen of Budlong's brain. "Bluey!" he thought weakly.

"Greetings," said the other. "How are soap sales?"

"Rotten," answered Budlong.

"It was a shame for me to slip the order blanks to the local trade ahead of you," replied the other, "but business is business, and times are adamant. When you told me you were headed for Jarvis to sell soap, and when I heard what a knockout your selling arguments were, I knew I'd have to step lively and chatter fast if I expected to save my blithe bacon. So I got right busy and talked to half the trade before I hit the bed-tick. Sorry, old man. I'd buy a drink, only my train leaves in ten minutes, and I've got to be on my way. Bye-bye."

"Bluey," repeated Budlong, lifting a shaking hand to an aching forehead. The more his mind dwelt on it, the more keenly humiliated he felt over what had happened to him. He had certainly been roughly handled in his first tussle with competition.

He ate his dinner in a daze. Then he sauntered forth and bought a sample of every rival manufacturer's soap on the Jarvis market. His ideas of doing so were vague and hazy. When he returned to his room, he had enough soap in his pockets to cleanse an army. There was tar soap, glycerine, elderflower,—soap for every taste and purpose.

Budlong then rolled up his sleeves, peeled off the wrappers of the different bars of soap, crossed to the wash bowl, and began testing them. He had made up his mind to find the weak spot of each of these soaps if he washed himself sick in the process. He weighed the performance of each in the balance, especially those that bore the trade-mark of Tabor and Son.

After an hour of critical, qualitative, quantitative, canny, and comparative washing, he dropped weakly into the protesting arms of a feeble rocking chair with the despairing conclusion that his hectic abluent efforts were getting him absolutely nowhere. His hands were raw, his face red, and his soul in the clutch of a navy-blue funk. He looked unhappily at the dripping dune of soap on the wash-stand, and bewailed the reckless folly of his futile purchases. All soaps were beginning to look sadly alike to him.

"I was certainly a prize ass for ever thinking I could get away with a game like this," he mused. "But now that I'm in for it, I hate to lay down on the job like a lamb. It's not my style."

He began to gather up the waste of soap wrappers that strewed the floor, the bed, and the table, resolved to clear the decks for some clear thinking. He crumpled up and heaved the wreakage into the waste basket. Then espying a last lorn wrapper he dived into the corner where it lay. It bore the proud lettering, "Aunt Sally's Fine Castile Soap." He crumpled up the lithographic coat of the unsalable product angrily. Then he smoothed it out absently, and re-read the engaging description of its ingredients and the superlative care of its manufacture.

Suddenly his eye caught an innocent little group of words that had hitherto escaped his attention. They were buried at the very bottom of the printed matter, below the flourishing facsimilie of the Aunt Sally concern's noble signature. Budlong gave a little cry of delight. His discovery had sent a ray of hope flashing through the shadows of his commercial despair. "O-h-h!" he ejaculated. "Oh, sweetheart!"

His discovery electrified him. He laid the wrapper carefully away and then swooped upon the waste basketful of discarded wrappers of rival soaps. Each he smoothed out with nervous fingers, and scanned the printed matter on each with searching eyes. From wrapper to wrapper he passed. On each he was looking for something which—wonder of wonders—he did not find. Only the Aunt Sally wrappers bore the incomparable printed talisman.

For a moment Budlong stood in the middle of his room in a brown study. Then he grabbed the copy of the Jarvis *Clarion* which haply he had saved, and began hunting for an announcement he vaguely recalled having seen. He found it, and intoned the exclamation: "Great!" Then he added fondly: "Soft, very, very soft!"

The hands of his watch made a straight and lovely line that proclaimed only ten minutes after eight. Budlong took the various rival soap wrappers with the devout air of a deacon taking up a thanks offering. The Aunt Sally wrappers he tucked jealously into his wallet. Then he slid precipitately into his overcoat, grabbed his hat, and descended into the lobby.

"Where is Wagner Hall?" he asked the night clerk, who was shooting crap at the desk with a hackney driver with an acne nose.

"Thanks. Here, smoke a cigar," replied Budlong with much pep, on receipt of the information. Then he sprang forth into the frosty night.

Wagner Hall was only two scant squares away, for the Jarvis business region was huddled together in squat and modest blocks. The hall was located right above the first drug store where Budlong had vainly sought to snare the proprietor into recording an order for his goods. Its location therefore filled him with a merry glow. He dashed up the stairs that led to the hall, three at a time, accelerating like a $1070 motor car on a demonstration hill.

The savant of soap found Wagner hall packed, and the monthly meeting of the Jarvis Federation of Labor about to be called to appropriate order. Excited groups were discussing wage scales, hours of toil, working conditions and other causes of proletarian grievance and unrest. The air was filled with tobacco smoke and class consciousness; for Jarvis was replete with strikes and rumors thereof.

"Hold on there!" challenged the sentry at the door in soldierly accents, as Budlong tried to enter. "You've got to have a union card on you to get in here."

"Right," answered Budlong pleasantly, producing his wallet, and fishing out his now cherished membership card in the Clayton local of the Machinist's Union.

"Glad to meet you, brother," exclaimed the sentry, taking a look at the newcomer's credential, and then his hand in a grasp of welcome.

"My name's Budlong," said the erstwhile machinist. "Can you point out the president of this organization?"

"That's him with the green necktie on, just getting on the platform," was the answer.

Budlong shouldered his way triumphantly to the platform, and was presently having a word with the czar of local labor conditions. The latter was a stocky teamster from the resolute stock of Erin. He had the jaw of Jess Willard, the vim of Von Hindenburg, and the eye of Kitchener. In his pocket was a letter of endorsement from Samuel Gompers, praising his able policies, and urging Jarvis locals to fight on.

The meeting was called to order with a bang. The parliamentary drama spun swiftly into motion. Budlong listened to the transactions while silently rehearsing the speech he was soon to make. A number of visiting brethren from other locals were already speaking, conveying to the Jarvis proletariat the greetings of their fellows. Then Budlong found himself listening to the chairman's introduction of himself.

"We have with us tonight Brother Budlong of the Clayton machinists. He comes from a place where the good fight is being carried on gallantly. Mr. Budlong."

"Fellow unionists," began the salesman, "I am unaccustomed to making speeches, but I come to you with an important message and am going to deliver it the best I know how. I come to you, bringing you new sinews of war in your noble struggle with the forces of capitalism. I am here tonight to show you where you have been making a great mistake as unionists and how you can correct it. I am going to put in your hands a powerful weapon of offense against our enemies."

Budlong talked on, gaining new confidence with every sentence. He talked as he had never talked before in his life. He told the meeting of the existence of a conspiracy on the part of Jarvis merchants that was being directed right at the heart and soul of unionism. He called them eloquently to their colors. He demanded that they get together solidly and renounce and shatter, in the name of their unions, this conspiracy against their cause. He stirred the Jarvis Federation of Labor up in a way that it had never been stirred.

When he sat down, it was amid a burst of cheers that rocked the hall hard enough to shake the bottles off the shelves of the druggist on the ground floor.

When the cheering subsided, one of the members rose and offered a resolution that was adopted unanimously and made Budlong tingle delightfully from head to foot.

Budlong returned to his hotel after the meeting with a feeling that the world was his. He knew at last how the Count of Monte Cristo must have felt when he uttered his deathless exclamation. He went to bed, to sleep long and soundly. He dreamed of a committee of labor unionists handing him bags of gold dollars.

Toward noon the next day, he dropped casually in at the general store where he had made his first effort to record a sale. He asked carelessly for a sack of smoking tobacco. While he was being served by a young clerk, the old proprietor, he of the G-strings, made a jump for him, and said:

"Say, ain't you the feller that was in here trying to sell me some o' that Aunt What's-Her-Name soap the other day?"

"The same," answered Budlong suavely, "Aunt Sally Soap. You told me you were full up with soap—couldn't take on another bar on a bet."

"Wal, funny thing," answered the other, but there's been a dozen people in here last night an' this mornin' demandin' Aunt Sally. Refuse to touch anything else."

"That so?" remarked Budlong innocently. "That's kind of them, I'm sure."

"Kind!" snarled the store-keeper. "It don't appeal to me by a dang sight. It beats all hell-beatin'-tan-bark—that's what it does. Here with me loaded down with more soap that I can use in a year's time, and folks yellin' their blocks off for another brand. How do you sell that Aunt Sally?"

Budlong opened his sample case, produced his order pad, and presently had the other's signature where he wanted it.

That was his busy day. Proceeding from store to store, he learned everywhere, to his delight, that an insistent clamor for Aunt Sally Soap had got there ahead of him. Merchants who had scorned his presence the day before now fell on his neck and ordered heavily. They looked woefully at their stock of other soaps, but gave their orders for Aunt Sally because its demand had sprung up overnight like a huge mushroom that overshadowed every other soap on the market. Most of the dealers who had ordered Tabor and Son's products on the day before rushed cancellations to the manufacturer by wire. Those who had fallen the hardest for Tabor and Son's garrulous and genial representative, now didn't want the stuff around.

When Budlong dropped into his hotel for luncheon at noon, he found a dozen or more telephone calls left by dealers all over Jarvis. They wanted to see him sure before he left the city.

Budlong smiled an inscrutable smile. And again he smiled inscrutably that evening when a long day-letter came from his sales manager in grateful acknowledgment and fervent congratulation on the deluge of orders for swift and heavy shipments to the trade in Jarvis.

Budlong lingered longer in Jarvis than any traveling salesman who had ever entered its gates. For it took time to appease the intemperate demands of those agitated merchants who had previously frowned upon his coming and sought to scorn his merchandise.

When finally he settled back in the seat of the train which was sweeping on to further conquests he took from his pocket the crumpled wrapper which had robed the bar of Aunt Sally in that despairing hour when selling anything in Jarvis had seemed the acme of impossibility. Once more he smoothed it out carefully, reread the engaging description of its incomparable ingredients and the superlative care of its manufacture. Again his eye paused with a glow on the little group of words and the innocent little smudge of printer's ink at the bottom of the piece of paper, right beneath the flourishing facsimilie of the concern's signature.

"I got to hand it to myself, kid," he grinned as he imprinted a loving kiss upon the union label.

THE SELFISHEST WOMAN

BY BLANCHE BRACE

A stage favorite, who wallows in publicity sprees and has her net ever ready to catch a little fulsome praise, gives a charity performance in a leper colony, hoping to add a rare specimen of press notice to her collection.

THAT was the week there was an all-star cast at the Globe, and the bloodiest fight on record for the best dressing-room. There wasn't a moment's truce. Even in the third act where all three of the women were on the stage together, it was just as bad, for then their maids foregathered, and went on with the battle-royal with their mouths full of pins. The wonder was that they didn't swallow them.

They waged war about this, that, and the other, and finally about their mistresses. If no man is a hero to his valet, it's a hundred times as true that no actress is a heroine to her maid. So, the night that I overheard this story, they were at the point of stabbing each other with the nail-files over which wage-payer was the worst slave-driver.

"Gawd only knows what I go through with, with that woman!" asserted a sullen-faced girl, who was combing out the bronze-red wig that I remembered as the property of the divine Peggy O'Brien. "Thinks she owns me, body and soul. She's the most selfish thing I ever saw."

"Selfish, is it?" spoke up a soft-voiced Irish girl. "What do you know about the meanin' of the word? You don't work for Evelyn Albee, do you? That woman, girls dear, just gloats on keepin' me on my knees. She'd have me comb her hair on my knees if it could be done, as, the Blessed Mother be thanked, it can't."

A great burst of applause came back to us there, softened to a sound that reminded you of the popping of corn in an old-fashioned skillet. When it was finished, Mrs. Drum spoke. She was Edith Dufrain's maid, a round, little, light-brown hazel-nut of an elderly person.

"You ought to have known Carneen Carmichael once," she commented drily.

"Carneen Carmichael?" echoed the Irish girl, yawning. "Who would she be after being?"

"Vawdville, I s'pose," scoffed Peggy O'Brien's slavey.

"Vawdville!" Mrs. Drum's voice scratched back. "My Gawd, how some folks can keep on livin' in the world, and be so ignorant! Do you mean to say you ain't ever heard of Carneen Carmichael?"

"What is she starrin' in, if she's so much?" the Irish girl demanded.

"She ain't starrin' now," Mrs. Drum replied. Then she bristled at the grins the others exchanged. "She ain't starrin' now because she chose to do something else. Six years ago they called her the most popular actress on Broadway, and the hardest-hearted. They said she'd stepped to fame on the laughs and the lines she'd stolen from others, and the high-class hearts she'd broken, in order to get herself into print.

"Well, it was true enough. I knew her the way you know the woman whose face you cold-cream four times a day, and I'll say for her she was the selfishest I've ever met. She slipped up once, though, on bein' selfish. And that's why she ain't starrin' now.

"They called her a beauty. She wasn't. She had a lot of black hair, and two black eyes, and a nose and a mouth, just like other folks. But New York loved her because she snubbed it.

"Selfish! It was her middle name, her family name, and her pet name. Once a boy with too much money and too little brains shot himself with her picture in his hand. What do you think Carneen Carmichael cared? It was good for a front-page story, that suicide.

"We played New York two seasons in 'The Test' before the producer decided to send it to Boston. That was as far from Broadway as Carneen Carmichael ever went. She couldn't waste her time on the wild and woolly West, she said.

"Herbert Daggett followed her to Boston, of course. He'd been hangin' around the whole of the three years that she had been a star. I never did like the man. He had the lonesome eyes that make you want to kick a hang-tail dog just because you are sorry for it. But he had barrels of money, and Carneen Carmichael kept him at heel. I won't deny that he was amusin'. He had a way of tellin' very good stories about the forty years he'd been knockin' around odd corners of the world.

"Boston's a dub show town, but Carneen Carmichael made a hit there. She'd have made a hit in the Bad Lands or the Sahara. Some folks are made that way.

"We were there just before Easter, when Carneen took a notion to run down to a leper island called Penikese, forty or fifty miles from Boston, to give a Saturday afternoon performance. Of course, the manager was hoppin' mad at the idea of closin' the house for a Saturday matinee till he read what the newspapers had to say about Miss Carmichael's kindness to the eternal exiles from the footlights. Kindness? Huh! It was just plain press-stuff. She was piggish.

"But Carneen was as pleased as if she'd been going to act before the king.

"'Bring all my make-up, Annie,' she told me a dozen times. She always wanted it all.

"We went in a crazy little catboat that rocked like mad. It ain't easy to hire a boat to go to a leper island. Herbert Daggett had to come along; and besides ourselves there were in the party a bishop who was goin' to conduct Easter services, and a famous Boston doctor. He said he was goin' down to try out some kind of a new innoculation on cockroaches. I guess he was just tryin' to make Carneen laugh. She could laugh like nobody else.

"The wind came up, and we see-sawed around in that crazy little cat-boat till I felt like a fish out of water, and Mr. Daggett got the color of Roquefort cheese and so sulky he wouldn't talk at all. He gave up tellin' about the Philippine Islands, where he'd lived, and the much superior kind of lepers they had there, and went and sat by himself. But Carneen kept laughing and singing and flirting with the doctor and the bishop at once.

"'I've always admired your demure costumes so much!' I heard the bishop tell her, and I grinned to myself. Carneen Carmichael's habit of wearin' long sleeves was just to make her different from other actresses, I was sure.

"At last we passed the little island of Cuttyhunk, where the entire population came down to the wharf to wave to Carneen, and saw the shores of Penikese. As we drew up to the island of the lepers, she was saluted three times with the flag of Massachusetts. She loved that. There was nothin' in the world that pleased Carneen Carmichael so much as admiration. That was because she was so selfish.

"Two doctors and their wives had come down to welcome us at the stone pier, which they said had been built by Agassiz, whoever he was, before the lepers lived at Penikese. It was all very pleasant and gay, with the sick folks hidden away from sight, half a mile away across the hill. But the moment I set foot to the island, I shivered all over, I don't know why.

"Carneen was the heart of the crowd at dinner. I was at another table in an alcove of the same room, with the nurses from the leper hospital, and I couldn't help watchin' her. She just bubbled with life. I had never known her so glad.

"After dinner—they call the noon meal that in New England—there was music and talkin' for awhile in the livin' room. But Carneen Carmichael excused herself the vain young thing, and came to me to be made up for her act at the hospital. They laughed at her.

"'You are quite beautiful enough as you are, Miss Carmichael,' I heard Doctor Godfrey tell her, and I grinned, thinkin' how Herbert Daggett must be glarin' at him. When I had finished, she looked beautiful all right for once, with her black hair, and her dancin' eyes, and a bit of color in her cheeks that were mostly so pale. I started to leave the make-up where it was till we came back from the other side of the island, but she wouldn't have it.

"'Bring it along, Annie!' she said. 'I may be needin' it. I want to look just right today.' She was as vain as kingdom come.

"Two little things made me feel funny as we were startin' for the leper half of the island. A big Airedale belongin' to one of the doctors started to follow us, and they drove it back again. Dogs mustn't be let go from one side of the island to the other, they said. And they made Carneen Carmichael leave her big ermine muff behind, too, though she pouted.

"'It's just as well to be on the safe side,' they told her.

"So we went single file along a little path with slippery grass on both sides of it, and up a hill, and passed through a gate into the leper half of the island. Ugh! I ain't going to tell you about those poor creatures. There was one Japanese, though, called Moi, whose face looked like a gray sponge, and whose hands were all bandaged and oozy. Sometimes I see him yet in my dreams. I guess he was about the worst.

"Among the Easter lilies in the leper hospital those poor things sat waitin' for Carneen Carmichael. They all looked alike. You couldn't even guess the nationality they had been. It was right pitiful to see them trying to clap their poor hands when she got through. You couldn't blame them, though; I had never heard Carneen so wonderful as she was that day. I almost forgot how selfish she was as I listened.

"Through it all, the doctors didn't seem to be payin' much attention to her. I noticed them whisperin' together, and I saw them watching Herbert Daggett. It made me sort of sore that they didn't listen to Carneen. You'd have thought they were used to havin' folks like us come down from Boston every day.

"When it was over, and the bishop had made a little prayer for those who dwell outside the city with the lepers, they asked Herbert Daggett to come into the little dispensary. They told Carneen Carmichael to stay where she was, but she wouldn't be put off. I guess she was afraid to be there alone with the lepers. She made me come, too.

"They made Herbert Daggett sit down in the big dispensary chair, and at first they didn't seem to be goin' to say anything. Daggett laughed, and then he seemed to be a little annoyed. But they just sat there and stared at him, while Carneen Carmichael hummed a little tune.

"'Did you see many cases of leprosy while you were in the Philippines?' Doctor Godfrey asked him at last.

"'A good many; I told you comin' down,' Herbert Daggett rapped back at them.

"'And didn't you know that it almost always begins as a numb, dead-white spot either on the palm of the hand or the inner arm, or'—he stopped a minute—'on the side of the nose?'

"That was all he said. But Herbert Daggett fell together in his chair like you've seen one of those wooden dolls do when a child breaks the string.

"'My Gawd!' he said, talkin' low and without any feelin' at all. 'I've been watchin' that spot for weeks. Someone mentioned it every time I shaved.'

"That was when Carneen Carmichael pulled at my hand, and begged me to take her out of the room. We all thought she was goin' to faint. One of the nurses opened the door of her own little bedroom, and let us go in alone. The minute she shut the door, Carneen slipped from her little rough blue jacket, unbuttoned the cuff of her satin blouse, and held up her arm for me to look at, saying something very low and quick.

"'No!' I said. 'You don't know what you're sayin'. Oh, no, no!'

"'Yes,' she said. 'You listen to me. That's what you're paid for.'

"When we got back into the smelly little dispensary, the doctors were tellin' Herbert Daggett that he could go back to Boston that night, to get his affairs in shape, but that it was against the law for him to leave the state of Massachusetts, and that he'd have to come to Penikese in a day or two, for good. And then Carneen Carmichael interrupted them.

"'You said this mornin' you admired me for wearin' long sleeves on the stage,' she said, looking at the bishop. 'Maybe you won't, when you see—this!'

"She rolled up her sleeve quick, as if she was doin' it on the stage, and they all saw that ugly mottle of lifeless white on her arm. She had pretty arms.

"'What!' cried the Daggett man in an ugly voice. 'You got it, too?'

"'It doesn't matter, dearest!' said Carneen Carmichael, and her voice was all glad and alive. 'You said you loved me. You wanted to marry me. I love you, too. We'll be married, then, and live in one of these little cottages, and—'

"'Leper cottages!' said Herbert Daggett.

"'I don't care,' said Carneen Carmichael. 'We can be married right away, can't we?' she said, to the others. 'Then I can take care of—then we can take care of each other, and it won't be so lonesome.'

"She got her way somehow. It was the Bishop who married them, and the rest of us stood around cryin'. But Carneen didn't care at all.

"And when we started back home, the rest of us, in that crazy little catboat, and I looked back, I shook all over to see the cliff there with yellow-white spots on it, and the bank that the water had partly eaten away. And I wondered if I had sinned in helpin' Carneen Carmichael put the makeup on her arm."

There was a moment's silence, broken by the far-off ripple of laughter from the audience.

"They found it out later. Where was you that you didn't read it in the papers?" Mrs. Drum asked them. "Of course, they let her stay, then. She was his wife, and she wanted to stay. Huh! Talk about selfish folks, she was the worst that I ever seen."

In the May number: THIRTY-FIVE TWENTY-SEVENTHS, *by Octavus Roy Cohen,* the story of a man who drove his office force all day and called himself into extra session every night to solve a problem in in efficiency, viz: how to make twenty-seven people do the work of thirty-five.

THE FEMALE OF SPECIES

BY DAVID A. WASSON.

This story is reprinted by request. It is not entered in The Black Cat Club contest.

LATE one afternoon a warm and friendly sou'wester fanned the down-east coaster Monhegan past the Isle of Shoals. Little Cap'n Ephraim Cutwater lowered his canvas-covered spyglass and turned to his six-foot spouse. "Don't ye cal'late we'd better dodge into Porchmith to-night, Lizy?" he whined. "Looks kinder dirty off there in the southeast!"

When other captains consulted their barometers, Capt'n Ephraim interviewed his wife, to the crew's secret joy. In their opinion "Old Fathom" was all wool and a yard wide, and she could pull the wool over hubby's red little eyes all she chose. She had sailed with him longer than most of them could remember, and it was forecastle gossip that Cap'n Ephraim was skipper only by courtesy.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" scoffed his better three-quarters. "Ephraim Cutwater, you never in the world see more than a little fog with the moon so nigh full as she is, and you know it. We'll haul her right out southeast by east and make our run."

"I wanted to mud her in there to Kittery Cove and try to git at that new leak in the rudder port, Lizy dear," pleaded the captain, trying a new tack.

The imperturbable Mrs. Ephraim cracked a knowing smile. "This old hooker has sweat her little three hundred clips an hour ever since we took her, Ephraim Cutwater, and you know it. She ain't leakin' no more, is she?"

"I kin see the masts of quite a little fleet in there already, Lizy," urged the skipper, raising the glass once more and conveniently forgetting to answer her question.

His helpmeet grunted again. "All you see, or wanter see, Ephraim Cutwater, is the chimleys of them breweries, and you know it. If there's any vessels in there for a harbor they're bound west. If we ever went in there we'd ground onto our beef bones before we ever got out. You'd be three sheets in the wind so quick 'twould make your head swim!" With this unconscious truism she waved her hand and dismissed the subject.

Thirsty Cap'n Ephraim regretfully saw the hazy outline of the genial New Hampshire sands slowly merge into the rocky and austere coast of the prohibition state as the Monhegan winged out and headed down shore with Boon Island's slim white tower over the starboard cathead.

Several craft behind her proceeded sheep-like to follow suit. There was marked, though prudently silent displeasure on the part of the foiled skipper. In his present state of mind he would have liked to see them scudding panic-stricken for port, his own vessel overwhelmed in a sudden tempest and himself vindicated with his tyrannical wife's last gurgling breath.

But no such luck. The dull red sun foundered in a smoky glowing west full of promise for the morrow. A swell, soft and gentle as the touch of a mother's hand, wafted the Monhegan away from the cooling sea of molten light astern, into ominous gloom in the east, which the captain fondly hoped might hide the ingredients of foul weather.

Again no such luck. Its menace too, was scattered, first by a luminous mist over the horizon, then by a wondering oval moon which oozed over the sea rim and hung almost on the jib-boom end, as if to bar the way. Instead it dripped an undulating silvery lane clean to the old schooner's bluff bow, and as the breeze freshened she trod it as eagerly as a boy on forbidden ground. Cap'n Ephraim was moved to admit grudgingly to himself that it was a pretty good kind of night for a run, after all.

Astern, the red and green eyes of one of the silent craft which had reached the same conclusion followed the Monhegan's bubbling wake devoutly, though wan in the white glare of the moon. A spectral pinnacle of canvas caught and reflected its pale glory as the pursuer closed up slowly on the coaster. It was a dainty white schooner yacht, garbed in the last towering cloth of her fine raiment; a dove with the wings of a swan.

Everyone knows that a stern chase is a long one. This one was so long that the moon no longer lighted the way when the tear and swash of the yacht's foaming progress could be heard from the schooner. It still touched fleetingly on the brasswork of her exquisite decks, but no longer glorified the pinions of this queen of the night as it peeped shyly from behind her.

"Hello aboard the schooner! Where's the other one?" on a sudden from behind the yacht's bellying spinnaker, the sound echoing hollowly against the Monhegan's dingy sails.

"What other one?" inquired Captain Ephraim dutifully, just as his lady and mistress popped on deck partly clad in her husband's great-coat.

"Why, the one they sawed off from that one," came in tones of triumph from the unseen jester. Faint but appreciative haw-haws from the unseen jackies of the watch. Chorus of sulky silence from the chunky coaster. "No offence, my good man!" resumed the talkative yacht. This was another voice, less pleasant to listen to than the first. "Just report us will you? This is the schooner yacht Free Lance, J. Archibald Martingale owner, from Nassau for Bar Harbor, seventeen days out."

Here Old Fathom entered the conversation in her best heavy weather voice. "Well, this is the schooner Monhegan, J. Ephraim Cutwater master, from Boston for Boothbay, and we been out the biggest part of the night! You can do yer own reportin', you Smart Alecks, and you better sheer off lively or that galoot at the wheel will have ye afoul of us!"

"Good God, Howard, turn out quick!" one of the yachtsmen shouted down the companionway. "Here's the suffragette navy right on top of us!"

"Ephraim Cutwater, will you let anyone insult your pore wife so-fashion? Get right up atop of that house and tell them drunken dudes what we think of 'em, if you're a man!" screamed the maligned one.

At about this time Ephraim arrived on all fours upon the cabin top, but if he had formulated any ideas in flight it is fair to presume that the expression of them would have in no way helped the cause of outraged femininity. He scrambled to his feet and stood speechless, evidently stage struck. Both crews, in various stages of undress uniform, were now enjoying the exchange of amenities.

"Ephraim Cutwater, are you deef and dumb? Your pore wife has been insulted somethin' fearful, and you know it! Tell 'em you won't stand it!" came the voice of the prompter from the wings.

"Suffragette navy!" exclaimed the newest arrival on the yacht's deck. "You're way off, Arch. That's the fog whistle on Cape Elizabeth! We couldn't find it, so they've brought it out to us!"

"Yah! You're drunk!" piped the captain, finding his tongue at last. "Tryin' ter pick up a fog whistle on a clear night! Yah!"

The Monhegan's heavy main boom suddenly sagged inboard. The vessels were now abreast.

"Heads, Cap'n! We're goin' ter gybe! Hard a-port the yacht!" chorused the Monhegans.

The mainsheet did a hop-skip-and-jump in the water, flogged the helmsman and whipped taut with a rattling wrench of blocks. The boom, a gigantic flail imbued with life, swept overhead viciously, and struck tremendously at the offending yacht. Like a stout man hit in the stomach her snowy spinnaker collapsed, rent from luff to leech. The great spinnaker boom stood on end for an instant then cracked in three pieces and bombarded the deck below. The yacht gybed as if in vain retaliation, came-to with a rush and lay fluttering like a bird with a broken wing.

And the captain of the Monhegan, oh, where was he? Struck behind the knees by the ribald main-boom he knelt gracefully in mid-air and landed froglike in the water half way between the warring craft. "Ephraim Cutwater, you come back here this minute!" screamed Old Fathom, with instinct born of long practice, but this time the poor man failed to obey. The much-rattled mate speared an oar after him, but whether it brained the skipper or proved the life-preserver it was meant for, none aboard the Monhegan could see.

When Eliza and the crew had lowered the center-board, trimmed-in the now subdued mainsail, let go the gib sheets, rolled the wheel down, dropped the leaky yawl-boat off the davits by the run, and manned her, the scene of the collision was, as might have been surmised, a cable's-length to windward. The grim coxswain in all probability was already a widow. Whether or not she realized it, she was as stolid as the Sphinx.

They pulled back wearily, each short, hurrying sea, slapping the boat full in the face as if to prepare them gradually for the final rebuff. They searched an empty sea, and then silently returned to the schooner, not deigning to speak the craft responsible for the mischief. She still hung in the wind some distance seaward, apparently clearing away the wreckage.

Old Ephraim had been a pretty decent sort of a chap in spite of his failings, thought the sobered pair at the oars. "Guess he must have been stunned by the boom," ventured the sympathetic mate.

"Yes, and you wait till we git this boat h'isted up agin and I'll show ye some of the all-firedest boo-hooin' you ever see!" was the curt reply. Which, the mate decided, was some sentiment for Old Fathom.

The faces of the cook and remaining man grinned over the bulwarks as they drew near. Old Fathom scrambled up the mainchains unaided and grabbed the head of the culinary department by the scruff of the neck. All hands sighed in relief. Richard was himself again.

"What d'ye 'mean, ye worthless black scum, by laughin' like a hyena at sech a time as this?" she demanded in a voice which again suggested the Cape Elizabeth fog whistle. "Do you wanter go overboard too?"

"Well suh—I mean marm," stammered the wriggling cook, "dis no-'count Dutchman yere 'lows how he done see a boat from de yacht pick up Little Nemo—I mean de Cap'n, suh—"

"Ya, ya, yust after you leave der ship," corroborated the Dutchman. "Ay tank he not bane hurt—"

Captain Eliza threw the culprit from her with a snort. Then she strode aft and soon had the Monhegan under way again, this time pointing for the blinding sun, or the half of it visible above the horizon. Half Way Rock's spiky lighthouse stuck up primly some miles inshore.

The mate saw Old Fathom furtively fling what he took to be a wadded handkerchief as far in the direction of Spain as the lightness of the missile would permit.

The Free Lance was just filling away to windward, and the coaster dawdled till she was overtaken again. The breeze was still freshening, but Captain Eliza needed no megaphone. "If you'll let her come-to again, I'll send the boat for my man!" she bellowed, but her voice this time lacked its usual raucous note. "And we'll be much obleeged to ye!"

A portly figure in white flannels jumped on the yacht's rail and held on by the main rigging while he shouted through a cupped hand: "Captain Cutwater presents his compliments, madam, and reports himself as in no condition to resume command of his schooner at present. Moreover, madam, in the process of resuscitation Captain Cutwater accidentally made the acquaintance of a certain brand of wine which has quite taken his fancy, and he desires to continue the tete-á-tete a bit longer." He bowed, flourished his yachting cap elaborately and stepped down, puffing for breath.

Old Fathom's jaw grew squarer. "He does, hey?" she retorted. "Well, then you kin take the consequences! You know what kidnapin' means!"

"Oh, be a sport, Lizzie! Give the old

man a little breathing spell!" was all the satisfaction she got.

Now a light center-board coaster dead before the wind, with a rapping good whole-sail breeze, is about the slipperiest article in Uncle Sam's fleet of merchant windjammers, and her kind have shown their heels to many an arrogant yacht before now.

In a moderate breeze the Free Lance had overhauled the Monhegan easily with her giant spinnaker pushing its best. But now her spinnaker, or what was left of it, was reposing in the lazaretto, and it was breezing up smartly. Still her people feared not for her laurels. As a matter of fact, she had never taken part in just such a contest. So the sailing master scoffed at Old Fathom's vague threat, and scorned to haul his beautiful craft on the wind, at which kind of sailing she could have cut circles around the old coaster.

The Monhegan, with patched sails ballooning and straining and a "bone in her teeth" deep burying her rusty chain bobstay, loomed forebodingly on the yacht's starboard quarter, and slowly drew up in her seething frothy wake.

Brass-bound officers and beflanneled aristocrats on the Free Lance's luxurious decks rubbed their eyes and blinked in amazement, marvelling at the fluke in the breeze which thus proved the race not always to the swift. Still they applauded her generously. "Come on, old hoss!" they yelled.

Up, up crawled the Monhegan, her square-headed old mainsail out to port driving its utmost, and the silent helmswoman steering her finest. Conducive to neat work on her part was the spectacle of her errant husband stamping about insanely on the yacht's deck, and cheering his own craft to victory with a long bottle which glinted in the early sunlight as he waved it wildly. No cup racer in a final heat was ever urged on more heartily.

The Monhegan's chubby bow lapped the yacht's main rigging, fore rigging, windlass, stem, bowsprit end. Then Captain Eliza without warning threw her helm hard a-port.

Bang! Rip! Wrench! The big main boom slashed over the Monhegan's deck again like Home Run Baker's bat passing home plate. It landed fair in the Free Lance's faultless white mainsail and made a worse wreck of it than it had a few hours before of her silky spinnaker. Her varnished eighty-foot boom jumped crazily aloft, then stabbed down through the polished cabin and made a still crazier three-master of her. A ravaged club topsail overhead transformed itself into an elephantine flag of truce, whipping mightily on before.

In awful silence the appreciative crew lowered-away the wreck, while the afterguard shook fists, and at the stalwart Nemesis on the Monhegan's quarter deck hurled epithets unfit for the ear of lady or suffragette. The afflicted yacht was plodding hopelessly along under foresail and gybes as the avenger ranged up alongside again, her crew grinning with delight from ear to ear.

"'Bout ready to send my man aboard, Mr. J. Alphonso What's yer-name?" inquired Captain Eliza with sinister politeness. "Next time I cal'late ter wipe that 'ere toy mahogany launch offn yer port davids, and mebbe put a leetle black stripe along yer hull! Stripes is lucky, ye know!"

A council of war was evidently taking place on the yacht's deck, with Cap'n Ephraim as the *piece de resistance.* As far as could be seen from the Monhegan he was not wildly excited about its outcome. His bottle, it was observed, he waved with increasing facility.

At length the yacht came slowly into the wind, her long bow dipping deep into the rushing sunlit chop and her remaining canvas threshing thunderously in the lively sou'wester. Captain Eliza promptly hove-to, the Monhegan nearby. An oily smoothness to windward marked her drift.

"All right, old woman, come and get your wild man!" shouted one of the Free Lancés through a megaphone.

"Oh, no, you don't!" returned Old Fathom, with the nearest approach to a smile seen for some time. "Them terms is all off now! You bring him over here or I'll have that shiny launch to kindle the galley fire with, spite o' fate!"

That was the last straw. A dinghy was promptly lowered in the yacht's lee; Cap'n Ephraim was hustled into it with no great ceremony, and a couple of sturdy seaman buffeted their sprayblown way into the windless lee of the wall-sided Monhegan.

"Mr. Martingale wanted me to tell ye, ma'am, that any time ye wanted a job as sailing master, just let him know," grinned the stroke oar. "I reckon you'd find us a willin' crew," he added admiringly.

"You tell yer Mr. Martingale that he owes me for a new main sheet!" returned the unmoved object of this flattery. "I stranded mine that last wallop I give him."

They did the returned prodigal the honor of lowering him a rope ladder, and he was gaffed overside with plenty of help from both above and below. The truant leered brazenly at his lady, and said conciliatingly, "You was right about not goin' inter Porchmith last night, Lizy. Yer most allus right, Lizy."

She, however, overlooked his maudlin levity and pointed silently toward the cabin door. This phenomenon might portend anything. Captain Ephraim looked fearfully over his shoulder and then wobbled hastilv cabinward.

As the Monhegan passed the crippled yacht for the last time, the crew had their hands more than full in straightening out the havoc and getting ready to bend a new mainsail, a task which in the strong breeze none on the coaster envied them. The beflanneled ones had nothing to say.

"I don't believe that pot-bellied cuss ever offered ye no job at all, ma'am," opined the literal-minded mate. "But if they was real sports they'd at least dip their colors to ye, ma'am."

"I cal'late I dipped their colors for 'em," said Old Fathom with something like a chuckle. "If I ain't mistook they're trailin' astern now along with a strip of that mainsail. Same time I don't misdoubt they're jest itchin' to dip 'em to us."

Majestic Sequin soon shrunk blue over the stern. Off the gray granite Cuckolds the faithful mainsail was hauled down as the Monhegan shivered in the wind's eye for a minute, and she went into Boothbay Harbor still a-boiling. Old Fathom put the finishing touches to her triumph by deftly anchoring in a tangle of small craft behind McFarland's island, while Cap'n Ephraim grinned idiotic approval from the companionway.

"Jest one thing, Lizy," he offered, emboldened by his sojourn with the idle rich, "'t ain't never a good idee to gybe her in a fresh breeze. Better to let her come-to 'n' fill away on the other sail—other tack—other tack."

"When I want any of your advice, Ephraim Cutwater, I'll ask for it, and you know it!" answered Old Fathom tartly.

Extract from shipping column of following day's New York paper:

"Spoken: June 13, off Seguin, schooner yacht Free Lance, Nassau for Bar Harbor, 17 days out. Reports experienced heavy weather in Gulf Stream and lost minor sails and spars. All on board well and wished to be reported. By schooner Monhegan, at Boothbay."

The Black Cat for May will contain eight entertaining stories and another composite essay in criticism by our Consulting Editor, the reading public.

The Testification of Cynthyan Adams is a splended piece of character work, good and funny and a bit weepy. "I could see Mary Pickford playing this to perfection."

From one view point, *By Subterfuge* is a good slashing adventure yarn, virile, full of action and with a satisfying climax and denouement. Opposed to that is the opinion that the story strikes a tone of deadly mediocrity because of the lack of objective action in the first thousand words or so.

In *The Burning Rivet*, the lack of action is even more pronounced. The characters do very little acting. They are acted upon; and the obstacle encountered by the principal character is solved by an outside influence not by the character itself. This lack of action is in part offset by vivid description and by the suggestive repetition in connection with the hot rivet. The story is interest compelling, but the sordidness of characters and setting keep it from getting a higher place on the list.

The Two Mile Twins is clean and funny and racy in the right sense. The only fault seems to be that the reader's mind hastens ahead of the story.

The five dollar prize winners in the second contest were Mrs. A. M. Scruggs, Selma, Ala.; Raymond E. Lawrence, Portland, Ore.; Edwin Upson, Chicago, Ill.; Ed. Malloy, Topeka, Kansas; E. Harold Cummings, Malden, Mass.

The Fifth Contest comprises the stories in this issue (April); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before May 1st. Prizes will be awarded May 10; and the result of the contest will be announced in the July BLACK CAT, issued June 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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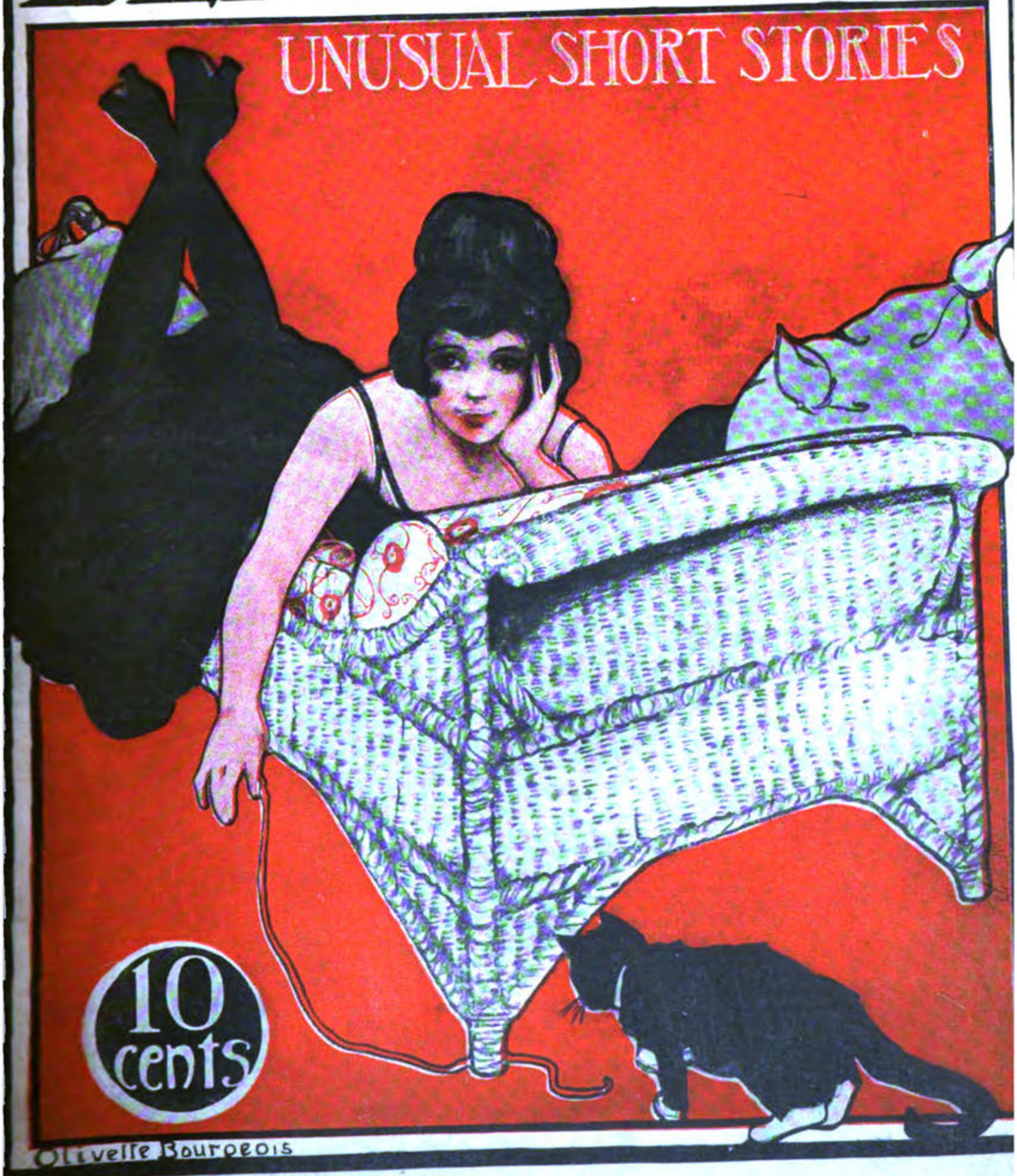
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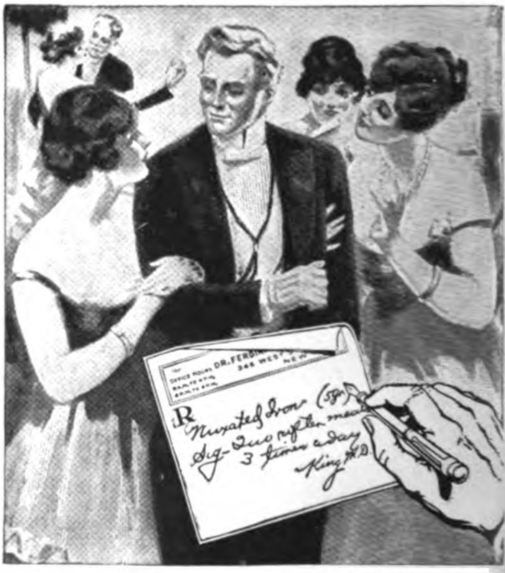

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The Black Cat

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Contents

Cover Design . . .	*Olivette Bourgeois* . .	
The Black Cat Club . .	. . . .	2
Thanks to the Cape Cod Finn	*Charles Boardman Hawes*	3
Thirty-five Twenty-Sevenths	*Octavus Roy Cohen* .	10
A Young Man's Fancy .	*Grace MacGowan Cooke* .	15
In Lieu of Leap Year .	*Milo Hastings* . .	20
Gentlemen of Generosity	*Harrison Seville* . .	24
Sunk by a Floating Mine .	*Charles LeRoy Edson* .	27
Fuzz	*Joe Bledsoe* . . .	33
The Scratched Record .	*Grace Van Braam Gray* .	40

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What Our Readers Say About Us

EVERY time we refer to the *Kipling Index*, we are informed that a sub-editor is hired to sub-edit, not to rewrite the Essays of Elia. Now it happens that we have an editor whom we call the Consulting Editor. He is sometimes known as the Reading Public, and it is his privilege to indulge in the luxury of essay writing. One would think that he might turn out some pretty good stuff. But he doesn't. His work is not Lamblike, it is not like that of the critical essayists, it is not like anything. He simply cannot write a composite essay in criticism without contradicting himself. He says that a story is good in one breath and bad in the next. For example, after stating that a story is "a breezy, realistic piece of fiction," he makes a marginal note to the effect that "it is pointless, plotless, stupid and tiresome. Even editing by Woodrow Wilson or Charles W. Eliot could never redeem it from its hopeless mediocrity." He damns with the faintness of his praise and glorifies with the inelegance of his abuse, all within ten lines; but we love him just the same. It is surprising how much he knows about short story technique. He knows so much that we are sometimes tempted to ask him if he ever fools around that buzz-saw known as the Correspondence School. If he does, perhaps that is what makes him stand head and shoulders above those "superficially, sentimental folk who are easily influenced by what they read, and who find, in letters to editors, an outlet for their overwrought emotions."

Having censored his remarks somewhat, we present his opinion of the February stories, beginning with the prize story, *Slicks and Slickers* by George Thomas Armitage.

This story is impressionistic, with objective treatment, the photographer's view. There is plenty of action, but it is the sort of action that might take place at a track meet or circus. The dramatic action which makes literature is lacking. The author's frenzied frantic, style is wearisome. Still, I predict that this writer who has made such a "glorious failure" will rank far above the other contributors when he has learned to let us know the point of the story early and keep us worried about it until the end.

The Acquital of Dr. Guidas is gruesome without being clever. It loses force because it is a "told" story; and the failure of the author to account for the disappearance of the head is unsatisfactory and marks the story as lacking in development. It leaves, however, a unified impression; and seems to have been written from an excellent recipe: "Take one silent doctor and a headless body, stir them into a handful of narrow, gossiping villagers, spice with a graveyard at midnight and a red cloak."

The Fairy Wand is good considering that it is handicapped by a more or less threadbare setting. We recognize all the boarding house inmates; but the characterization is largely caricature, which explains perhaps why so few of us have ever sat at a table with such a quintessence of typical personalities.

Getting It arouses the interest with the very first paragraph, and the second carries one well into the story and gives the key to the situation. The action is cumulative. The two motives, the captain's need of guns to get money and his need of money to get guns, are artistically interwoven. The captain himself is a clearly drawn character, and the reader is prepared for his unethical behavior in augmenting his exchequer. If there is any fault to be found, it is that the story strains the credulity in one or two places, as for instance, where the envelop in which the money was received is carelessly thrown away and is not discovered by either the police or the delegation of cloak, suit and tie makers who "snooped with a frenzied diligence in all corners." For the student of the short story who has to illustrate the technique paragraphically for his finger exercises, there is nothing better than this one.

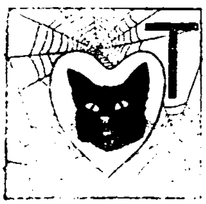
About *Tante's Valentine* there is the scent of lavender and old rose, with the pleasing contrast of the morning glare and the sunset glow of love's old sweet story. It is necessary to dodge the obtruding figure of a garrulous school-girl in order to see the principals of this story clearly.

(*Continued on page 45*)

THANKS TO THE CAPE COD FIN

BY CHARLES BOARDMAN HAWES

Emerson made one great rule for the guidance of humorists. "One has," says he, "but to remove an object from its environment and instantly it becomes comic." This story follows that rule, except that there are three objects and the result of their change comes near to being tragic.



THE Cape Cod Finn was responsible for the strangest adventure that ever befell three of the best axemen in all the Abol River Valley.

He came to Abol the winter after Wally MacDougald had achieved immortal fame by winning the gold medal for playing jigs and reels in the grand competition of pipers at the Scotch picnic in Boston; but having spent fourteen years before the mast, and being fully imbued with the glories of the sea, he was inclined to shrug his shoulders scornfully when any one spoke of what a fine thing it was to have a job with a man like MacLaren, and every evening he told such tall stories of mariners and ships that Wally MacDougald and Farquhar Stevenson and Danny Logue became discontented with the camps and asked him if there were not more of a chance at sea to better themselves.

"It is a fine life, a fine life," the Finn declared. "A fine life for a likely lad." But his eyes twinkled. The Finn was a shameless humorist.

At first the talk of going to sea was a joke; soon the three were considering it seriously; in a week they had become so enthusiastic that they could think of nothing else, and in two weeks every man in camp was calling them "the three old salts."

The Finn, however, had had experience with the "glories" of which he spoke so glibly, and with his scorn for the inland life was mingled a certain involuntary content. As he ate MacLaren's good grub and figured up the wages that were due him he gazed at the smoky rafters and smiled a sad smile behind which danced an unhallowed mirth.

In the fullness of time, the drive swept down to the boom and the crews went forth on the rampage. From the Columbia Hotel to the Brewer Bridge one could not pass two lamp-posts that were not held up by MacLaren's men. Barney Osborn hocked his brad-boots and went to the Exchange Street Station to try to beat down the price of a round-trip ticket to Passadumkeag; Ole Hardenson wandered up on Main Street and bargained half his accumulated wages for a second-hand violin; everywhere there was a grand time in progress. But Wally MacDougald, Danny Logue and Farquhar Stevenson, having deserted the crowd and gone off by themselves, picked their way through the mud to the end of an Exchange Street alley and peeked round the corner of an old shed at a short, fat man with a sad, sour face, who was sitting in a rocking chair on the deck of a lumber-laden schooner.

"I do think he's the very man," whispered Danny Logue.

"Weel, then, have it over with," replied Wally, and stepped out from the corner of the shed, thereby, although no one knew it at the time, preparing the way for the future astonishment of the captain of the tugboat *Push and Pull*, himself a worthy and patriotic Scotchman, who, at that moment, was two hundred miles away and had never heard of any one of the three.

They crossed the dock and stepped from the blackened timber that overhung the dark water of the Kenduskeag, to the deck of the little schooner. The man in the rocking chair raised his eyes and took his pipe from his mouth but said nothing.

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"Captain Nelson of the *Elmira Hawkes?*" asked Wally boldly.

The fat man spat over the side and cleared his throat. "That's me," he said in a squeally voice.

Wally glanced up at the old gray post-office and the long brown wharves before continuing. "Hum, hum," he groaned, being somewhat embarrassed, then as neither Farquhar nor Danny said anything, he plunged boldly into the subject in hand. "Mr. Nelson, here's three handy lads as can handle an axe, run logs or drive hosses. We don't know nothin' 'bout ships an' such like, but we wants to go to sea a spell, seein' there ain't no crews goin' into the woods this time of year, an' we was especially recommended to you by a mutual friend of ourn. If you can give us a job, we'll work hard and serve you faithful."

Wally stopped and stared at Captain Nautical Nelson. On his face expanded a most peculiar expression that was intensified by a broad grin. There was a strange light in the man's small, closely-set eyes that seemed to be in imminent danger of running into each other, even as his black eyebrows ran into each other on the summit of his nose.

Captain Nautical Nelson gulped, knocked the ashes from his pipe into the stream and held out his hand. "Ye're fine, hearty lads," he cried. "The' ain't much to do jes' sailin' the *Elmira Hawkes*, an' I can't pay ye much, but I'll give ye your keep, an' say—" he paused and eyed them dubiously,—"four dollars a month!"

"Not much!" Danny Logue muttered.

Nautical Nelson turned quickly and looked at Danny's broad shoulders. "Make it five!" he snapped.

"Not on your—"

"Sh," whispered Farquhar, "it's only a lark! Come the end of the month we'll all be back in Bangor and hire out with MacLaren."

"Well, perhaps—" Danny began.

"Where's your crew, Cap'n Nelson?" asked Wally suddenly.

The captain flushed and avoided the keen eyes that were turned upon him. "They er—they was took sick," he said in a low, sad voice, then as
seemed to strike him he co
briskly, "'twas the Bango
pizen."

Wally looked at the other
grinned and Danny nodded.
Wally cried. "We're with yo
month only."

Captain Nautical Nelson
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it's a fine v'y'ge we'll have—a

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and Danny Logue followed
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Cap'n Nelson didn't want us
ashore for our bags. So lon

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thunder-burst of laughter sh
old hostelry. Men laughed ti
ached and their heads drop
folded arms.

Out of the little hotel offi
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gasped. "Thanks to me! Oh
Lord! I've seen 'em easy, I
soft, but when it comes to
green lobsters a-racin' fer t
me a blue-nosed lumberjack
water!"

When the drawbridge at t
the Kenduskeag stream slowl

a snorting little tug drew the *Elmira Hawkes* into the main river where a flood tide and a fair wind waited to waft her down to the sea, a hundred lumberjacks were seated along the sleepers of the railroad bridge and along the rotting piles that lined the riverbank, to wave farewell to Wally, and Danny, and Farquhar Stevenson.

"What," growled Danny, "are they laffin' at!"

Neither Wally nor Farquhar answered the question, but Captain Nautical Nelson hid his face.

The *Elmira Hawkes's* patched sails filled in the brisk wind that was blowing down the Penobscot. Her ropes creaked in the blocks and her squat bow lunged ahead, plowing up a mound of gray-brown foam. Nautical Nelson stood at the wheel and under knit brows surveyed now the impudent little ferry boat that chugged away off the port bow, now the gray icehouses and the tall church spires of Brewer.

"The pipes, lad, get out, the pipes!" whispered Farquhar.

Up in the bow of the schooner, behind a huge pile of shingles, Wally MacDougald unwrapped his bagpipes, while Farquhar Stevenson clicked his heels together in eagerness to dance. The blare of the tuning drowned out all other sounds so that not one of the three was aware of a hoarse voice that bellowed furiously, nor heard catlike steps approaching on the deck. As Wally filled the bag and let his fingers fall across the chanter, a shadow darkened the shingles; as the first notes of "The Cock o' the North" wailed loudly, a hard hand was laid on Wally's shoulder.

Wally took his fingers from the chanter and high G was blended with the melodious hum of the drones. Over him stood Skipper Nautical Nelson. Nautical Nelson appeared to be a fat man, but there was solid bone and muscle to his huge body, and his double chin had a mournful unhappy droop. In his eyes was a curious expression, catlike and unpleasant, strangely unlike the oily smirk with which he had greeted them early in the day.

"Can't have it," he said angrily. "Music is an abomination, an' that screechin', caterwaulin' windbag thing you've got there is a special abomination o' the Devil."

"Well," said Danny Logue, sticking his thumbs under his suspenders, "what *can* we do to pass the time?"

"Do?" quavered Skipper Nelson in a tone that implied that he had not heard aright. "Do to pass the time?" He gasped for breath. "Lay for'ards an' fetch them shingles amidships!"

The three looked at each other and then at Captain Nelson, whose face was changing from crimson to purple. He spoke again more slowly but more harshly, and his small eyes seemed to become narrower and closer together. "Lay for'ard—an' fetch—them *shingles*—amidships! Bagpipes! Jehoshaphat!"

The light went out of Farquhar Stevenson's eyes. Danny's face grew long and sad, and Wally stared in unbelief: the first great dream was shattered; even at sea hard work confronted them.

When Nautical Nelson saw them piling shingles with a will, he gripped the wheel with both hands and watched the yellow bulk of High Head glide slowly by. When after an hour's brisk labor the shingles were ranged along the cabin, he cleared his throat loudly.

"Them's too high up," he yelled. "Pile them two top layers for'ards again!"

Another hour passed slowly.

"Now," cried Skipper Nelson, "we've got to clean up a bit. Bangor's a dirty place an' dirt's contagious. MacDougald, he can rub up the paint; Stevenson, he can holystone the deck, an'—le's see—le's see—Logue, he can go below an' clean the cabin—it's awful dirty from the crew I had comin' up river."

The *Elmira Hawkes* was one of those small coastwise craft on which captain and crew occupy the cabin together in peaceful disregard for the etiquette that governs more pretentious vessels.

Captain Nelson leaned against the wheel, smoking his brown clay pipe, and watched them with calculating eyes. He was pleased to see them work; he was always pleased to see people work on board the *Elmira Hawkes;* it was said that he would spill lampblack on the deck so that his men, when they had nothing else to do, could clean it up; some went so far as to say that he had cut his own mainsheet in a calm so that his men could splice it.

"Bag-pipes! Jehoshaphat!" he muttered. In all the world there was nothing that he detested so utterly and so completely as the drone of the Scottish pipes. There was a reason for it, too, but the reason could only be found in the closed book of Nautical Nelson's past.

As the day wore on apace the *Elmira Hawkes* plowed down the river. Hamden, and Orrington, and Winterport loomed up in turn. The gray walls of Fort Knox, over which peered her antiquated cannon, rose beyond the river's bend and fell far astern. After a long time, the lights began to twinkle in the farmhouses that perched on the high banks and Captain Nelson nodded at the wheel. But as the day wore on, the three grew angrier and angrier. When night fell, and their empty bellies called for food, Wally and Farquhar began to talk in low tones that did not carry to the skipper's ears.

"Five dollars a month he's paying us!" muttered Farquhar.

"Well, I'm no' the one that made all the talk about a sailor's life an' ridin' 'round on ships with nothin' to do!"

For a time they scrubbed in silence.

"Now I wonder what Danny'll be doin'!" said Farquhar thoughtfully.

Wally made no reply.

The well-scoured deck was shining in the light of the sunset. The hills on the skyline were fringed with pointed firs and spruces. The two sat in the shelter of the shingle pile and gazed long and peacefully at the swiftly fading western light. But from Danny there was neither sign nor sound.

The schooner was a small craft. From somewhere aft came a low buzzing sound that rose gradually to considerable volume and died away in an audible gasp. Wally looked at Farquhar and grinned more broadly. Again and again that strange sound was repeated. It grew louder with every repetition. Wally held his hand before his mouth and whispered, "It's Danny! He's snorin'!"

Abaft the shingle pile, Nautical Nelson scratched his head "Where's that steamer that's bellerin' so?" he called out.

Wally and Farquhar, bending over their work to conceal their laughter, were unable to speak.

"Well," the old man grumbled crustily, "let 'er bellow! I'm agoin' b'low and set out the grub! MacDougald, take the wheel an' hold her about two points west o' that little yeller light!"

Nautical Nelson paused on the ladder. He peered down into the cabin and saw a strange sight. His chin expanded, his eyes dilated. "May I be swigged!" he gasped.

He climbed on deck in clumsy haste, selected a bit of stout rope with a large knot at the end of it, tiptoed back to the companionway and with catlike silence and a celerity seemingly incongruous with his vast bulk disappeared into the dark cabin.

As another long snore shook the air and the crescendo of a second began bravely, the two listeners on deck heard a rope swish through the air and land with a sharp crack. The crescendo was broken off by a wild yell. The rope whistled and cracked. A loud and angry voice roared hoarse reply to Nautical Nelson's wheezing tirade. There was the sound of running and racing and crashing and smashing and tumbling and banging down there in the darkness of the little cabin.

"You lumpin', lazy, lag-jawed, bat-eyed son of a down-east seacook!" Nautical Nelson yelled. "You thick-headed, lobster-backed, barnacle-brained scum of the clam-flats! You flounderin' human mudscow! You gallivantin' Mahon scullion! You club-footed bag-piper!" Constantly Nautical Nelson harked back to the detested bagpipes, for his was a mean soul with no love of music.

With a wild yell, Danny Logue broke from the cabin and leaped to the deck. A tin plate whistled by his head, flew over the rail, splashed and sank.

The voice below stopped and a lantern flickered; the *Elmira Hawkes* had turned from her course and the yellow light lay off the port quarter. The two noticed it at that very moment that Danny Logue came tumbling up on deck. Their one thought was to bring the yellow light once more beyond the bowsprit.

"Turn her round quick!" Farquhar cried, gripping the wheel. "Which way do we spin it?"

Already Captain Nelson's feet could be heard on the companionway.

The breeze was increasing and long waves were lapping against the hull of the *Elmira Hawkes*. Realizing only that she must be brought about, Wally and Farquhar, in serene ignorance of nautical affairs, threw the wheel hard over. The schooner swung slowly off. Then came the unforeseen.

Squarely, fairly, without sign or warning, the *Elmira Hawkes* jibed treacherously! Her booms swept the deck. Her sheets tightened with a report like the crack of a musket. Her sails filled and jerked against her mast. The rotten boltline on her ancient foresail gave way and the canvas was torn in a screaming rip. For a moment she lay nearly on beam end, then, slowly righting herself, she headed once more at the yellow light. But her deckload of lumber was floating in the cold water of Penobscot Bay and Danny Logue was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's Danny?" Wally cried.

The two stared into the black water to leeward.

"Danny, Danny! Speak, Danny, and we'll throw you a line!"

There was no answer.

Behind them, through the companionway, a large round head with double chin was thrust into the open air. Neither noticed it because the lantern had been smashed and the cabin was dark, but the voice that followed it demanded attention, for Nautical Nelson never lacked words wherewith to express emotion. "Sometimes they're wuthless—sometimes they're useless, sometimes they're destructive," he bellowed when he saw the stripped decks, "but of all the confounded, slamguzzled, sink-brained idjuts."

He paused, realizing for the first time the extent of the damage that had been done. There were no shingles piled amidships, there were no clapboards piled aft. A few joists still rested by the lee scuppers, and that was all. The deck-load was overboard and the black waters of the bay were slapping the side of the *Elmira Hawkes* as if hungry for more.

Like the comb of a turkey gobler, Nautical Nelson's double chin crimsoned and swelled; his brow knotted; the purple of his nose deepened. He looked at the two men who had left the wheel and were leaning over the ornate taffrail that decked the *Elmira Hawkes's* stern, calling into the black night, "Danny! Danny! Where are you, Danny?"

Nautical Nelson was known from Eastport, Maine, to Provincetown, as the most consistently ill-natured man on the New England coast. Now that he had reason to be angry, instead of shouting and cursing and stamping and bawling like other men, he spoke to himself, sadly, in a low voice, as if to reinforce his determination. "They've lost my deck-load," he said. "They've drownded one of my crew; I'll finish 'em, that's what I'll do." He picked up a short piece of four by five timber, and crept along the deck toward the two, who were calling in vain to the missing third of the triumvirate.

Ignoring the responsibility that he himself had incurred by putting two green men at the wheel, he rose on his tiptoes behind Wally MacDougald and swinging the bit of timber through the air, brought it down with all his might at Wally's head. At that moment, however, a little squall danced into the mainsail and the *Elmira Hawkes* heeled before the gust. The blow missed Wally altogether and struck Farquhar Stevenson's hand on the rail.

Springing back with a yell, Farquhar looked into Nautical Nelson's eyes. Captain Nelson, always a man of wrath, had never been so angry as at that moment.

Like a flash, the skipper raised his club to strike again, and Farquhar lunged in under his guard, caught him round the waist, although his arms could scarcely encompass the huge body, and heaved mightily. But Nelson, lazy and indolent though he seemed, had worked long and hard in his younger years and his great bulk concealed strong muscles and wiry sinews. Farquhar, his hold broken, was flung his length on the deck.

As Nelson again swung his four by five club in the air, Wally leaped at his throat, and clung there with all his might and main. The big man's eyes flashed. His huge, pudgy hands clutched the little Scotchman's locked fingers and slowly forcing them apart he thrust MacDougal back on Farquhar's unconscious body.

Wally flung himself hard to the left, turned in the clutch of Nelson's two hands, and spun on his head like the featherweight wrestler that he was, but to no avail. Farquhar moved and groaned but one of the skipper's great hands held him in a relentless grasp. With his other, he drew a keen-pointed dirk and raised it with demoniacal fury.

The *Elmira Hawkes* was sailing of her own will. Her wheel turned listlessly this way and that, as she veered with the wind. Her split foresail flapped idly in long tatters, but her mainsail bellied full. Round in a great circle she swept, through the dark sea over which distant lights were glimmering, till jibs and mainsail flapped loosely in the head wind. She was carried along by her momentum till the sails filled again, then she heeled to port and swung on another tack. She had returned, unknown to the two who were fighting on her deck, to the very spot where she had jibed and split her foresail.

She bumped against floating joists and shingles, and clinging to one of these bundles of shingles was a man who watched the schooner with the split foresail loom out of the night until he was struck by her broad bows and knocked under water. He came up amidships, gasping, thrust out one broad hand, clutched the rail, and hauled himself up.

While he balanced himself by the stays, he saw by the light of the schooner's lantern the little group lying in the shelter of the cabin; he saw Nautical Nelson's huge bull neck swelling under his dirty collar; he saw the gleam of the drawn knife.

Danny Logue crouched on the rail, then sprang through the air, caught Nelson by the neck and crotch, lifted his two hundred and twenty pounds clear of the deck, took just three whirling steps and hurled the skipper headlong into the dark cabin. Nelson fell with a wild yell and thudded at the foot of the companionway in a crumpled heap. Getting on his feet, he clutched a carving knife and sprang up the companionway, but he looked into a pair of eyes the blaze of which dimmed his own. He saw silhouetted against the sky a great, sledgehammer fist, and heard a terrible voice roar, "Come out like a man, yez inglorious apology for a shcoundrel, and I'll maul ye till ye wish ye was borned a choppin' block fer the relief that ye'd git by it!"

Nautical Nelson resisted his murderous impulse and retreated. He saw the light cut off and heard many timbers being piled on the hatch. Very cautiously he crossed the cabin and tried to force his way out but found to his chagrin that he was a prisoner on his own ship.

Wally helped Danny pile lumber over the cabin, and before the companionway was entirely buried, Farquhar Stevenson sat up, rubbed his head and asked what had happened.

"The boat sets funny," said Farquhar, when half the lumber in the hold had been transferred aft as an additional barricade, and the schooner was riding with the bow well in the air. "She sets funny an' we can't sail her. We'd better take down what's left of them sails."

They cut the halyards, and mainsail and jib came fluttering down.

There off Islesboro, with only the tattered foresail to rattle in the breeze, the *Elmira Hawkes* drifted at the mercy of wind and tide.

"Now," said Danny, with a strange twinkle in his eyes, "now for revenge!"

Revenge! There was one thing that Nautical Nelson abhorred above all else, and what that thing was each of the three amateur seamen knew well.

Hours later the tug boat, ***Push and Pull***, was churning its way up-river in the deeper darkness that precedes dawn.

"Them lights is actin' funny!" said her skipper.

"Hark!" said her mate, "what in the name o' mischief is that?"

Over the water came an eery sound that cut the mist like the scream of a siren horn. The skipper's ears, trained in the wild minors of his native Scotland, detected melody. "It's the pipes, man," he cried, "playin' 'Cock o' the North'! Put down your helm!"

As the tug chugged over the gray sea to the drifting schooner, the first light of dawn broke in the east and revealed on the deck of that craft of strange behavior the shadow-like shape of a leaping man.

"What's he doin'?" asked the mate.

"He's dancin' the Highland Fling!" cried the skipper.

When Nautical Nelson heard the timbers drawn from above him, he stormed up the companionway and blinked at the lights of the tug and at the dancing sea; the blanket of his hypocrisy had been torn from his shoulders.

"Murder an' mutiny's been done!" he screamed. "Handcuff 'em—iron 'em—jail's too good for 'em—hangin' too cheap! They've clapped me in my own hold—they've lost my cargo—they've bust out my forcs'l—they've played that devilish squeakin' bagpipe contrary to my precise orders. Mutiny! Murder! Hang 'em!"

He stopped suddenly. He recognized the captain of the tug.

"Captain Nelson," said that dignitary, "I'm a reliable man an' a Scotchman. I ain't seen nothin' wrong. I've found two good Scotchmen an' a friend of theirs, which is a friend of mine accordin', which has been abused some'in awful. One of 'em has been throwed overboard, an' the others is terrible misused. I'm goin' to take 'em right back to Bangor. As fer you, you kin hist your own sails, an' sail away where you like. There ain't no great of a wind now, an' no danger to you, more's the pity!"

And as the tug *Push and Pull* chugged away in the first light of morning, Nautical Nelson was serenaded by the parting strains of his particular abomination, a Scottish bagpipe.

As for the Cape Cod Finn, when he was told that three sailors had returned to Bangor and were extremely anxious to see him, he jumped the first freight out of town and never was heard from again, for, besides having a sense of humor, the Cape Cod Finn was a man of vast discretion.

THERE was Jones, a Cockney, and Kranz, a Dutchman; Harris, a mulatto, and Peel. Then there was Miller. He was not of their class, but he was brainy and a superior marksman; and Peel needed his unmoral support in robbing the Mission at Santa Marta.

They violated a sanctury, shot down a Monk, and departed in a whaleboat as they had come. After that—well, if you wish to know what happened after that, read "NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME" *by Frederick J. Jackson* in THE BLACK CAT next month.

THIRTY-FIVE TWENTY-SEVENTHS

BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

Twenty-seven people can possibly do the work of thirty-five, if fattened pay envelopes constitute the driving force. Otherwise thirty-five over twenty-seven is something more than a simple problem in division. Pointing out the dignity of labor is a poor incentive to industry.

PERSONALLY, Cyrus J. Hawkins was the very antithesis of romance. He was spare of frame, large of head and scant of hair; spindled-legged, narrow-shouldered, sunken-chested and cursed with a pair of lustrous black eyes with an X-ray power.

It was the eyes of Cyrus J. Hawkins that started all the trouble. Not one of the girls of the stenographic force could work with those orbs boring into the back of her head, however protected by switches. On occasion when the official glance was thus turned balefully on a malefactor, a bad business became worse, and on several occasions the girl stared at had broken into a paroxysm of weeping, whereat Cyrus J. Hawkins had grinned malevolently (or so it seemed to the other girls) and disappeared contentedly into his sanctum santorum.

But, however unpleasant it is to do so, the devil must be accorded his due. Cyrus J. Hawkins, office and sales manager of the Harrington Machinery Company, Inc., had his hands full and then some. The trouble lay in Harrington senior, chief stockholder in the corporation.

In the days before the Harrington Machinery Company, then *not* incorporated, was out of its swaddling clothes, Jim Harrington had been actual general manager. In those days he had employed an office force of nineteen persons, four of whom were more or less comely young ladies expert in the gentle art of hieroglyphing in notebooks and transferring their work into type with a greater or less degree of speed and accuracy.

Prosperity smiled upon the firm, and little by little the office and sales force was increased to twenty-seven persons, seven of whom were stenographers, by grace of business colleges. At the same time, the burden of work shifted by almost unnoticeable degrees from the exceedingly portly frame of Harrington senior, to the gaunt one of Cyrus J. Hawkins. After articles of incorporation were granted at the state capitol, Cyrus J. was officially made office and sales manager, while Harrington—now James Montgomery Harrington in place of plain Jim Harrington—builded himself a mahogany finished office, installed real mahogany furniture, genuine Havana cigars, and acquired an air of pomposity which was adequately defended by an overweening self-esteem.

Cyrus J. was a competent man, an exceedingly competent man, and in the following three years the business—incorporated—grew marvellously under his expert handling. But the force remained the same unelastic twenty-seven. For nearly a year now every man-jack and woman-jack of that force had been working at a maximum and three times Cyrus J. had approached the man in the mahogany office with demands for an increase of staff. Each time he had failed utterly to penetrate even the first trench line of Harrington senior's self-esteem. He was as immovable, as the oft-mentioned Rock of Gibraltar. He had run the business with a staff of twenty-seven and was paying Cyrus J. to do the same. That ended it, and Cyrus J. knew that it ended it, and for all time.

Therefore it followed, as a matter of course, that Cyrus J. must get out of the minds and bodies of his twenty-seven accredited employees the work which ordinarily thirty-five could not have handled with any too great a degree of despatch. In the course of time, three vertical wrinkles grew between the bridge of the nose and the place where his forelock should have met the forehead, and transversing these lines at more or less variant right angles was a series of furrows, which, as any phrenologist will tell you, denoted that Cyrus J. was both studious and worried.

He was worried because he knew the man for whom he worked, and he knew that he had to make good on the task assigned him, else his years of faithful service would be discounted one hundred per cent and another man summarily seated in his chair. And Cyrus was being paid a very fair salary and he wished to retain it. Father Time was on his heels, and already he was approaching the fateful fifty mark;—the fiftieth year when a man loses a bit of fighting ambition and becomes content to hold a well-paying position.

The lines of study were brought to his hitherto uncreased brow by reason of a mad chase after efficiency. Efficiency, to his way of thinking, was typified by making twenty-seven persons do the work of thirty-five. He absorbed one rule, and then like a student of the magpie, let the others slide. And this rule dealt with waste time, which under the new order of things was not to be found in the Harrington offices. But Cyrus J., not having pursued the subject of efficiency far enough, became an iron slave-driver.

For about a month his plan worked very satisfactorily and then insurrection broke out; not gradually, but with a sudden flare that startled him. He knew that he had Miss Marjorie Summers to thank for it.

Miss Summers drew at least twenty-five dollars a week as head stenographer for the Harrington Machinery Company, Inc. She was as competent as she was pretty, which is saying a good deal for her competence. And up to the time she was awakened to the leadership of rebellion, Cyrus J. Hawkins had liked her exceedingly. He disliked her as an opponent because he knew that she was no fool and also that she understood the situation perfectly. He thereupon construed her opposition to him as being deliberately unfriendly, and then proceeded to sever diplomatic relations. Whereat she perfected her plans of campaign and held an informal meeting with the other females of the office force shortly after the closing hour. The meeting was held in the ladies' cloak room, and Miss Summers harangued the gathering about as follows:

"The old fossil is doing us a dirty trick. Instead of standing right up to the boss, he's taking it out on us, and looking to each one to do two persons' work. But we've got the whip hand, because there's a certain amount of work that's got to be done, and if it isn't done the business goes to pot. And if he sees we aren't going to do it—or aren't doing it, as you may choose to express it—he's either got to make a firm stand with old man Harrington or else be fired, and me, I don't care which happens. I'm thinking I'd rather he'd be fired."

"But Marjorie,"—this from a flaxen-haired filing clerk,—"s'posin' he knows what we're up to an' fires us?"

Marjorie gazed upon the speaker with the condescension which twenty-five a week has the right to show towards seven-fifty.

"He can't! I've thought that out, too. He's getting all the work we can do now—and we're all broken into the business. New people have got to be broken in and while that's being done the work's falling behind. We've got things all our own way—but we've got to stand together."

And stand together they did—with a vengeance. The first day of open rebellion, Cyrus J. Hawkins believed the evidence of neither his sight nor his ears. The typewriters clicked all day long, but they lacked the frantic tattoo as the typebars cracked against platens. The letters and papers which came to his desk were faultlessly done but the quantity of work turned out by the seven typists assayed only about seventy-five per cent of the amount he had obtained under his slave-driving efficiency system.

That, in itself, was sufficient to arouse his suspicion; but when he noticed that his two little filing clerks were working with accurate, painstaking lack of speed; that his woman biller was correspondingly dawdling, and that every other wearer of skirts paid greater attention to accuracy than to speed, he knew that he was up against a very hard proposition.

Thereupon he carried the campaign into the enemy's country. He moved his working desk into the outer office and watched. Thanks to the generalship of Miss Summers, his watching availed him nothing. Insofar as eyes could detect there was not so much as a minute's loafing—yet the quantity of work turned out daily grew less and less by almost infinitesimal degrees. And Miss Summers had guessed correctly when she asserted that he dared not discharge any of the insurrectoes because of the unthinkable waste in "breaking in" persons unfamiliar with the routine of the office.

If, under ordinary circumstances, the girls would have been softened to leniency at sight of Cyrus J.'s haggard face as the strain of battle left its indelible mark on him, their spirit of combat was kept alive by his irascibility and fed upon his uncompromising refusal to arbitrate. And Cyrus J. was game enough and sensible enough to fight his fight without carrying details to James Montgomery Harrington. In the first place, Harrington would not have believed; and in the second place, had he believed, he would have snorted with disgust and attributed it all to lack of executive ability on the part of his office manager. And Cyrus J. was upwards of fifty and his job looked very good to him. If Harrington had been human in even a minimum degree—but he wasn't, so there was no use in appealing to him.

At the end of two months there was an accumulation of work on hand which longer hours could not, and would not, cut down. All the raving and ranting, all the biting sarcasm and scathing denunciation of inefficiency in the vocabulary of the diminutive Cyrus J. availed nothing. The girls had reached their minimum speed and turned out just so much work daily; and as so much work was on the wrong side of being enough, the unfinished business of the office grew and grew. And in the big office Harrington—James Montgomery—thrived mightily and smoked his black, gold-banded perfectoes, and grew stouter and more florid and entertained the pleasing delusion that he was running his business very well and very economically.

Summer came, and with summer came heat, and with heat came longer afternoons and longer hours in the office. It was after one such sweltering afternoon that Miss Summers, on her arrival at the hall-bedroom which she occupied in sole state, discovered that her keys were not in her purse.

She felt a sense of panic and impending disaster. Miss Summers, in addition to being head stenographer, was keeper of the incidental cash and one of the keys on her key-ring gave access to the big steel cash box that did duty in lieu of a safe. Harrington had used no combination safe in the old days and he therefore used no safe now. And it was important that those keys should not be lost, for, while the cash usually kept in the cash box was small in amount, it was sufficiently large to prove worrisome to Miss Marjorie Summers.

She summoned a fellow boarder of the masculine gender, ardently inclined towards herself despite his eighteen dollars a week, and requested his escort as far as the office. It was past supper when they set out and he insisted on stopping for an ice-cream soda. At their arrival at the factory, she was surprised to discover that there was a light burning in the office. Now she would not have to bother the watchman. She left her cavalier outside and mounted the short flight of steps. She turned the knob and the door opened readily. She entered—then stopped short.

Seated before a typewriter, his head pillowed on crossed arms, was Cyrus J. Hawkins, fast asleep, and as she looked at him she felt her first pang of conscience. His narrow shoulders were hunched forward, and he looked very old and very bald and very tired. In the platen was a partly finished letter, one which he had dictated to her that day and which she, knowing its importance, had purposely refrained from sending.

The maternal instinct in the girl was aroused and she felt very sorry and very mean and very small. She tiptoed to her desk, and saw, by the little man's hand, her missing bunch of keys. It was evident that they had slipped from her bag which, during the day, she kept atop her desk, after the fashion of stenographers the world over. And as she took the keys she coughed.

The little man jerked himself upright, and rose stammeringly to his feet. At sight of her, his frown re-appeared and he summoned the cold aloofness which had clothed him during hostilities in which he had recognized her as the opposition leader.

"Miss Summers! What are you doing here?"

The girl flushed.

"I—I—forgot my keys. I just returned for them. I—I—can't I finish that letter for you?"

The little man gazed at her sharply, and shook his head.

"No, thank you," he said coldly. "You should have done it before you left here. I am able to attend to it myself."

"But I can do it so much more quickly."

"You can work with greater speed during the day, too, Miss Summers,—but you don't do it."

"I—I—"

"Don't apologize, please. I have realized that there was a conspiracy against me. I've been fighting it as best I could. I ask no quarter."

The calm dignity of the little martinet appealed to the girl as nothing else could have done.

"You drove us to it—"

"Excuse me, I did not. It was not I who demanded that my working force do fifty per cent more work than we have a right to expect. It is Mr. Harrington. I am in his employ just as you are, and I am responsible to him for what you do and don't do. But it has never occurred to any of you that he might be to blame. It was I—you never analyzed. You knew him well enough to know that when the work fell very far behind he would fire me. All right—" he shrugged. "I'm afraid, Miss Summers, that I'll have to concede you the victory. I'm beaten."

"Beaten?" The word of victory had a hollow sound now that it was uttered. The little man looked so lonely and so quietly game. If only he had been angry and had railed at her. But no—he was polite and quiet and heroically unheroic.

"Yes. Certain matters are coming up to-morrow—one of them the McDavis contract—which have not been attended to, thanks to the refusal of my office force to work up to the best of its ability, and Harrington will hold me to account for it. It will, or would, lead to a scene. I shall avoid that by a plain talk with Mr. Harrington beforehand. I shall also have my resignation ready."

"You mean—you will resign, whether or no?"

He bowed gravely.

"That is what I mean. I know Harrington—as well as you do. I would far rather resign than be forced out. I shall at least retain my self-respect."

"You—you—have been working here—every night?"

"Of course. I am entrusted with the work of the office. If those I employ refuse to do the work they can do—and refuse by actions cleverly calculated to save them from being discharged—it is up to me to make good their deficiency insofar as I can."

His precise manner won her admiration. There was no hint of cringing.

"May I ask you a personal question, Mr. Hawkins?"

"Certainly."

"You—" she flushed. "You are dependent on your—position here?"

"What do you mean?"

"It means more to you than—just a job?"

This time the man flushed and embarrassment showed on his face.

"We'll hardly discuss that, Miss Summers. Very often there are personal reasons to spur a man to greater effort than was intended for him by nature; reasons which are his, and are sacredly private.

They exist, Miss Summers, even in the life of a crabbed, crusty old bachelor."

It was a new angle to the little man's character: this nobility of purpose which kept him slaving his health away. And that it was a strong motive she knew—else he would not have done as he had been doing. Impulsively she turned.

"Wait one minute, please." She left the office, descended the stairway and summarily dismissed her escort, much to that pompadoured young gentleman's bewildered sorrow. Then she returned to the office, doffed coat and hat and approached Cyrus J. Hawkins.

"Please let me sit there, Mr. Hawkins," she said quietly.

"What for, please?"

"I'm going to work here until that McDavis thing is finished. And you're not going to resign, and— Oh! I want to tell you that I am sorry, very sorry, and that I'm going to do all I can to rectify the wrong I have done. Believe me, Mr. Hawkins, and let me do my little toward righting things, won't you? And please promise me that you'll give me another trial—that you won't resign your position."

He stared at her strangely. Then suddenly he shoved a bony little hand toward her.

"Thank you, Miss Summers. We'll shake on it, if you wish."

And shake they did, and a friendship was born between them. Together they worked until two o'clock in the morning and when they finished, the voluminous mass of papers in the McDavis matter was neatly completed. The little man escorted the girl to her boarding house and there left her. As she mounted the stairway to her room she felt a sense of elation which comes to those who have been magnanimous in the hour of victory.

Just before the working hour struck next morning there was a second conference in the cloakroom of the women employees of the Harrington Machinery Company, Incorporated. And again Miss Marjorie Summers was spokesman. She excelled herself in her graphic description of the scene on the previous night, and by the time she finished, more than half of her hearers were weeping softly. The average woman is ninety per cent emotion and sentiment, anyway.

"I don't know what it is girls," she wound up, "but there is some secret in his life; some motive which has compelled him to drive and drive himself ten times as hard as he has tried to drive us. I, for one, have finished with my loafing. I'm going to work and work and work—I'm for him first and last."

"And me."

"Me too."

"So am I."

It was a starry-eyed crowd of girls that seated themselves at their machines and took their desks as the working bell struck in the factory entrance. In a second, typebars were clicking against platens with a speed that the office had never before known; the filing clerks worked with lightning speed, the other office girls bustled about swiftly, intent on their tasks. The eyes of Cyrus J. Hawkins met those of Miss Marjorie Summers and a smile of mutual understanding passed between them. Somehow, all the girls felt that their victory was complete—that there was more for them in such magnanimity than there could ever be in a triumph which lost to the game little man his position.

Cyrus J. Hawkins strolled to the window and gazed out upon the smoke-limned skyline of the district. He smiled very gently indeed, and rubbed the palms of his hands together softly.

"I call it clever," he soliloquized softly, "the whole thing. First slipping the keys from her bag, knowing that she'd miss them, be worried, and return; then pretending to be asleep, and working that sympathy gag on her. They do say that there are more ways of killing a chicken than by tickling it to death with a feather.

"And after all the end is worth the means. They'll catch up with the work in no time—and everybody's happy!"

He faced the office as he walked back to his desk and he smiled again. He seemed twenty years younger. And the girls smiled with him. They were as content as he.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

BY GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

In Texas, when spring is in the air and in the blood, one is likely to meet Dan Cupid riding the range almost any day. For then, the heart, "like a maverick, goes astray"; and friend Dan is always on the lookout for the heart that does just that.

IT took him by the throat in the first flush of primrose time. Spring comes early down there in southwest Texas. Marshall's ranch was all the land enclosed in a broad canyon. A mile of fence across the eastern end made him king of his own little country.

He had loved the life and exulted in it for ten years; and now, suddenly, just because the earth was green and the sky was blue, his heart was stormed by a thousand foolish emotions.

He took his pinto pony into his confidence as he rode, but the pinto had no wisdom wherewith to meet this strange emergency.

Marshall was a long, lithe brown young fellow, all bone and muscle. His clear, gray eyes were never very widely opened, and they gave a lazy or indifferent turn to a countenance which would otherwise have been over-strenuous. A few people had trusted to that laziness and indifference, and been deceived.

As he rode up to his comfortable ranch house, he saw one of his cowboys—a small cockney Englishman, who had been a groom in the old country—exercising a milk-white pony up and down the long sandy drive from the front gate to the porch. She was a pretty creature, a grade horse, and Cockney Jim had thrown a red Navajo blanket over her, and let it dangle, skirt fashion.

"What in the mischief is that for?" called Marshall.

"I'm a-gentlin' a good 'oss for the Missus, 'gainst the time you bring her out," replied Jim, impudently.

"You go to ——! Well, hang your impudence!" cried Marshall, with a little unnecessary heat, for he felt himself blushing under the ten layers of tan that ten Texas summers had given him. He laughed foolishly, and busied himself with his spur, which he fancied was coming loose.

"I get it from all quarters," he confided to the pinto. "The whole world has gone crazy." And then he went into the house and told his factotum, Manuel, to pack a grip for him, and send over for the major-domo, to inform him that he, Marshall, was called East suddenly, to the bedside of a sick relative. As it was well known on the ranch that Marshall had not a relative in the world nearer than a second cousin, this statement caused more of the laughter which Marshall, himself, had called foolish, and which, as he was a strict disciplinarian, was kept out of his sight.

When he got over to Antelope, where he took the train, he sent a telegram to this one, solitary second cousin, his sole link to a world that had women in it, to announce his coming.

He said to himself, with a whimsical smile, that he was homesick. He could find no fitter word to describe the longing that was in him, though at the bottom of his heart he recognized it as the stirrings of the primal race instinct; he knew that it was thus, and not otherwise, the heart of Adam yearned before his Creator sent that kindly sleep upon him and made such excellent use of a rib.

His telegram distinctly fluttered an exclusively feminine household in a small Massachusetts town. There was Mrs. Baldwin, the aforementioned second cousin, a woman of determination. There was Sarah, her daughter, who may be dismissed, safely, as the daughter of her mother. And there was Katharine Brent, a guest in the house, who thought it was extremely interesting to have a second or third cousin one had not seen for ten years coming all the way from Texas to visit one.

The mother and daughter held a guarded little consultation about the matter. Katharine was an extremely pretty and a very charming girl. "His coming now at this time, and in this way, can mean only one thing," said Mrs. Baldwin, decisively.

Sarah and Marshall had exchanged letters, perhaps a half dozen times, in the past ten years. There must always be some one affair to which a woman can refer as "the affair," and her third cousin, Robert Marshall, had served this useful purpose to Sarah Baldwin. But now she demurred.

"Oh, I don't know, mother," she remonstrated, "it's two years since I had the last letter from cousin Robert, and even then he wrote at Christmas time to send those resurrection plants and Mexican curiosities. It wasn't a—it wasn't that kind of a letter, you know."

"I think," said Mrs. Baldwin, severely, "that you ought to tell Katharine just how matters stand between yourself and Robert. It will save misunderstandings."

Speech is used for various purposes besides that of conveying mere information. You and I know that Mrs. Baldwin did not want Katharine Brent told just how matters stood between Robert Marshall and her daughter, but, rather, just how matters did not stand.

Sarah Baldwin was not an inventive person, but she managed, in the week before Marshall's arrival, by various hints and half admissions, to convey the desired impression to Katharine Brent's mind.

When Marshall came, it chanced that they were all on the lawn together. Sarah gave him both hands, and earnestly wished that his kindly greeting had been a little more lover-like. She wished it mainly for the sake of Katharine, who was looking on.

Then she looked up, and saw that those quiet gray eyes of his had gone past her and were gazing at Katharine Brent, exactly as though Katharine were the one whom he had come two thousand miles to see.

It is strange how perverse the human heart is. Mrs. Baldwin and Sarah would both have told you that the latter was just the wife for Robert Marshall, and indeed, some of the neighbors might have agreed with them. Sarah was not at all a bad-looking girl, and she had a little money of her own; while Katharine Brent was an orphan, halting here at the Baldwin home for a few weeks after completing her college course before engaging in the profession for which it had fitted her.

And yet Robert Marshall had no more doubt, when he looked at Katharine Brent, that he had found his wife than he had of her beauty and sweetness.

The two weeks that followed his homecoming were tantalizing weeks. He could never see Katharine alone. If he asked her a question, it was ten chances to one that Mrs. Baldwin or Sarah answered it for her. She seemed to be hedged about in all directions by a mysterious barrier.

It wasn't because he was a man and a possible lover, he could see that; for the young rector of St. Jude's, who was a great friend of the family, could see her and talk to her and walk with her at any time. It occurred to Marshall more than once that the rector's attentions to Katharine were distinctly welcomed and encouraged, while he could not show her what he thought ordinary civilities. As the time for his departure approached, Marshall's impatience mounted. They were all sitting in the parlor one evening. The rector had been reading Kipling's "Recessional." Katharine was asked to sing, which she did very sweetly, riveting poor Marshall's chains with every note.

"Did you ever hear any of the Mexican music?" Marshall asked her, in a low tone. "It would suit your voice."

"Why would it?" she asked, smilingly.

"It requires a very flexible voice," he answered. "It has so many accidentals and odd little broken half-tones, which very few singers but the Mexicans themselves are able to give. I would love to hear you sing '*La Golondrina*'—that's 'The Swallow,' you know—let me show you how it goes."

Bob sat down on the music bench beside her. "No," he laughed, as she would have risen, "I can't play much. You stay here and I'll point out the keys for you."

He had begun on the first bars of the exquisite melody. He turned an ardent, smiling glance across his shoulder to Katharine, as she sat beside him.

"See, that's how it goes. It is the Mexican 'Home, Sweet Home,' that is, I mean that they love it as we love 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

Katharine said something in reply, but it was lost in Sarah Baldwin's voice.

"What is that perfectly lovely thing you are playing, Cousin Robert? Why haven't we had you play for us before? I had forgotten how charmingly you do play. Is it a duet?"

Katharine was on her feet.

"Mr. Marshall was trying to show me some Mexican music," she said, coolly; then with a look at him that was anything but kindly, "Thank you, I don't believe I could ever learn it," and she walked over to where the rector and Mrs. Baldwin were discussing the best kind of plants for an herbaceous border. Her cheeks were flushed, and she displayed unnecessary vigor in expressing her opinion as to the plants.

How was poor Bob to know that she felt as though Sarah Baldwin suspected her of an unmaidenly attempt to get up a flirtation with another girl's promised husband?

He tried vainly all the evening to regain the ground he had mysteriously lost. "Mayn't I write out that song for you?" he begged in a half-whisper aside. "Won't you try it?"

"Oh, thank you," she answered, in a rather raised tone, "Sarah plays so beautifully; if you'll just give her the air she can make a delightful piece of it."

The next day Bob tried putting a little note into Katharine's hand as he picked up her handkerchief for her.

"Is this something of yours?" she inquired, disengaging it from the folds of linen and holding it toward him.

They were under the battery of two pairs of eager and curious eyes, and Marshall assented, rather grimly, that it was his, but nothing of any account, as he took it. Something in Katharine's face, some look of relenting, perhaps, made him determine, as he tucked his poor rejected note into his pocket, that he would make an end of this thing tomorrow. He was going the day after. Tomorrow he would talk to her. It was absurd to think that he dared not come to the house, as any other young man might, and ask for her, without asking for his cousins.

That evening because fortune favors the brave, and making up your mind strongly to a thing is apt to bring that (or something else) about, Sarah was called from the room to attend the visit of a dressmaker, and her mother, a few minutes later, went out to look after some household matter. Each thought the other would be back almost immediately, and for one long, delicious hour, Bob sat and talked to Katharine.

He wasted no time in preliminaries. He sat down before her and asked her questions—as one having authority. Was she fond of horses? Ah, so was he. Did she like an outdoor life? He also delighted in it. That's what had taken him to Texas ten years before. Then he described the ranch to her with such earnestness that she finally interrupted him, laughing:

"See here, Mr. Marshall, are you a ranchman or a real estate agent? Do you want to sell me that ranch?"

"No," said Bob, boldly, and his eyes were not lazy as he looked at her, "I want to give it to you."

Just then Sarah and Mrs. Baldwin came in hurriedly; but not before Marshall had heard, at some length, the story of Katharine's hopes, plans and prospects. He had found that his first impression of her was, as it always is, the right one; and he knew, not because she had told him or shown it in any unmaidenly fashion, that the first strong attraction had been mutual; so when he went to the

Baldwins' that last day, he had it all beautifully planned.

He would ring the bell and ask for Miss Katharine Brent. He didn't want Sarah nor her mother. He would see them later, when he and Katharine had settled their affairs.

Now observe how ill he plans who plans only for victory.

When Marshall opened the gate at the Baldwins' they were all on the lawn, and the rector was with them. It was a very warm day for early May, and the chairs and a table, with books, some work and a tea-tray on it, had been moved out there.

Poor Katharine's cheeks were scarlet as she greeted him. A long night of wakeful misery over the things she had said and the things she had listened to from Sarah Baldwin's affianced had left her with a feeling of spent and weary melancholy that was almost despair.

How dared he talk so to her! And yet, always, there was the conviction that it was she, and not Sarah, whom he loved; and the belief that it was she and not Sarah, who could make his life's happiness.

Marshall sat down and took the cup of tea his cousin offered him, very quietly. He didn't drink tea, but it gave him an opportunity for reflecting and planning. He stirred it so long and so solemnly, as he went over every possible course of action, that his cousin Sarah finally cried in despair, "Robert, I know you like things sweet; but really, that's the seventh lump of sugar, and I don't think—"

There was a general laugh. "I do like sweet things," returned Marshall gravely. "Miss Katharine, will you walk down to the beach with me? I want to say good-bye."

There was a sort of horrified hush. "Why, you're not going right now," returned Katharine, in a very low tone.

"Oh, no," replied Marshall, "not till to-morrow morning, but I have a lot of things to tell you, and—"

"How we shall all miss you," broke in Mrs. Baldwin's calm tones. "I really think Sarah and I will have to pay you that long-promised visit some time next year."

"The long-promised visit" was almost, if not quite, an inspiration of the moment. There may have been some talk of the sort, but Marshall had forgotten it. Its mention, however, served the purpose well. The rector was reminded of a visit he had promised to pay, and which he was going to compass within the next two years. He described this at some length. Sarah added details of an outing of her own the spring before. Katharine had been one of the party at that time. Sarah strove vainly to draw her into the conversation about it.

The culprit, I may say both culprits, sat silent, while the three "good people" talked vivaciously, not to say industriously.

But the silence of the two differed. Katharine's was the muteness of utter misery. Marshall was quiet because he was planning more and greater atrocities.

Suddenly Katharine rose, with a little inarticulate murmur. "I'll get those roses," she said to Mrs. Baldwin, "and dress our tea table, as you asked me to."

She went to where the big, old-fashioned Prairie Queen clambered all over the porch, and began cutting clusters of pink blossoms. Standing in the sunlight, with her arms upraised, she looked so lovely that Sarah Baldwin regretted that Marshall was there to see. She glanced toward him. He was looking at Katharine.

Sarah started over with the intention of seating herself beside her cousin and having a last good long talk.

Now, I think it is a pity that individuals are not provided with gauges, such as one may see upon steam boilers, to register the pressure of the steam within. If there had been such a guage as that anywhere about Robert Marshall, so that his cousin, Sarah Baldwin, could have known just how near the point marked "dangerous" things were coming, she would never have done as she did, nor spoken as she did, appropriating him, placing herself just where she cut off his view of Katharine—for, mark the result! This action of hers made the pressure just one ounce too much.

Katharine drew back her hand with a

little exclamation of pain. Marshall arose and went swiftly over to where she stood. "Did you hurt yourself?" he said. "Is the thorn in there?"

"Never mind," returned Katharine hastily. "It is all right. Oh, yes, I think the thorn is in still," as he took her small, tremulous hand in his two strong brown ones, and began looking for it, "there in the wrist."

"Don't flinch so, child. I won't hurt you. There now. Steady! Out she comes!"

He held her hand after the thorn was out, and looked at it whimsically. It appeared very small, and white, and helpless. He waited until he was aware that all three of the others were regarding them intently and curiously. Then he said, exactly as though they were alone:

"When I was a child and hurt myself, my mother used always to kiss the place and make it well." He raised the little white wrist quite deliberately to his lips and kissed it; then he dropped an arm lightly around Katharine's waist.

"My good friends," he said calmly, turning to the other three, "this young lady and I expect to be married before I go back next week. Naturally we have a good deal to arrange. I'm afraid she has been too shy to tell you about it, but now we're going to walk down on the beach and talk it over."

When they came back an hour later, two very happy people, with "the light that never was on land nor sea" shining serenely from their faces, the rector had gone.

Mrs. Baldwin and Sarah sat disconsolate. "Well," said the latter, "of all crazy things! How long has this engagement been a fact, may I ask?"

Katharine hung her head, laughing and blushing; but Sarah's angry eye caught the gleam of a big diamond on her finger.

"Why did you never show me that before?" she cried, pouncing on it. "Aren't you going to tell me how long you two have been engaged?"

"I just brought the ring this afternoon," answered Marshall, speaking for both; "but the engagement,—why, bless your soul, Sally dear, I left one of the cowboys exercising Kate's horse when I rode over to take the train at Antelope."

There was a general chorus of surprise, and Marshall heard Kate's voice in it.

"Oh, I did. You needn't think the horse isn't there. It's a good one, and it's a white one, and its name is Texas."

THE poet laureate of C. Troop was ranked as high as the poet laureate of England until "Foureyes," late of *The Lampoon,* pointed out a shortage in metrical feet. The rookie from Harvard did not stop at lampooning the poetry, he had to lampoon the poet as well, thereby starting something he couldn't finish.

You will find this story in THE BLACK CAT for June. See GOD'S HALF ACRE by G. B. Buchanan.

IN LIEU OF LEAP YEAR

BY MILO HASTINGS

A steed from the stable of Cupid that will not stand without hitching may accomplish more lasting though perhaps less visible destruction than an unromantic undertaker's horse from an unromantic livery stable dashing homeward to an unromantic supper of oats and hay.

FICTION is based on life.

That is the unconscious, obvious, profitable, inevitable shop-rule of a few score of literal and literary grubbers who say their prayers on Manhattan Island when the crimson light in the belfry of the Metropolitan tower winks ten P. M. But the masses it concerns not; where the spindles spin, and the reapers reap, and the sheep baa, the rule is—unconsciously perhaps—reversed, and—

Life is based on fiction.

Phidias T. Quisenberry was a unit in the masses. Phidias T. lived with his mother, dealt in real estate, and was a serious, retiring, exemplary, bashful, well-read young man.

For twelve or fifteen years, Phidias had been secretly contemplating marriage, but he didn't know how to go about it. The town where he resided and thrived had a population of about three thousand souls. All these human beings Phidias could recognize by their walk and call by both Christian and heathen names. How could a man fall in love with a woman with whom he had played cross-tag or held on his knee while her mother punched up the pillow in the baby carriage. It was unnatural, non-fictional and impossible.

Phidias read the magazines faithfully and memorized all the ways in which heroes meet their affinities. One dark night he tripped over a lady's purse. The purse contained a card. He took it to a lamp post and read the name of his cousin Betty. He began buying the eggs for his mother. The third year he found a name and address written on one of the thin calcareous shells. It was the name of a girl who had been in his Sunday-school class since 1897.

After Phidias had shifted the deeds of all the transferable real estate in his home town, and some of it four or five times, he began to dream of larger worlds to buy and sell and conquer. Over in the next county was the growing city of Rugglesville with a coal mine, a butter-tub factory, a street-car track, two daily papers and a population of twenty-five thousand. Phidias journeyed thither and rented an office and bought a cottage.

The former owner of the cottage agreed to vacate October first, and Mrs. Quisenberry and her son moved in on October second.

Phidias knew a score of men and one married woman in the city. But there were several thousand women on whom the dim light of strangership shed halos of romantic uncertainty. Still, he was a business man with character to lose and a reputation to gain—and married women's kerchiefs will fall by the wayside as well as those of the "single blessings." Churches seemed a safer prospect, and Phidias decided to look over the choirs in turn, which would take till Christmas. Impatience ne'er won a bride without the help of Fate, and Fate—how did one enlist Fate in one's behalf?

Better to refresh his memory on the working plans of this unseen mistress of Destiny, Phidias sat one evening on the steps of his cottage reading his favorite weekly magazine, while his mother was in the dining-room unpacking a ninety-six piece set of china and placing it on shelves covered with fresh newspapers.

The hero of Phidias' story was an aviator whose petrol tank had exploded above a cloud. The brave pilot was falling by inches and adjectives through the nasty wet cloud right into the castle yard where his unseen, unknown, imprisoned, bride-to-be was taking Delsartian exercises, with the ramrod of a Waterlooan musket.

"Meurow."

Phidias dropped the helpless aviator on the stone step, and saw upon the walk before him a maltese cat. "Behold," said Phidias, "I address me to one of the steeds on which Dan Cupid oft doth ride."

"Milk, please, or chicken with gravy," said the cat in readily translatable feline vernacular.

"But where," asked Phidias, "is the sleigh-bell on your neck with the Rajah's favorite pearl for a bell-clapper—or the lady's card?"

The cat merely repeated his order.

"Draw one," shouted the willing waiter, as he rushed into the hall, "and a squab in a castle role." Then he went into the kitchen to hurry the order.

Returning to the board walk, Phidias served his guest with the best the house could offer.

Mrs. Quisenberry hastily removed her kitchen apron and came out to be presented to the visitor. "It is a distinguished looking cat," she commented admiringly.

Phidias was rubbing the fur the wrong way but found neither fleas nor brands; the cat's ears were unfrozen and unpunched; his whiskers unsinged and his eyes undimmed.

"Son," remarked Mrs. Quisenberry, "the cat has six toes."

"By crickets!" exclaimed Phidias; "so he has. I knew he was a cat with a message or a deformity—or something."

"He doesn't belong to either of our neighbors," said the mother, "for both of them have called and reported nothing but dogs and children."

That night Phidias locked the portentous visitor in the woodshed, and thereafter nourished him and watched over him with solicitous care.

Phidias had attended four churches; he had been elected on the Boost Committee, and had sold a plot of ground to a new factory crowd who were going to make vegetable ivory out of the casein of skimmilk. Business prospects and speaking lists alike were growing; the mists of romance were disappearing before the sunshine of acquaintance—and the six-toed cat still slept in the woodshed.

Phidias sat in the dining room waiting for supper. He was penciling remnants of geometry on the margin of a newspaper. Suddenly he became agitated. "Mother," he called, "from whence came this paper?"

Mrs. Quisenberry looked up from the stove. "It must be one I took off the shelves when I put the new oilcloth on."

"Listen to this—

Lost, strayed or stolen—a maltese cat with six toes on each of its front feet. Finder will please return to Miss Estelle Burlingame, 220 Fowler Street, and receive suitable reward."

"I recall," said Mrs. Quisenberry, "I was unpacking the china that night when you found the cat. It is too bad; I am afraid he has become used to our place by now; cats, you know, become attached to places, not people. But come, son, supper is ready."

Phidias crumbed his bread in the soup, thinned the pudding with milk and washed down the cake with tea. "I must take the cat right home," he said; "she must have missed him, he is such an intelligent cat."

The mother rose from her half-eaten supper and fetched a covered basket. "Better put him in this," she said; "he might get away from you on the street."

Basket on arm, Phidias punched the bell at 220 Fowler Street. The young lady who opened the door was not so very young—but still she wasn't old.

"Good evening," said Phidias, "you are Miss Burlingame, I believe."

"Yes, and you are Mr. Quisenberry; you were at our church Sunday. Won't you come in?"

Phidias followed Miss Burlingame into a parlor containing a piano, a "Reading from Homer," the Three Fates done in plaster relief, and Ingall's "Opportunity" burnt on sheepskin. He set his basket down beside his chair.

"How do you like our city?" asked Miss Estelle.

"About as usual," said Phidias, fidgeting. "You live in Rugglesville, I presume?"

Estelle smiled indulgently. "One might call it that. I teach the B Grammar in the First Ward school."

Phidias glanced uneasily at his basket; he was playing for time, and feared the cat would call his hand.

"Have you been marketing?" asked his calm-mannered hostess.

"No, not exactly—I—eh—I was just going— Phidias was plainly flustered. "It looks like snow, doesn't it?" he asked abruptly, then he remembered that it was only November third and very clear and warm, and a mortified red suffused his homely features.

"Perhaps it does—that is, I hope it will next month; I like a white Christmas."

The basket tumbled over on its side. Phidias glanced at it in dismay; but the contents readjusted itself to the changed environment and began to purr.

"That reminds me," said Phidias, "that I called to—did you ever lose a cat?"

"Why, yes, I did once; it was some time ago; I fear the dogs killed it."

"I have a cat in the basket," said Phidias.

"So it seems," said Estelle. "What are you going to do with it?"

"I am going to give it to you."

"Do you think it is mine?"

"I know it is."

Estelle wondered why he didn't let the cat out, then a flash of inspiration crossed her mind and she said: "Perhaps we oughtn't to let it out in here; he might be angry and—scratch the piano. Shall I take him out to the kitchen?"

"I expect you had better," said Phidias.

Miss Burlingame returned with the empty basket. "I put him to sleep under the stove," she said.

Phidias rose to take the basket. "What is your cat's name?" he asked, with sudden brilliancy.

"Nebby; it's short for Nebuchadnezzar."

"I hope Nebby is glad to get home," said Phidias, as he reached for his hat.

"I hope so, too."

"Good-night."

"Good-night. I am glad you called."

Catless, churchless, magazineless, Phidias perambulated through a joyless week. Friday night at supper his mother said: "Son, you will have to take Miss Burlingame's cat home again; he came back today."

"Ah-ah!" said Phidias, as he walked down the street with his six-toed ally upon his arm. "So we forgot something, didn't we? Thought we had to do it at one session like a common purse finder or a drowning girl saver. But now we can take our time, eh? That's why the cat came back; how about it old sport?"

And Nebby snuggled his nose into the black sateen lining of Phidias' best coat and seemed very well pleased with his work.

The next Friday night it was Phidias who spoke at supper: "Mother, did Nebby come back today?"

Mrs. Quisenberry shook her head sadly.

But after supper Phidias got his hat and coat, and laughingly told his mother that he guessed he could get along now without Nebby's assistance.

At about eleven that night, when Phidias returned home, he found Nebby sitting on his front porch.

This time, Phidias called up on the 'phone to ask Miss Burlingame when he should return the perfidious Nebuchadnezzar.

"Come over Tuesday evening," said Estelle, "but never mind about Nebby; let him stay—that is, if your mother likes him; you see, it is pretty lonesome for him here, as my sister and I are away all day."

The steeds that bear Dan Cupid are not beasts of burden to be put on regular runs like mail-carriers and mine-mules. Nebby had done his work and would have been allowed to sit under the stove all day unmolested if Phidias' mother had not lain sick of a fever and passed to her reward. But death and love are mixed in life, and life is mixed in fiction, and fiction is made from life, and round and round it goes, and it caught poor Nebby on a prong of circumstance and dragged him forth again into the spotlight of human utility.

It was the night after Christmas, and in the Burlingame house Phidias T. Quisenberry was wishing that Nebby would walk in and help him start something; or that one of the plaster Fates would step down and—but there was Ingalls' "Opportunity" thundering at him from the burnt leather: "Once at every gate....before I turn away...." And Phidias, knowing that his hour had come, screwed his courage to the speaking point:

"Estelle, don't you suppose it is pretty lonesome for Nebby there alone all day since mother left?"

"Why, I hadn't thought of that. You may bring him back here, you know."

"I hadn't thought of *that*," said Phidias miserably.

The Fate with the water jug winked a plaster-of-paris eye at her neighbor on the right.

"But he wouldn't stay," said Phidias, when the next wave of courage struck him; "had you thought of that?"

Time was fleeting, the Fates were fretting, and the burnt leather Ingalls was droning—"Reach every state mortals desire—but they who doubt or hesitate—" And Estelle replied:

"It may be rather lonesome here, too. You know my sister is to be married New Year's day."

And Phidias said—

But why hurry the man, he had all evening and we have only half a column. Suffice us to know that the B Grammar had romance too—a new teacher in the middle of the term. And that would be all there is to tell if it wasn't for Nebby's growing fondness for the spotlight, and that pestiferous and peripatetic nuisance known as a red-headed boy.

It was Sunday afternoon, and Phidias T. was sitting on the front steps reading the inevitable magazine. Nebby was at his side watching approvingly some newly married and inexperienced sparrows who were starting a nest out on a wobbly limb where the June storms would spill out the young birds for Nebby's edification. Mrs. Phidias T. had gone to a ladies' missionary meeting and would not be back for two hours. And so, with the stage all set, the redheaded trouble-maker arrived. Scraping the tacks in his heels on the cement sidewalk, he came and hung over the front gate.

"Say Mister, that's our cat," he piped.

"I guess not," said Phidias, arising to defend the symbol and representative of his hearthstone.

"Oh, yes it is,' said the boy, coming up the walk. "When we moved from this house last fall, we took him along to Rock Center, but he wouldn't stay. I ain't never been back here till now, or I would have called for him sooner."

"I think I can prove that you are mistaken," replied Phidias, picking up Nebby. "This is a very unusual cat; he has six toes on each of his front feet."

"Sure," said the lad with the rouged hair.

"Well," snapped Phidias, "there couldn't be another cat like that, could there?"

"Sure; there was two like that in the litter; I gave the other one to the teacher, but this'n is ours—hers had a white hind foot."

Phidias dropped Nebby and thrust his hand into his pocket. "Here's a dollar for your cat."

The boy stowed away the dollar and turned to leave. Phidias called him back. "Here's five more dollars," he said; "the first is for the cat and the five is to pay you to promise never to speak to a living soul about cats again; you are to forget that you ever had a cat; all the cats you had had five toes—understand?"

"Now, ain't he the easy guy," grinned the boy, as he turned up the street; "six dollars for a cat and Bull would have eaten him hair and all if I'd taken him home."

GENTLEMEN OF GENEROSITY

BY HARRISON SEVILLE

From a business standpoint, generosity ceases to be an asset when it begins to reduce one's other assets. If you are suffering from an excess of liberality due to a lapse from virtue or other natural causes, don't forget to enter "generosity" in the schedule of liabilities when you file your petition in bankruptcy.

JIMMIE Heath paused with his glass half raised to his lips to study the man at the next table to him. Jimmie had just arrived at Fonseca and as he sat there under the gay striped awnings of the Plaza, sipping his wine and watching the busy sunlit street beyond, he never felt more lonely.

"Surely not Charlie Cummings way down here in this forsaken spot," he murmured.

The man at the next table turned a flushed face toward him.

"Why Jimmie Heath!" A glint of recognition shown in the man's blood-shot eyes. "Where did you fall from?"

"Came down to report on some mining land. Sent down by the Consolidated." Jimmie smiled proudly as he reached for the big man's hand.

Charlie Cummings was a big man physically, but it was the kind of bigness that reminds one of an overgrown bear cub. There was nothing of the æsthetic in his entire six foot two; his shoulders were broad but not powerful, his feet were large but not well formed, and there was not a single strong feature on his whole face.

As he comprehended Jimmie's words, his face blanched and he reached for his half-filled glass.

"God!" he groaned. "I was expecting to get that. They knew I was down here. I just had a letter from them."

There was a painful silence. Jimmie worked his glass nervously back and forth over the marble top of the table. He was not proud that he had to thank his uncle, the new president of the Consolidated, for his selection.

"I'm sorry, Charlie," he finally apologized. "You know those big corporations have no soul; one's job depends merely on the caprice of the board of directors. If you are really looking for something to tide you over, though, come along with me. It will give you enough to get back to the states, and your knowledge of the country will help me to finish in jig time. And believe me, I have to hurry. Only have two weeks before the company's option runs out. You see the darned boat was a week late and it's got me all balled up. What d'you say?"

"Yes, I know the country," muttered Cummings. "And if you are going very far into the mountains, you'll never make it in two weeks without a blamed good guide."

Jimmie seemed to take this statement for assent. He pulled a blue-print from his inside pocket and smoothed it out on the table. Cummings drew his chair up with a great show of indifference. Jimmie called for more liquor.

"I don't mind telling you all about it, Charlie; it's really no secret among the trade. The Consolidated picked up this option on what seems to be some mighty fine iron ore, red hematite. They say there's thousands of tons of the stuff laying exposed and Heaven knows how much more in the mountains. If it's as near the coast as this plan shows it, it should be an easy matter to build a railroad to it. All I want to do now is to ride up there, see if the stuff's what they say it is, and see if a railroad's possible. If I can cable an 'O. K.,' I'm a made man. I'll be the Chief Engineer."

Cummings bent closer to the blue-print.

To think that all this might have been for him; that with his training and experience he could do this much better than Heath. To think that even now it was only through him, Charlie Cummings, that the thing was possible. And Jimmie was going to use him for a stepping-stone! Cummings smiled. The mountain road was narrow, the footing was treacherous; if Jimmie's burro should slip, well, there would still be mines and railroads and wharves, but there would be another engineer.

Cummings began to show interest in the project. Guided by the contour lines on the blue-print, he slowly traced his railroad. The possibilities of the trip appealed to him; and Jimmie was only too pleased that he should be interested, for it had been the consensus of opinion back home that Cummings would be a great engineer if he could let the booze alone.

The two men talked and planned until the gloomy shadows of the mountains crept over Fonseca, and the ships at anchor in the harbor below them began to twinkle with their red, green and yellow lights. Then they fondly bade each other good-night, just as they had so often done years before, on a certain college campus after football practice.

"Now don't get drunk over it, Charlie," cautioned Jimmie, as they left the Plaza. "Remember, I'll be looking for you early."

That evening, when Charlie Cummings was getting the last good sleep he knew he would get for two weeks, Jimmie Heath was enjoying the thrills of the Plaza by moonlight.

Most of the village lay below him, and the effect of the moonbeams on the ghostly white houses and the dark palms; the great black harbor beyond them with its twinkling lights and its wide stretch of moonlit ripples, all added much to his lonesomeness. He wished the company had played fair with Charlie; he wished he had never seen Fonseca; he wished Cummings had stayed up. And between each wish he called for more liquor; and there were more wishes and more liquor, until even the attentive waiter was in danger of losing count.

The next morning Cummings, refreshed from his long sleep, and as near to a cold bath as Fonseca permitted, started the day whistling. Looking very much like a big boy on a play donkey, and dragging two other of the diminutive animals behind him, he climbed the narrow street to Heath's hotel.

Jimmie Heath, with his panama set at an unruly angle and his white linen suit unduly wrinkled, came wavering uncertainly down the broad steps to meet him. A great idea was brewing in his drink-befuddled brain.

"Charlie," he hiccoughed, winking familiarly at the first little donkey, "I been drinking it over,—I—I mean thinking it over, yes, that's jus' what I mean,—thinking it over, and I think the company had no right to double-cross you. Therefore, of—what was it old Prexy used to say, oh, yes,—of my own free will and volition and without coercion, I turn it over to you. Here's papers, letter from me to company, telling them they're crooked. You go ahead, see the land and cable them your answer. I refuse absl—absl—I refuse abslutely to work for such a company." Jimmie smiled a broad grin of drunken generosity.

Cummings leaned his big frame heavily against the lead burro as he stroked his chin in indetermination. Why not? Liquor had taken several of his best chances away from him; why should it not give back one at least?

If Cummings had been allowed to lay awake on the chilly nights of the mountain trip to plan this chance, he would have been more ready to accept it. But to have this forced upon him without notice, called forth a certain latent honesty of his innermost self. He hesitated. It was but a moment of indecision, a day-dream that took him down the narrow street, across the blue harbor, past the dark green islands at its entrance, back to God's country, back to the land where these two in by-gone years had worked and played through their intimate college life. He decided against opportunity and turned slowly to his friend.

The moment of indecision had accomplished for Cummings what honor could not. Jimmie Heath was gone, and no amount of searching could find him. Cummings fumed and swore at the delay. The chance of success for one man was gradually becoming the chance of success for no man. Every minute would be needed to make the trip; Cummings, having time to argue with his honesty, decided that if he made the trip alone, he would share the glory with no drunkard.

After dinner, the big man unhitched his burros, and soon a white cloud of dust was moving slowly along between the two even lines of palm trees that marked the President's Highway, the highway that ran with great pomp and magnificence through suburbs, wandered aimlessly through the swamps, where the malarial fever hung like a dense bank of fog in the early twilight, and finally staggered a poor broken-backed ox-trail up the gloomy mountain side.

Jimmie's debauch lasted for two days, and when the poor boy regained his sobriety and realized what he had done, he straightway started on another, which rounded out the two weeks of Cummings's trip.

Cummings's expedition was a success from the very beginning. He mentally laid out his railroad as he went; the red hematite he found without difficulty; he made estimates, drew pictures, wrote reports, squinted continually through his Loche level, and turned back satisfied.

But two weeks in the saddle, sleep disturbed by wild dreams of busy mines, prosperous railroads and great ore docks, and a return trip through the fever belt with the haunting fear that each breath of fever-laden air might bring a lingering death to his run-down system, all this played havoc with Cummings.

Upon his arrival in Fonseca, the first thing he did was to stop his mud-bespattered, dust-covered outfit in front of the Plaza and proceed to begin where Heath had left off. Glass followed glass, until the saddle-sore, mind-wearied traveler became the gentleman of generosity that he always was in his cups.

The three burros were then headed for Heath's hotel, the swaying Cummings enjoying all the thrills of a returning Columbus. Heath stood on the same broad steps where Cummings had last seen him two weeks ago;—he was sober.

"Jimmie," hiccoughed the returning hero, as he slipped one foot over the little donkey's head and leaned forward like a football "sub" sitting on the side-line bench; "Jimmie, never let it be said that a Cummings played a fren' dirt'. Everythin's up there just as they say it is; here's plans, pictures and the papers you gave me. You can't argue with me, I refuse posit—positiz— I refuse positizively to keep 'em."

Jimmie's heart beat wildly as he held the papers. Why should he not take them; shouldn't whiskey give back what whiskey had stolen?

Yet Jimmie sober had as great a sense of honor as Cummings drunk. Here was Cummings, Jimmie figured, taking his trip through the fever belt, enduring the mountain hardships, merely to help him, Jimmie, and what was he doing now but planning to take advantage of his drunken generosity! Didn't Cummings deserve at least a share of the glory; shouldn't he be allowed to build the mighty enterprise that he had made possible?

In the end this reasoning prevailed. Honor won; but while it was still throttling temptation, Cummings took time by the forelock and departed. He clattered down the narrow street toward the wharves and cheap taverns, swaying perilously on one burro and driving the other two before him like sheep. When Jimmy, hesitating no longer, opened his mouth to call him back, Cummings was beyond hearing. Presently he and his burros disappeared around a corner at the foot of the hill.

"Oh, dammit," said Jimmy Heath, "if I was only drunk now, I'd go after him and offer him a job. But that would be risky wouldn't it? I guess I'd better stay off the stuff for good."

Then he went around to the cable office to send his report to the Consolidated. He could settle with Cummings another day.

SUNK BY A FLOATING MINE

BY CHARLES LEROY EDSON

A jump from a fifteen dollar job at the cigar stand in the Union Depot, Kansas City, to a mine superintendent's job at Half Moon Mountain, Arkansas, is a flying start toward prosperity; but from there on, the trail has a tendency to wander and is fully as rocky as any other route.

I'LL tell you why I quit my job at the cigar counter; there's no secret about it. I quit my fifteen-a-week to take up the million-a-minute line. Get-rich-quick was the slogan; that's why I resigned on one day's notice. It has to be done fast. Getting-rich-quick by slow degrees is as great an absurdity as for a burglar to jump across the air shaft in two jumps. You've got to make it on the first jump or you drop out of the picture.

All my fellow clerks in the depot were turning plutocrats through various freaks of the war. Large fortunes were being much worn that summer even by the lower classes. Jake Pell, the peanut butcher on the Colorado Flyer, came in from his run one day, turned in his stock of chewing gum, unsold best sellers, and resigned. He had just cashed in the old homestead down near Joplin, Mo., for a cool two hundred thousand. It had been valued at seven hundred before the war, but when zinc ore rose from fourteen dollars to one hundred and ten a ton due to the boom in munitions, the old farm became valuable. The next day Alex Bergoff quit his twelve-dollar-a-week job in the news-stand and announced that he had decided to end it all by going back to New York and getting rich, too. Yes, casually, just like that. Yawned and said he guessed he'd go out and get rich, as a fellow would say he guessed he'd go out and get a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. Next I heard from him he had an office at 120 Broadway and a checking account of eighty-seven thousand dollars in the Chase National Bank. He had used his knowledge of Russian methods to become a broker in war munitions. He was getting ten per cent on all orders placed by the Russians for American-made shrapnel, and was also exporting dollar safety razors by parcel post to Russia where he got five dollars apiece for them, thereby making a profit of two dollars a head on every soldier in the Czar's army. You see, when the French commanders forbade the Poilu to grow beards, the Russians, who get all their styles from France, decided to harvest their whiskers, too. There are more soldiers in Russia than there are doorkeepers at a Democratic national convention, you know, so you can get an idea of how big a field Alex had found to make hay in, and you can come to a realization of why, six months later, with the aid of Jake Pell, friend Alex was able to buy outright the Kansas City, Ozark and Southern railroad. Not that it's the longest railroad in the world at that.

Of course it didn't nettle me any to see a poor news butch like Jake and a poorer depot news-stand clerk like Alex, turn coal-oil Johnnies in six months, and buy one of the railroads running out of this very depot. It amazed me, I'll admit. Talk about your Arabian Nights. Why, Aladdin's wonderful lamp looks like a cheap cigar lighter in comparison. These boys were my best chums, too, Jake and Alex, and now they are rich plutocrats. Of course they didn't turn snobs; those boys didn't look down on me a bit because I was still passing the Havanas over the counter for fifteen dollars a week. But I was too darn good a democrat to embarrass a couple of regular guys by staying poor when big fortunes was the correct style for working-class people. I'm strong for equality. So I told the bunch: "Boys, I'll go out and get rich, too. We've been pals in poverty and hard times, and I'll not desert you now that you've joined the predatory rich. To show you my heart's right, I'm going out and cop a barrel of mazuma, too, and we'll still be comrades in the higher financial circles."

That afternoon my opportunity came. It approached in the guise of an Ozark Hill Billy. He bashfully edged up to the cigar-stand and said he was famishing for a "bait of tobacker" and didn't have a cent. He had the inevitable black slouch hat, hollow cheeks and billy-goat whiskers of the Arkansas hill gentry. He had come to Kansas City to buy mining tools to develop the mineral prospects of his own farm, and on the train he had met some congenial strangers. He had matched pennies with them, and when they landed at the Union station, the confidence men had his three hundred and sixty dollars and he had the experience plus an appetite and an empty purse. I made him a present of a ten-cent plug of Mule Ear and told him to go into the lunch-room and order a big job of interior decoration with the classic egg-and-ham motif predominating. I stood by to endorse his check at the cashier's counter. He fell to the grub in a way that reminded me of the question: "What three foods does the human system require?" and the school-boy's answer: "Breakfast, dinner and supper." Uncle Casper ate the food he was needing, and it was three meals telescoped together with one epitaph to cover 'em all at the cash register. So that was the beginning of our financial partnership, and that afternoon I resigned as a cigar salesman and became a mine superintendent.

The next day Uncle Caspar Paugh and I were rattling up into the Arkansas mountains on the Kansas City, Ozark and Southern. It runs over the Pittsburg and Gulf rails to Monett, Mo., and then takes to the logging trails. The railroad is so jolty that passengers are advised to upholster their teeth with either tobacco or chewing gum, otherwise the management will not be responsible for dentistry destroyed in transit. This was the railroad that an English syndicate had thrown on the market because their capital was needed for munitions, and my depot pals, Jack and Alex, had bought with their new-found wealth. Now I was riding over their railroad on a "slow train through Arkansas" to get rich fast. I had invested three hundred and fifty dollars in an undivided half interest in old man Paugh's farm, and he had bought drills, crow-bars, shovels and dynamite, and we were equipped to dig for anything. Or rather, *he* was equipped to do the digging —I had already dug up about all I had.

When we reached Half Moon Mountain I coughed the cinders of travel from my lungs and inhaled the mountain ozone. You can't beat that country for blue sky and beautiful scenery. It is a land where "every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." When we reached the Paugh clearing and gazed on the ancestral shack, my heart fell. What a habitation it was! If a fellow should dive off the Kansas City dump into the Missouri river he'd come up with a better house than that clinging around his neck. It looked like a two-bit dressing sack after its third trip to the laundry. Mrs. Paugh sat on the stoop with a snuff stick between her lips. She was contentedly basking in the spring sunshine, barefooted and speechless. No greetings were exchanged. But the old lady hoisted an eyelid and glanced slantwise at me with the expression of a mean pup that knows he isn't going to like the stranger. I knew right then that the barefooted lady wouldn't bark, but she'd bite.

The Paughs were well equipped with the Uncle Tom's Cabin stuff. Hounds, hounds, hounds everywhere. They had more hounds than ever chased Eliza across the ice. If that family had given a noon-day parade, they would have been more than an hour passing a given point, and if the given point had been a tree with a cat in it, they never would have got past it.

Paugh walked into the open door of the hut and I slouched in after him, trundling my grip and feeling ashamed of myself for wearing socks and carrying a change of linen. I was afraid they'd look on it as casting reflections on their humble and democratic mode of life.

I was hungry enough to eat stewed carrots, and I glanced about the room like a spy from the food dictator's office investigating the ham shortage in Westphalia. The table was spread, and I took an inventory of their Tiffany bric-a-brac at a wink. They had three cracked china cups, none of them mates. A bone-handled butcher knife, a paring knife, and a silver knife, was their spread of cutlery. The table was covered with oil-cloth, instead of linen, because oil-cloth doesn't waste the sorghum molasses, being non-absorbent. The Paughs must once have been up in the world, for they had an exquisite silver sugar bowl with vines and cupids in bas-relief, the design matching the one lone ornamental silver knife. Something about the lay-out indicated the presence of a girl. That gave a flicker of heart interest. I sized up the situation quick as an adding machine: they had seventeen dogs, a Mary Pickford daughter and baked 'possum and corn pone three times a day.

Paugh and I sat down to the table, and while the old woman was dishing up the dinner, along came Rose. She was a beauty; she was a cross between a woodland sunbeam and an Elberta peach blossom. After I had given her the "close up" I decided to stick till the end of the reel. She was the wild, woodsy, violet-like creature that a city man would fall for even if the fall included a high dive off the Woolworth tower with nothing to save him from a bump except seven imps of the imagination holding a life net woven of the cobwebs of fancy. At the very sight of her I turned poet and began thinking:

Blink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will blink with mine.

Her eyes played on me a moment like a ray of turquoise light, and I almost went over backward as if I had been hit on the chest by the full torrent of honeymoons that plunges endlessly over Niagara Falls. Her hair was the burnt umber of a sweet gum's autumn foliage and her eyes were April pools of blue-mirrored skies darkened with reeds around the margin. The swaying of her uncorseted young body and the flicker of life about her mobile mouth made me resolve to be in the picture till the last scene and be doing the big lip reading act in the fade out. I had come into the mountains to find silver and zinc, and here was fairy gold. These old people, storm-driven back into the rocky gulch of life, had brought their treasure with them. She was a full-lipped briar-rose, budding and blooming afar from the trampled way.

Well, the days went by, and our mining operations proceeded to the tune of coming prosperity, with hope as a dancing partner to happiness. The Paughs and I mixed fine, except perhaps the misses. She was of a queer turn of character and highly non-talkative. Either she disliked the cigarette habit I carried around, or else she didn't like the face I carried it in. I'm not a real cigarettist. I smoke only three or four a day and don't inhale them. Mrs. Paugh, with her snuff dipping, had the tobacco habit in a form ten times as noxious as I did. But you never can account for prejudices. I saw women down there who smoked cob pipes and were making fun of other women for chewing tobacco. In church, though, the tobacco-chewing ladies had the best of it, as smoking wasn't allowed. I took Rose to meeting one night and thought I'd wait for her on the outside, but the ladies spat such torrents out the window during services that in self-protection I had to come into the fold and be counted for the Lord.

This wild country with its odd ways fascinated me, and inwardly I resolved that it would take an earthquake to jar me loose from the romantic mountains and a cyclone to drive me back to any kind of city life after the first sip of the honey lips of my Rose of Arcadia. I worked at the mine all day, ate corn pone and "sogrum 'lasses" for supper and loved Rose by moonlight. Sure I had opposition; I'll admit it. No opposition, no conflict, and without conflict, no story. So I'm telling you; his name was Lum Posline, to rhyme with clothesline. He was a big stick. I guess his first name, Lum, stood for "lumber." That's the kind of a stick he was, not the big stick that means war. I tried to pick a fight out of him, hoping it would help me with Rose, but this Lum had an eye for peace as big as Henry Ford.

Rose had never cared for Lum Posline, but her mother was for him stronger than sauerkraut. And Rose didn't have any more chance of speaking her true sentiments than an Austrian sympathizer while being shaved by an Italian barber. The old lady cooked shortening break and chicken dumplings every time that Lum came to dinner, and dished up pear preserves and boiled cider, but she always put so much soda in my pone that it tasted like the soap course at an Eskimo banquet. And my coffee was so thin that it tasted like a splash in the face on a muddy road. I always expected her to cook up a conjurer's dose of black spiders and burnt lizard's tail and slip me these rustic knockout drops in my Java some night.

Meanwhile Paugh and I drilled away and dug, dug, dug, until we had uncovered the vein of ore in the hillside. Neither of us knew beans about minerals. We didn't know whether we were digging for gold, silver, copper, platinum or linoleum. If we had struck a pure vein of custard pie we might have rejected it because we thought we were digging for mince. When we got already to put in our first big blast, I suggested to my partner that we'd better pause and define our terms as gents do before they plunge into the matched debate. I thought we ought to agree as to what we were digging for before we touched off the dynamite, then after the smoke cleared away we could tell better whether we had got it or not. But Paugh thought we had better just go it blind, then we would be in better shape to accept whatever luck the gods bestowed. Everything was ready for the big blowup. I had spooned out a hole and put in the dynamite stick with a giraffe-neck attachment. The old man lighted the fuse and we beat it through the brush like a coon chase and hid behind the black oaks a quarter of a mile away until she detonated. Say, when that blast went off, it sounded as if one of those submarines, this means U-boats, had come up from a subterranean sea through a crawfish hole and had torpedoed half the United States off the map. It seemed to take hours for the smoke and dust to clear away from the mine. Pebbles, rocks, clay balls and pieces of oak leaves rained all over Half Moon Mountain. When we approached and looked at our hole, I thought sure I saw starlight on the other side and discerned the chief mogul of the Chinese Empire-Republic under a pepper tree with a geisha girl eating the midnight chop-suey. Half the western hemisphere seemed to be missing, and that hole actually looked as big as the cavity feels to your tongue after your first tooth is pulled. The debris from our little Fourth of July celebration was rock, ore, mud, slime and satisfaction.

We spent the rest of the afternoon pawing over the treasure trove we had jarred loose. We had not only sticks and stones but fossil bones from the buried past. There were the petrified vertebræ of the willopus-wallopus, the prehistoric flying lizard, and other miocene, pliocene and seldomcene animals. But best of all, we had about a truck load of gold ore. Stock in our mine advanced three kilometers above par on a front of three hundred yards. I wouldn't have sold my prospects right then for all the priceless rubies ever stolen from the eye of a Hindu god in the all-story magazines.

"What are you going to do with this ore?" I asked. "Shall we take it to the store and buy crackers and sardines, or shall we get Uncle Sam to stamp an eagle on it before we do any high flying?"

"Send it to an assayer," Paugh mumbled, picking up more of the shining lumps.

That night, when I told Rose about my good fortune, she didn't seem near as glad about it as she might have been expected to. I told her my future was assured, that I would build a log bungalow on Half Moon and she should be my little mocking bird. I asked her to name what she wanted most and I would buy it. She asked me for an ice-cream soda and a pair of dancing pumps, the two things that can't be had in the mountains. I said all I wanted was a kiss. I took it, but her counter attack was too darn weak to be worth mentioning in this communique.

There was a box supper and a literary entertainment at the schoolhouse that night. I went with Rose and blew my money like a day laborer buying soup at five cents a plate. What did I care about expense? I was the Diamond Jim Brady of the crowd. As a tired business man, who had just done a million dollar business since lunch, I was there for a rest, amusement and relaxation. Well, that big hick of a Lum was there, too. He was on the program for an oration. His subject was "Home." He had learned it out of a bush league book and he mispronounced half the words. His rube gestures, whining drawl, and general get-up was immense. I've seen rube acts in vaudeville, but nothing that could touch him. I told him that if he would go to the city and see Martin Beck, he could get booked over the big time for a hundred dollars a week just to recite that oration. I nearly laughed my head off.

But Rose seemed to be offended because I kidded him. From that day she cottoned to King Rube Lum and cooled toward me. I guess she wanted Lum to make good on the vaudeville suggestion and shame me for my smartness, for she did everything she could on the quiet to induce him to go to the city as I suggested. I helped all I could by telling where to go and whom to see to get the booking, but finally, of course, it fell through. Meanwhile, the old lady began trying to rush things to get Rose married to that bean-pole of a Lum before the assayer's returns came in to tell me I was elected to Millionaire Row. Of course, I didn't think my Rose was mercenary, but that hundred-dollar-a-week stuff that I had told her about Lum seemed to have caused some kind of a tide to set in in his direction. It puzzled me how any girl could think of marrying that red-necked crane in the same breath with me. I don't want to hand myself any bouquets on looks, but actually, that scarecrow Lum was seven feet high, and when he drank coffee out of a saucer his Adam's apple went up and down three stories like the freight elevator in the Flatiron building.

One day I saw old man Paugh coming up the trail from the postoffice at Oak Flat, as it wound like a thread of dirty sackcloth up the creek valley to the mountain top. He had the same beaten and busted expression he wore the time I met him at the cigar stand begging for a chew of tobacco. He carried an open letter in his hand, and when he offered it to me he seemed surprised in a sort of dopey manner because I didn't take it.

"I've read that letter often enough to know it by heart," I said.

And then I had to explain to the poor old codger that I had read it on his face. I laughed and patted him on the shoulder. I felt worse than he did, but we city guys always kid everything. The old man had merely lost an imaginary fortune, while I had lost a real treasure I could lay my hand on. That was the first thought that came to me,—Rose will never be mine. The gold ore came second; it was pyratese of silver, or some such thing, and the letter said that if it could be found in vast quantities close to rail transportation, it would be valuable. We had scratched clear down until we tickled the toes of the toy-footed women of China, and we couldn't gather up half a ton of the stuff. Old Paugh sat around like a Greenwich Village yogi with stomach-ache, who had gone into the silences. I was bluer than a cargo of cobalt and nothing in the world mattered any more. In a situation like that somebody ought to chuckle, just for the artistic combination of the stage picture, and somebody did. A peal of girlish laughter broke from the tobacco-stained lips of the old lady and rippled through the opera score like quicksilver traversing the thermometer on a sudden drop to zero. I could have choked her to death, but it wouldn't have done justice to my feelings, so what was the use?

But there was Rose! She must have

really felt bad for me, because she came over and put her arms about me sympathetically and on my paralyzed face she pressed a warm kiss of commiseration. What an angel I would have had if I had won her! Actually, the fact that she couldn't love me made her feel so sorry for me that she almost loved me out of pity. The sex is a mystery, and I don't pretend to be the guy that understands women.

Lum rode thirty-five miles over the mountains to the country seat to get the license, and the old lady announced that the wedding would take place a week from that date. I wrote to Kansas City for a job at the cigar counter in the same old depot, and shined my shoes with stove polish preparatory to a trip back to the tawdry city. The old man sat around with his head between his hands, but he roused up at corn pone time, and he never missed taking the hounds for their daily "run in the park."

Friday night there was a letter under my plate and, in opening the envelope, I got the impression it had been opened before and sealed again. If the old lady was censoring my mail, I guess she was satisfied, for this letter was calling me back to my old job in the Union depot, and marked the end of a dream of freedom, wealth and Rose.

The next day I packed my baggage and lugged it down that endless trail to the railroad which belonged to my friends Jake and Alex. It was a sick and beaten man that bought the return transportation from those plutocrats. I had not sought out Rose to say goodbye, for fear I might pull on the tremolo stop and do some sob stuff that was unworthy a game loser.

The little old train came coughing along, and while I was climbing aboard, old man Paugh rode up on a frothing mule and told me that Lum Posline was beating it to the justice's office to get a warrant for my arrest They would try to catch the train at Bee Branch and serve it on me. He was still shouting instructions into my bewildered ears when the train pulled out. I was puzzling over what charge they had brought against me, and couldn't figure it out. The train stopped at Bee Branch, and I could see a long stretch of the county road from the car window. Just as the train started again I saw Lum and the constable come galloping along in a cloud of dust. I stared at them until the train left them far behind, and then I turned and saw somebody standing before me. It was Rose. She sat down in the seat beside me and kissed me.

She told me the answer to the riddle. She had ceased to love me when I struck gold and settled down to a life on Half Moon Mountain. She had begun to care for Lum when his vaudeville prospects loomed up, but when that faded she saw there was nothing to Lum. Then when my pestiferous gold mine collapsed and I got my old job back in the Union depot at Kansas City (she had opened my letter to learn it) she knew at once and forever where her heart really lay, and she had decided to elope with me. Her note conveying that information was what had set her mother and Lum and the law on our trail.

Some girls marry for money and some marry for social position, but my woodland Rose was marrying for city life. Whichever suitor would be surest to abandon country life was the one which would capture her wavering heart.

Being a cigar clerk in a dusty, noisy railway terminal isn't rated anywhere compared with a country home on Half Moon Mountain, at least, we city fellows don't think so. But did you ever stop to consider how grand and glorious a city clerk can look in the eyes of a girl who was born and raised in the sticks? A Union depot clerk looks to your wild Tess-o'-the-Storm Country like a bishop and a general in one. Many of us fail to reach our dearest goal, like the old French peasant who never had seen Carcassone. And I had failed in that direction too, but when the conductor yelled, "Kansas City Union Station, everybody change cars," it sounded just like that to me, but in the pretty, eager ears of Rose, —God bless her heart,—that conductor man was calling: "All out for Carcassone."

FUZZ

BY JOE BLEDSOE

Fuzz is a globe-trotting dog. He and his master make a shabby and altogether depressing picture, but they aré genteel nevertheless. They eat their crackers without jam, and, like Sam Weller, don't care for beans when they can get liver and onions.

GREENY sat on a siil in the fast gathering shadows underneath the water tank and hummed to himself. The call of the road was strong upon him, for it was the time of year when all "bodom" becomes troubled with that peculiar malady known as "Itchy soles." And yet another motive even stronger than this natural call was urging him to put distance between himself and the twinkling lights of the town at his left.

In the early hours of the afternoon, while lolling in the protecting shade of a string of empties across the tracks from the depot, he had glanced for one startled moment into the great brown eyes of a figure that carried him back to his bygone days of respectability.

Fuzz, who had wandered from his master's side over toward the depot, had attracted the attention of a child on the platform. Good-naturedly, he had submitted to the boy's fumbling caresses, and when he had turned to retrace his steps, the child, loath to let him go, had trundled along at his side, stumbling awkwardly over the steel rails. Greeny, in a half doze, had been unaware of his dog's protegé until a low, reproving voice, addressed to the child, fell upon his ear.

With a mighty start, he had bounced to a sitting posture. For the space of a second, they had gazed into each other's eyes. He had seen a flash of suppressed merriment in the brown orbs at his sudden perturbation, followed instantly by a dazed, wondering look, half doubt, half scorn. Slowly she had gathered up the child and recrossed the tracks to the depot, leaving Greeny staring in dumb wonder at her receding form. A hundred yards up the track, he had turned and looked back. The young woman, with the child still in her arms, stood gazing absently up the track in his direction.

Now, as he sat waiting for his train, the tune on his lips grew stronger as he endeavored to drown the haunting memory of that fleeting glance of scorn which had been apparent in the eyes of the girl whom he had met earlier in the day.

Suddenly he straightened and glanced quickly up the track. A low, distant rumble reached his ears, while through the soft twilight of the early spring evening, he made out a dull red glow painted against the sky. "Get ready, Fuzz. Here she comes," he drawled, as he rose and shuffled back into the deeper shadows of the tank supports. Fuzz rose lazily, went through the motion of wagging his absent tail, and stalked over to his master's side.

Greeny slouched against a beam and waited. He let his gaze wander idly over the myriad of twinkling lights in the town below. Grimly, he clutched the lone tencent piece deep down in the cavernous pocket of his ill-fitting trousers, as his gaze fell upon a certain electric sign ostentatiously displayed down near the tracks. "Cheaper than the Jungles. Beds, Ten Cents." he read, skeptically. With a scornful curl of his unshaven lip, he again turned his gaze in the direction of the approaching train.

As the glare of the headlight began to penetrate their place of concealment, Fuzz became impatient and, with a soft whine, licked his master's hand.

"Easy, Fuzz; this may not be our kind," admonished Greeny, placing a restraining hand on the dog's ugly head.

As they stood for a moment revealed by the rays of the powerful headlight, they made a grotesque and droll picture. Upon the begrimed visage of the man there sprouted a wild tangle of unpruned whiskers. On his right foot, he wore a low, button shoe, while his left was encased in a rusty, run-down-at-heel boot several sizes too large. His trousers' legs were badly frayed at the bottom, and much too short. But what they lacked in length, they made up a thousand-fold in waistband.

For a belt he used a fish cord, doubled many times and drawn tightly about his waist through the belt loops of the manifold trousers. His coat was "swallow-tail" with one tail missing, while the sleeves, in marked contrast to the legs of his trousers, dangled down over his finger-tips. For a hat, he wore, jauntily perched on the wrong side of his head, a greasy, dove-colored derby of the "ram's horn" variety with a dented and battered crown.

With this crude setting for a background, there appeared round his neck a gorgeous green tie, immaculate and neatly tied. Being the only thing apparently clean about him, it stood out in bold relief against the dilapidated appearance of his other apparel, commanding instant attention.

Fuzz, as far as appearance was concerned, proved to be as poor a representative of his race as his master was of his. His coat was a dirty drab color, thin and scraggy. The hair on his body resembled thin fuzz and persisted in turning the wrong way. Half of one ear was missing, the result of a fierce battle, while his tail was conspicuous only by its absence. Indeed, it seemed as though a joint or two of his vertebra had gone with the tail.

There was a reason for Greeny's choice of conveyance over the road. Fuzz was a wonderful dog, but there were some means of locomotion connected with this method of wandering that even he could not master. And where Fuzz couldn't ride Greeny wouldn't.

As the iron monster ground grudgingly to a pause opposite the water tank, Greeny noted with satisfaction the long line of dark, silent objects stretching away behind it.

"Come on, dawg. She's a freight," he whispered laconically, as he started to shuffle guardedly up the track. Half way up the line, he discovered a box-car with its door shoved partly open. But before he could take advantage of the opportunity offered, a light suddenly bobbed into view across the track.

Silently the two slunk out of sight over the edge of the embankment. They listened to the crunch of the "shack's" footsteps on the cinders as he moved down toward the engine. When the sound had died away, Greeny rose and glanced furtively about. Another light was moving down the track in their direction. Evidently the "shacks" were on the alert for skulking "Knights of the road."

The light came within a hundred feet of their hiding-place and stopped. At the same time, the signal which sends a thrill of anticipation coursing through the souls of such as they, barked out, clear and sharp, on the night air. Out of the tail of his eye, Greeny saw the "shack" give an answering high ball.

Seizing Fuzz by the good ear, he pointed toward the box-car, which was beginning to move. "See that 'side-door Pullman'? That's ours; but we can't get 'er here, 'cause that 'shack' back there has growed to the ground. But we'll hook 'er on the other side of the tank. Understand?"

Swiftly they skirted the water tank and, with a deftness born of long experience, Greeny seized the side of the open door and swung himself gracefully inside the moving car. As he released his hold on the door, a heavy body struck him in the bend of his knees and bowled him over on the car floor. Scrambling up, he seized Fuzz's head between his two hands and chuckled softly.

"Yer jumped a little quick that time, Fuzz. But yer didn't want to take chances on gettin' left, did yer? That was some jump, and you're some dawg." Slowly he wagged the dog's head back and forth. "Do you know, Fuzz, that I've got a hunch, a hunch that some day you'll pull off somethin'—somethin' grand?"

"What's all the chatter about, bo?" suddenly came in a gruff voice from the farther end of the car. Greeny gave a start of surprise. Fuzz peered in the direction of the voice and growled menacingly. Presently a ray of light illuminated the darkened car. Out from behind a stack of hay bales in one corner issued the owner of the voice.

He moved over toward the two in the center of the car, a flashlight held guardedly in one hand. Evidence of the "road" was stamped strongly upon his person, from the shaggy, unkempt hair, down to the rusty, out-at-toe shoes. As he shambled forward, surprise and wonder shone from his green-gray eyes.

"Say, bo, you're a qua'r gink. I've seen a good many strange sights since I took to the road, but I'm hanged if yer ain't the first feller I ever see take up with a dorg for a road pal."

"He's got your kind beat a country block," retorted Greeny, bristling.

"Oh, don't git sore," returned the other, affably, trying to be friendly. "Come to think of it," he went on, "seems like I have heard jungle talk about a bo, over on t'other side of the hump, who traveled with a hound this way. His monaker was Greeny, I believe. Ever hear of 'im?"

Greeny nodded. He seemed bored by the other's recital.

The man recently from the hay continued, "My monaker's White Line Charlie. What might yours be, friend?"

"It might be Whiskey Jake, but it ain't," returned Greeny, sourly. He had taken a sudden dislike to his fellow passenger, and took no precaution to conceal the fact.

In spite of this rebuff, White Line Charlie persisted in being friendly. He dragged a bale of hay in front of the open door, where the night breeze wafted in, and invited Greeny to a seat. But the latter declined.

As his eye fell upon the lank form of Fuzz, curled contentedly upon the car floor, he suddenly burst into a loud guffaw.

"What's the joke?" inquired Greeny, the hint of a sneer in his voice.

"I jest happened to think—"

"How wonderful," broke in the other, sarcastically.

White Line Charlie ignored the interruption. "That hound will git his'n when the 'shack' sees 'im. Why, he'll kick his durned head off."

An ominous glint shone from Greeny's eyes. "I don't think he will," he informed the other, brusquely.

Suddenly the rays of the flashlight were focused on Greeny's gorgeous tie. "Some neckgear you've got there, pal," exclaimed White Line Charlie, reaching out a grimy, soot-smeared hand.

Greeny backed away, touchily. "Never mind," he admonished testily, waving the outstretched hand roughly aside. "It's a breach of good manners to comment upon a fellow's wearing apparel to his face, anyhow," he continued loftily.

"Been readin' George Washington's rules on good behavior, ain't yer?" sneered the other, showing signs of choler for the first time during their brief acquaintance.

"I don't have to read nobody's rules on good behavior to give riff-raff like you points," retorted Greeny.

"Riff-raff!" snorted White Line Charlie. "Why, what do ye call yerself, I'd like to know? Yer don't look to me like one of John D's favorites."

"Jest the same, I'm above herdin' with bindlestiffs of your caliber," replied Greeny, casting a contemptuous glance in the direction of the other's roll of dirty blankets.

As the argument waxed warmer, both failed to notice the diminishing speed of the train. They were brought to a sudden realization of their precarious position when a lighted lantern was suddenly thrust in at the car door, followed by a burly "shack." White Line Charlie made a ludicrous attempt to dodge behind the hay. Greeny stood still, while Fuzz rose lazily, stretched himself, and wagged his absent tail.

The trainman wasted no time in preliminaries. "What yer ridin' on, bo?" he asked tersely, addressing Greeny.

"Only my nerve," replied Greeny, laconically.

"It ain't enough, pal, on this road. Say, is that your hound?" he inquired with a frown, as he caught sight of Fuzz.

"That's him, but he's no ordinary hound," answered the dog's master.

"Oh, I beg your pardon; Scotch Collie or St. Bernard?" asked the "shack" contemptuously.

"Jest plain dawg, but he's got lots of sense at that," returned Greeny proudly. Placing a hand fondly on the dog's back, he continued, "Some day this dawg is goin' to pull off somethin'—somethin' grand."

"He don't look it," retorted the other, skeptically.

"Here, you, jest wait a minute," entreated Greeny, "an' I'll show yer somethin' worth seein'." The request seemed rather inopportune, as the brakeman had shown no inclination to depart.

Suddenly giving Fuzz's ear a slight tweak, Greeny cried softly, "Mooch old dawg, mooch!" For some reason or other the animal hesitated. Perhaps his instinct warned him that the quarry in the box-car was hopeless. Greeny repeated the command. This time there was a note of sternness in his tone.

In a moment, Fuzz transformed himself into another creature. Slowly he reared upon his hind feet and gently lifted his master's greasy derby from his head. A look of utter dejection and despair had suddenly appeared in his big sorrowful eyes. His back humped perceptibly, while one foot was held clear of the floor in seeming agony.

With the derby held firmly in his mouth, he hobbled painfully over to White Line Charlie and gazed up into his face with a look of mute appeal in his great, hungry eyes.

In spite of his recent fear of the "shack," the tramp guffawed loudly. A moment Fuzz waited, and then turned dejectedly to the gaping trainman and repeated the performance. He waited longer here, but finally turned, with a melancholy air, to his master.

Without hesitation, Greeny went down into his cavernous pocket and fished up his lone dime. With a lordly gesture, he tossed it into the battered hat. Then, after a slight pause, he seized the derby, deftly scooped the dime from its crown, and replaced it upon his head.

Taking Fuzz's head between his two hands, he weaved it gently back and forth. "Good work, Fuzz. Yer sure ar' some dawg."

"Say, bo! You sure got that cur trained," exclaimed the brakeman, casting admiring glances at Fuzz.

"See this dime?" Greeny held up the worn piece of silver. "I allus keep it about my person. When nobody else contributes, I do, to kind o' keep up the dawg's ambition. Get me?" The other nodded.

"Well, I guess your little exhibition's good for a hat check on this train to the end of my division," he muttered, turning his attention to the other occupant of the car.

It took him less than two minutes to dispose of White Line Charlie's case. Being either unable or disinclined to "produce," the tramp was invited, in no gentle tones, to "throw out his feet."

As the train gathered momentum again, Greeny had the grim satisfaction of seeing his fellow passenger shoulder his roll of blankets and "hit the ball o' mud." Thereupon he sought the solace of the hay.

How long he had been asleep, Greeny never knew. He was suddenly awakened by a rude jolt and felt himself hurled violently against the side of the car. There followed a rending, splintering crash, succeeded by a moment of awful silence. When he rallied his scattered wits, he realized that he was lying face downward on the damp ground. He made an ineffectual attempt to rise. Some heavy object had his lower limbs securely pinioned to the earth. Suddenly he heard a low whine and felt the cold nose of his dog sniffing at the back of his neck. Turning on his side, he took Fuzz's head between his hands.

"Hello, Fuzz, old dawg; some wreck, ain't it? Yer hurt? No!" as Fuzz licked his hand.

An instant later a groan at his left attracted Greeny's attention. "Hello! Who's there?" he called loudly.

"It's me," came back in weak tones. Greeny recognized the brakeman's voice. "Hey, bo! What's happened? Yer hurt bad?"

"I'm nearly killed, but we ain't got no

time to jaw. Come over here. I want yer to take my lantern back and flag No. 8."

"Can't stake yer, pard," answered Greeny, flippantly. "I happen to be in the same boat as yerself."

The brakeman groaned aloud. "No. 8 will be here in less than three minutes and, comin' round that curve, she'll never see us in— My God!" he broke off, as far away up the track, there sounded the faint whistle of an approaching train.

"Where's the rest of the bunch?" inquired Greeny, an uncomfortable feeling beginning to traverse his backbone.

"Either dead or crippled. There's only the engine crew, the head 'shack' and the 'con,' besides ourselves. If there'd been any one left, he'd been round afore now," muttered the trainman despairingly.

Again the distant whistle sounded on the night air. Greeny placed his ear to the ground. He could distinguish a low, distant rumble, growing louder as the moments passed. Vainly he strove to extricate himself from the wreckage. After what seemed ages, he managed to free his right foot, but his left was wedged fast. Feverishly he worked, twisting from side to side in his mad endeavor. Only a sharp, stabbing pain in his leg rewarded his efforts. At last he gave up and flung his face flat upon the earth, pantingly listening to that ominous, ever increasing rumble, near enough now to cause the earth to tremble beneath his prostrate body.

Presently Fuzz whined and sniffed the back of his master's neck. The touch of the cold nose against his flesh affected Greeny like an electric shock. He raised his head suddenly and shouted, "Hey, there, you! Where's that lantern?"

"Here." Feebly the brakeman waved the light.

"Go get it, Fuzz," commanded Greeny. Obediently the dog obeyed.

Placing one arm around Fuzz's scraggy neck Greeny muttered hurriedly, "Go, Fuzz; up the track; hold tight. No, no mooch," he explained, as the dog lifted one front foot. "Up the track, see," he exclaimed, waving his hand in the direction of the on-coming train.

Then as the whistle of the on-rushing monster shrilled out on the still night air, just around the curve, Greeny had the satisfaction of seeing Fuzz disappear up over the embankment, the bail of the lighted lantern held tightly between his teeth.

"What yer doin' now?" came weakly from the brakeman.

"Sendin' Fuzz to flag 'er," explained Greeny.

"Flag nothin'," came the low retort, and the "shack" relapsed into despairing silence.

The ensuing moments seemed ages to Greeny. He had unbounded confidence in Fuzz, but this was a new experience for him. Even if the dog understood the import of his errand, would the engineer of No. 8 interpret the oddly given signal correctly? Would he bring his train to a stop before it dashed around that sharp, deadly curve, upon the hidden mass of wreckage?

Again he placed his face close against the earth. The din of the coming train sounded like the roar of a cataract in his ears. Slowly the conviction that Fuzz had failed, took shape in his brain, and he muttered, "Poor old dawg. He didn't savvy. I ought ter—" Suddenly he broke off and jerked himself half erect. From a short distance up the track, there came a shrill whistle.

Greeny heard a series of sharp, staccato notes, as the engine sent its signal of warning hurtling out on the morning breeze; heard the scream of brakes against steel drivers as the engineer released the air.

By a superhuman effort, he raised himself sufficiently to glimpse the track above. The train had partly rounded the sharp curve and the rays of the mighty headlight lit up the scene below with a brilliant glare. What caught and riveted Greeny's attention, was the figure of Fuzz, racing madly along between the rails in front of the slowing train, the bail of a lantern held tightly between his teeth. Even as he gazed, No. 8 shrieked to a standstill scarce a train length from the wrecked freight. Greeny heaved a deep sigh and dropped back upon the ground.

When the engineer of No. 8 reached the shattered box-car he found Greeny propped upon one elbow with his arm around the thin, scraggy neck of his dog, murmuring low words of love and pride as he shook the dog's head gently back and forth. From Fuzz's mouth, there still swung idly by the bail, a lighted lantern.

"Say, bo! That your dog?" Silently Greeny nodded. Gently the man stroked Fuzz's ugly head with a greasy, gloved hand. "I've had some queer signals dished up to me during my time on the road," he went on, "but this one tonight's got 'em all skinned. It worked like a charm though. He's sure some dog, bo." After a moment's pause, he continued, "The luckiest wreck I ever saw, too. Nobody hurt very bad except the fire-boy, and he'll pull through all right. Engineer knocked batty for a while. The 'con' and the other 'shack' shut up in the up-ended caboose without a scratch. Nobody left to flag us but the hound, here, and believe me, he's done it to a queen's taste. Here, everybody!" he suddenly shouted, as the curious passengers from No. 8 gathered around. Briefly, he explained the situation for the benefit of those not already familiar with the facts, concluding with the remark, "Now this gentleman may be in need of a little financial assistance at present, and I believe it about the right time for all who can to donate."

While speaking, the engineer had removed his cap with one hand, while with the other, he fumbled in the bib pocket of his grease-smeared overalls. "Here's a starter, friends," as he dropped a bill into the crown of his cap. "Who'll be next?" he asked, starting around the circle.

Just then, Greeny spoke. Some long dormant germ of self-respect deep down in his breast suddenly sprang into action. "Me and my dawg don't want nothin' for savin' human life," he cried sharply. He was shocked at his own speech. He could not wholly grasp the meaning of that awakening spark in his breast. It seemed to him as if some inner being, over which he had no control, had uttered the words, merely using him for a mouthpiece.

The engineer paused in surprise. This was a novel experience,—a bo refusing a donation. Finally he spoke. "This is different from a touch, bo. Can't you see these people just want to make you a little present in acknowledgment of what you did for them?"

Greeny quickly swallowed his compunction. "Well, if there's got to be a contribution, let's have it taken in the regular way." Quickly he gave Fuzz the command. This time the dog needed no second bidding, but almost toppled his master over in his eager reach for the soiled derby.

At the first sound of Greeny's voice, a figure in the crowd of curious passengers had started slightly and shifted her position in order to obtain a better view of the speaker.

While Fuzz was making the rounds, to the great delight and admiration of the rest of the group, she suddenly stepped forward within the rays of No. 8's headlight. As she focused him with her gaze, Greeny beheld once more that look of mingled wonder and scorn in the great brown eyes. For a moment, he seemed to shrink from the clear gaze riveted upon him. Then suddenly he shrugged his shoulders with an indifferent air, folded his arms across his tattered chest, and gazed stonily back into the eyes of the girl with a defiant stare.

Three feet away from his master's outstretched hand on the return trip, Fuzz suddenly stopped in dismay. One side of the crown of Greeny's derby had given way. Willing hands helped them gather up the scattered coin. When the last one was stowed safely away in his capacious pocket, Greeny swung aboard No. 8. Gingerly he sat down upon the cushioned seat, Fuzz at his side. Remembering the look in the eyes of the girl, he fished from his hip pocket a soiled bandanna, and carefully placing every dollar of the late donation within its ample folds, tied the four corners securely together.

As the train began moving back toward Harper, the conductor strolled down the aisle of the car, and Greeny held the laden kerchief toward him. "Here, Con, take this stuff and give it back to the passengers. Fuzz and I don't want it." The conductor started to argue, but Greeny was determined. "Take it," he demanded. "If you can't return it to the parties who gave it, turn it over to a society for the needy or somethin' of the sort, 'cause Fuzz and me would jest squander it useless like."

As the conductor reluctantly took the money and moved away, the girl with the brown eyes rose from her seat a few feet back and, with the look of contempt on her face changing to a sort of admiration, came forward and deliberately perched herself upon the arm of the seat occupied by Greeny and his dog.

Greeny glanced up for a fleeting instant, then stubbornly turned his gaze out of the car window.

"So it's you, is it?"

He thrilled anew at the sound of her voice.

"It's me," he answered shortly, gazing with unseeing eyes at the light of the coming day.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, after a pause.

"What are you doing here?" he countered, unconsciously dropping the slang of the road from his English.

"I have been visiting my sister in Stockton, and am on my way home," she informed him.

At the sound of the word "home," Greeny winced.

"What made you do it, anyway?" she continued, a little note of sadness creeping into her tone.

"Do what?" He feigned ignorance.

"You know what I mean."

He turned on her defiantly. "Say, Bess, that's a queer question for you to ask me. Don't you know that when a fellow like me loves a girl like you and loses her, he loses everything, even his self-respect?"

For a moment, the girl remained silent, gently stroking the ugly head of Fuzz with her slender hand. "Didn't it ever occur to you that you might have been mistaken?"

"Mistaken!" he echoed contemptuously. "Where's your husband, Jem Basseter? And wasn't that yer kid,—er—your child,—that I saw in your arms back at the station?"

The girl laughed. "Jem Basseter married my sister, and that was her 'kid' you saw in my arms. He and his mother are returning home with me for a visit."

"But I saw in the pa—" he began stubbornly.

"Yes, I know," she broke in. "It was a mistake in print. As it was Tessie instead of Bessie, you see the mistake wasn't a very bad one after all."

"I don't see how it could have been worse," muttered Greeny, remembering the pain it had cost him. Suddenly he asked eagerly, "And you, Bess?"

"Oh, I'm still Bess Allen," she admitted with a droll little laugh.

As the train backed cautiously into the mouth of a dark tunnel, Fuzz suddenly found his position rather crowded and, with a protesting whine, vacated the seat and curled up on the car floor at his master's feet.

When No. 8 ground to a pause on the siding at Harper to allow the wrecking crew to pass, Greeny climbed to the ground. "And you'll wait, Bess?"

The girl in the car door gave Fuzz a last, loving pat as he sprang down beside his master. "Sure I'll wait. And you'll make good?"

"Sure I'll make good."

The engineer leaned from the cab window. "Hey, bo! I'll give you à one spot for that hound." Greeny turned and shook his head. Then he went on. The morning breeze wafted a wisp of straw-colored hair gently back and forth above his crownless derby.

Two hours later, the two paused on the outskirts of the town. And seating himself on a fallen log, Greeny took Fuzz's head between his two hands and gently wagged it back and forth.

"Fuzz, old dawg! I guess this is our last mulligan. We're goin' back to work and be respectable once more. The agent at the employment office said our man would be round at ten. I'm goin' to pitch hay, while you watch his sheep. We've just got to do it, Fuzz, 'cause there's a girl waitin'; waitin' for us to make good. Get me? But say, Fuzz! I just knew all along that you was some dawg, and you sure did pull off somethin'—somethin' grand." Fuzz whined gently and licked his master's grimy hand.

THE SCRATCHED RECORD

BY GRACE VAN BRAAM GRAY

It is annoying to have a raven come in at the window, perch on the bust of Pallas, and croak "Nevermore" repeatedly; but it is no worse than having the persistent wail of a cracked phonograph record float through the window night after night. One can at least throw a shoe at the bird.

WITH A yawn that ended in an imprecation, Dallas swung himself to a sitting posture on the edge of the bed and peered at the cheap alarm clock ticking on the bureau.

"Ten minutes past two," he grumbled. "The idea of any infernal fool running a phonograph at this hour on the hottest night of the year!"

Blinking sleepily, he sat for a moment listening, as the distant notes swelled into the familiar strains of "Kathleen Mavourneen."

"Good record," he admitted grudgingly, but even as he spoke the voice broke raucously. For a moment it became a mere confused blare of sound, then fell to silence;—a silence so tense and so full of expectancy that it drew Dallas almost unwittingly to the window.

Across his shoulders, his pajamas clung to the firm young muscles, and his face was beaded with perspiration, but there was more of resignation than of protest in the gaze he flung at the low-hanging clouds. After all, when a man's winter engagement has ended with Lent, and the weeks have dug deeply into a slender bank account, weather doesn't matter much when an eight weeks' stock engagement is offered. So it was less the heat than a sense of something impending—of waiting, for what he could not have told—that kept him leaning from the window until slowly, but with an intensity almost shrill, the song began again.

"Ah-h!" It was not an exclamation of annoyance, but rather one of welcome to the expected, but it drowned the sound of a light tap on his door and he did not turn until it was opened and Everard, the "character man" of the company came in carrying a thermos bottle and two glasses.

"I didn't think you would be able to sleep," he said, with a geniality that sounded forced, "so I brought a nice, cool drink in to you."

"You'll certainly go to heaven," said Dallas with fervor. "But it's not the heat so much as it is that phonograph. People ought to be arrested for running a thing like that with a scratched record in the middle of the night."

"Oh, the phonograph!" said Everard, oddly. His hand suddenly wavered, spilling a thin trail of liquid on to his bare ankles. "Yes—of course—the phonograph."

"You've heard it then?"

"Yes, I—I had this room before you came. I—moved on account of it. It doesn't bother many people because it is only poor devils of players or night workers who are awake to listen." He held out a glass to Dallas and the latter, taking it with a thirsty exclamation of delight, lifted it to his lips, but Everard took his up more slowly.

"Here," he said, still in that queer tone, "is to the voice of the broken record."

"Here's to the hope that it may break entirely," retorted Dallas, and as if his words were magic, the song stopped with a sound that was almost a cry.

Both men paused, and there was something so eery in the silence that Dallas shivered and put his glass down hastily as he whispered:

"There it is again—the—the bad place."

"Yes, the bad place," echoed Everard; then impulsively he leaned forward and laid his hand on the arm of his companion.

"Look here Dal, you and I have played together in different companies for five seasons. You know I'm not given to hitting them up, and that I haven't the imagination of a scene shifter, don't you?"

"I surely do," said Dallas.

"Well then, let me tell you that that record has got me! It haunts me! I'm as jumpy as a woman with neurasthenia, because I tell you—*it doesn't break in the same place twice!* A record is as cut and dried as a legal document. Any old record will make a queer sound over a bad spot, but it is always the same spot—*and this isn't.* Sometimes the song goes all the way to the end, magnificently; sometimes it breaks in the first stanza—and—it always begins again, with the opening bars. The worst of it is *I know the voice.* I tell you I *know* the voice. It calls to me as a friend, but I can't answer. I don't know where it is—or who— It's just a loose voice that comes at this time of night, and my God, man, it's a song of agony. Sometimes it is as if the soul were being drawn out of the body. Sometimes it is defiant, but it is always that song; always that infernal, 'Da dee, de da dum, the grey dawn is breaking.' I tell you it's driving me insane."

Dallas stared at Everard, his eyes wide, his face a little pale.

"Have you any theory?" he asked breathlessly, and the other nodded:

"I have. But everyone would say I was a damned fool, and I couldn't *prove* anything. I—I wish you were game enough to go with me and find out." He hesitated, and Dallas swallowed hard.

"I'm pretty game, Ev."

Without a word, the older man got up and padded in his bare feet to the window, and with a jerk of his head summoned Dallas.

"The voice was loud tonight, wasn't it?" he whispered. "You could get the words plainly, couldn't you?"

"Sure."

"Well—and why? Because the wind is southeast. When we have a strong west wind it is faint; same when it is north. Then it is positive that the voice or record is somewhere to the south or east, isn't it?"

Dallas nodded, and Everard, putting his hand on the other's shoulder pointed to a dark and gloomy pile looming up across the little splotches of back yards.

"The Cosmopolis Opera House is southeast!" Dallas laughed out loud. "Shades of the symphonies and Wagner," he mocked, "is some watchman running a phonograph in the sacred precincts of the prima donnas?"

"No," said Everard, and his voice was husky; "there is a watchman there, an old man who has been there thirty years, but he doesn't keep a phonograph—because—because— That is not a record I tell you, but a voice,—a voice shut up in the Opera House calling—to me, perhaps, or to you—and I tell you Dal, it's got me. It's got me, and I'm going to answer. Alone if I must, with you if you will come?"

"Come—come where?"

"Into that Opera House now, this very night, while the voice is singing. We can get in through a little window on the side. I swear to you that if we lose that voice once we are inside the building, I'll come back. But I've got to know if the voice is there; I've *got* to know. Will you come?"

"Of course," said Dallas flatly; and they shook hands on it.

"Fine," said Everard. "Put on your shoes and a raincoat over your pajamas. I'll get a flashlight and be with you in a minute."

Shivering a little with excitement, Dallas drew on a few clothes and thrust a box of matches into his pocket, just as Everard returned, swathed in a dark raincoat, and together they went swiftly down the stairs, through the kitchen with its stale odors, and out into the back yard.

Dallas, unused to the intricacies of city gardens, choked himself upon the clothesline, and crushed three flower pots under foot with what seemed a hideous noise, before his eyes became accustomed to the gloom and enabled him to follow the swifter Everard across the square of green and behind the dusty bushes to the high board fence.

"Put your foot on the handle of the gate and you can swing up more easily," whispered Everard. "Better not try to stand erect. We've got to crawl a few feet to reach the fire-escape of the school next to the Cosmopolis."

With a boyish thrill of excitement and a strong desire to laugh, Dallas did as he was bidden, and in a few moments the two stood on the fire-escape within easy reach of a narrow window in the next building, which was open top and bottom, as if for ventilation. There Everard turned and gripped his companion fiercely by the arm.

"The voice is there," he whispered; "listen!"

"It may be for years and it may be forever," wailed the voice in a great breathy whisper, that seemed incredibly close yet muffled as if by distance. Then came the break and a sobbing cry, "God—God—God!"

For a moment the two men stood as if frozen, then Everard said quietly, as if to some unseen listener:

"It's all right; I'm coming." With that he swung one foot over the sill of the little window.

Inside the Opera House it was very dark and they could hear a rat scuttle across the marble corridor, somewhere near them.

"Do we go up or down?" whispered Dallas, and Everard answered promptly:

"Down. Where is that flash?"

Cautiously, Dallas sent the long ribbon of light leaping before them, and they saw that they were in the corridor back of the upper boxes. As silently as two ghosts, they slipped down the winding stairs; past boxes, down another flight, then Everard took the lead back toward the stage.

"There's nothing in the front of the house of course. It will be back, I—" he broke off abruptly and his groping fingers gripped Dallas's arm so tightly that the hand of the latter relaxed its hold upon the flash and left them in the darkness.

"Listen!"

With the slow, gasping breath of men concentrating upon one of the five senses, they stood motionless. The voice had ceased, but gradually there crept through the silence, a whispering wave of sound, —a sound that was like the slow rhythmic sweep of women's gowns, or the echo of a storm that approaches but never arrives.

"Dear Father in heaven!" gasped Dallas. "What is it?"

"I don't know, but we'll find it. It's here—it's all around. It's sound conceived in silence. Damn you! Where's that flash?"

The trembling fingers of the younger man found the little spring and again the ribbon of light wavered along the corridor. With the first movement that elusive whispering left them—drowned even in their cautious footsteps as they opened door after door and peered in expectantly.

But the light showed nothing but electric switches, piled up cleaning apparatuses and old programs, so it was with careless hands that they thrust open the last door, only to fall back from its threshhold as wailing, moaning, a great sobbing cry rose to them, followed by a soft, steady swishing as of a multitude of silken garments.

The flash now revealed a narrow flight of steps leading downward. Again Dallas's fingers relaxed, and the two men stood in the heavy almost sentient darkness, hands gripping, shoulder to shoulder—listening. And still the low, sobbing moan continued with the steady swish, swish of the silken robes.

"Come on!" Neither man was conscious of having spoken, but at the words they moved involuntarily down the stairs. The waves of sound seemed to rise and envelop them as they descended, but they didn't hesitate, and when this time the flash showed them a low wooden door, they moved towards it with one accord and flung it open, stopping with a simultaneous cry as the light suddenly shivered into a thousand prismatic rays and the rhythmic sound rushed forward and engulfed them.

Then Everard gave a hysterical gasp of relief.

"Pair o' fools," he gurgled. "Damned fools! This is the clean air stunt. The moan is the ventilator sucking air, and this is the water that washes it. It got a full page in the papers when they put it in. The air runs in special corridors all under the house. It's all right,—come on. It's all right, I tell you."

Dallas laughed too, but uncertainly and, turning the light again, flung a marvelous jeweled shimmer across the great sheet of water falling so steadily and gorgeously in that empty place.

"Queer thing," he said slowly, "to use electricity and water to wash the air for a closed building. Does it always run—this way?"

"No. No, you are right." The voice of the other was hoarse with excitement. "Somebody is here who has to have fresh air. It's the voice man,—the voice,—and we're going to find it."

Still moving softly, though the rushing water drowned all other sounds, they passed through into a corridor, the cool, fresh air revealing the fact that they were in one of the ventilating passages. It curved ahead of them into the heart of the building and they followed it without question till they saw another door, from beyond which there arose suddenly the quavering tones of a woman's voice:

"Mavourneen, Mavourneen, my sad tears are falling,
To think that from Erin and thee I must part."

"I knew it,—I knew it!" cried Everard, triumphantly, and the two men creeping forward, crouched against the door and listened as the song broke off and a bitter sobbing filled the echoing spaces around them.

"I won't! I won't! I won't!" wailed a voice. "Oh, kill me and be done with it!"

"No, no, you shall not die," answered a deeper voice. "A thousand times you shall sing it and then you shall die. Did you not say to me, 'Michael, my dear, every night will I sing Kathleen for you—a thousand times you shall hear it if you like?' Now you shall sing it. All those thousand times,—then I will kill you."

"Oh, Michael, Michael, have you no mercy?" cried the woman's voice, and the man's voice answered:

"None. For fifteen years I have sat and waited,—waited for you to come. I knew you would—it had to be—and now you shall sing for me, as befits you,—only for me. Sing it again I tell you—now—now—*now!*" His voice rose harsh and insistent and the woman moaned, but high and gloriously sweet for all its undernotes of agony the strains of Mavourneen rang out again and stealthily Everard forced open the door and peered into the room beyond.

It appeared to stretch endlessly away into darkness, but at one side a lantern stood at the edge of what looked like a huge pool of blackness in the floor. Crouched beside it and peering down at something that they could not see, was a grey-haired man, his face distorted with a dozen conflicting emotions in which cruelty predominated.

"We will take him from each side," whispered Everard coolly, his mouth close to the ear of his companion, his excitement abated. "She must be down in that blackness. Now—one, two, *three!*"

The last word rang out like a clarion, and at its sound the old man leaped to his feet but the others were on him in an instant, and silently struggling, battling and clawing, the three men rolled and fought in the dusty blackness, while from the woman came a sobbing cry and a reiterated:

"Oh God,—at last—at last!"

At length, with a grunt of satisfaction, Everard sat triumphantly on the back of his prostrate victim.

"There is a length of clothes-line in my left-hand pocket Dal," he said cheerfully; "get it and truss up this fellow."

Awkwardly Dallas obeyed, and the old man sitting up, glared mutely at his captors, who turned towards that pool of blackness.

"Where are you?" called Everard, and now his voice shook.

"Here, gentlemen—here! Oh, thank God you have come at last. In the pit—in the pit—be careful not to fall."

It was a voice whose sweetness thrilled both men, and it echoed and reverberated with a sonority that was almost startling.

"In the well," he ejaculated, "the famous sounding well under the stage! My heavens, how did anyone get down there?"

"He let me down on a rope," cried the sweet voice. "Oh, in pity's name get me out quickly. He has a ladder there, gentlemen; he tantalizes me with it. Oh, there in a corner you will find it. Oh, hurry! hurry!"

There was a note of hysteria in the voice and Everard and Dallas stumblingly obeyed. When they finally located it and thrust it carefully down into that well of darkness that lay unfenced and extending vastly into the shadows, the ladder seemed to become alive in their hands so eagerly was it seized from below. Almost before it could be steadied in fact, two slender hands appeared out of the gloom, then a face. Such a face! A pair of white shoulders smeared and grimed, arose, spectre-like, from the darkness.

They saw the tattered remnants of a magnificent evening gown and jewels shimmering amid the dust, and though the exquisite face was streaked with tears, Everard knew her; Dallas too, for that matter, since her picture had been in the papers for weeks.

"Madame de Vesin!" they cried in unison, starting back. Then came to them the remembrance of the strange disappearance of the great singer while her admiring friends thronged the dressing-room and her waiting host sat in the limousine at the stage door. And here she was—a resurrected ghost—emerging in the dark hour before dawn, out of that hideous well of blackness.

"Madame! Madame!" It was all Everard could find voice for, and she could only cling to his hands and sob. They were startled by a sneering laugh.

"Madame, Madame," mocked the old man. "'Tis no madame you are talking to, but my wife. Ask her—ask her—if it ain't so?"

"Oh, I never denied it," she flung back at him, loosing her hands from Everard's. "I never denied it. I married you and I'd do it again—to win my chance, just as I'd leave you again when my art needed me. I married him, " she went on, turning piteously to Everard, "when I was sixteen because he, and he alone, could gain for me an entrée behind the scenes here,—a chance to sing for them—the great ones. They heard me and the rest all the world knows! For fifteen years I have lived in my art and for my art. I thought he, my husband, must be dead, so at last I came here to sing. When the concert was over a note was brought to me saying that one of the theatre men wished to see me a moment; he had a message. On my way to the motor I stopped. It was a trap. He dragged me here,—gagged me and oh, my God, here he has kept me! They searched, but he lied. He said he had sat there by the door and no one had passed.

"He has fed me like a beast in the zoo—and always at night he has forced me to sing! To sing—sing—sing!" Her voice rose in a shrill sob and the old man laughed again.

"I am your husband," he repeated parrot-like; "these fools cannot take you away from me. You shall sing for me a thousand times."

"He's crazy," said Dallas. "Maybe I had better get a policeman." But the woman caught at his sleeve.

"No! no!" she wailed. "Not the police—think of the publicity,—of the trial perhaps. No, no, gentlemen, this you shall do for me. Somewhere he keeps a dress and a hat. I might have them he said when I went home with him. Get me those—and set me free. I have money—jewels. I will take a train somewhere—anywhere, it doesn't matter where. Then *voila*,—tomorrow Madame de Vesin will awake; Madame the victim of aphasia will recover. She will telegraph her manager—cash some checks,—send for her maid, and her two very good friends here. And we will forget—this!"

"You are right of course," said Everard quickly. "We'll find you the dress, then Dallas shall take you to the station. My duty lies here. At five o'clock I shall set him free." He gave a nod towards the old man and repeated: "Free. You will be gone then,—gone to your art—forever."

Dallas, dressing briskly after the matinee, hurried whistling, down the stairs from his dressing room, only to be halted by the sight of an exclamatory group huddled over an evening paper.

"Madame de Vesin has been found," shrilled Miss Rainery, the leading lady. "She had aphasia. It is a lot more exclusive than appendicitis nowadays. She has turned up in a little town in New Jersey. It's the greatest story you ever saw as a press yarn. Some people surely do have all the luck."

Dallas, leaning over her shoulder, was arrested by another item.

"What is that next to it?" he asked.

"Oh that?"—her voice was vague and indifferent,—"some old man—a watchman at the Cosmopolis killed himself last night. Um—um—been with them thirty-two years. Well, it's time he ended it. But just think of that singer! Why, it has been almost three months!"

Above the heads of the group, Dallas met the eyes of Everard and what he saw in them made something prickle along his spine—and he wondered—he wondered.

The Black Cat Club

(Continued from page 2)

The situation in *The Mixed Quartette* is humorous, and the atmosphere is good; but the story is weakened by a sort of epilogue. It might well have ended with "'Uh-huh,' I says and kissed her again." Another bad feature is that some of the illustrations used, as for instance the allusion to the "busted garter" are not essential to the progress of the story but seem to have been captured in the store-house of the author's memory, bound hand and foot, and tossed helpless into the tale.

There is entertainment to be found in *The Evidence in the Case*, if one survives the long introduction; for one may find both charming character drawing and a novel situation with a pleasing solution.

Conscience Stuff for Two has the whole stock cast of melodrama without the compensating thrills. Its greatest appeal is to the desire for poetic justice, which is a fundamental characteristic of most people. The property pieces, pipe and can, are worked in cleverly.

The five dollar prize winners in the third contest were: Roy H. Fricken, Ann Arbor. Mich.; Mrs. A. M. Scruggs, Selma, Ala.; Willes W. Hackmann, Bridgeport, Conn.; Elliot Field, Cleveland, Ohio; and J. Willard Ridings, Columbia, Mo.

The Sixth Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (May); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before June 1st. Prizes will be awarded June 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the August BLACK CAT, issued July 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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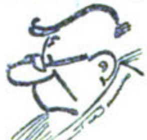

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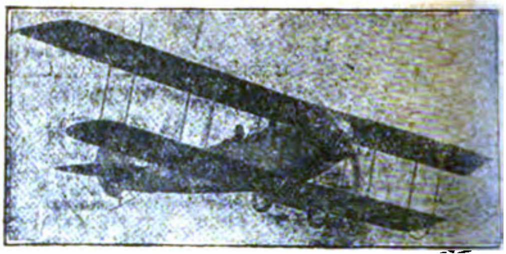

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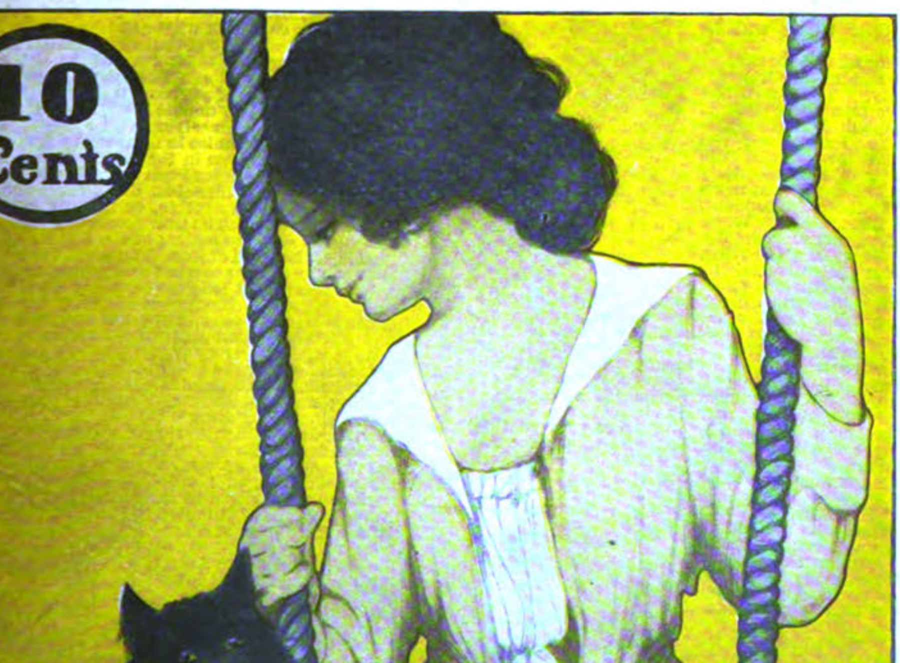
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S.C.Jaques, M.D.

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The Black Cat

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Contents

er Design . . . *Olivette Bourgeois* . .
Black Cat Club 2
Other Gods Before Me *Frederick J. Jackson* . 3
Strike at Nealy's . *Earl H. Emmons* . . 11
hout the Law . . *Joseph T. Kescel* . . 16
Inevitable . . *Robert McBlair* . . 21
Prod . . . *George L. Catton* . . 25
h, Hope and Justice . *Marvin L. Hayward* . 28
's Half Acre . . *G. B. Buchanan* . . 33
Smile of Joss . . *William J. Neidig* . . 41

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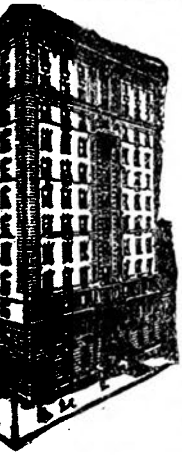

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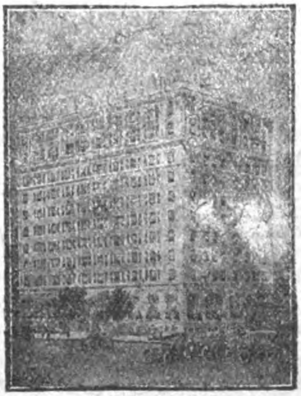

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

BACK in November, when the editor penned the salutatory of the club, he said that it was created to bring about certain more or less "ideal" relations between editor and readers. Not much was said about writers. Perhaps it was presumed that they would be interested in the $25 bonus to the exclusion of all else. Perhaps the editor was thinking about what Stephen Leacock called "the low cunning of an author," and shaking his head sadly over the mercenary instincts of authors who not only want their stories published but actually demand payment for the privilege. Nothing was said about writers in that salutatory and little was said in the full page advertisement that followed. Yet a distinct result of the club plan has been the interest which it has aroused among young writers. Many of our criticisms have come from them, for they have found that writers who are still concerned with fundamentals can find nothing better in the way of "finger exercises" than analyzing *Black Cat* stories. One of them goes so far as to say that the *Black Cat* is giving a course that is more helpful to the young writer than any correspondence course.

The returns in the March contest resulted in the awarding of the $25 prize to Marion Hill, author of *The Bridegroom Elect.* A criticism of this and other stories follows. The stories are arranged in the order of their standing in the contest.

In *The Bridegroom Elect,* Marion Hill has written a story full of clever phrases and pleasant humor. The characters are drawn with the strength and lightness of touch of an artist. There is a nice sense of proportion in the balancing of the brothers against each other and in the juxtaposition of Bianca and the ninety-eight cent girls. The crisis is alive with action, the climax and conclusion are excellent. Of the eight stories in the number, this one is the best combination of substance and form, although *The Power of the Wireless* and *Their Piece of Art* exceed it in dramatic possibilities.

The Power of the Wireless is a story that is rich in material but poor in treatment, a story that is less individual than some of the others principally because it is so conformative to previous literary types. The ruthlessness with which the author permits all on board the "Starlight" to be killed is justified by his premises. He set out apparantly to paint a sombre picture of the sea and he does not let his sentiments run away with his artistic instincts. His theme is the wireless, its power for good or ill; and to the very end he is consistent. But the virtues of the story stop there. In neither technique nor style does the author achieve a high standard. He has some vague conception of a wireless station, but it is doubtful if he has ever seen one in operation. Even Marconi has never been able to make a message being received "echo raucously." And why, if the German admiral could hear the concussion when the "Starlight" was blown up, couldn't he have caught the wireless messages? The atmosphere of mystery in which the story is shrouded from the first paragraph soon thickens to a murky obscurity, pierced occasionally by brilliant flashes of frenzied rhetoric. 'Tis a dreadful night. Heavy lines of capital letters plow their way through the pathless deeps, steering their devious ways "by the war-star Mars" and injuring a style that is already commonplace. Surely the author has not made the most of his material. He might have molded it into more artistic form.

Shad's Windfall is a pretty picture of a bit of life among the "submerged tenth." It is a type of "made" story; it is woven about a single verse of the Bible, a verse which the dominant character knows by heart and of which he says, "It's into the Bible just that way, and nothing that's into the Bible is junk." The interviewing-the-world idea, while not strictly fresh in this story, is used to good advantage; and the author succeeds in sustaining a humorous situation with clever dialogue. It is a whimsical bit of narration, a transcript from life, worked out with careful attention to detail and sustained interest.

Their Piece of Art is a mystery story that does not expend the full force of its emo-

(*Continued on Page* 45.)

NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME

BY FREDERICK J. JACKSON

Five men who wish to reach a state of affluence with a minimum of effort satisfy their desire by robbing a mission. Four of them have no god but gold. The fifth for the first time in years is aware of a higher divinity.

THERE'S something about the idea that makes me uneasy. I don't like it! Ever been in a church? Ever pray?"

The face of Peel, the beachcomber, crinkled like tanned leather as he laughed derisively, laughed as when he had escaped the firing squad in Callao and crossed the Pacific to the Philippines.

"Me in a church? *Me* pray? If ever I pray it'll be for a stack of gold. The yellow god is all I'll ever look up to! Say," he demanded, suspiciously, "you ain't thinkin' of backin' out, are you? 'Cause you can't, see! You've got to figure this out for us!"

Miller, feverish and wan, looked at Peel. "Oh, no, I'm not backing out," he said, resignedly.

"You'd be crazy!" Peel declared. "I told you about the galleon that brought the treasure to the Philippines, didn't I? Those cups and vessels of soft, pure gold the monks used in services. Stole 'em, the Spaniards did! And they squealed like stuck pigs when the French and British buccaneers stole 'em in turn!"

"Aw, that was some hundred years ago."

"What of it? The missions here have the gold yet, and that old paper I found in Callao tells all about the secret hiding place."

Peel, Miller and three others sat beneath a mango tree on the edge of the jungle. A whaleboat was beached fifty yards away, while spread out before them was the Sulu sea, a sheet of red and gold flame in the setting sun.

Said Miller: "I think we'd better start now."

With Peel and Miller still mumbling over the plans, they shoved the boat off the beach and set out, as though fleeing from the darkness which crept out from land with tropical haste. Through the early evening the oarsmen pulled along quietly, keeping a course parallel to the shore line where the little ripples of the quiet sea lapped with an ever-changing fringe of phosphorous. Occasionally, a ground-swell swept in, lifted the boat, dropped it again, and passed on to break with a roar and a line of fire along the shingle.

The dark wall of mangroves and jungle broke off, and gave way to an occasional palm hut and to cultivated fields. A little later the men in the boat could make out the indistinct outlines of what they knew to be the mud walls around the Mission of Santa Marta.

Vaguely, a chapel and cloister loomed up on the hill in the tropical starlight, the whitewashed towers of the bells rising higher like twin sentinels, and standing wraithlike against the skyline.

Miller peered ahead, and finally headed the boat towards the beach. "In with the oars!" was his hushed order.

It was quietly obeyed. The keel grated on the sand. The men sprang out, seized the gunwhales, and with the aid of a breaking swell, hauled the boat out of water.

Stealthily, they made their way towards the mission, dark and silent as a place of the dead. Peel scaled the outer gates, and opened them from within. They groped through the patio to the chapel under the bell-towers. The door opened to Miller's touch and they entered. Peel

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struck a match and lighted a bull's-eye lantern.

Down an aisle, past row upon row of straight-backed seats, he led them directly towards the altar, grinning as he noticed the furtive glances from his men as they scanned the empty seats. The beachcomber flashed his light around, and then reached up to a figure of the Virgin as if to pull it down.

Miller choked on a word of protest at the vandalism.

"I know what I'm doin'!" said Peel. The entire altar swung back.

"Now— Here's where they keep it, boys!" There was nervous exultation in his tone as he stepped into a narrow chamber. They crowded in.

Kranz, slow-thinking and of few words, licked his lips at the sight of the reward. Jones, a big Cockney, and Harris, the mulatto, crouched side by side, their eyes shining hungrily.

There was no delay. Miller and Peel began packing the gleaming objects into a chest. Suddenly they straightened. In the unnatural quiet, sandalled feet could be heard shuffling across the patio.

A monk entered the chapel. Down the aisle he hurried, carrying a flare high over his head to light his way. As the group at the altar came into the light, the hand of the brother trembled.

"Hold! What is this?" He saw the altar swung back and the treasure exposed. "Ye desecrators of that which is holy; ye profaners of that which is pure! My children, *think*, for ye know not what ye do!"

An oath ripped from Peel. A bolt of fire flashed in the dull half-light. The explosion was deafening in the narrow confines. It echoed and re-echoed among the rafters.

"Oh, my God! What have you done?" gasped Miller, dropping to the side of the fallen monk.

"Come on, you fool!" Peel was in command now. He led the exit from the chapel, staggering along with his men under the weight of the chest.

"Poor fool! Poor blind fool!" Miller sobbed. "He doesn't know what he's done!" He knelt over the monk again.

"Thank the Lord he's not dead!" For a moment he hesitated, then crossed himself fervently, the first time in years, and followed through the doors into the patio.

The following moments were only a nightmare to Miller. He found himself outside the mud walls, covering the retreat of the men. Shot after shot he fired over the heads of the scantily-clad people in the gateway to prevent pursuit. Sobbing and cursing wildly, he ran to the beach. Then he was in the boat, crouching in the stern as he steered for open water, while four husky backs strained at the oars.

Patches of phosphorescent fire swirled, and boiled, and sucked, and made miniature whirlpools behind each ashen blade as it bent and bit sharply through the water. Astern, the narrow wake of the whaleboat was a ribbon of living fire, glowing fitfully.

A bullet whined sharply overhead. Another ricochetted from the water a dozen feet away, and hummed off into the distance. The tip of an oar was splintered by a shot. Bullets whizzed by on all sides, then the boat drew out of range.

"We made such a hell of a fuss, the garrison from the fort almost nipped us," laughed Peel, looking back at the futile flashes.

"Huh. All they see's our wake," replied Miller, as he changed the course of the boat.

"How's she headin'?" inquired Peel, with a glance at the stars.

"East by south!"

"That's about right!"

On they rowed through the night. Miller leaned over the compass and watched it in the light of the bull's-eye.

There was no moon. An overhead haze gradually obscured the sky. The southern cross disappeared. The night became inky-black, a tropical night, with a velvety, all-enveloping darkness.

Furtively Miller began shifting the course of the whaleboat. The oarsmen failed to notice that the swells were coming from ahead now, instead of from abeam; and the boat was soon heading off at right angles to the course it originally held.

So they passed the night. At intervals two of the rowers alternated to rest their tired muscles. This was but very seldom, however, for they were spurred on by fear of what lay behind them, that, and the thought of lustful pleasure ahead. As they rowed, they talked spasmodically, made plans for the future, and of how each would dispose of his share.

"I tell you, boys, we'd better scatter for awhile," concluded Peel; "we've sure stirred up one hell of a mess. When we get to Miradora I'm goin' to make my way around to Manila in a sampan. That's inconspicuous enough, if a fellow is alone. I know a Chink who'll melt my share of the gold cups and crosses and things into little bars. That'll destroy all evidence. Takin' no chances, I ain't!"

"Goot idea!" commended Kranz.

"Not for me!" declared the stroke oar, the big Cockney. "Hi knows w'ere Hi can get the top price in 'Ong Kong."

"Singapore for this bird!" announced the next oar, Harris, the mulatto. Harris was over six feet, a brute in every way. He was a deserter from a United States gunboat on the China station.

On and on they planned doubtful pleasures and amusements, but they did not look into the eyes of the man who sat crouched in the stern, nor see the set of his lips as he listened to their plans and all the time held the boat steadily to the northward.

Morning came. The oriental sun popped gorgeously above the horizon, and rapidly dispersed the overhead mist.

Jones arose to his feet, apparently much puzzled. Instead of the green islands expected, he saw nothing but the flat, oily expanse of water, broken only by an occasional sluggish swell which came sweeping down from the north.

"Hi carn't hunderstand this," he announced. "There hought to be land by the blooming boat right now. Crikey! Look where the sun is! Bly me, hif we hyn't been 'eadin' north!" His eyes grew chilly with sudden suspicion. He looked at Miller, who glared defiantly.

Jones hauled in his oar and started aft. "Lemme see that compass!" he demanded. Then he leaped back. Instead of looking at the compass, he found himself staring into the ugly snout of a huge navy revolver. He could see the hammer drawn back under Miller's thumb. Half in bewilderment, Jones sank back on the seat.

"Wot the 'ell, Bill?" he wondered.

Peel started to arise at the sight of the revolver. Dazed, he sat down mechanically as Miller turned the muzzle in his direction.

"Got the drop on you!" Miller snapped out. "Bat an eye wrong, or move a hand, any one of you, and your prayers are said! You know how I shoot! Now, Jones, unbuckle your belt. Easy! Don't put your hooks on that gun! Now—drop it over the side!"

Sullenly, Jones obeyed. The others looked on in sheer amazement. Little bubbles arose playfully to the surface as the .45 and the belt of shells sank into the blue depths.

"Now, Harris, the same!" and the mulatto's gun went overboard. Peel and Kranz were likewise disarmed, and Miller settled back to the tiller.

"Now, row, you dogs, row!" he ordered.

A strange contrast was Miller as he held the four oarsmen in subjection with his revolver. Pale, a hectic flush on his cheeks, thin to the point of emaciation, he was a sick man. A man less iron-willed than he would have been prostrate. His eyes were glowing a bit too brightly after the sleepless nights, and the flush burned deeper than the evening before.

Primitive types all, any of the men could have crushed him. But they were cowed. They stood in deadly fear of him. Had they not seen him shoot? He had shot every pip from the six of spades from a distance at which any of them would probably have missed the card. He had outshot and killed "Pig-eyed" Scanlon in Hong Kong, Scanlon who was known as a gunfighter from Singapore to Seoul. Miller's reputation was based on that feat. Then, too, he had a phenomenal brain. It was for this that Peel had enrolled him in the party.

They could imagine no motive for Miller's present tactics other than his love of gold. They knew only that he had betrayed them. By their code he deserved no mercy. Any one of the four cheerfully would have throttled Miller and flung him into the sea.

While inwardly cursing him, their gaze was riveted in fascination on the chest where he sat. This was of oak, worm-eaten, bound and studded heavily with brass, which was nearly eaten off by the verdigris of two or three centuries. Two rotted leather straps had fallen from around the chest. A dead sort of thing!

"You dirty sneak!" swore Peel, glaring at Miller. "We oughta known better than trust you. You weren't one of us!"

"No compliments, *Mister* Peel, if you please," returned Miller. "Save your breath! You'll need it before we reach San Miguel."

"San Miguel!" gasped Peel. "You're crazy! Don't you know that San Miguel is over a hundred and fifty miles from Santa Marta?"

"Sure, I know," acknowledged Miller, "and you better pass that water-breaker aft. You fellows hit it up too freely last night. We'll need it later."

"San Miguel!" repeated Harris. Then he fairly foamed at the mouth and directed a stream of abuse at Miller.

"That will do, Harris! You keep your fly-trap closed mighty tight, sing low, and put a little muscle behind that oar, or I might *accidently* overlook you a couple of times when I pass out this water."

Harris subsided, but his dark, sullen eyes, with their dissipated, yellowed whites, glowed with bitter hatred. A little later the mulatto broke out again.

"Harris," said Miller, slowly, "to tell the truth, I'd just as soon shoot you as look at you, and I'm looking right at you. I may have broken all the ten commandments, but there are things which even *I* draw the line on, and I have as much use for a depraved beast like you as I have for a cobra."

Miller distributed food to the men. He sat munching on a cake of sea-biscuit, when he suddenly choked on a piece. He coughed violently a few times, then still harder, doubling up with pain. His face became congested, he was strangling.

Like a tiger ready to spring, Harris had been watching. As Miller lowered his head, Harris dropped his oar, and dashed at the sick man. The oar of Jones, the stroke, was in Harris's path. He lost a fraction of a second in hurdling over it. Two more steps and he would have reached Miller. That lost fraction of a second was fatal. Miller raised his head and saw.

Coldly, calmly, dispassionately, almost disinterestedly it seemed, he lifted the gun and shot Harris through the heart. The mulatto straightened erect at the smash of the bullet. The evil in his eyes turned to the surprised look of a child, then he collapsed across the Cockney's seat.

Miller's lips twisted into a sort of grim smile as he saw Jones rise to join Harris. The gun barked again. Jones screamed as a bullet smashed his ribs. A third shot, and he fell sprawling over the body of the mulatto.

Miller peered questioningly at Peel and Kranz, who had remained at their oars in the fore part of the boat. Then he resumed his racking cough until he found relief. Weak and trembling, he leaned back against the gunwale.

Finally he recovered a bit. "In with your oars, and drop that carrion overboard!" He pointed to the bodies with the muzzle of the gun.

Harris's oar had stuck in the tholepins. Peel bumped against it, and the oar slid overboard through the pins. The beachcomber caught at it.

"Let it go along with Kranz's oar," ordered Miller. "You'll need only two. Now get back and plant some beef behind the ash."

The patches of blood on the after thwart dried quickly. In the heat of the fiery overhead sun they turned into blackened spots, which afterwards cracked into various designs. They fascinated Kranz. In pop-eyed horror he watched them through the afternoon.

It was Peel who spoke after hours of grilling work.

"My God, Miller!" he expostulated, dashing the sweat from his face, "you don't mean to say that you're keepin' on to San Miguel. That's nearly one hundred miles away, and the two of us couldn't row there in less than three days. We're not machines! This boat is too heavy for a single pair of oars. I'm about all in now!"

"We're going to San Miguel," declared Miller. He raised the revolver menacingly, meaningly.

"What's the great idea?" insisted Peel. "You can't get rid of the stuff there!"

Miller was silent for a moment. Emotions, many and varied, played on his thin countenance.

"These relics are going back to the church," he said at last. "Let me tell you something: I was brought up in the church when I was young, but I forgot its teachings. I was not impressed. I laughed at everything. I drifted low, very low. I have commanded a bloody pirate junk down on the south coast. Men have tried to kill me, many of them," he shrugged his thin shoulders and sighed self-appraisingly, "and I laughed as I killed *them* instead!"

"Harris, for example," interjected Peel grimly, "only you didn't laugh then!"

"This fever has been wasting me for weeks. The thought of death caused me no concern until last night. It was your wanton shooting of that monk that served to awaken me. It came to me that I may have but a short time to live, and that I must make my peace with God the best I can before I go. There is little I can do —return these sacred chalices to the church where they have been for centuries is all perhaps.

"I want to get them to San Miguel, where the Bishop is, and seek absolution from him. To have that curse lifted. '*May these sacrilegists never know Christian burial!*' is what the nun screamed. That bothers me, Peel; it troubles me!" He paused, and breathed heavily from exhaustion.

"Aw, you and your curses make me sick," jeered Peel. "What difference does Christian burial make? When you're dead, you're dead, and that's all there is to it. I know! 'Live while you can,' is my motto. A big chance you've got of gettin' to San Miguel, you and your notions. In a day or two where'll you be for lack of sleep? Why, you ain't got a chance! You ain't strong enough to tie a knot that would hold us!"

"Perhaps," said Miller, setting his jaw stubbornly, "but you chuck a little weight on that oar and we'll arrive sooner, for we are going to San Miguel."

A long, slate-gray shadow crept silently alongside the boat from astern.

"Christian burial!" drawled Peel with a sneer. "That tiger-shark is all the Christian burial you'll be getting. When you insist on headin' for San Miguel, you're only bitin' off a man-sized chunk that'll choke yuh. We'll be gettin' all the junk, 'stead of havin' to split with you."

"Ye-es?" said Miller. "I'll tell you this, Peel: if I can't hold out until we reach San Miguel, I'll at least see that it ain't left for you to trade for rotten pleasures. They're too sacred to be touched by your dirty hands."

Peel smiled sardonically, and well he might. Four strong men had staggered and sweated under the weight of the chest in bringing it to the beach. Two of them could scarcely lift it between them. The chest was safe now in the bottom of the boat, for Miller could never budge it. Peel reasoned.

Throughout the day the two oarsmen labored, working their hearts out under the menace of Miller's gun, and the terrible threat of no water if they soldiered on the job. At intervals of rest Miller doled water out to them, a gill at a time. In the late afternoon they slept, for Peel had fallen from his seat in a stupor caused by shear weariness.

And ever silently following them was the shark, eighteen hungry feet of ominous, grim expectancy, for the best meal in many a day had come from this boat.

Miller watched it dreamily, half in horror. A little, blue-striped pilot fish darted up to the head of the shark as though delivering a message. He shuddered.

Peel's callous words rang in his ears:

"That tiger-shark is all the Christian burial you'll be gettin'!" Miller shivered again, then caught himself with a start. "Must be losing my nerve," he thought. The possibility threw a fright into him. One thought obsessed him. He awakened the sleepers, and with threats and curses drove them at the oars through the night, drove them to the limit of their endurance.

By early morning Miller was delirious. He raved of his boyhood home. An uncle had been a parish priest. The church had grown to be a nightmare to the lad of wild instincts. In his delirium he made attempts at repeating the Lord's prayer, but he had forgotten it. He essayed the ten commandments, but did little better. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," was the part he repeated over and over again, and he appeared to be speaking to Peel.

Peel watched him keenly, debating with himself as to whether or not Miller still retained sufficient of his faculties to shoot should he attempt to rush him.

Miller's ravings at last began to irritate Peel. "Belay that guff, Miller!" he burst out. "You'll be singing a hymn next!"

Miller recovered himself with a start. "And if I do, you'll have to join in the chorus!" he retorted.

The monotonous thump of the oars in the tholepins seemed to want to lull him into disastrous slumber. Every nerve in his tortured body craved rest. His eyelids seemed weighted. Twice, he dozed momentarily in spite of himself, but awakened each time at the jerk of his head as it fell forward on his chest. He bathed his face and eyes in sea-water, and the sting of the salt on his drawn skin afforded a scant relief. It was short at best, and after each repetition it grew still shorter, and the desire for sleep came back threefold.

He managed to stand erect, and gazed around toward the horizon. Nothing was to be seen but the gently heaving surface of the blue-black sea with its glassy swells that reflected the horrible glare in a manner that hurt his tired and burning eyes. Fifty miles they were from land, and as much more from the nearest steamer lane.

He sat down heavily upon the chest, and for a brief period grew light-headed and babbled incoherently. Peel and Kranz had again slumped into the bottom of the boat. They slept audibly, with their heads in the scant shade of the seats.

Miller looked at them absently for a while, then his gaze wandered to the bow of the boat. It fell on the painter, neatly coiled, six fathoms of stout three-inch Manila line.

"Huh!" he muttered with a sour grin. "And Peel said that I couldn't tie him. Damned if he didn't bluff me!"

Reeling and staggering giddily, he made his way to the bow, climbing over the seats and avoiding the sleepers. With the painter in one hand, he prodded Kranz with the revolver barrel.

"Sit up!" he ordered quietly. "No, sit in the bottom with your shoulders against the thwart."

It was an ingenious method Miller had devised. He led the line over the seat, under Kranz's chin, and back over the seat. Then he ran it under the seat, tight around Kranz's chest, beneath his arms, and back under the seat again.

He did this all from behind, with the revolver ever handy, to obviate any chance of Kranz's grappling with him. He shoved the revolver muzzle against Kranz's head.

"Off with your belt!" he ordered.

Miller used the belt to strap Kranz's arms behind him, drawing the leather tight just above the elbows. He then awakened Peel, and repeated the process of binding on the next thwart. Making the end of the rope fast to the after thwart, he sank back, satisfied. Both men were securely lashed to their seats by an endless line, and their arms pinioned effectively to prevent their picking the rope strands apart or assisting each other.

Almost exhausted by his efforts, Miller lay down to sleep. On he slept through the afternoon and through the night, heedless of the cries for relief, and the threats and blasphemies of his hungry, thirsty and cramped captives. For fully eighteen hours he slept. When he finally awoke he was much refreshed, but was even weaker physically than before. He released the men, and passed out food and water. Then he ordered them to the oars again.

It was high noon when he allowed them to rest, and they immediately tumbled into the bottom of the boat.

For hours Miller let them sleep, too apathetic to arouse them. He knew he was lost, for the boat had drifted far from their course while he slept. At times he sank into a state of semi-drowsiness, a morbid stupor. He aroused himself, and for a space keenly watched the sleepers.

He dropped to his knees before the chest, and lifted the cover. On top of the precious heap lay a huge crucifix of solid gold set with large rubies. Red and glowing, their bloody effulgence flashed in the sunlight. Miller crossed himself as he gazed upon it. / Reverently, he finally lifted the cross.

Half an hour later he closed the chest and sat down upon it, feeling satisfied that his purpose had been well accomplished.

Peel and Kranz still slept.

Once more Miller began to grow delirious. Over the side of the boat, not eight feet away, the glistening fin of the man-eater cut smoothly through the water. It glided along with scarcely a ripple.

A small, pale, cruel, glary eye looked up at him. His unstrung nerves made him scream in terror, then in futile rage he put a bullet hole through the fin. Again he shot, and still again, and the fin disappeared.

Peel and Kranz sat up and rubbed their eyes.

"Out with the oars!" screamed Miller, "and pull like hell! Row, damn you, row! Leave it behind! Leave it behind! It's after me! It's after me!"

For a mile the men tugged and sweated at the oars in deadly fear of the raving madman who sat on the chest in the stern and waved a gun, and cursed, and reviled them as he urged them to greater effort.

And then—Miller wilted!

His nerveless fingers relaxed. The revolver dropped with a clatter. Back against the tiller he collapsed like a pricked bubble.

Like jackals, Peel and Kranz dropped their oars, and stumbled over the seats to the treasure chest. Peel's foot collided with the water-breaker, and upset it, but neither of them heeded the accident in the slightest, so intent were they upon reveling in the riches for which they had sweated and suffered all the agonies of hell in the past few days. They wanted to get their fingers upon it, to feel it, to know it was there.

Roughly, they pulled Miller from the chest. Jointly, jealously, suddenly suspicious of each other, they threw back the lid. Peel gasped! Simultaneously, each looked at the other.

The chest was empty!

For a moment neither spoke. Peel glanced down at Miller.

"Curse his heart! The preachin' knave got the best of us after all. Shoved the last bit of gold overboard, as he said he would. Damn him! He can follow it!" He started to drag the unconscious man out from under the after thwart, but at the exclamation of horror from Kranz at discovering the loss of the water, he dropped Miller.

The catastrophe was overwhelming. Turned over by Peel's hasty and unheeding foot, the precious fluid had gurgled out and mingled with the blackened and dirty sea-water in the bottom of the boat.

They found their oars were missing. Left in the tholepins in the hasty rush aft, they had slid out into the sea. The momentum of the boat had carried it five or six fathoms from the floating oars, and the distance was widening.

Peel looked at the oars, kicked off his shoes and made ready to swim for them, but he paused.

A triangular dorsal fin, with three clean-cut bullet holes through the cartilage, glided lazily, Nemesis-like, between the boat and the oars.

They looked at each other helplessly again. Each felt the cold, clammy hand of an unseen being laid upon him. Kranz licked his lips. His mouth was too dry for words. Then he dropped on his knees in the bottom of the boat. He lifted his head, and raised his clasped hands weakly.

With the habitual sneer on his cruel lips, the beachcomber looked down at the kneeling man and scoffed. But the sneer gradually faded, as the full realization of their predicament came over him. A moment later, Peel, too, was kneeling.

"Say, Dutchy," he whispered huskily, "what was that stuff Miller was sayin' about 'No other Gods before Me'? Was that a prayer?"

"Nein! I vill teach you von!"

They had both failed to notice the black cloud approaching swiftly from the north. Came a few fitful gusts of wind, and then the tropical squall burst upon them with all its fury. The rain poured in torrents, at times almost driven in a horizontal sheet by the furious blast.

Peel leaped to the bow, as the boat spun around. By luck he managed to catch a floating oar as they drifted past it in the grasp of the wind. He was a seaman, and knew the boat would be swamped if it lay in the trough when the sea arose. Quickly, he took a turn of the painter around the oar as a makeshift oarlock over the bow, and swung the double-loaded boat to drive before the gale.

With Kranz bailing frantically, and Miller lying unconscious at the other end of the boat, the beachcomber strained at the improvised steering oar. Hour after hour he steadily held the little craft to the southward as it drove before wind and sea. Cold, hungry, weary, and all but exhausted, it was only his enormous strength that enabled him to hold out.

Night came. The boat still drove. The wind had settled down to a steady gale. Peel, with anxious eyes endeavoring to penetrate the gloom ahead, began to wonder where they would fetch up. He had long since lost all idea of direction. His only hope was to keep the tiny craft afloat. When handled properly, a whaleboat is a good sea boat, and with the desperation of a cornered animal fighting for its life, Peel struggled with the sea.

At midnight, he saw a broad line of phosphorous through the spume ahead. To the right and the left it stretched out as far as his vision could reach in the darkness. He knew it to be breakers. With this mountainous sea running, perhaps it meant the end. He didn't care, he was so utterly tired and cold.

Summoning his last remaining energy, he managed to keep the bow of the boat headed towards the beach when it was caught in the maw of the surf. They rode on the summit of a curling breaker. At express-train speed it carried them in towards the shore. When it broke, it left them behind in the whitened water. The steering oar snapped into two pieces. The boat broached to. The next breaker capsized it.

Peel and Kranz were thrown into the water. Miller was beneath the boat, caught in the thwart. A third breaker, following closely, dashed the two against the side of the overturned craft with stunning force.

When the tropical dawn came, it saw two bodies stiff and stark on the beach. They were Peel and Kranz. The stoved-in boat lay just beyond the reach of the surf. Miller had disappeared.

Some months later two officials stood on the deck of the government steamer, as it lay at the dock of San Sebastian, two miles from Santa Marta Mission.

Three monks came onto the pier to supervise the distribution of the cargo of supplies, which was destined for the mission. One of the three was hollow-eyed, esthetic looking.

"Say," remarked one of the officials after scrutinizing him closely, "doesn't that monk remind you of Miller? Remember Miller, the man who shot Scanlon in Hong Kong? Bad record, he had!"

"He does resemble him a little," replied the other official, "but that is Brother Luis. He is working out some great penance. Miller would never be doing that. He wasn't that kind of a man!"

Brother Luis overheard. He turned away to hide the peculiar smile which played for a moment on his thin lips.

THE STRIKE AT NEALY'S

BY EARL H. EMMONS

There are strikes for higher wages and strikes for shorter hours, sympathy strikes and hunger strikes; but this story deals with none of them. It introduces something absolutely new in the strike line.

AT five in the morning, Buck Ellis was sleepily pushing a dirty wet rag back and forth along the bar when the doors of the dingy saloon were kicked open and Nealy, misanthropic philanthropist and owner of the Twelfth Avenue dive, strode in. That is, he gave as good an imitation of striding as his condition would permit, which was hardly a success, because Nealy had just come from an all-night champagne party.

Ellis, a hard-faced, blear-eyed product of the underworld, glanced at his employer disinterestedly and continued his scrubbing. Nealy's gaze wandered around the empty room; he hung his cane on his arm and lurched against the bar.

"Well," he growled huskily, "how's business?"

"Nothin' doin'," replied his employee, and went on wiping the near-mahogany.

"Nothin' doin'!" repeated Nealy, and his big face colored.

"Say, what's the matter with this bunch of live-stock? What's the matter with you? Didn't I tell you I needed the dough?"

"Now look here," grated Ellis, as he leaned forward, "don't get mussy with me 'cause I don't stand fer it. I been givin' 'em the number eight prescription ever since you told me, but don't think I'm goin' to knock somebody in the head fer you or anybody else. Get me?"

For an instant, the two men glared at each other. Then the boss averted his eyes.

"Who's next?" he asked.

"Accordin' to the looks of things, Miller is due with Hoffman runner-up an—"

"Miller! Hoffman!" exploded Nealy. "Miller and Hoffman be damned! Where's Quinn? Is this place goin' to be turned into an old-folks' home or is it goin' to continue a business proposition? What about Quinn?"

Ellis remained undisturbed. "Didn't show up last night," he replied. "Guess he slept in an alley."

Nealy seemed on the verge of apoplexy. "Alley, hell!" he said, and banged his fist down. "More likely he got himself pinched and will be kept in until he sobers up. What d'you let him get away for?"

"Say, that's about enough from you," threatened Ellis. "If you don't like the way I run this joint you get somebody else, see!"

"Now listen, Buck," the owner soothed; "I ain't meanin' anything, but you know how long that rum-hound has hung on here and he's the most expensive proposition we've got on hand. Last week, when he began throwin' fits—well, I thought he was about due so I—you see, I sort of figured things was comin' strong and I plunged a little deeper than usual on the prospects. Business has been so cussed dull I finally had to mortgage the place to pay the last premiums and if something don't break pretty soon, we're goin' to be in a devil of a fix for cash."

Buck Ellis, cooled down to normal again, leaned his head on his hands, stared at his bar rag and tried to appear deeply concerned.

"You know, Buck," Nealy went on, "Quinn is the prize of this bunch, because I played him to the limit, and if we don't collect quick we're goin' to be up against it."

Ellis still seemed engaged in solving some difficult problem and did not reply.

Nealy shifted his position, leaned his back against the bar, propped his elbows against the edge and stared at, but not through, the dirty windows. "If only that bird would go out and get in front of a truck like McCabe, or walk off the dock like Kane, or mix in a few free-for-alls,—but he won't. He's too cussed careful for this business and if we don't get some results soon, we'll have to drop him—and a lot more, too."

Truly, here was a discouraging situation. For the first time since he had opened his business three years before, Charles Nealy, saloon-owner, misanthropic philanthropist, friend of the down-and-outs and man-about-town of the lower order, found himself in financial difficulties which promised, or threatened, ruin. And it was such a good business, too.

It had all started when a derelict drifted in one cold night and made his unusual offer. He would have his life insured and made payable to Nealy if Nealy would give him a place to sleep and a drink occasionally while he was out of work. The proposition was startling at first, even to the Twelfth Avenue saloon-keeper, but the deal was finally made.

Then came the treatment. First, the derelict was sobered up, cleaned, shaved, put into a cheap but new suit of clothes and made to look fairly respectable. Then, with a tale of woe, he was able to secure a policy for five hundred dollars, payable to Nealy, his "brother." He then had a drink or two with his well-meaning benefactor and started out to look for work.

Work, somehow, seemed to have an elusive way of dodging him, but his thirst stayed on and then, one night, after tramping the streets all day and going without food, he had two or three drinks of the chemical Nealy called "whiskey" and, owing to his weakened condition, he fell to the floor in a spasm.

It was then that Nealy conceived an idea and when the derelict was again on his feet, his benefactor was kinder to him than ever. There was no mention of work, but always there was plenty to drink, and presently work was entirely forgotten and the man settled down to the business of drinking himself to death, while Nealy cheerfully paid premiums on the policy and dealt out the liquor.

Then, after a few days, Nealy began experimenting. He mixed things with the whiskey for his patient. He tried a little wood alcohol, a trifle of strychnine, and did what he could to help things along. Before the new suit was worn out, his investment fell on the street in delirium tremens, was taken to the police station, and the next morning completed his part of the agreement.

When he collected the five hundred, Nealy sat down and figured up. He entered the price of the suit, the so-called examination fee, the three monthly premiums, estimated the cost of the whiskey, threw in a substantial amount for incidentals and discovered he had cleared nearly three hundred dollars.

This was a moderate beginning, to be sure, but the idea had fixed itself in the saloon-keeper's mind and he was ambitious. Thus he became the friend of the down-and-outs, the misanthropic philanthropist, and in due time acquired his other titles.

It was hard work at first. He had to rent the floor above his saloon and fit it up with bunks; he had to work out a system of treatment for preparing the candidates so they would pass inspection; he had to acquire numberless aliases so that he could be the "brother" to his various investments and, hardest of all, he had to make a study of the insurance companies, minor lodges and benefit organizations, which were lax enough to suit his purpose.

But the business had grown. He had worked hard, during that first year, and though the disappointments were many, yet he prospered. Sometimes, after he had made the initial investment for clothes, soap, etc., his candidates would be refused by the companies. Sometimes after the deal was made, the insured would not stick, but above all, there had been a substantial profit and Nealy finally was able to hire a bartender so that he could devote his own time to outside business and pleasure.

During the next two years, things had

gone along fine. The system was changed and improved—from Nealy's standpoint. He had eliminated his free-lunch counter, reasoning that if his investments did not eat they would drink more and thereby hasten the happy end. He had worked out a good training course to prepare his candidates to pass the examination. He had branched out and used insurance companies in nearby towns. He had devised a well-planned series of treatments, whereby his charges were each day given stronger mixtures than the day previous, so that they were brought gradually, but surely, to the point where the deal was finished with a flourish. Then he had placed knives in handy places and was gratified when he saw one missing, for he hoped that quarrels might start among his investments, and knives would help materially in bringing in cash returns. Finally, Nealy had found an outlet for the by-product of his business. He received from twenty to fifty dollars from colleges for each of his protegés after he had finished with them.

So the business had gone merrily along until the coming of Quinn. Nealy had debated with himself at length before taking Quinn, because he looked too healthy, despite the fact that he was shattered by drink. Nealy realized that it would take longer to realize on Quinn than on his customary candidates, but the fact that he was able to secure a policy for four times the ordinary amount made the newcomer a desirable prize.

Thus does a little thing sometimes upset great expectations, as a pebble may start an avalanche or a mouse break up a suffrage meeting. From the day Quinn joined the ranks there was trouble. First, he couldn't drink enough. A few glasses of the stuff Buck Ellis dealt out would put him to sleep before he had had enough to do real harm. There were times when he even stooped so low as to ask for beer, and Nealy suspicioned he was frequenting other saloons where free lunch was served and all this tended to offset the treatment and postpone collection day.

So the friend of the down-and-outs was worried. He had spent so much money lately that he could not meet the premiums and had to mortgage his place. Now, more premiums were rapidly becoming due and unless some of his charges gave him the necessary assistance by climbing the Golden Stair, he might lose his business.

And at the very minute he was leaning on the bar, pondering over these things, more trouble was brewing, but he was blissfully ignorant of it. At that minute Quinn was leaning against a friendly post in a nearby alley, giving a correct imitation of a novice on the high seas.

Quinn's stomach had never been robust despite his healthy appearance and when, the night before, after consuming several doses of Buck's prescription number eight,—a mixture of whiskey and strychnine,—he had stepped out to get some fresh air, his system rebelled. When the uprising took place Quinn was wandering through an alley. The cramps tied complicated knots in his entrails and he crawled under a back stoop, curled up and bade the world farewell.

Never before had Nealy come so near to realizing on an investment without collecting, but when daylight came, Quinn awakened to the fact that he still was several per cent alive although his stomach felt as if it had been kicked by a mule. It was some time before he could balance himself sufficiently to permit successful locomotion, and just as he did so an idea struck him. It was the first idea he had had for a long while and he had to steady himself once more against his friendly post while he figured out his problem. All at once he reached the solution,—food, he needed food. He knew it; and right there trouble in allopathic doses began to accumulate for the misanthropic philanthropist.

Two hours later, after Quinn had consumed a five-course breakfast,—one course in each of five saloons,—he slipped up the back stairway into the upper room, over Nealy's place, where the "flops" were located.

They were all there,—Nealy's investments,—in various stages of intoxication, poisoning and odor; and after several minutes of earnest effort, Quinn managed to get his audience propped up in the back of the room, which was over the storehouse and beyond hearing distance of the bar.

Then he began his oration. At first he was kept busy knocking heads together to keep his hearers awake, but finally he succeeded in getting his message across. He told them the facts as he had figured them out. Nealy, instead of being a benefactor, was, in reality, a crook. He was taking an unfair advantage of them by serving no free lunch, thus forcing them to drink more, so he could collect the insurance money sooner.

"Of course, y' understand," Quinn told them, "I ain't findin' fault with th' general plan. The old man picks us up an' gives us a place to flop an' all we want t' drink fer th' privilege o' insurin' our carcasses so's t' get paid back when we kick off. As a business proposition an' from a human'tarium standpoint it's all right; but the Declaration o' Independence gives every guy th' right t' eat, drink an' pursue happiness, an' when the eats is missin' we ain't gettin' our—our legal rights!"

Quinn was not totally familiar with his subject or constitutional privileges, but his hearers were impressed, and amid many hiccoughs they agreed with him.

"This mornin'," continued the orator, "I was ready t' kick th' bucket, I was that weak an' sick; an' if I had tooka coupla drinks I woulda been laid out by this time wit' a lily in me han', but all at once I thinks o' me rights an' I nearly cleaned out all th' chuck in a half-a-dozen gin mills, an' look at me now."

His audience looked at him and he went on:

"There's only one thing t' do, brothers, an' we're gonna do it. We're gonna strike!"

The audience straightened up, hiccoughed two or three rounds and waited.

"Yes, sir," continued Quinn, "we're gonna strike. They's been wage-strikes an' hour-strikes, sympathy-strikes, an' hunger strikes, an' they all got what they wanted. If they can do it, we can do it. We're gonna have a thirst strike!"

This statement caused a stir. Part of Quinn's hearers looked at him with admiration, others in fear, for there wasn't one among them who wouldn't, at that very moment, sell not only his body, but throw his soul in for good measure for a drink, yet they waited. The members of this motley gathering had always pursued the course of least resistance and had been helped along by kicks, until they thought there was no other road.

Now it filtered slowly through their whiskey-soaked brains that collectively they were a power; they began to see the importance of organization and were anxious to try it out.

"As I said," continued the speaker, "I was ready t' kick off until I got a mess o' chow. Look 't me now! An' hereafter I'm goin' t' have chuck er I don' drink. If I don' drink I'll live longer an' th' old man 'll go broke payin' insurance dues. There's the system, gem'men; an' now if yo're mutts an' ain't got sand 'nough t' get what's comin' t' yo', go ahead an' starve, but if yer have foller me an' show this bloke we know our rights an' that we're gonna have 'em!"

Quinn's speech was a mixture of patent-medicine testimonial and the address of Spartacus to the Gladiators at Capua, and it got across with a majority vote.

"Now," announced the leader, "we're gonna march down an' deliver our ultimater—an' any guy that tries t' sneak a drink by is gonna feel somethin' sharp an' pointed in his ribs. March!"

Nealy was awakened by a violent ringing of the telephone in his apartment. He swore mildly and answered. As he listened his dissipated face grew two shades paler and his profanity increased with a running jump.

When he reached his saloon, his worst fears were realized. Buck Ellis, calm and unconcerned, was listlessly wiping an unoccupied bar. Nealy glared savagely around the room. Buck nodded toward the stairway, and the friend of the down-and-outs charged upwards.

To Buck Ellis, there drifted fragments of outrageous language, among which he caught such words as, "ungrateful curs—

think this is a boarding house?—home for bums,—in hell first."

Then came a crash and a muffled revolver shot, followed an instant later by a stampede of feet down the back stairs, then dead silence.

For a space Buck Ellis stood perfectly still, even forgetting to mop the bar. Then he rushed up the steps and fell over two forms. One was Miller, the investment scheduled to fall due next. He had a hole through his head and a knife in each hand. Beside him lay Nealy with more holes in his anatomy than had Cæsar after Brutus had staged his little affair.

"Yeh," explained Buck to the police a little later, "th' old man musta been jumped on by this guy first an' shot the' bloke through the head as he went down. No, they wasn't nobody else in th' place at the time."

Later he condoled with himself thus: "Gee, the mortgage 'll clean up th' joint an' I'll lose me job. I oughta had th' old man insured; I sure oughta had him insured."

NEXT month: BIG BROTHER *by John Matter,* an entertaining story in which a Chicago truck driver tries homesteading on the Arctic Circle. He finds that he has a longing for the soft coal smoke, the hot, spongy asphalt, the lake ozone and the glad lights of Chicago, with a big, cool drink of beer for good measure. But most of all, he wishes to collect a debt; and the realization of his wish enables him to figure a net profit without turning over the soil of his homestead acres.

WITHOUT THE LAW

BY JOSEPH T. KESCEL

Waiting for Justice is generally a painful and expensive operation. The youth may be excused who becomes impatient, takes off his coat, and starts something, especially when he has just made up his mind to fight for himself "and a woman forever and ever. Amen."

BEFORE Norton was fairly inside the "Iron Dollar" bunkhouse, everyone within earshot knew something out of the ordinary had happened.

"Boys! I've been kited off my claim!" He spat the words out in a tone that showed his feelings had been downright ruffled.

"What's this? What's this?" sang out half a dozen miners, crowding around him.

"Chased off my claim! Thirty minutes ago, Big John Cardiff and five of his pug-nosed man-eaters breezed into my cabin and boosted me outside. Cardiff's Winchester jabbed against my ribs made me listen to his explanations. 'Be ready to beat it right after I finish talking,' he said, giving me an extra jab with the muzzle. 'What right you got holding this ground without fulfilling government requirements? You know you haven't done a hundred dollars' worth of work. I'm taking possession here and it's your move. Get across the boundary line, and remember something will surely happen if your feet accidentally turn this way. A while ago, I offered you a good price for this claim and you turned it down, but that was before I looked up your title!' A nod from the big scut, and I was Spanished over the side lines—"

"You mean to say that frog-faced thug bounced you off your own claim?" one of the boys broke in.

"Yep. Spanished. Danced over the side line with two of Cardiff's bung starters holding me by the bosom of my trousers and coat collar! I tried fighting 'em, but couldn't lick a whole truck load." He had worked up a real fighting face that spelled trouble for someone, while spilling his hard luck story to the bunch.

Almost two years before this little seance, Frank Norton had headed straight for Montana after leaving his home in York State. His father owned one of those big dairy farms so common in Orange County. Cows, and all grades of milk, from A to where the grades stop, were entirely familiar to the youngster even before the old man mapped out a course for his son at Cornell.

"Dad," young Norton had repeatedly said, "yelling 'so-o-o, Bossy,' and chasing calves is all right for those that like it, but I don't. I'd rather try my chances in the West."

"My son, I'm surprised," Pa Norton had many times replied. While Ma Norton had as often snorted, "Well, I declare! To think a son of mine should want to go way out West! Something terrible would surely happen to him among those blood-thirsty people he's certain to meet."

The old folks finally gave in and the youngster hit the trail, leaving the live-stock in care of Pa Norton and his four other sons.

Frank could have made the trip to Council Creek sooner, had he paid his way and gone as a passenger. Or, if walking had been better, the time could have been cut down considerably.

Day was just breaking, several weeks later, when he dropped from a freight and grinned up at the conductor and two brakemen who had chased him over a long line of box cars.

Council Creek, like a great many other places, looked better on the map than in reality. It was a lively little place, however, being the headquarters for several large freight outfits which supplied the towns and mines back from the railroad. On the return trip to Council Creek, the wagons, almost as big as box cars, would be loaded with ore or anything else that could be picked up to make a paying load.

One of these wagons, standing close beside the track, caught Norton's eye. "She's a wagon, all right. for there are the wheels," he said aloud, taking it in from every angle. "I wonder what's in her." He swung a foot onto the hub of a front wheel and drew himself up. A second step, and his foot rested on the broad tire. Then his head went over the edge of the wagon body,. for a peek inside. His curiosity was over satisfied as a sawed-off shotgun touched his nose.

"What you want?" Billy Freeman, who spent the night guarding two hundred sacks of rich ore, asked the question, while thumbing the hammers of his gun.

"Nothing. I was just looking over your wagon. Never saw one like it before."

Freeman sized Norton up for something above an ore thief, and lowered his sawed-off. A few minutes later, though, he half wished he hadn't, for the kid began shooting out questions like a gatling gun.

"You say the rock in those bags is ore?"

"Yup."

"Real ore from the mines?"

"No, not from the mines. It's picked from the trees—just before they go to seed."

Norton laughed, but his curiosity was still unsatisfied. "Do you mind if I lift one?"

"Nope. Fact is, all of 'em have to be loaded into a car, and the job's yours if you want it."

Norton's right hand shot down before Freeman had finished speaking, and his fingers fastened onto a sack corner the same as he would have grabbed a bag of feed back on the farm.

"Gee! But she's heavy!" he grunted, as his fingers slipped off. "Who'd ever think a little bag like that would weigh so much?" A second attempt with both hands, and he jerked it up, his face wrinkling into a smile.

Freeman had sized the kid up for a tenderfoot, before this. Also, he had figured him regular man, and he wasn't downhearted when Norton asked if he might make the trip with him back to the Iron Dollar.

That ride, forty miles across country from Council Creek, was an eye-popper for the youngster. He was as tickled as a jack rabbit gormandizing in a cabbage patch. The twenty-four horses strung out ahead of the wagon, and guided by a jerk line, claimed some of his attention. He tried not to overlook anything, though, and kept his head swinging around like a weathercock. While his eyes were taking in the country, his tongue wigwagged at Freeman continuously. But what tickled him the most was being headed for the mines,—the mines, where a few days' work sometimes turned off a fortune! A year or so, and he would go back home with a stack of bills bigger than a bale of hay. He was feeling mighty frisky when he bumped up against me, holding down my job as foreman of the Iron Dollar mine.

"Mr. Quigley?"

I looked up from a pile of gold ore, and took him in. Right away, I liked him, every bit of him, from his black hair, smiling eyes, and good-natured face right down to his number ten shoes.

"That's me," I finally drawled. "What you want?"

"I'm looking for a job."

"Miner?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I can make use of you." That night his name was written on the timebook, and behind it, the word "mucker."

One peek into a freight wagon when his curiosity registered about six hundred degrees Fahrenheit, had mapped out a big change for old man Norton's favorite son. With his head up, he went at his new work, of shoveling the broken ore underground. Before the first month rolled by, he'd passed the muckers' stage, and pounded a drill with the miners. And before three monthly pay checks had been cashed, he thought he knew as much about mining as anyone in the camp, even Fred Wilson, the superintendent. He tackled the game from every angle, including books, and his enthusiasm always registered the high mark on the thermometer.

His first visit to Wilson's was to borrow a book on mining. His second, was to return it; that volume of five hundred pages having been read in one evening, so he unblushingly declared. Record breaking work that; especially when on every page, mixed with gold, silver, copper, and the earth's formations, was a wavy mass of light golden hair, two dancing blue eyes, and a mighty pretty face that peeped at him between the lines.

He'd met Evelyn Wilson the first time he called at her father's. The second time, she met him at the door. After that, there was a bonanza pay streak in their eyes every time they looked at each other.

Evelyn was one of those girls that made you think, "I'm glad I know her." Tall, fine looking, and just a dandy disposition. Twenty-one, a year or so younger than the kid, and also a graduate of some highbrow factory. Most natural thing in the world that she and Norton should keep on cultivating their minds. Natural thing, also, that while they sat side by side poring over quartz, granite, porphyry, dykes, dips, spurs and angles of a vein, etc., something else should develop.

His case had been worse than a bad dose of valvular palpitation of the heart since their first meeting. Maybe a person shouldn't make remarks about the ladies, but her symptoms were pretty much the same as his.

A few months of working for wages, and Norton began scouting around for a mine of his own. Down below the Iron Dollar, was a big copper outcrop. Most everyone in the district knew about it. Also, everybody knew the ore was very low grade. Even the youngster knew it, but he was looking farther ahead than the rest of us; and after he had put up stakes, calling the claim the "Marion"—Evelyn's middle name—nothing could move him excepting human brutes such as Cardiff and his gang.

Big John had become intensely interested in Norton's claim when he learned that many low grade copper propositions were paying good dividends. In fact, he became so interested that the Marion was soon completely surrounded by ground upon which he had posted location notices. The youngster had the choice claim, however, and without it the rest didn't amount to much.

Cardiff knew where he could unload the whole group at a mighty big price, and he went after the Marion. His offer of a few hundred dollars was turned down right pronto. Being so durned grasping, he wouldn't raise his bid and hustled to his lawyer.

"Give the kid what he asks. You'll get it back, ten times over," was the lawyer's counsel.

"But he wants fifty thousand dollars."

"Give it to him."

"No, sir! Nothing doing at that price!"

The lawyer wrinkled his nose. "Well—I—I— there is another way open."

"What's that? Give it to me."

"Possession is nine points of the law. Boost him off on the last day of December. Get your location notice into the recorder's office right after midnight. He's done the required amount of work all right," said the lawyer easily, "but it'll be no trouble for you to get witnesses to swear that he hasn't. With you and your men on the ground, nothing but a law suit will help him, and mighty few people are buying those, nowadays."

The Marion looked so good to Cardiff that he was on the spot all harnessed for business by three o'clock on the day set by the lawyer. His hopes were running pretty high after he'd chased Norton off his own claim; while the youngster's were down in the cellar.

Sympathy never bounced six well-heeled men very far, and sympathy was all we could offer. The only shooters around the bunkhouse were a twenty-two target rifle and a shotgun; not exactly the weapons to bristle up against a half dozen Winchesters. The West isn't what it used to be, when everyone kept a gun hot on his hip. Suggestions and advice were wirelessed from all sides with a lot of feeling. They're all right, but they're no more use than blank cartridges against heeled claim jumpers. Maybe Norton hadn't done double the amount of work required by the govenment to hold a claim. I would have sworn that he had, though, and so would anyone else that understood mining. A lot of time which might have been put to better advantage sinking a shaft, was put into a five-room log house.

Along in the summer, he'd got a letter from the old folks, saying they would pay him a visit right after New Year's. He said that was the reason for being so particular about a place to live. Maybe it was, but everybody around the Iron Dollar linked that job of house building with Evelyn.

When the kid saw that all we were able to give him that thirty-first of December was sympathy and advice, he bolted from the bunkhouse and hustled to his girl. Right then, it looked as if Pa and Ma Norton would be obliged to enjoy Montana's untropical climate in some other place than their son's new home. Already, the youngster could fancy the old man saying with a grin, "Guess they've put one over on you!" Also, Ma Norton's, "Land sakes! It's just what you could expect in such a country!"

By the time young Norton reached Wilson's, his mad was almost kicking his hat off.

Sitting side by side, holding each other's hands, he and Evelyn went into consultation. He was pretty much excited, but she only looked grave. "I wish father were here," she said, sort of mournful. "He might help us. But as he isn't, we'll have to do our best."

Norton jumped up. "I'll try to catch him at Council Creek, by 'phone. No, they have outfigured us and cut the wire!" While he had been twisting the telephone handle and yelling into the transmitter, a lot of ideas had been sprouting under his scalp. "Gr-r-r-r! I'll blow them up! That big scut isn't going to get away with this!"

"No, no! You mustn't! Not that!"

"But you wouldn't expect me to let him get away with this without doing something?"

"No-o-o, but there must be some other way. Besides, you could never reach the house without being seen. The law—"

"The law will do us a lot of good tomorrow! It's up to you and me, Evelyn, to get those coyotes off the claim—and get them off before midnight. I've figured out how it can be done."

"How?"

"I could use the aerial tramway. Scatter the house all over the hillside, with no danger to myself."

"The aerial tramway! That gives me an idea of my own."

Immediately, the consultation became a real pow-wow. The little scheme they hatched out during the next ten minutes, once more showed that brains are aces ahead of brute strength.

Norton was sizzling with excitement when he came bouncing into the bunkhouse again.

In the hour he had been away, we'd everyone worked up a new batch of suggestions. Half a dozen of us opened up the instant he stepped inside, but we were cut short.

"Boys," he snapped, "if you'll give me a hand, they're going to vamoose."

"Sure!" everybody chorused. The man with the target rifle grabbed the pea shooter, while the owner of the shotgun slipped two loaded shells into the barrels.

The world was mighty little older when all hands hit the collar with a rush; a fifty-pound case of high per cent dynamite occupying everyone's attention, even the girl's. We were working against time, for that job had to be completed before dark. The light was still good when we filed into the loading station of the tramway, which had been installed for the cheap transportation of the Iron Dollar's low grade ore to the mill, some two miles distant. Where the tramway passed over Norton's house, the cables which supported the buckets were nearly a hundred feet up in the air.

Norton carefully placed a crate of dull yellow bundles in one of the buckets. Three fuses, with their ends cut ready for the match, protruded from between the slats. The opposite ends of the fuses were lost in three rolls of heavy oiled paper, whose sides displayed the trade-mark, "Strong Arm Powder Company." A long rope was carefully coiled beside the crate, before the youngster buttoned his mackinaw and squared his shoulders for the real business.

Most of the men had already streaked it downstairs to the ground, when the kid took the girl in his arms and kissed her. "You're a brick, little girl!" he whispered.

She snuggled close to him for a moment, and he then stepped into the bucket. "Let 'er go!" he sang out, while crouching down until only his head showed above the bucket's edge. He blew the girl another kiss as I threw off the brake, and the cable began to pay out.

Gradually the bucket became smaller, and then became only a dark spot traveling in the air.

Evelyn had had a pretty hard time to convince herself that Norton should make this trip. She'd cried a little at first, but after giving her consent, stood pat. Standing close to my elbow, with her eyes glued to a pair of field glasses, I knew she wasn't going to overlook the expected signal.

"Stop!" she suddenly sang out, without taking the glasses from her eyes.

I jammed on the brake, bringing the bucket to a stop, and feeling pretty well satisfied that Norton was now getting ready to do some skylarking right above his own home.

The stop had been guaged to a nicety. Norton said afterward that he believed he could have dropped a plumb line down the chimney without any trouble at all. Five seconds later, a cloud of smoke floated up from the bucket as the fuses were touched off. The crate was lifted over the side and carefully lowered. Foot by foot, the rope paid out until the deadly looking package touched the roof of the house. It slid over the shingles to the eaves and dropped farther down.

A pair of eyes spotted it as it passed the window. Cardiff, who'd planned to spend the first part of the night in his new possession, let a yelp out of him that almost loosened the rafters before the crate reached the ground. The big scut and his hired bouncers all knew dynamite, and how to use it. They also knew what would happen to them if fifty pounds of high per cent went off. Every log in the building would be splintered over the hillside.

Big John was not the only one to see the three smoking fuses, or the familiar words, "Strong Arm Powder Company." He was, however, the first to reach the door and dart through. Norton hadn't built his doorways expecting five big huskies to bolt through, abreast. The last one to start was the second out, for he sky-rocketed over the others who had jammed tight against the sides.

None of those six coyotes was built for speed, but they clipped seconds off the record quarter-mile dash before racing over the Marion's side line. Cardiff's tongue was sticking out so you could have hung your hat on it. But he still led the procession.

The youngster had taken their break through the doorway, as a signal to get into action himself. He swung over the edge of the bucket and began sliding down the rope. They were still running when his feet touched the ground, the grin on his face broadening every second.

The boys who had but a short time previously hustled from the loading station, also took the six sprinters' getaway as a signal to swing into action. They charged from a ravine, yelling like Comanches, and made straight for Norton's. All hands bolted inside just about the time the big stiff and his gang loped out of sight behind a low foothill. Everybody wanted to do his share in making that package look less deadly, and he surely did. One by one, those yellow death dealers were emptied of the sawdust which we had so industriously placed inside the wrappers, after moving the high per cent explosive.

In the presence of Pa Norton and me, Cardiff pundled up sixty-five thousand dollars. The price of the Marion had gone up considerably on account of the inconvenience of the kid's little ride, and because Evelyn said they would need some extra money for their wedding trip in June.

THE INEVITABLE

BY ROBERT McBLAIR

In which two persons find happiness in a tuberculosis camp and feel sorry for the man back home who has been trying to drown his sorrow and whose self-respect is about to go down for the third time.

THEY came face to face unexpectedly on a street in that little hill-encircled city where three out of four are bound together by a common affliction; where a half empty sleigh will but rarely pass without offering the pedestrian a lift; where eggs are advertised as "suitable for eating raw;" and where a third of the population reclines on its porch, pallid and immovable, throughout the day and night—and laughs about it all.

Both were embarrassed. "Why, what are you doing in a place like this?" Clare exclaimed.

Hugh faced the thing manfully. "I am chasing the cure. And you? I suppose you are up for the ice carnival?"

"No," she smiled. "I am one of us, too!"

Both laughed.

"Well, we don't deserve any sympathy. I never saw you looking better in your life, Hugh."

"How about yourself? Why, you look like a meat-fed militant! It is certainly true that one has to come up here to see people who look really well. How long have you been here? Have you found out what 'cousining' is yet?"

She laughed. "Yes, but I haven't found a cousin!"

"Neither have I. I'm glad you still laugh so much. I like to see your teeth. And your eyes are as blue as ever. Where are you going? May I go too?"

"Yes, do. You can tell me what kind of snowshoes to get, and I've got to buy a 'pig.' It went down to twenty below last night. Isn't that terrible?"

"Horrible! Yet it is delightfully adventurous, too. Every night when I climb into my Klondyke I wonder whether I will wake up with a full set of ears and a nose."

"The most wonderful part of it to me," said Clare, as they crossed the snow-packed street, "is the popping of the trees when the cold settles down at night. It makes the cold something real and alive that grips the whole world and squeezes one's nose and makes the house crack and groan. I've stayed awake just to listen to it, and sometimes it frightens me."

He showed her how to tie on the snowshoes as the Indians do, with a single thong looped around the heel and a knot over the front of the foot where it can't bruise. The next day, after rest hour, was set as the time when he should go with her to try them out. That evening he stayed to dinner. That night they "cured" on the porch together, and watched the round moon rise above Mount Baker and make the world a haunt of shadow and silvery mystery.

It was about three months later that they went on the sleigh ride. Silently they rode through the still woods. It was a day of gray tree trunks and grayer clouds, with the feathered branches of the evergreens covered to the edges with pyramids of snow. Overhead a tracery of slender twigs supported hills of snow deeper than the width of a man's hand, and a silent lane of white wound before them, flanked by powdered and moss-grown trees and roofed by a delicate lattice work of white.

"Anyhow, we shall always be friends, Hugh," she said irrelevantly, turning to him with a smile. "You are a friend of mine, aren't you, Hugh?"

"That doesn't express it," Hugh replied solemnly, and she colored.

They drove on through woods so like the forests of the old Norse gods that Hugh would not have been surprised to see great Woden himself come galloping through the thicket on a mammoth white horse.

The silence was becoming oppressive; he knew that if he spoke there was but one thing he could say; and he knew that he shouldn't say it. But, nevertheless, he spoke.

"Clare," he said, "I suppose you know that I love you?"

He saw the flush go up to where the spun-gold curls tucked under the knitted cap, and run down to where the round chin nestled in her furs.

"If you don't know it," he went on, "I am going to tell you, although I am a dog to do it, because, as you know, I can't get married. It's all I can do to support the mater and the girls when I'm well, and now that I'm a useless invalid," his voice grew husky, "God knows I can't do even that."

She put out her hand to stop him.

"No," he demurred, "let me finish. I am staking all on keeping them and myself on my savings for the next six months. If I win and get well enough to take the western job, I shall just be able to make both ends meet, providing Dorothy lands the job as society editress. If I lose, well, we needn't consider that.... Either way I'm a dog to say anything to you. But somehow," shaking his head slowly, "I just couldn't help it."

"Hugh! Please don't talk about yourself like that! You don't know what it means to me to have you tell me. It means the whole world and everything in it. If you hadn't I should have gone back home the most miserable woman alive. But now, but now— Hugh, don't you think you might, at least, kiss me once?"

The weeks flew by. "Oh, Hugh," Clare cried, one morning as he came up the steps of her porch, "guess what Doctor Baldwin has just told me!—that I can go back when I want to, and to forget I've even been sick! Isn't that wonderful?"

"Dandy!" he exclaimed, trying to equal her enthusiasm. "Fine! Now you are a regular person again. It is really too splendid to realize. Now you can go back and do anything you want. ...."

She must have sensed the pain in his voice.

"Yes, and leave you," she cried with eager contrition. "Leave you sick and alone! Oh Hugh! Isn't this a queer world?"

"Yes," he replied, "but it is the best one we know. You have a chance now to make the best of it."

"Come up here, you poor boy, and let's talk. We won't have many more talks, Hugh," she added sadly.

They bundled up in blankets and furs and reclined with their chairs close together while the rose-flush slowly left Mount Baker and the sky and earth turned to the thin, pale-blue of winter twilight.

"Do you know," said Clare, breaking the silence, "that what I dread most of all is seeing Curly again."

"Is he still so insistent?"

"Not so much insistent, but he says he still loves me, and he goes on drinking, and I feel so terribly responsible for it all. Up here I have been able to forget it."

"Why, it isn't your fault. If a man drinks like that it isn't the girl's fault, it's his own weakness."

"Yes, I know, Hugh; but he did stop when we were engaged, and I told him I loved him, and then, and then, I found out that I didn't. Oh, it's all so hopeless!"

"If I were only—"

"Now stop, Hugh. I'm not going to let you even think that. You are up here to get well, and if you have those awful 'if' thoughts, you'll never get well. I see how impossible it all is, and I am just going to make up my mind to accept the inevitable. Promise me that you will look at it that way too, Hugh."

But in spite of her bravery, that night

she clung to him and cried softly for a long, long time; and there was nothing that he could say.

The next night when he came, he saw that she had been crying again.

"I have been writing a letter," she told him.

"A letter?" He hoped for some lighter vein, but her expression showed that the tragic note was still on. "To whom?"

"To Curly," she said, in a dull voice.

"Let me see it." He held out his hand, feeling sure that she still had it with her.

"No," she replied, in a hopeless voice, "it would do no good."

"What did you tell him?"

Her lip trembled. "You will find out in time."

"What did you tell him?" he repeated.

"Do you really want to see it?"

"I do."

She took it from her pocket and gave it to him. It was stamped and addressed, but unsealed, and he read it in the lamplight that filtered out to the porch through the curtained window. He was silent for a long time, and gazed broodingly over to where old Baker loomed up pallidly against the stars.

"Do you love him?" he asked presently.

She was silent.

"Do you?"

"You know that I don't."

There was another long silence before he spoke. "Well," he said, slowly, "I hate to say anything about all this, because I suppose you know what you are doing, and because I haven't any right to influence you. You surely must be awfully certain of a man to write him a letter like that. That's what impresses me,—you must be dead certain of him, and that makes a lot of difference. If he loves you that much he ought to take care of you; and no doubt he would. But what I can't see is, how in the devil a woman can give herself to a man she doesn't love. They do it. I've known scores that have done it. I believe fifty per cent of marriages are of that kind. But I could never see it myself. What is the reason? Is it so necessary to get married?"

She answered in the same hopeless voice. "What difference does it make? I can't marry the person I want. I may as well marry Curly and try to be of some use in the world. I can make him happy and I owe him that. I can have children and make them happy. If I can be of some use in the world, what difference does it make whether I am happy or not?"

"Doesn't he drink?"

"He will stop if I marry him."

Hugh gave a gesture of impatience. "It is out of the question, that's all! You are in a despondent mood now because you are feeling so strongly the hopelessness of it all. This is no time to make a decision of so much importance, something that will determine your whole life. Wait until you get back and can think clearly; wait until you see Curly again. Think of what it would mean to send him this letter and then find out again when you see him that you can't possibly marry him."

"Give me my letter."

"I'll do no such thing. I'm going to take it home and make you think it over. Then, if you still want it, you can have it. Shall we take a drive tomorrow? It is not so cold, only about zero to-night, and that means ten or twenty above tomorrow. All right. I'll call for you at four."

The next afternoon she was alight with happiness; her mood was gone, and she nestled as close to him beneath the fur lap robe as their heavy fur coats would allow.

"Oh, I'm so glad, Hugh," she said, "that you didn't let me. I would have sent it. I was simply desperate yesterday. But I have thought over what you said, and I see it would be impossible. It would be horrible, horrible!" She shuddered.

"You little minx! I believe you just wrote that to see how strongly I would object!"

"No; I was really thinking of sending it. But I did want to see if you really would mind very much."

They both laughed, and this, their last drive together, was a gay one.

The next night she left for home. When he had finished checking her trunk, she drew him to one side for a moment before the train started. "Remember, Hugh," she said, "whatever happens, I love you. I'll never marry Curly now; don't fear. I should have if I had mailed my letter to him that night, because I could never hurt him again the way I did before. But now I shall just go on loving you." Then she raised her mouth for a last kiss.

When the train had gone Hugh walked back to the cottage. She was going back to the busy world; she would find many things to interest her and keep her occupied, and presently, although she would not forget, it would be easier for her, and in time she would be happy. In time.... Who could say what would happen in time? He had a letter in his pocket to the president of his publishing company, saying that in another six months he would be in shape to take up the opening that they were holding for him in the West. This would mean a living wage, enough for Clare, too, maybe, if Dorothy landed the editorial job and if Diana's music class paid. Then, if he found that he could keep up the pace—well, who could say what would not happen in time?

He made a detour in order to go by the post office, and dropped in the letter abstractedly, his mind intent on getting back into the game.

The next day he drew from his pocket a letter. His face blanched. Apprehensive shivers played up and down his spine, while he continued to stare helplessly at the fateful epistle.

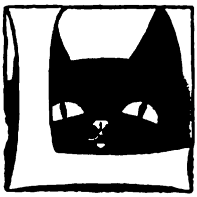
Later in the day he received a wild scrawl from Clare: "Oh, Hugh! How *could* you! How *could* you!"

THE bark *Miranda* had a clean record. She never had saddled a big repair bill on her owners, never had lost a spar below her to'gallantmasts, never had been brought to shame by an unruly crew. Then the sudden demand for tonnage caused by the war placed her in commission after five years' retirement, and she shipped a mutinous crew on the very first voyage. This story of THE UNSULLIED MIRANDA by *Mrs. David A. Wasson* will appear in the July issue.

THE PROD

BY GEORGE L. CATTON

Charde was a tobacco-eating brute who never thought of giving hostages to fortune because he never found time to think of anything but gold. As a man he assayed about thirty cents to the ton, and there was considerably less than two thousand pounds of him.



LIKE diamond dust the snow glittered on the solid river. Like great emeralds the stars hung quivering through the dead atmosphere. The long tongues of the aurora hissed in the silence, and it was ten miles to Kelly's.

Every time Charde's right hand and left knee plunged down into the snow, Charde lurched ahead twenty-one inches. Every time Charde's left hand and right knee plunged down into the snow, Charde lurched ahead twenty inches. He made twenty-six lurches a minute. So Charde made a mile every two hours. And behind him on a toboggan rode *the Prod.*

No matter what our urge may be, or whether we have an urge or not, the Prod we have always with us, spurring us on.

It was the Prod that got Charde.

Born in the smudge of a California gold-rush dance-hall, spawn of a frowsy doxy and a mule-muscled flathead, Charde was patently a mistake. Principally beef, he inherited from his mother the cunning of necessity; from his father, the sullenness and ferocity of a starving wolf; and from both, the hellish viciousness of primitive brains acrawl with stampede whiskey. To the lean and bitter years of a wasted youth he added other corruptions; till at thirty there remained but the massive frame and the virus of the Klondike gold strike.

He didn't possess a stimulus—only the shadow. His was the mere love of gold because it was gold. Like Midas, he loved the greasy feel of it, the yellow glint of it, the dead weight of it; but there, Midas-like again, his love came to a full and self-satisfying stop. He was too low in the intellectual order to realize that the love for gold is but a means to an end. So he lived to gather gold; to feel of it, glare at it, weigh it in his filthy paws; then, after he had gloated his fill, to convert it into a liquid hell to pour down his roaring throat.

Charde was known at Kelly's as the Bull. Every time he came into Kelly's to prop his awkward bulk against the bar and roar for whiskey, the regulars would hitch up their gun-belts and turn their backs to him. Always on the raw edge of a murderous explosion when drunk, his little red eyes warned even the most fuddled of the danger of the smallest spark of annoyance in the vicinity of that magazine of intoxicated rage. And he drank alone. Not that any of Kelly's regulars would have refused to drink with him, with whiskey at a dollar, but because he never extended an invitation. Charde travelled alone, worked alone, drank alone, —and nobody grieved. And the last time he packed his canoe at Kelly's and went up the river, the Prod got him.

The last time Charde went up river, he turned into a new tributary. A half mile up that creek, Allan MacFarlane and his wife were cleaning up five thousand a week; everybody knew that. Furthermore, their nearest neighbor was fifteen miles away. But Charde didn't do anything rash. When he reached MacFarlane's cabin he paddled across to the opposite side of the stream and for a full hour sat behind a clump of alders, eating tobacco, cursing other men's good luck and twirling the cylinder of his forty-five. Then he paddled on. Though all the other claims on the creek had pinched out and been abandoned, scarcely a summer's day passed but someone rode the current,—and it was just ten miles to Kelly's.

When the winter came, when the creek and the river below were dead, and the few who were forced to travel cut off two miles by the other pass farther down then ....Charde looked more brute than human when he left MacFarlane's cabin behind.

Perchance it was the idea in his mind that blurred his vision; or maybe his luck had deserted him; or yet again, Providence may have had a hand in it. Be that as it may, when Charde started back to MacFarlane's cabin in December, his poke was as flat as his stomach; also both feet were frosted.

When he awoke from a drunken stupor beside an extinct fire, and found both feet dead, an empty match-box, and his flask dry, he rolled over on his knees and started down stream. Two miles below was MacFarlane's cabin. Just around the next bend of the creek were food and a fire, and a warm bunk to lie in till his feet were again fit for travel. And there was the gold—*gold!* Charde crawled through the snow, his wits driven by necessity, striving to formulate a plan of procedure.

He would keep out in the open and crawl straight for the cabin. And then, when MacFarlane came out to help him ....Charde halted and his hand went back to the revolver in his belt.

Then when he got around again, when he was fit for a long, hard trail again, he would leave Mrs. MacFarlane—that was—and start for Kelly's. Yes, he would start for Kelly's, but he wouldn't stop at Kelly's. In fact, he wouldn't stop at all till many, many miles lay between him and the handful of ashes that he would leave behind.

Charde was less than a hundred yards from MacFarlane's cabin when his plan matured. And then, as though MacFarlane had heard his muttered thoughts, a rifle bullet roared out from the cabin window and screamed above his head!

Instinctively Charde ducked. He stopped crawling and his right hand fumbled at his belt. He cursed. The rifle roared again.

Charde dug down into the snow, his sharpened wits laboring resentfully. What was MacFarlane's idea? He had never done anything to MacFarlane. And if he wanted to shoot at him, why didn't he come out into the open.

A moment later, Charde raised his hand and poured five shots into the cabin, aiming for the window, but the whining lead still picked at him.

Allan MacFarlane was stark, staring mad. His wife was dead, and to his insane mind that crawling man out there was a thieving mob trying to rob him of his own, and his aim was as wild as his wits.

An hour passed. Charde reloaded his revolver and crawled out of the hole in the snow. Of the thirty-two screaming bullets not one had struck within a yard of him. Besides, it was quicker to die by lead than by frost. He crossed that hundred yards.

MacFarlane jerked open the door, threw down the muzzle of his rifle and pulled the trigger. He missed. Charde's answer ended the shooting, and he crawled into the cabin.

When the edge of daylight deserted the stars, Charde pulled MacFarlane's body away from the door and dragged out the toboggan. It was ten miles to Kelly's. Every time Charde's right hand and left knee plunged down into the snow, he lurched ahead twenty-one inches. Every time his left hand and right knee plunged down into the snow, he lurched ahead twenty inches. His right leg shrieked at him and he lost an inch.

Dead feet trailing just ahead of the toboggan, knees sinking deep with the weight of his tremendous bulk, mittened paw over mittened paw, Charde dogged through the glistening frost dust. Hour after hour, that thing of brutal brawn, that soulless mass of male animal, fought those ten white murderous miles to Kelly's. And he made it.

The first mile was easy. Fortified in his alcoholed heart with the last half cupful of MacFarlane's whiskey, Charde's pumping paws and plunging knees never once hesitated. Unmindful of the gruelling ache in his huge calves, he ploughed ahead. But with the second half of the second mile came the inevitable reaction. Burned out, and consuming the keen edge of his energy in the burning, the dead alcohol clogged his veins. He stopped for a rest. Then as he went on, lapping over into the third mile, the unnaturalness of the wasted years behind him began to ride his muscles. An hour later, when the twilight faded out, he was travelling on sheer nerve. At the end of the fifth mile, one thing, and one thing only, kept him going. Behind him on the toboggan rode *the Prod.*

Knees plunging with automatic monotony, paw over paw doggedly,—feet,—rods, miles, with grim persistency he forged ahead. His fingers were benumbed. The pain in his calves had knawed up to his knees and died. And as the last tenth of that awful trail dragged itself beneath him, his pumped-out heart began to miss its beats, but he didn't rest. He dared not stop. A few hundred yards more and—

The Prod won.

The door of Kelly's swung slowly inward and Charde, the Bull, crawled across the threshold, dragging the toboggan on the snowless step. For a moment, while the astonished crowd gaped, the Bull tugged in the traces. Then he collapsed.

The crowd bestirred itself. Eager hands dragged the toboggan inside and lifted the Bull to a table near the stove. Raw brandy was poured liberally into the gaping mouth; mittens, parka, footgear, were stripped off. Then the Bull opened his eyes and tried to sit up.

"MacFarlane's—croaked," he gasped. "And—and so's his—his woman. And there—" he tried to turn his head toward the toboggan.

And then—then the end came.

Awed, the crowd looked at one another then back to the toboggan. Horny hands unstrapped the pile of bedded blankets; a bundle of rags was laid on a chair. And then, as if in answer to their wondering faces, came the low, weak wail of Allan MacFarlane, junior,—*the Prod*—a week old.

THE survival of the fittest is always a strong theme for the story teller. It is the theme which *Hapsburg Liebe* employs in THE JUNGLE'S ACCOLADE, a story you will read next month.

Nine men and a woman marooned on an island far outside the steamer lanes — that is the essence of the dramatic situation which Mr. Liebe develops in his usual entertaining fashion.

FAITH, HOPE AND JUSTICE

BY MARVIN LESLIE HAYWARD

Here is a study in rare birds, with the best slide showing a full length view of the attorney who holds no brief for charity, who never takes a case merely to get a fee, who never moves until sure that he has Justice on his side.

I SUPPOSE you've been reading Gerald Hamilton's articles which we've been running since October last?" queried John Bland, the managing editor of the *Evening Advocate,* as he leaned back in his office chair. "I fancy they would be extremely interesting to a man of your unique mental makeup."

"Why unique?" queried Frazer MacKenzie, the "dilettante attorney," as his brother lawyers were pleased to call him.

"Are you not a member of the bar of this state in good and regular standing?" demanded the editor.

"I believe so."

"How many cases have you handled in the last year?"

"About half a dozen."

"How many have you refused to touch?"

"Legion—and then some."

"And why did you refuse them?" snapped Bland.

"Simply because I pledged myself the day I graduated from Stanvard that I'd never take a case unless my client had justice on his side," replied MacKenzie, "and by justice I mean not mere technical justice but actual moral righteousness—'that justice whose seat is the bosom of God and her voice the harmony of the world.' "

"And every one of those cases that you did stoop to take had been pronounced hopeless by some prominent lawyer in the city," averred Bland.

"I believe so," admitted MacKenzie. "My theory is that in the majority of cases a lawyer must obtain a square deal for his client not by applying the existing law or persuading a partisan jury, but by finding some loophole in the present law that lets his client out. My model is the great Daniel O'Connell, who declared that he could drive a coach and four through the most skilful statute ever passed by the English Parliament."

"And yet you say you are not unique," sighed the editor.

"Coming back to Hamilton," hedged the lawyer, "I haven't read his stuff and don't want to, for I've a pretty good idea of what it's like. Of course I don't blame you; you must give the people what they want or your circulation drops to the danger line; but you know it's simply the cheap claptrap of a shallow-pated un—"

"They're called the 'Fall—" interrupted Bland; but the telephone rang and he turned to answer it. There was the familiar buzzing of the wire, and Bland said, "Yes," in the bored tone of the busy man of affairs.

"Speak of the devil and he's sure to appear—or telephone," he flung at MacKenzie. "This is Hamilton's secretary on the wire now."

MacKenzie did not have time to reply. The wire buzzed again and Bland's face paled to a sickly white. His strong jaw sagged helplessly as he hung up the receiver and dropped back in the chair.

"Hamilton was murdered in his apartments at Omega Street, last night," he gasped.

"As I never permitted myself to know him I can't be disturbed by the news," declared MacKenzie, "but if his character's half as bad as his reputation the world's better off."

"Speak no ill of the dead."

"A dead rake's no better than a living one, except that his capacity for evil dies with him," retorted MacKenzie.

"But that's not all," groaned Bland. "His secretary found him alone with a knife wound in his breast. He named his murderer and died."

"Good newspaper copy, I think you call it," smiled MacKenzie.

Bland sprawled back in his chair and gazed at his legal friend in horrified dismay.

"But he named Blake R. Freeman," he gulped.

MacKenzie sprang to his feet. His nonchalance had dropped from him like a discarded coat.

"My roommate at Stanvard," he snapped.

"And one of the owners of this paper," was the whispered reply.

The telephone rang again and Bland reached out a trembling hand and took down the receiver.

"Yes," he said wearily. "Yes, he's here now."

He hung up the receiver and turned to MacKenzie.

"Freeman wants to see you right away down at the City Jail," he said.

"Poor old Blake," sighed the lawyer as he started for the door. "He was one of the best friends I ever had—soul of honor and all that sort of thing."

Bland rose from his chair, walked over to the door, and placed a trembling hand on MacKenzie's broad shoulder.

"Say, MacKenzie," he quavered, "if ever you twisted the law to produce justice, do it now. Go on quick, and—and—God bless you."

"I'm afraid you haven't profited by Hamilton's articles that you're using," was MacKenzie's parthian shot.

Half an hour later, he was admitted to Freeman's cell. The prisoner rose from the narrow cot, and the light fell on his lithe frame and haggard, care-lined face.

"I knew you'd come, old man," he exclaimed.

"Tell me all about it," urged MacKenzie.

"Oh, I know they've got me dead sure," replied Freeman. "Hamilton's 'dying declaration,' accusing me, is the very best evidence they could have. I'm lawyer enough to know that."

"But I'm the lawyer just now—tell me the facts," demanded MacKenzie.

"There's not much to tell," began Freeman. "Ten years ago I loved a woman—it was my first and only love affair. The memory of her has been—"

He stopped and gazed out the narrow window with the sinister horizontal bars. MacKenzie nodded understandingly.

"Then she met Hamilton, and I never saw her again."

"I understand," interrupted MacKenzie grimly.

"Last night she called on me and told me that since breaking off with Hamilton she had been living in a city up state, and living straight, too—that she was to marry a respectable, well-to-do business man up there, but didn't dare until she had got some letters that Hamilton had in his possession."

"And you went with her, Blake, for she didn't dare trust herself alone, and wouldn't take any third person into the affair but you," interrupted MacKenzie.

"Hamilton laughed at her—found out why she wanted the letters and threatened to send them to her future husband. In a fit of passion she seized an antique dagger from the wall and stabbed him."

"You hurried her away and Hamilton, with a sense of latent chivalry or malicious spite—God knows which—accused you and died."

"It's no wonder they say you can see farther into the other fellow's case than he can himself," exclaimed Freeman.

"Well?" interrogated MacKenzie.

"That's all I'll tell even you," declared Freeman. "I will not give you the woman's name nor where she lives. It's my life or her reputation."

"And I know you'll protect her. You always were stubborn as a mule," MacKenzie said as he gazed abstractedly at the signs on the opposite side of the street. His glance wandered up and down the tall buildings and rested on the glaring gilt announcement of Ingersoll & Payne, wholesale chemists and druggists.

"That's all the information I can give you," repeated Freeman, "and if you can't defend me and keep her name out of it why—"

MacKenzie's gaze flashed from the sign of the wholesale chemists and druggists back to the harried, stubborn face of the newspaper magnate.

"Really, you've given me a very full and complete statement of the case," MacKenzie assured him, "and I'll be glad to work out the defense along my own lines."

"Then I'll rest as easy as I can on a jail cot," smiled Freeman, "and I know that if human power can save me you'll do it."

"Thanks, old friend," said MacKenzie softly.

"I don't suppose it's any use to ask you what you think of my chances or what line of defense you'll adopt," suggested Freeman timidly. "I've read and heard enough of your methods to know that."

"It beats all," exclaimed MacKenzie, "the good law one can get from just reading the advertising signs with an open mind."

"Advertising signs?"

"Yes," smiled MacKenzie. "I once restored a $30,000 property to a deserving widow just by seeing an advertisement of 'marriage licenses and wedding rings.'"

"Time's up," announced the keeper gruffly as he swung open the cell door.

The trial of Blake R. Freeman for the murder of Gerald Hamilton was probably the greatest criminal trial the state had ever known, and special correspondents from all the big national dailies were on hand.

Roscoe Powell, the newly elected District Attorney, appeared for the people, and Frazer MacKenzie languidly announced that he appeared for the accused.

It had been expected that there would be the usual bitter and tedious fight over the selection of the jury; but MacKenzie lived up to his reputation as the most eccentric lawyer who ever drew a brief, and twelve "good men and true" were selected without a single objection on the part of the prisoner.

Then on the afternoon of the first day Powell called his first witness—Raymond Emmerson, Hamilton's private secretary.

"You knew the late Gerald Hamilton?" Powell began.

"I did."

"You were his private secretary?"

"I was."

"Describe briefly what you know of the circumstances surrounding his death," suggested Powell, with a triumphant glare at the jury.

"On the evening of the eleventh of October last, Mr. Hamilton and I were alone in his apartments comparing some literary material he was preparing for the press," began Emmerson.

"How long did you stay there?"

"I left about 8.30 to go to the public library to verify a quotation."

"And left Mr. Hamilton alone?"

"Yes."

"At what hour did you return?"

"A few minutes of ten."

"Who came with you?"

"Mr. Hayden, who has the adjoining apartments."

"What did you find?"

"I found Mr. Hamilton sitting in his chair with his head and shoulders on the desk. I raised him up and found that he had been stabbed in the breast."

Powell was approaching the crucial point of the case with the circumspection of the adroit legal strategist.

"Was Mr. Hayden with you?"

"Yes."

"Did the deceased make any statement to you?" Powell queried, and the jury, swayed by a common motive, leaned forward as one man.

"He did."

"What were his exact words?"

Powell was out to make a record for himself by convicting the wealthy and influential Blake R. Freeman as his first official act. The most pronounced laymen in the courtroom realized that this was the moment which spare writers delight in calling psychological, and the reporters scribbled away furiously, waiting for MacKenzie's strenuous objection to the question and the technical argument that was sure to follow.

MacKenzie made no move. He was sharpening his pencil with an air of careless unconcern, and Powell, after a scornful glance in MacKenzie's direction, repeated the question.

"He said," was the slow and careful reply, "'I'm dying—Blake R. Freeman killed me.' When I came back from the telephone he was dead."

"That's all," announced Powell with a ring of triumph in his big bass voice.

MacKenzie rose calmly and began his cross-examination.

"What was the nature of the library work you were comparing with the deceased on the night in question?" he began.

"A series of articles for the Sunday section of the *Evening Advocate,*" replied Emmerson.

"They had been dictated by Mr. Hamilton and typed by you I presume?"

"Yes."

"What was the general title of the articles you refer to?"

"'Fallacy of Faith.'"

MacKenzie handed the witness a copy of the *Advocate.*

"Is the article printed on page 16 of that paper one of the articles so dictated to you by Mr. Hamilton?" asked MacKenzie.

"It is," replied Emmerson as he handed back the paper.

"Now, Mr. Emmerson," continued MacKenzie, "I should like to call your attention to one paragraph of this article.

"'Faith is merely a survival of the collective superstitions of primitive man,' he read, 'and the prevalent belief in God is a proof of the limited range of the ordinary mind.'

"Did Mr. Hamilton dictate those sentences to you?"

"He did."

"How long have you been Mr. Hamilton's private secretary?"

"Ten years."

"Do you know whether those words represented Mr. Hamilton's personal views?"

"What's the use of going into this?" broke in Powell arrogantly. "Surely my learned friend doesn't imagine that the prisoner was justified in murdering the deceased on account of his private opinions."

Judge Blaisdell motioned Powell to his seat.

"If you object to the questions state your grounds—otherwise do not interrupt the cross-examination," he ordered.

MacKenzie repeated the question.

"Yes," hesitated the witness, "I have frequently heard him say there was no God or Supreme Being, and that only fools thought so."

"That is all," said MacKenzie, and the witness stepped down.

Powell then called Jasper Hayden, a prominent broker, who corroborated Emmerson's testimony and repeated Hamilton's dying statement accusing Freeman.

"That closes the case for the people," announced Powell confidently.

"The defense calls no witnesses," countered MacKenzie.

The evidence for the prosecution was absolutely unshaken and MacKenzie had practically admitted his defeat. Powell was the man of the moment; but the local reporters waited eagerly for the next move.

"Have you anything to say, Mr. MacKenzie?" queried the judge carelessly.

"Merely this, Your Honor," began MacKenzie, "that the only evidence against the prisoner in this case is the dying declaration of the deceased accusing the prisoner of having murdered him."

"That's very evident," agreed Judge Blaisdell, and Powell grinned openly at the jury.

"Now," MacKenzie went on, "a dying declaration—although not made under oath—may be given in evidence in court the same as a sworn statement, on the ground that the statements are made under a sense of impending death, which imposes upon the conscience of the party making the statement as great an inducement to speak the truth as an oath administered in a court of law."

"Nobody disputes that for a moment, Mr. MacKenzie," interrupted the judge testily.

"Now," continued MacKenzie calmly, "there can be no doubt that Hamilton's statement was made under a sense of impending death, for his first words were, 'I am dying.'"

"That's just the argument I was going to make," sneered Powell.

"Then I think even my learned friend will admit," retorted MacKenzie, "that if a party is not competent to give evidence in court under oath, his dying declaration cannot be given in evidence for the same reason. For instance, if a party is so insane that he cannot testify in court under oath, then his dying declaration would be rejected."

Powell was smiling patronizingly at the reporters whose accounts of the trial would send his stock skyward; but Judge Blaisdell leaned forward, a keen look on his thin, pale face, and MacKenzie turned to the district attorney with a cheerful smile.

"It is also very elementary law," he went on, "that no witness is competent to give evidence in court who does not believe in a supreme being, and it follows that if a party does not so believe, then his dying declaration must be excluded. In this case the evidence of Emmerson, Mr. Hamilton's secretary, shows that Mr. Hamilton was a pronounced infidel and devoid of all religious belief, and therefore his dying declaration is inadmissible. I would ask the court to direct the jury to disregard all the evidence on that point."

MacKenzie sat down and went on sharpening his pencil. One of the local reporters slapped a visitor on the back and said, "I told you so." The jury gazed in vacant bewilderment and Powell leaned against the table, his big hands sprawled uncertainly on its surface.

"Have you any authorities to sustain that argument?" queried Judge Blaisdell calmly.

MacKenzie handed up a number of stout volumes, and went on, reading from some scribbled notes on the back of a used envelope:

"In the case of the State *vs.* Ah Lee reported in 8 Oregon Reports, 214, the Court said, 'Under the Common Law, one who does not believe in the existence of a supreme being who will punish false swearing in a future world is incompetent to testify, and consequently the dying declaration of such a one would not be admissible in evidence under the common law.' The same rule has been laid down by the Courts of California, Iowa, Mississippi, West Virginia and other states. See the whole point fully treated in 16 Annotated Cases, page 148."

MacKenzie sat down and tore up the envelope. Powell still leaned against the table in a state of mental paralysis, and the judge closed the book he was reading and turned to the jury.

"Under the law as brought to my attention by Mr. MacKenzie," he said, "I must instruct you, gentlemen, to disregard altogether the evidence of the dying declarations of the deceased, and, as that is the only evidence implicating the prisoner in any way, there will, of course, be a verdict of 'not guilty.'"

Several days later Freeman came into MacKenzie's office for the first time since the trial.

"Are you making up my bill? Be sure to make it big enough," he bantered.

MacKenzie pointed to a paragraph in the newspaper he had been reading.

"No," he smiled, "I was just reading the wedding announcement of the 'woman in the case.'"

Freeman glanced at the paper and sank into a chair.

"And you knew who she was all the time?" he faltered.

"Sure. She called on me the day after the murder, told me the whole story, and insisted on going on the stand and clearing you. I staved her off by assuring her that Hamilton's 'Fallacy of Faith' articles would do the trick without bringing her into it at all."

NEXT month: THE LAW OF THE ABALONE, a story of the shell-hunters of the Pacific.

GOD'S HALF ACRE

BY G. B. BUCHANAN

The poetry of C Troop's poet laureate was not so good as newspaper vers libre nor so bad as advertising limericks. It would have passed if a highbrow from Harvard hadn't pointed out its defects and made the poet feel as if he had been "opened by the censor."

In Gugu-land the Dato-man lay snoozin'
by his door;
He was dreamin' of a vision like he'd
never saw before—
'Twas a beauchus Red-Cross Dame, come
from the U. S. A.
To nurse the poor soldado boys the
Gugus put away.

JACK MONHOAN, C Troop's poet laureate, paused in the rendition of his latest contribution to the long and suffering annals of versification and eyed the circle of C troopers squatting about the steaming coffee pots expectantly. What he saw pleased him; his hearers sat spellbound.

"Say," breathed Corporal Dan Adams, "that's poetry! When I hear them ringing words I feel my ego go bust inside me, just same as if a bullet with the sign of a cross carved on its snout has cracked into me. I feel my soul set free and with one or two bounds going sailing, sailing, sailing across the big drink to God's country. Almost I wish—but no! I belong right here in the army and 'whither thou goest I will go' is my creed. Sing some more, poet looray."

The poet, however, had the poetical temperament and could not woo the muse effectively without the harmonious support of all present; the frown upon the long face of "Foureyes" Fitshugh, the troop rookie, damped Monhoan's versifying ardor. The corporal noticed Monhoan's questioning glance.

"It ain't healthy," Adams began darkly, "for a low-down, no-account rookie to have opinions different from the unanimous consent of his troop. Have you got earache, or what?"

"As verse—of a topical order, perhaps," Foureyes boldly stated, with the authority of an ex-editor of the *Lampoon*, "it passes. Poetry? No!"

"Oh!" retorted Adams. "This camp is hot enough now without tropical poetry. What's the reason it ain't arctic poetry, you Foureyes?"

"I haven't scanned it fully yet," admitted Fitshugh, "but off-hand I should say it hasn't feet enough."

"Feet!"

"Precisely."

"Do you mean to tell me that in addition to there being tropical and arctic poetry there is also foot poetry? Maybe then there is hoss poetry—"

"And maybe there is sea poetry, too," suggested an ex-marine.

"You do not understand, I fear. This term 'foot' in poetry does not mean the same as foot in the army—as a 'foot soldier.'"

"Thank God," murmured the quartermaster sergeant, who had to fight for footwear.

"No, the poetical feet do not wear shoes," Foureyes went on. "It is a figurative term." He went on to elucidate his meaning, and by the time the coffee boiled, Corporal Adams had learned some interesting things he had never suspected lurked in poetry.

"Then," he suddenly demanded, "if you say this here poetry hasn't got feet enough, and this is the best this guy Monhoan has given us since his ode to the demise of Sandy Lukey, who hit the eternal hay down in Mindonati Jungle, what would you call the rest of the stuff? You

Monhoan, what you got to say about this short footage?"

"Go chase yourself," Monhoan retorted angrily. "Who ever heard of feet in poetry? I don't believe it! This poetry of mine is all right, and if—"

"Say no more," thundered Adams. "You've been showed up for the short footage guy you are. Foureyes, here, went to Harvard, which can be forgiven—but I guess he knows. You will now relocate them stanzas in the arctic rather than in the torrid zone, and put in plenty of feet."

Monhoan swore disdainfully, and studied the bubbling soup being prepared from water and the emergency ration.

"Give you three minutes," the corporal warned. "This troop has honored you with its commission of poet looray too long to feel kindly disposed to these here bum footings."

"You go to a hotter place than the tropics."

"Well, boys," Adams suggested judiciously, "what's the penalty for short footage?"

"Sit on a saber," suggested Foureyes, remembering his rookie experiences.

"Fine! Well, after grub, fellows, unless this short foot man ponies up the footage he's cheated us out of these many days, we'll inflict the penalty hereby pronounced. Grub's done. Come on and swill."

The commissary detail having cleared away the pots and kettles, and the smudge bowls lighted, Corporal Adams introduced Monhoan to a seat upon the point of a saber. Monhoan fought desperately, but willing hands overpowered him, and to his curses the others inexorably demanded, "Feet, feet, feet!" Of course, as every poet knows, poetry cannot be devised under such harrowing surroundings. Besides, Monhoan didn't care if he didn't, and told his tormentors so in language more forceful than even a horse soldier customarily employs. Whereupon, the hubbub kicked up brought the guard officer and, being in the enemy's country, quiet was restored. Still snarling and defiant, Monhoan was released. Shortly they spread their blankets. Monhoan retired with the jibes of his comrades still assailing his ears.

And way along in the night Foureyes wakened to find a fist prodding his ribs.

"Don't yell," hissed a voice, "it's Monhoan, the poet looray. I just wanted to tell you that if you think you're smart just because you went to Harvard, and can make fun of my poetry"—Foureyes detected a sob in the word "poetry"—"you're mighty damned much mistaken. Maybe you think your going to Harvard puts it high and mighty over a feller that never had any chance to go to school. Well, I don't object. But I do object to having my poetry made fun of and I tell you straight, Mr. Smart Aleck from Harvard, I'm going to pay you for this dirty trick you done me tonight."

Foureyes marveled at the man's vehemence. Monhoan spoke as a man who had had something precious defiled.

"Oh, I say," said Foureyes kindly, "it was all fun. Can't you take a joke?"

"Yah," sobbed the other, and splashed something from his eyes which fell warmly limpid upon Fitshugh's up-turned face. "Go on and apologize you—you snake! That's always your play. You smart aleck have your fun—and apologize. Do you know what your apology is worth? I never had no chance to go to school—I—I—by God, man, you'll pay for this sometime!"

Monhoan slipped quietly across the bundled ponchos. Foureyes started up, but thought better of arousing the camp. He lay awake an hour, puzzling. Yes, there must be some deep sentiment underlying Monhoan's poetical efforts. He sensed an idol whose breaking meant a wounded heart. Naturally kind-hearted, Fitshugh had a bad attack of compassion. Next morning he collared Monhoan and again apologized. The trooper only stared malevolently, gasping, "Fun! fun—that's always your game—fun for you—hell for the other—"

"But man—"

"Go to the devil," Monhoan snarled fiercely, "and if you ever say 'fun' to me again I'll—I'll kill you!"

Foureyes was amused at Monhoan's

outburst, as one may be amused at the sobbing threat of a child; but he could not escape the fierce passion glinting in the boy's gray eyes. They were dreamy eyes. There hovered in them the perpetual questioning of a youth, yet with the deeper note of a mature idealist. Foureyes remembered Monhoan's sobbing, "I never had no chance to go to school!" He wondered a little what those eyes of a child and a dreamer and an idealist would have found had they gone to school—for instance, had they had the schooling he himself had had. Foureyes had written much verse, now and then a gleam of poetry, himself. And suddenly he saw into Monhoan's heart. The soul and heart of a true poet stared at him from the trooper's burning eyes. "Lord," he thought, sadly, "and I made fun of such a man's verse. He never had any schooling but in his heart the song is forever singing. It's meat and drink to him. I bet money he never had an honest-to-God sweetheart in his life. His love is his poetry—and I made fun of that!" Foureyes shuddered. He respected tragedy.

"Well, old man," he said, kindly, "I begin to understand. I'm sorry. I suppose it doesn't mean much—to say that—but if I can help you any time—"

"Thank you." The trooper turned on his heel and marched off toward the picket line, along which the mounts were tethered, head high, shoulders squared.

Foureyes watched Monhoan caressing his horse, then sighed and turned away. "Gee," he mused, "if I had that boy's soul on top of my schooling, I'd burn the *Atlantic Monthly* up."

Raulliane, the mixed Spanish-Chinese-Pulajan blackleg who led the small army of marauders that Troop C had been sent to subdue, possessed, like Monhoan, genius in the rough. His unbaked skill centered in military strategy. Graduate West Pointers grumblingly admitted that with a first year course in tactics Raulliane would have been a sinister menace. There were those who secretly harbored the view that the Constabulary commander who had refused Raulliane a commission in the Island police had seriously erred; inexorable tradition forbade this simple process of eliminating the threat he then subtly made. All Raulliane wanted was to soldier in high commands. The panoply of the American soldado had appealed to his fancy. Refused this desire, he drowned his sorrows in vino—and broke loose.

First a batallion of Constabulary went for him—a batallion which returned *a la carte,* a head now, a foot wrapped up in palm leaves and labeled "pig," two arms tied to the horns of a carabao, or a torso in a rice sack; all of which infuriated the Constabulary and enlisted orders to bring Raulliane in on the hoof and be suitably hung, if it took all the Constabulary in Pinoslos district. It pretty nearly did—and still Raulliane infested the mountains, gathering recruits through his prestige due to victorious encounters with the hard-used police.

Then came the regular army's turn, and Taps sounded over vacant ponchos with sickening regularity. They sent A Company of the Ninth Regiment foot soldiers. Raulliane himself, disguised as an old, old padrone, engaged himself to the dapper West Pointer in command, as guide. He guided A Company into the jungle with sixty men. And up in the foothills above Pinos, the ancient padrone betook himself to other parts under cover of darkness.

Just at daybreak a wicked, enfilading fire from Krags and Mausers, shooting bullets upon which the sign of the cross had been cut, mowed down forty-two of the A Company men. After that a daily commerce in portions of American soldados set up with the army post at Pinos. Sentries stepping through the dark would stumble upon a wrinkled head, its ears crushed off, its eyes gouged out, its tongue slit to ribbons. Or it might be the legginged calf and horse-hide booted foot of an A Company man.

In order to punish the perpetrator of these atrocities they outfitted an expedition of picked campaigners. It included C Troop of cavalry, Companies B, D, and I, of the Ninth Foot soldiers, and a mule battery of quick firers, together with one three-inch gun for use in case Raulliane entrenched himself.

The expedition moved out of Pinos with the band playing that classic departure hymn—"The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Maybe Foureyes remembered Amy, as C Troop proudly rode through the heavy gate posts and faced down the four miles of hard white military road which had been built north of Pinos. But for Monhoan there was no girl left behind; yet it was an inspiring moment. Romance cantered at his saddle horn; he mentally shed his khaki service kit and assumed the ponderous, silvered armor of Sir Galahad or Ivanhoe. There had been food for his idealism hunger and a song in the stirring chronicles of Scott and Tennyson which he had found in the army post libraries. He did not heed the blaring band because the only love he had ever known centered in the long rhythm of romance eternally flowing through his brain.

They camped beside the Noya in the foothills the first night. Monhoan sat upon the saber and hissed his passionate wrath into Foureyes' astonished ears.

Next morning C Troop deployed northward on scout duty and before night had struck the bandit's train. For two days the expedition toiled through the jungle, hacking a way for the quick-firers and three-inch piece with machete and axe. Troop C scouted constantly and on the third day found itself in two sections. Monhoan, Foureyes and Corporal Adams with thirty-odd men, had ridden up into a suspicious looking canyon. The rest had gone westward—and had not returned. The explorers made camp in the canyon. Monhoan reported for supper, then vanished. He had vanished nightly these last few nights, going out into the jungle, to remain till the bugle sounded retreat. He always carried his carbine with him,—a knight never laid off his lance until his good right arm failed.

The camp was quieting down. Soon the bugle would call softly to the wings of slumber. Far in the distance toward the west they heard a faint rattle, like a volley of government 30-30's. "Just our luck;" the corporal swore helplessly. "Either the foot soldiers or McCabe and the rest of Troop C have bumped into the scullions over there. Well, first thing in the morning we bust down through this place as fast as hell for teather'll take us."

Adams was bending over preparatory to resuming his seat upon the saddle he had placed upon the ground, when suddenly a shriek rose from the patch of jungle ahead of them, and a Krag crashed. Adams fell with a dum-dum through his thighs. In a moment pandimonium broke loose. To the front and right the jungle resounded with yells and spitting guns. The troopers coolly secured their guns and fired in the direction of the flaring flashes that came from the black jungle when the brown men fired. Foureyes squatted beside Adams and yelled the orders that the fast dying corporal whispered. The fire in front gradually lessened, then suddenly a single shot rang in the rear, right behind Foureyes, and he felt a numbing crash in his body. "Corp," he gasped, "they've surrounded us!"

"About face and give 'em hell," Adams shouted. The troopers swung and fired a volley into the blackness behind their positon. It was repeated; then, as no more shots came from that direction, they turned back and combed the brush ahead. As suddenly as it had begun, the firing ceased.

With the coming of daylight, the remainder of the troop crashed through the jungle, routing the bandits as they went. They gathered up the wounded and the dead: Adams, who died just before dawn, and four troopers, whose khaki would never again move to the swing of trained muscles, and strapped them upon horses. Such of the wounded as could ride climbed up behind a comrade. Foureyes and the others who were seriously injured were laid on improvised stretchers.

Out in the jungle, to the rear of their position, they found Monhoan, moaning in a pool of blood, his empty carbine beside him. Carefully they lifted him and placed him with the wounded.

So the punitive expedition continued its little task, while the grain which had fallen before the giant harvester there in the gloom of the jungle, was garnered in the cool, white painted post hospital at Pinos.

Monhoan and Foureyes were laid on adjoining cots, because each had C Troop insignias upon their collars; and Angel Minerva, with the red cross of mercy on her sleeve, smoothed their foreheads and gave them cooling fluids. The Major Doctor looked sadly at them. He shook his head at Monhoan, and the boy knew that never again would he lie out in the jungle in the moonlight and dream of Launcelot and Sir Galahad and Lady Elaine. Then he looked up into Minerva's soft blue eyes, and there came to him a feeling that after all Sir Galahad and Lady Elaine were dead; but Minerva was alive, a tangible bit of womanhood, and he knew, somehow, Minerva was taking the place in his heart which poetry had so long held. And above all, he knew that he was dying.

Pain racked his torn and bruised body and he bit his lips to stifle the moans. Presently they gave him drugs and he suffered less. Then he took notice of his surroundings. He saw Foureyes in the next cot, while Angel Minerva stood over him stroking his hair as the Major Doctor's kindly but hurried fingers gouged raw nerves in Fitshugh's wounds. Monhoan felt a wave of jealousy; moreover, he saw that Foureyes had been shot in the back. He remembered a night, so dreamily far away it seemed now, when he had cursed men who were holding him upon a saber point and raucously urging "Feet, feet, feet!" He remembered that he hated this man in the next cot with all the hatred of his being. Now Angel Minerva petted him—and he had been shot in the back.

"Well, Mr. Smart Aleck from Harvard," Monhoan presently remarked, in a faint voice, "I see you've got showed up for what you are—like your crowd always does. You've got yellow in you somewhere. You wouldn't be a smart aleck if you hadn't. Here Minerva, don't touch that man again, he's a coward."

Foureyes rolled his head and stared at his neighbor. He saw that he lay next to Monhoan. "Coward!" he said. "Monhoan, what do you mean?"

"I mean I've showed you up. You got shot in the back."

"Well?"

"I suppose, if pressed," Monhoan pursued coldly, "you'd say your side arm got overheated in the furore of the action and shot you from spontaneous combustion. Or, perchance, when you went to Harvard, where they teach the mysteries of 'feet,' they may have taught you to shoot service side arms with your toes. Sir, I charge you with cowardice. You wouldn't have been shot in the back if you had been facing the enemy."

The Major Doctor had ceased his examination and gazed curiously at Monhoan, then back at Foureyes' pale face. Minerva stood motionless beside him, her cool, white hand upon the trooper's forehead; but Monhoan noted with infinite satisfaction that her smile had turned more distant and cold.

"Ah, but I wasn't running," Fitshugh cried. "I was right beside Adams. He got hit bad and I was taking the orders he whispered to me and passing them on to the men. Then there was one shot, a single shot, from the rear. It plugged me square in the hip. I told Adams and he ordered a volley to the rear. We heard no more shooting from that point, and finally about-faced and combed the brush ahead. If Adams were living he'd tell you. Why, I couldn't run."

"Very plausible," cut in Monhoan weakly. "Does credit to an ex-editor of the celebrated *Lam-Lampoon*. Maybe you used to write fiction. I simply want to ask you, Major, sir, what sense there is in a single shot coming from behind, and that single shot singling out a certain party and going into his hip? Is it war or is it a love story?" Monhoan's voice rose to a gasping shriek. "I told you, man, I'd pay you back."

Suddenly an inspiration came to Fitzhugh. He half raised and shook his fist at Monhoan's passion-constricted face. "You traitor!" he thundered. "I see it all now. They found you off by yourself. You sneaked up behind me, your-comrade-in-arms, singled me out from the whole bunch and shot me down in cold blood. You damned traitor—traitor, traitor!"

Foureyes continued to roar the baleful word. Monhoan eyed him blankly a moment, then seemed to realize that somehow his revenge had been a boomerang. "My God!" he gasped and turned his head. "I didn't—honest to God I didn't."

Foureyes shook off the nurse's restraining hand and bellowed a contradiction. The Major Doctor brought quiet by a curt command. "Men," he said grimly, "these are serious charges both of you make. Let's have your stories. Monhoan, you started it. What have you got to say?"

It was little enough, and had already been said—that a knight faced the enemy until he laid his heels lifeless upon the field. And Fitshugh had been shot in the back. And a knight never lied either. There had been other shots from behind, —he himself had fired his carbine as long as it held bullets,—then they had boloed him—the little brown men. There was something else—he could not remember—but he hadn't—he hadn't shot Fitshugh.

"He has been boloed," the Major Doctor mused. "You're positive, Fitshugh, there was but one shot from the rear?"

"I heard no others."

"Well, what's your version?"

Foureyes settled back. His glance strayed upward till it centered upon the inscrutable blue eyes of Angel Minerva. He told his story simply. The Major Doctor wiped his glasses before he spoke. Then, judicially, "Well, I'm no judge of poetry, but I may say that whether that's good verse or bum verse, it's a little thing to get sore at a comrade for—perhaps shoot him in the back in action."

"I didn't," Monhoan protested. "But I *was* mad at him. You would be too, if you were like me. I never had no schooling, but I been reading and making up things like that always. I guess I'm bughouse over it. It was like a sweetheart to me—and this smart aleck laughed at it. What would you do if a feller laughed at your wife because she never had been to a Harvard dance,—what would you?"

"Whether or not I'd knock his block off is not a question—but I'd do it fair and in the open and not sneak up behind him in action and shoot him in the back."

"But I didn't, I tell you," Monhoan gasped, and blood drops flecked his drawn lips.

"It will all have to be investigated," replied the Major Doctor. "Neither of you is in a fit condition to state exactly what happened. Nurse, do everything possible for these men. I will have the investigation proceeded upon as speedily as possible and if either of them is —guilty—we've got to patch him up enough to take his medicine. One of them may be a coward—which will bobtail him out of the service. One may be a traitor —which will bobtail him into eternity. Keep them living.

The Major Doctor moved away, and two pairs of eyes, gleaming with suffering and fever, stared passionately at Minerva.

"I didn't do it, honest," gasped Monhoan.

"I wasn't running either," begged Foureyes.

"There, there," Minerva soothed gently, but both noticed that she spoke mechanically and omitted the "Soldier Boy," she had added to her soothing "there's" before.

Then began a concerted effort to patch them up so they could "take their medicine." Couriers were dispatched to the remnant of C Troop, fighting up in the Finangaro Mountains. But they saw that in Monhoan's case the ten hours necessary for even the most expeditious horsemen to reach C Troop and back would be too long. Minerva tried to cheer him, but somehow, she could not bring to her ministrations the sincerity which would show Monhoan that she thought of him as a true soldier. His mind wandered at times, but when the mist cleared away, ever his soul sank into the black depths of despair. He was a knight without honor—whose lady disbelieved.

The sun climbed higher. Its rays sought the windows and shone kindly in upon the white cots. Minerva drew the blinds.

She saw Monhoan's fever-bright eyes fastened upon her. She came to his side.

"Was there something you wanted?" she asked, gently, and brushed the dark, curly locks from his forehead, streaked with the sweat of pain.

Monhoan tried to smile. "Yes," he nodded; "I want you to—believe me. Honest—I didn't do it. And I would like —like to see my candle—snuffed out knowing—that—that you believed me—because I guess—I—" he paused, his breath whistling through tautened nostrils. Then vaguely the vision of Sir Galahad, of ancient warriors and brave kings, hovered before his closed eyes. He felt strengthened. "Methinks, My Lady," he suddenly spoke up strongly, "I fain would lay my heart at thy feet."

He lay very still. Blood oozed between his lips and trickled across his white chin. Minerva gently wiped it away. She could not control the tears which came to her eyes. The touch of her hand roused the soldier, and, looking up, he saw that she was crying. "Oh, I'm so sorry," she sobbed.

"Why," he said, "do you mean—that you are sorry—I said that—or that I—I am going—you know—"

Minerva did not reply. As never before she rebelled against this chimerical glory called war. She did not know that she cared sentimentally for Monhoan; but he was a good boy, with a heart and soul —the capacity sometime, somewhere, to make a woman happy. And his life was being taken from him in the same way she had seen so many taken. He was giving his all for the glory of his flag.

"Thank you, sonny," she murmured, "I appreciate it—and I'm sorry you've got to die—like—like this, anyway."

"Yes—like this,—under a cloud." Monhoan shuddered. "Who was it—do you remember—Rowena—or the Lady of the Lake—or Thelma—who told her knight—who was under a cloud—to cast himself into the sea? And I would—if I could—and I were guilty. But I'm not—I never shot that man."

Minerva quieted him. But she did not call him "Soldier Boy," and Monhoan knew he was still under a cloud.

Through the open windows the crack of a muleteer's whip punctuated the lazy quietude of the calm air. Foureyes, nearest the window, looked out. Below, on the hard white military road, an ambulance train wound rumblingly toward the building. Minerva hurried below. Fitshugh saw the Hospital Corps men carry two Ninth Regiment men from the first wagon; he glimpsed a lean, seamed brown face, on a white stretcher. Foureyes looked closer; yes, there was no doubt about it; it was Raulliane!

"Hey," he called gleefully, "you Troop C men and Ninth Regiment men and Constabulary, they got the fox at last. And presently, if he don't croak, you fellows and your comrades, who've gone to glory hunting him, will be avenged. Do you hear, Monhoan? Raulliane will never ambush another command."

"And what consolation—is that when—I got to be called a—traitor?" The injustice of it assailed him. "Oh," he sobbed childishly, "it's all your fault—if you hadn't gone—and made fun—of my poetry."

"For heaven's sake, boy, why can't you take my word for it? It was all a joke."

"For the same reason," Monhoan replied, "that you can't believe I didn't shoot you."

"Oh!" Then, "Well, old man, it's a sorry mixup all around. You're dying. I guess I'll live. And if it'll do any good I'll gladly believe you didn't—or if you did, I'll forgive you. It was all my fault. I should have seen your seriousness in your eyes, Monhoan, it can be seen. Let's forgive and part friends."

"So far as you and I are concerned—all right—but a knight—Foureyes—would help a brother knight—out. There's the rest—Minerva—will they believe?"

"I do not know."

There was silence for awhile. Presently a volley sounded from the direction of a palm-decked post cemetery down near the shore of the bay. A bugle call echoed; rising, falling, they heard the most majestic melody in the Regulation Bugler—"Taps." They were burying the remnants of Sandy Lukey, a Ninth Regiment foot soldier who had paid his last toll to Old Glory down in Mindonati Jungle and which had come home that morning with Raulliane's compliments. Now the shriveled relics, wrapped in a new service coat, were being laid away there beneath the nodding palms. They fired the three rounds blank and sounded Taps—it was a knight's ritual. And Monhoan felt a sudden clutching fear that it would not be granted him.

Oh, hear the bugle calling, calling,
Follow it, follow it, home!

He fancied the bugle calling to his soul; he wanted to know that his grave, however rude, would be unblackened by the brooding epitaph above it, "Here lies a traitor." And he wasn't;—if they would only believe.

"Say," Monhoan gasped weakly, "do you mean—that about—friends?"

"Sure."

"Like knights—like Ivanhoe or—Sir Galahad?"

"Yes," curiously.

"Then you got to help me—I didn't do it—you say you believe I didn't—the rest won't—unless there was—no reason for—me to be—accused.

"Yes?"

"You got—to say—you were running."

"What! Admit I was a coward? Why, that'd bobtail me out of the service."

"And which is worse—a live coward or—to die—a traitor?"

"I see. Give me a little time to think."

"Time! Man—I'm dying."

The Spirit of Romance hovered low, folded her wings and nestled upon Fitshugh's cot. The trooper reached over. "I'll do it, Monhoan," he said, gravely. "It's mostly my fault. I'll do what I can."

"You are—a knight." Monhoan tried to reach out his hand, but his strength was ebbing. "I thank you—and if I were king I would—knight you—Sir—Sir Foureyes of Harvard!"

"Thanks, old man." There were some new lines in Fitshugh's face.

Minerva, closely followed by the Major Doctor, suddenly rushed into the room. Fitshugh held up his hand as they started to speak. "I have a confession to make," he said, slowly. "I was running. I'm a coward. Monhoan here is no traitor."

Minerva knelt quickly between the two cots and buried her face beside Monhoan's but one hand reached over and nestled in one of Fitshugh's. The Major Doctor polished his glasses carefully. "And why," he said, solemnly, "do you say that? Do you know it will bobtail you out of the service?"

"Yes, sir. I say it because it is,—Monhoan here, must not die under a cloud."

"Youth, oh youth," murmured the old doctor. "Brave, noble, quixotic fools! Why, you chump, do you know that your little scheme would not hold milk in an investigation?"

"But Major, please—this boy here—"

"Yes, this boy here—" the old doctor's tired eyes smiled, his hands clasped over his stomach, "this boy here is booked for one of the rarest honor medals in this world—the one from Congress. Do you know what Raulliane is doing down below? He's cursing the twenty-seven saints of his religion for this boy's true aim. But for this boy here, Troop C would have been annihilated—shared the fate of A Company of the Ninth foot soldiers. You didn't listen well that night—or, rather, your own volley drowned other firing. Raulliane had prepared a neat ambush. He had surrounded you. His shot was to be a signal. He picked out the commanding officer—which was you, Adams being down. Then, Holy Christopher, hell in the shape of a trooper's carbine broke out right next door, so to speak. Well, when Monhoan had shot himself dry, they boloed him—but the chance for an ambush vanished when Monhoan's surprise party crippled Raulliane. His men carried him off but the boys got him next day......but he'll never wear it—the boy'll never wear his medal."

Monhoan was lying motionless, his face glorified; he visioned his knights, King Arthur and Sir Galahad, welcoming him to glory, and he smiled.

HE SMILE OF JOSS

BY WILLIAM J. NEIDIG

In a piece of red paper, like a laundry check, which floated to his feet out of the night, Sam Wren, the reformer, recognized the warning—Danger—Run Slowly. Sam immediately shut off his gas and coasted out of the spotlight and into the shadows.

WHEN he had washed the dishes, Sam Wren threw off his white apron, drew on his surtout, and went down town. Not to the joss house nor the theatre nor Li Hung Ching's tan
. No! Sam was not such a heathen.
ad, he headed straight for the mis-
where there was to be an entertain-
that evening.

m was walking quietly along, looking
er to the right nor the left, when a
f red paper fluttered to his feet. The
contained his name, with the legend
k out for Ah Fat!" in Chinese.
n you find a piece of red paper in
street in Chinatown with your name
t, and the legend "Look out!" in
ese, it means that you've been doing
thing that someone doesn't like. It
s that someone has given your name
e devil. Red paper stands for devil.
Fat" stands for—well, Sam Wren
who Ah Fat was. The warning was
ntly from a friend.

e would think that a Chinaman with
od conscience would not be looking
over his shoulder every few rods
e if he were being followed by the
t Black Bogie; that is, a mission
aman, who didn't believe in black
s, and didn't care a tea-leaf whether
levil's eye had a cinder in it from his
alwood incense or not.

m was nearing his journey's end,
nothing had happened. When he
passed the next dark alleyway
vould be all right. That's as close
evils ever get to the mission. It was
er across the street. Sam thought he would cross the street before he got to the dark alleyway. Besides, walking was easier across the street.

Sam crossed the street. He came opposite the dark alleyway. He was almost past its menace, when suddenly there was a little cough of fire from the very center of the darkest place of all. Ping! went a bullet, smash against the fence. Another shot, and another. Ping! Ping! The bullets followed him, and he thought he was gone. He made a dash for the mission. Ping! The last bullet stuck in the door-jamb as he burst open the door of his haven. Confucius! but it was a close shave!

Sam Wren knew a thing or two—that he did not learn at the mission—about devils. He knew perfectly well which of the Suey Sing hatchet-boys it was that had shot so wretchedly. Useless knowledge! Ah Fat was a poor shot; that was true. But he could use a knife beautifully. And he was patient; if he did not get his Chinaman this time he would get him the next. And he was experienced; one corner of the graveyard belonged to him. And he was sly; he had never yet been caught at his mischief. And he was not alone; the Suey Sing Tong was behind him. Ah Fat was the most desperate highbinder in the Suey Sings. Indeed, they had but three. The Suey Sings were a little short on highbinders. Ah Fat and Luy Ling and Luy Kam constituted the entire force. Three men had stepped out from the alleyway. Sam Wren knew who they were.

It doesn't pay to stick your nose in other people's business. It doesn't pay to stand in with the reform work, and help tear low-browed slave girls from their purchasers. You are liable to get hurt, if you happen to be a Chinaman yourself.

Sam slammed the door of the mission, and ran squealing to the men's quarters. He threw himself upon a bunk and drew the covers over his head. His breath came in gasps. He lay shuddering and cowering, and muttered strange words between his chattering teeth. These reformers carried a thing too far. He had never intended to antagonize the entire Suey Sing Tong. Too late! He was as good as dead! All the lady reformers in this world couldn't save him now!

Nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, midnight. One by one the mission boys had gone to bed. The house was as quiet as the dead earth. Every Chinaman was in his bunk, and every Chinaman was asleep —every one save only Sam Wren. Sam Wren lay like a corpse, with his face to the wall and the blankets drawn over his head. There was not the slightest pulse of blood in his body. It was a terrible thing to have the hatchet-boys after one.

King, the mission housekeeper, before kicking off his embroidered holiday slippers, had stuck three or four pieces of sandalwood punk in a flower-pot, and lighted them. It was not a superstition; although, indeed, there is nothing like sandalwood punk for scattering devils. No. It was merely that he liked the fragrance of the burning incense. After a time the room became sweet and pleasant, and lost the disagreeable laundry smell that somehow hangs about a Chinaman's lodgings, unless something is burned to drive it away.

One o'clock, two o'clock. The air was heavy with smoke, and the punk-sticks had at last been consumed by the gnawing glow-worm that will eat straight into the heart of a devil if he comes too close. Sam was still awake, shuddering beneath his blanket. Suddenly he sniffed. It was the incense from the burning sandalwood that penetrated to his nostrils. Sweet and pungent, it carried him back a thousand years, to when he was young, to when he kneeled prostrate before his joss and took the oath of the Sam Yups and had no fear in his heart. Now he was no longer a heathen, and was afraid. Why was he afraid now, and not then? Perhaps it was because of his enemies. Perhaps it was because Joss stood in with you, if you burned enough paper devils before him, when you had enemies that you wanted to kill. The mission ladies wouldn't let you kill your enemies. It was pretty bad when you couldn't kill your enemies, and they were after you with pistols and knives and sand-bags. Joss, of course, was a wicked old heathen god, but he let you kill your enemies.

Two o'clock and fifteen minutes. The Sam Yups kept their joss-house open all night, because you never could tell when you were going to need a joss-house. Sam Wren softly crept out of his bunk and slipped on his shoes. Then, with infinite patience, he unbolted the back door, felt his way down the back stairway, and lost himself in the blackness of the street. He knew that there was a hatchet-boy in the black alleyway, because the Suey Sings never let up on a man once they started in, and so he was very careful, and kept away from the hatchet-boy. At last he arrived at the joss-house, and the sleepy old sentinel passed him through the tortuous, smoky corridors into the presence of Joss himself. He bought of the old man some punk, and some red papers that represented the different orders of devils.

Sam burned his incense in the way prescribed by his tong ancestors. It was very simple. First he lighted two punk sticks, one for each hand, and held them before the face of Joss, his eyes on the ground. Then he bent forward and pressed his forehead against the sacred mat, holding his punk sticks so that the feet of Joss were shrouded in smoke. Then he chanted the sacred lines of his tong, having care to use only the mandarin dialect. When the chant was ended he withdrew backward, bending low his forehead thrice three times toward the floor. Now, with face averted, he arose. He turned with his back toward Joss. The old priest, with much ceremony, gave over to his keeping the red paper devils which he was to burn, and he lighted them, one after another, until they were all consumed. No tiniest fragment must escape the flame. If one should get away with his wings singed, or if a fragment of one should not be burned, that devil would take up his residence in Sam Wren's house. Nobody ever lets a devil get away from him.

When Sam had thus flaunted his incense before the face of Joss, and bowed his forehead to the sacred mat, and backed away, and turned and burned his devils without so much as a fragment of any one of them getting away, then he went straight to the corner of the room, where there was a door. He knew now that Joss would smile upon him. The old priest unlocked the door that opened into the Closet of Mystery. Sam selected a slender, keen-edged knife and a stouter stiletto from what was therein displayed, and hid them in his blouse. Then he slipped out into the street and lost himself once more in the night.

But it was no longer Sam Wren the mission proselyte, trembling for his life, no longer Sam Wren, the timid Chinese cook; it was Sam Wren of the Sam Yups, with a knife in his hand and the smile of Joss in his heart. Save for the halo of an occasional street lamp the night was pitch black. Sam slipped from doorway to doorway, shadow to shadow, street to street, and there was no one to see him. He was part of the night. Now he entered a narrow areaway. He crept along the ground. He flattened himself against a fence. Cautiously, swiftly, surely, he made his way through back yards and around obstructions, approaching the mission nearer and nearer.

At half-past-three o'clock, Sam Wren the Sam Yup man, pressed his body through a hole in a fence and crouched in the blind alleyway that sheltered his enemies. He must be very careful now. He knew that one of the Suey Sings still held guard before the mission. He knew that the hatchet-boys were patient fellows, and never slept. Perhaps it was Ah Fat who was watching; perhaps it was one of the others. Whichever it was he was not asleep. The Suey Sings never slept when they were on a spoor.

Very softly and stealthily the Sam Yup man stole forward. Joss had lent him an invisible cloak, and feet that make no noise. Nearer, nearer, nearer, he drew. He crawled on his hands and knees in the black angle where the fence met the ground. The Suey Sing man ought to be very near. There was no telling. It was too black to see.

One foot, two feet more. It was blacker than black ahead. Another advance, slowly, slowly, nearer, nearer, nearer. The blackness took form. There was something—something—in the alleyway. Very softly the Sam Yup man arose. He bent forward. The black body was an ashbarrel; but against it, with his face turned in the other direction, the Suey Sing hatchet-boy was leaning. Sam Wren stole forward. He moved an inch in a week. He placed his hand upon the ashbarrel. He leaned over it, forward, forward, forward. He raised his firm right hand very carefully, very patiently. With a swift stroke he drew it across the shadow, close under the chin. The Suey Sing man fell in a heap, gurgled a little and lay very still. The Sam Yup man wiped his knife on the Suey Sing man's blouse.

When the Suey Sing man had quit kicking, the Sam Yup man took him by the heels and dragged him behind the ashbarrel. Then he took up his position where the other had stood, and waited. He knew that the others would be along before daylight. He knew that they were expecting Sam Wren the stupid cook, to leave the mission at an early hour. The white man who employed him had to have his breakfast. No doubt his stupid cook never dreamed that the Suey Sing boys would wait for him all night.

Sam Wren waited, and waited, and the night grew blacker as it grew older. It was time the Suey Sings were at their post. At four fifteen he heard someone coming up the street. The Sam Yup man never moved a muscle. The footsteps drew nearer. They were at the head of the alley. The Sam Yup man did not seem to notice them. They passed on up the street. The Sam Yup man could tell a Chinaman's wooden footsteps as far as he could hear them. It was probably a printer on one of the morning papers.

Now there was another sound of footsteps in the street. Another printer had finished his work and was going home. The footsteps approached the head of the alleyway, and then they stopped for a moment. They began again. A muffled black figure entered the fatal court. Not a word was spoken. Not a word of greeting passed between the watcher of the night and his brother Suey Sing who came to reinforce him at the appointed hour. The black shape drew quite close to the ash-barrel. The next moment the newcomer fell like a log, with a stiletto through his heart. Beautiful work! Ah Fat himself couldn't have done it cleaner.

The Sam Yup man let Luy Kam lie where he fell, for he had Ah Fat still to reckon with and Ah Fat was not the man to walk up and let a friend run a stiletto between his ribs, that was sure. Ah Fat was the keenest of the lot. No doubt he would have a good deal to say about the disposition to be made of knives and stilettos in his neighborhood.

It was still very dark. Now and then someone passed in the street; now and then in the distance could be heard the rumble of milk wagons and produce carts. There were people who never kept Sunday, it seemed.

The terrible leader of the Suey Sing hatchet-boys came sooner than was expected; that is to say, he came without the warning sound of shuffling wooden shoes, and without any signal whistle. For the rest, when his gaunt shape loomed up before Sam Wren, the Sam Yup man was ready for him.

"Huh! I smell blood!" said Ah Fat, in his thick Canton-Chinese.

"He bled like a hog!" replied Sam coldly, in the same dialect, speaking as few words as possible.

Ah Fat betrayed neither emotion nor surprise. He kicked the body with his foot. Then he fished out a match, and leaned over the corpse, lighting the match upon his shoe.

"You got to be damn sure," he said, as he held the flame over the dead face.

Sam Wren was standing behind him, and when the other bent over the dead man, Sam seized his Suey Sing pigtail firmly in one hand, jerked his head back sharply, and slit his throat from jowl to jowl. The blood spurted forth upon the ground. Ah Fat lurched forward in his rage, fumbling at his pocket. Then he tried to rise, but his knees weakened and would not support him. Sam Wren plunged his knife into his back, where the heart ought to be. Ah Fat tumbled over on his face. His hands twitched a little, his legs kicked a little, the horror at his throat gurgled a little, and then he went to join the ancestors of his tong. And that was the end of the terrible three.

The Sam Yup man felt of each to make sure that he was dead before he left them. The blood flowed once more through his veins. He was contented in his heart. He wanted to dance. He wanted to cry aloud. He felt gloriously exultant. But he did not dance, nor sing, nor cry aloud. It was beginning to grow gray in the east, and it would soon be breakfast time. Sam Wren the Sam Yup man wiped the blood from his hands on the clothing of the dead Chinamen, and the soles of his shoes also, where he had stepped in the crimson puddle. Then Sam Wren the cook went home and got breakfast.

In the morning, after he had finished up his work, Sam went to the Chinese church. In the afternoon Sam went to Sunday School and taught a class of China boys. In the evening Sam went out for the mission. Although he walked through the heart of Chinatown, no red paper devils fluttered to his feet, and he never once looked back over his shoulder to see if he was followed. He did not cross the street when he came to the black alleyway, but went boldly past. And he did not squeal when he climbed the mission steps. He had his Chinese Bible with him. Perhaps that was the reason. Or perhaps it was the Sunday School. Or perhaps it was the sermon of the morning.

The Monday papers contained an account of a mysterious highbinder murder, in which three innocent Chinamen had been slain near the Chinese mission. As usual, there was no clue to the murderers.

(*Continued from page 2*)

tional values, but deftly hints and leaves the solution to the very end. It is another story rich in substance; but the treatment is impressionistic rather than realistic, and to that may be attributed its failure to attain distinction itself as a "piece of art." It does not fall far short, for its faults cannot destroy the bigness of the conception—that the two men responsible for the engineering triumph should "hold up" the two ends of the bridge.

You remember how O. Henry wove romance about dandelion and egg salads or such remote foodstuffs as the potato and the onion? Mr. Evans has woven his tapestry around a fly and a daddy-long-legs with equally charming results, albeit he makes the long arm of coincidence pretty lame in the process. Of course *Fate's* [illegible] is a fairy tale: the cloth is so flimsy that one can see the holes in the warp. One might say that the sense of the inner unity of things which one may see from—say Carlyle—is here distorted by a thin and mawkish travesty of an allegory of fate; or, in other words, that the sense of the unity of things, etc., is here reduced to a lot of sentimental slush covering a groundwork of petty, insipid fatalism. After saying that, one might as well return to the original proposition and repeat that the author has succeeded fairly well in his attempt to microscope a daddy-long-legs and a *musca domestica* into plot proportions. He may at least be commended for that.

The Chink is an old plot warmed over and garnished with new scenery, new players and even a new asbestos curtain to rise into the proscenium arch. What of it? It grips the sympathy just as it did when De Maupassant made use of it in "The Necklace." The author subtly conveys the illusive Chinese atmosphere. One senses the fidelity of the setting in such passages as that one which speaks of the "red coral buttons of a provincial governor," in that one which tells how "the far pagoda gongs throbbed through the dead air, and peace lay heavily upon the world," and again in the description of the Chinese games in the house of the "Ten Thousand Little Monkeys." The foreshadowed meeting between Lo Kiang and Foo Gan is a brief but deft study in contrasts; and the climax, which contains its own denouement, is structually good.

In the introduction of *Something for Nothing*, the reader is led to suppose that the story will have to do with the struggle between McGann and Duffy for the hand of the widow, Mrs. Kester. This proves misleading, as the reader learns in the end that McGann's use of the dog to finance a theatre party is the real story, inasmuch as he was already Exhibit A with Mrs. Kester. This story does entertain despite our arguments that such sophomoric view-points and plots do not enter into good short-story writing.

Alfred Westfall does fairly well in *An Honest Thief* what another author scored with repeatedly. The mock morality is pleasing and harmless, and the improbable conversation stretches along a highway of relatively unimportant incidents to a goal of debatable worthiness.

The five dollar prize winners in the fourth contest were Miss Gertrude E. Simms, Chicago, Ills.; Willis K. Jones, Clinton, N. Y.; Russell P. Askue, Cleveland, O.; Willis W. Hackmann, Bridgeport, Conn.; Francis J. Gillooly, Philadelphia, Pa.

The Seventh Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (June); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before July 1st. Prizes will be awarded July 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the September BLACK CAT, issued August 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

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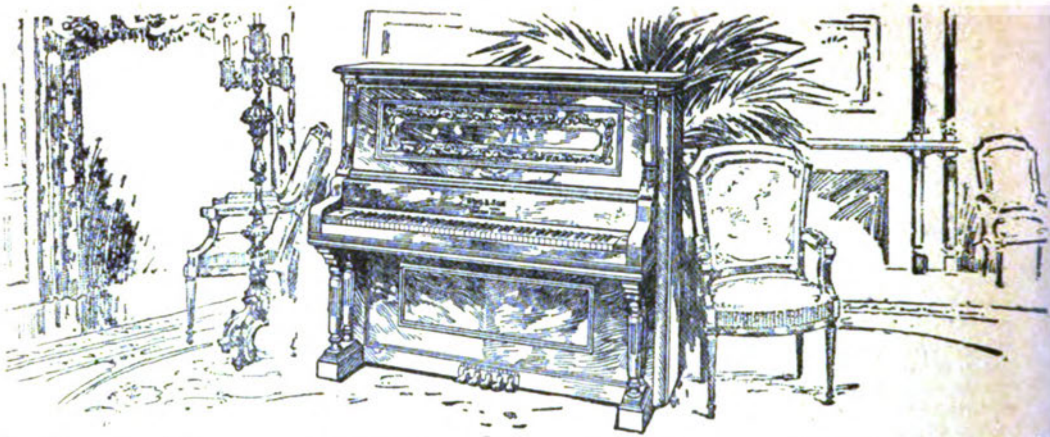

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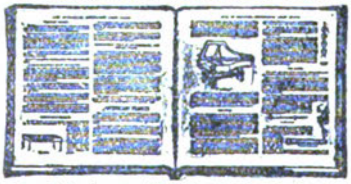

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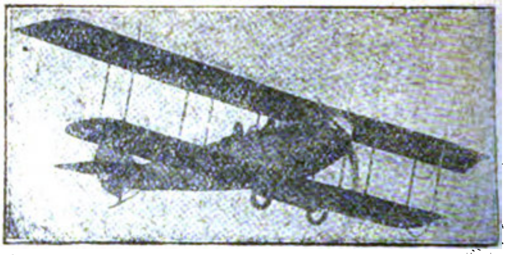

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Opinion of Doctor Howard James, late of the Manhattan State Hospital of New York and formerly Assistant Physician, Brooklyn State Hospital, who has prescribed and thoroughly tested Nuxated Iron in his own private practice.

Former United States Senator Wm. E. Mason, recently elected Member of the United States Congress from Illinois

WHAT SENATOR MASON SAYS:

"I have often said I would never recommend medicine of any kind. I believe that the doctor's place. However, after the hardest political campaign of my life, without a chance for a vacation, I had been starting to court every morning with that horrible tired feeling one cannot describe. I was advised to try Nuxated Iron. As a pioneer in the pure food and drug legislation, I was at first loath to try an advertised remedy, but after advising with one of my medical friends, I gave it a test. The results have been so beneficial in my own case I made up my mind to let my friends know about it, and you are at liberty to publish this statement if you so desire. **I am now sixty-five years of age, and I feel that a remedy which will build up the strength and increase the power of endurance of a man of my age should be known to every nervous, run-down anæmic man, woman and child.**"

Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron was shown to several physicians who were requested to give their opinions thereon.

Dr. Howard James, late of the Manhattan State Hospital of New York, and formerly assistant physician, Brooklyn State Hospital, said:

"Senator Mason is to be commended on handing out this statement on Nuxated Iron for public print. There are thousands of men and women who need a strength and blood-builder, but do not know what to take. There is nothing like organic iron — Nuxated Iron — to give increased strength, snap, vigor and staying power. It enriches the blood, brings roses to the cheeks of women and is an unfailing source of renewed vitality, endurance and power for men who burn up too rapidly their nervous energy in the strenuous strain of the great business competition of the day!"

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston Physician, who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said: "Senator Mason is right. As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking organic iron — Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth.

"Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. "If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

"Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Senator Mason's championship of Pure Food and Drugs legislation, his fight for the rural free delivery system, and his strong advocacy of all bills favoring labor and the rights of the masses, as against trusts and combines, made him a national figure at Washington and endeared him to the hearts of the working man and the great masses of people throughout the United States. Senator Mason has the distinction of being one of the really big men of the nation. His strong endorsement of Nuxated Iron must convince any intelligent thinking reader that it must be a preparation of very great merit and one which the Senator feels is bound to be of great value to the masses of people everywhere, otherwise he could not afford to lend his name to it, especially after his strong advocacy of pure food and drugs legislation.

Since Nuxated Iron has obtained such an enormous sale — over three million people using it annually — other iron preparations are often recommended as a substitute for it. The reader should remember that there is a vast difference between ordinary metallic iron and the organic iron contained in Nuxated Iron, therefore always insist on having Nuxated Iron as recommended by Dr. Howard James, and other physicians.

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The Black Cat

VOL. XXII. No. 10 JULY, 1917 10c. a COPY. $1.00 a YEAR

Contents

Cover Design . . . *Olivette Bourgeois* .
The Black Cat Club 2
The Law of the Abalone . *Chart Pitt* . . . 3
The Jungle's Accolade . *Hapsburg Liebe* . . 9
The Unsullied Miranda . *Mrs. David A. Wasson* . 17
The Love Offering . . *Alice Gorton Wynn* . . 24
Big Brother . . . *John Matter* . . . 28
Unmasking Cleo . . *Frank X. Finnegan* . . 37
The Engineer and the Pilot *Nathaniel Dickinson* . 42

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

It is manifestly impossible to do justice to all stories by arbitrarily comparing all varieties at once. It is frequently a matter of personal taste and a question of which type of story fits the mood at the time. They can not all be judged by the same standard, except to this extent that they may all be subjected to much the same test of form, that is, compared as to detail of technique and workmanship. Thus the stories may be grouped. Take for instance two stories treated in this article. *The Subscribers' Serial* may be considered as good a story from the humorous standpoint as *The Clod* is from a serious and æsthetic viewpoint. In this instance, in the final analysis, *The Clod* must be put upon a higher plane not only because of superior technique and literary finish but because such stories are generally considered as worth more to the reading public since stories that stimulate serious thought obviously rank higher than stories that merely amuse. Where two stories represent widely different types, precedence may be determined by deciding which is the superior type. It is only where stories are of the same type and of equal merit as to matter and form that one may legitimately say that one is better than the other by deciding which is the more entertaining of the two.

Many readers do not have the patience to undertake such searching analysis as that necessary to determine which is really the best of eight or nine stories. They discard all standards of measurement. They base their judgment upon the amount of entertainment to be derived from a story rather than upon any known rules of criticism, so that the story that fits the mood is likely to be adjudged the best one in the magazine.

The returns in the April contest resulted in the awarding of the $25 prize to John Berry, author of *The Clod*. A criticism of this and other stories follows. The stories are arranged in the order of their standing in the contest.

The Clod is a grotesquerie that reminds one of Ambrose Bierce. Its theme, murder for an ideal's sake, is strong and novel and is well sustained by distinctive handling. The characters are consistently and carefully developed, although the story is not so much a character study as it is an analysis of the last-day manipulations of the mind of one who is about to die. Choice material and good workmanship combine to make a story that is satisfying in every detail.

In *The Selfishest Woman*, the author cleverly offsets the deep gloom of the real story by the humor in the manner of the telling. It is that implacable critic, the maid, whose vivid and original bits of description veil the horror of it all in a mist of humor. She is consistent to the very last which is more than can be said of her mistress, whose chameleon disposition supplies the twist at the end of the story. Now a twist at the end of a story is supposed to be rather catchy. *It Happened Last Night* won the prize in the January contest and it was built on a twist. But *The Selfishest Woman* is built on an illegitimate twist. The characterization is false, for not one word up to the very end is given to show the reader that Carneen Carmichael is other than as characterized. That a woman of the type drawn would do the thing described is improbable in the highest degree. The author should have drawn a line of distinction between the two kinds of selfishness. Then there is another point in which the story lacks probability. None but the poorest of doctors would have been fooled by the make-up patch on the arm, and even a third-year medical student would have known better than to hazard a diagnosis on so superficial an examination as that given Daggett.

Soft Soap is an example of good short-story form. Within it are incorporated the chief characteristics of the perfect short story, viz.: a single predominating incident, a single preeminent character, imagination, plot, compression, organization and unity of impression. The weak point of the whole story is that it leaves the reader with this question: What will Budlong do in the next town? Must we suppose that he goes from town to town making speeches at labor meetings in order to create a demand for his soap or does he acquire the knack of selling his line on the merits of the article itself? Perhaps the reader should not be concerned beyond the end of the story but one cannot help wondering what Budlong would do if the time of his arrival in a certain town did not coincide with the time for a labor meeting to be called to order. Of course he might write ahead and arrange to address various organizations, in which case he would soon develop into a labor agitator or qualify for the Chautauqua Circuit. Doubtless he would find this more remunerative than selling soap.

Although *The Corpse Delicious* is a story saturated with local color and contains an abundance of humor of the W. W. Jacob's type, it is not so interesting as the material of the story would justify. That essential element, suspense, is utterly lacking. Moreover the

(*Continued on Page* 45.)

THE LAW OF THE ABALONE

BY CHART PITT

A shell-hunter conceives a unique and horrible form of man-trap by which to bring about the death of a companion. He puts his plan into execution; but at the critical moment, "a loose pebble turns beneath his shoe sole."

THE heartless, whining song of the homeless winds, drifting landward across the gray miles of the Pacific, softened to a morbid whisper, as Lee Tong staggered from the door of a little driftwood hut that clung to the side of the hill.

The Chinaman was small and misshapen, like the twisted, stunted trees that clung to the storm-swept cliffs. His wizened face was covered with skin as yellow and wrinkled as old leather. If the dwarf ever possessed a soul he had safely hidden it behind that stolid mask. But his narrow slanting eyes held the poison of loneliness—and of hate.

And the fire flared to a dangerous brightness in those eyes as the stunted Celestial heard the cabin door open and close behind him, and the measured thud of confident feet upon the hill-trail, where Long Sing returned to the abalone beach.

The mongrel camps of the shell-hunters never made stranger bedfellows than this pair. One was a stunted son of the peace-loving hordes that swarm along the hot shores of the Yellow Sea; the other, a Mongol from the lonely, upland steppes of the west, a giant Tartar, with the blood of red-cloaked, devil-riding ancestors in his veins.

The man beside the shack stood motionless, watching the straight, tall form of his companion go swinging down the hillside. At that moment Lee Tong might have been mistaken for a graven image that had kept its watch upon that wind-flailed headland for a thousand years.

Then he flung his head back upon his hunched shoulders and bared his yellow fangs to the dazzling sunlight. His claw-like hand fumbled among the folds of his loose garment, and brought out a cleaning-knife with a blade as sinister as the misshapen creature who held it. The flame of passion died in his narrow eyes. Once more he was a soulless clod.

Like an unthinking machine he shuffled down to the fetid heap of abalones below the cabin. His flat nostrils became filled with the loathsome stench of the abalone-scrapings rotting in the sun and his soul rose up in bitter rebellion as he began his work.

For six months he had shared the driftwood hut with the big Tartar; and brooded over the lonely lot of an abalone hunter. He had heard the wind sing its soulless song among the naked rocks until his withered brain had become as lean and hungry as the sunburned hills that shut him away from the companionship he so desperately needed.

Those winds that came out of the west had journeyed far. They bore the perfume of flowers that had bloomed beside a sacred shrine, and were charged with that mystic lure that sets the East apart from the rest of the world. They spoke to Lee Tong of the homeland, China, where the temple-gongs purred in the scented dusk, and the path of life trailed aimlessly under the witchery of the poppy-dreams.

For six months he had taken his turn upon the sun-scorched hill, cleaning the shells that were to buy him a third-class passage back to the land he could never forget.

And this day it should have been Long Sing who cleaned the shells in the reeking swelter of the hillside. But the cards had run against the hunchback the night before, and with the reckless plunging of the Orient, he had wagered his privilege of taking turn and turn about with his partner, down on the cool abalone beach, for the rest of the summer.

The Tartar once more held the winning hand; so the dwarf must spend the sultry dog days crouching among the fetid mass, while the big Mongol wandered beside the splashing sea, prying the shells from the rocks.

This day of all others, Lee Tong needed to be upon the beach. The day before, while peering through the clear water, he had discovered a giant shell, one that would be worth a month's wages to him if he could hide it among the rocks and not have to share it with his fellow hermit.

Today there was an extremely low tide, and Long Sing would be sure to find the treasure.

The man upon the hillside glimpsed the hard road that led back to the homeland. It was growing longer and more difficult under this new hardship which the fickle cards had put upon him.

As he slashed spitefully at the hated shells, he was half stupefied by the dread conviction that suddenly sprang upon him from the hot silence. A gloating voice seemed to whisper that Lee Tong never would look upon the hills of his childhood. His misshapen bones never would rest in the sacred soil of China, where his fathers slept.

For years he had carried that hope with him. It had been the one ray of sunshine in his lean life. Now the sullen-mouthed winds were taunting him because he was old, and his dream could never come true.

The sun swung past the meridian and slanted off toward the brassy sea. There was less sting to its lashing rays that fell upon the yellow face of the hunchback; but the fire of hate and madness burned with an added fury in his blood.

Gradually the rebellious passion that had goaded the little Chinaman to the verge of madness, centered upon his more favored companion who idled away his time upon the abalone beach. Lee Tong knew he was loitering down there,—knew he had cheated at cards the night before, so that he could get a chance to take life easy for the rest of the summer.

By the time the sun had touched the far rim of the Pacific, the dwarf had worked himself into a fury. That flaming ball of red was looking down upon the hills of China—hills that he never would see.

"I *will* go." He flung his challenge to the winds, as he braced himself upon his crooked legs. He smiled his wolfish grin at the long-bladed cleaning-knife as he ran his finger along its keen edge. Then, without looking behind him, he stalked off down the hill-trail that led to the beach.

The faithful, dog-like brain of Lee Tong, the Chinaman, had broken at last under the terrible strain of solitude, where the lonely winds kept whining like the voice of a soul lost in the world's first night. In that moment, the mad brain of the dwarf went groping back across the months for something tangible upon which to base his hate for the big Tartar.

In a flash, he remembered. It was a rain-soaked night in mid-winter. The arc-lights had glistened in a sea of silver mist, and the wet pavements had been blotched like blood-stains from the glow of lighted shop windows. There had been a brass horn and a drum that beat out a strange, wild tune that got into the blood. A man in uniform had shaken a blood-red flag at the crowd, calling upon them to forget their false gods, and follow him.

And Long Sing had stepped out from the motley rabble of the street and balanced his ponderous form upon a packing-case. With the blood and fire of the hill clans, he had spoken of the new religion that wiped away the tears of the world. He had heaped his biting sarcasm upon the flowers that blossom under the shadow of the poppy smoke; and had sworn that his father's bones were the bones of a sinner who never had seen the true light.

Lee Tong had forgiven him for speaking those sacrilegious words, because his own body was small and misshapen, and his misguided countryman was of faultless form.

He forgave,—and speedily forgot. Now

it came back to him with the force of a blow. It was the poison of the new religion that had festered in Long Sing's soul and allowed him to take advantage of the cards; to send his stunted companion to the filthy shell-pile while he amused himself on the cool beach. That was the way of the white masters whom the Tartar tried to imitate. They were always putting some new burdens upon the shoulders of the yellow man.

With the single-track reasoning of the madman, Lee Tong found it easy to trace every hardship he ever had suffered to the door of his proselyte countryman. Nor were material things forgotten in the mad demand for revenge. He gloated over the summer's harvest of rainbow-hued shells, and realized that they would carry him back to the homeland, and leave something for his last years—*for there would be no other man to share them with in the morning.*

But he must make no mistake. The long arm of the law was only too ready to punish the yellow man. It was the cunning of the East pitted against the tyranny of the West,—and the wisdom of the ancient East must find a way.

With the cunning in which the Oriental is adept, Lee Tong followed the hill trail, his twisted brain filled with a multitude of horrible schemes that would fool the greedy law. A thousand things suggested themselves. The very silence of the dying day was teeming with possible ways to pay that grewsome debt of blood which the hunchback believed he owed his stalwart companion.

One by one, he examined them, then discarded them. When he swung down among the crags that rose sheer above the abalone beach, he was still groping for some means that would be safe—the one perfect way—something that would be an honor to his vengeance-loving ancestors who slept in the sacred soil of the homeland.

Nothing was moving among the shattered rocks that formed the snarling coast of California.

Instinctively, the Chinaman's eyes sought the lower beach line and focused themselves upon the rock wall where the giant abalone clung in the path of the flooding tide. A deeper blotch among the shadows justified Lee Tong's fears. The proselyte had discovered the monster shell which would bring a handsome price from some curio collector. He had waited for the coming of night to spirit it away unknown to his companion.

Then the thing for which Lee Tong's mind had been groping, suddenly flashed upon him, perfected to the last detail. It was the one faultless plan—something that would make his dead ancestors turn over in their graves with envy.

With eager feet the misshapen creature scrambled over the slippery boulders. He spurned the slower and safer trail that wound down to the lower beach. Like a goat he leaped from terrace to terrace, straight down the side of the cliffs where one false step would plunge him to death among the snarling rocks below.

Long Sing heard him coming among the rocks and lifted his head suspiciously. The dwarf glided up, a picture of innocent unconcern.

"Ho! catchum very big one," the hunchback wheezed in well feigned surprise. "Don't hurt him with the knife,—he very valuable shell,—worth lot of money."

"Him too big," the Tartar grunted back, falling into pidgin English, which was a sure sign that he was excited. "Him pinch like hell."

"We wait a minute and the big devil him think we go away,—then we grab him quick,—and get him loose before he knows anything about it. You big, strong man —not afraid of abalone."

There was logic in Lee Tong's words. Both men knew from experience that a quick, unexpected thrust would loosen even a large shell, one that would have to be literally cut from the rock if given time to bring its tremendous vacuum power into play.

However, there was nothing logical in the mad eyes of the hunchback; but the gathering darkness hid his grewsome secret from the world. The blood tingled in his veins;—he would show how a crooked-back man paid his feud-debt. In a moment the spirits of his sires, whose bones rested in the sacred soil of the homeland, would witness vengeance such as they never were privileged to know.

The only thing that troubled Lee Tong was that the whole affair seemed too simple. He would have preferred to settle the blood-debt with a flourish of dramatic show. A fool could play this game if he had thought of it; that was the point,—a fool never *would* have thought of it. Chinamen had loved and hated for a thousand years, but it was left for Lee Tong, the hunchback, to discover the one perfect revenge.

It needed only a quick thrust with his claw-like fingernail, and the giant abalone would snap its shell against the rock, and Long Sing would be a prisoner, counting the slow march of the minutes that brought the flood-tide back to cover the snarling cliffs of the California coast. Inch by inch it would creep up about the stalwart form of the Mongol—until the end. Surely that was vengeance such as his fathers never knew.

Lee Tong shuffled his feet in the gravel in readiness for the thrust that would spring the sinister man-trap—and then a quick leap backwards to safety before the cruel jaws snapped upon their prey. A loose pebble turned beneath his shoe sole, and with the instinct born of months of climbing among the cliffs, his other foot gouged for a protecting hold upon the ground. The resultant tremor shot along his tense, over-charged nerves, passing out at his finger-tips; and with it came the reflex action of muscles.

Like the snapping of steel jaws, the giant shell crashed down against the rock, gripping both men's fingers beneath it as in a vice.

In that first moment of surprised agony, the hunchback weakened. Like a wounded pig, he bared his yellow fangs, and his soulless cry drowned the shivering whisper of waves against the barrier rocks. For a moment he made the night hideous with his mad lament. Then once more he was a part of the stolid East, where every emotion is hidden beneath a mask-like face.

There had been no sound from the other victim except the whistling rush of breath through close-drawn lips. It was the defiant spirit of the steppes that had made a mockery of death upon a hundred battlefields.

A thin-voiced wind began its eerie calling among the cliffs. It was the chill breath of the deep-sea that rode in the wake of the flooding tide. Lee Tong shivered at the sound. He knew that the tide had turned. Once more the untamed waters of the Pacific were rushing back to the land, to cover the snarling crags in a smother of milk-white foam.

The night deepened about them. One by one, the blue stars blazed out above the lean, hungry hills. A belated flock of cormorants came flapping in from the sea, headed for their rookery among the crags. For a half hour the protesting voice of the birds jangled their discordant chorus, as the newcomers crowded about in search of a choice roosting place. When at last their commotion died down, it left the night silences unpeopled by a solitary sound except the low strumming of distant beaches that were beginning to throb to the beat of long, green swells that rode in the flooding tide.

Beneath his mask of stolid unconcern, the hunchback quailed as he heard that hollow, sinister voice that was drawing closer through the night. He watched a star that was creeping higher and higher above the crags, and thus measured the slow passing of the hours.

Lee Tong was of the East, and had sipped the germs of fatalism with his mother's milk. He neither repented nor hoped to escape from the vampire thing that held him a prisoner in the path of the rising tide. His plans had miscarried and he was waiting to pay the price. His misshapen bones never would rest in the sacred soil of China, but his spirit would be there before the red sun flared up over the thirsty hills.

The wind freshened to a gale, and the engulfing waters quickened their pace under the sting of its flailing lash. The drumming of surf on the barrier rocks began to fill the night with its mad lament.

Foam-balls drifted through the darkness. They touched the withered cheek of Lee Tong as they floated past. The little Chinaman shivered, as if the fingers of the dead had touched him. He was growing weary of waiting. The death that was crawling upon him was slow in coming. He slipped down as far as his gnarled arms would allow and felt with his feet for a touch of the water he could hear gurgling among the gravel at every rush of the swell against the barrier rocks.

Like a statue of black marble, the giant Tartar towered above him, clear cut against the stars. The sight filled Lee Tong with a comforting joy. He had feasted his soul upon the thought of crouching among the rocks and watching the proselyte die. Things had not worked out as he had planned, but that part of the picture would come true, he would be there to whisper an evil prayer as the big man died.

Then a new agony marked him from the darkness,—something that his mad brain had forgotten. He cursed the fingers of the Creator that had left him like a stunted tree, trailing its branches in the famished soil, while the Mongol towered above him, even in this hour of death, as he had in life.

The proselyte would die; that was certain. But Lee Tong would not be there to gloat over his death-agony. The rising tide would swirl above the spot where his deformed body swung in the grip of the greedy man-trap, and his treasured queue would flap to every surge of the deep-sea swell, the sport of the fishes and rock-crabs that would swarm to the feast. In that hour, the blue stars would look down upon the heroic form of the Tartar standing alone beside the rock wall, neck-deep in the creeping water, waiting, silent-lipped, in the path of the flood.

The wind fluttered out its last sobbing breath among the steeple-crags—and died. But the madness it had put upon the sea, lived after it. The great waves came purring in from the Pacific and broke against the barrier rocks. The whole beach shivered under the concussions of those sledge-hammer blows. The cormorants squawked restlessly among the crags. The half-minutes of silence that lay in the trough of the waves were filled with the hollow sucking of the backwash and the metallic tinkle of water scurrying over the rough surfaces of the beach-boulders. Then the cold hand of the Pacific reached up through the noisy darkness and touched Lee Tong's foot with its groping fingers. Like the beating of the black wings of death, the flood-tide swells thundered against the snarling California coast; and inch by inch, the water crept up about the crooked legs of the dwarf.

Then the terrible blackness was filled with the soothing voice that rang half-familiar, half-strange in Lee Tong's long lobed ears.

"Brother, if thy hand offend thee, cut it off. For it is better that the hand should perish, than that the body should be given to the sea," the giant Tartar repeated in an awed whisper that carried above the drumming of the outer beaches.

The hunchback strained at the rainbow-hued shell that held him. His memory rushed back to the town he had left behind; where Long Sing had stood in the silver mist of the rain-soaked night, and spoken words like these to the motley rabble of the street. Yet it was the poison of that new religion which made the proselyte victorious even in the face of the supreme defeat of death. A snarling retort was upon Lee Tong's lips, when the whispering voice continued:

"My knife is fresh sharpened, and a few slashes will set me free. It is in my belt. You can reach it with your teeth if I bend over."

Something in the purring voice of the big Mongol whipped the fire of hate from the mad brain of the dwarf. For the moment he was under a compelling impulse to help this man whom he had come to kill. Perhaps there was nothing in that new religion to keep the proselyte from saving his life by slashing the faultless hands which God had given him. But Lee Tong would die rather than return to the land of the poppy-dreams without the gnarled claws that had earned his right to live for fifty lean years.

Mechanically he obeyed the request of his fellow victim; then turned his head away to contemplate the slow creeping of the water that meant the end.

A whistling intake of breath told him that the proselyte was slashing his faultless body to save his miserable life. There was nothing but pity for the man's weakness in the heart of Lee Tong now. Let the coward live if he would.

The next moment, a splashing in the water roused the dwarf from his bitter reflections. Long Sing reeled back from the man-trap—free—and an object for charity for the rest of his days.

Like a madman, the Tartar clawed about in the swirling water. Lee Tong strained his eyes to follow his form through the darkness. What new form of insanity was this? Why didn't he escape while there was time?

Then once more the Mongol towered against the stars as he reeled back through the lapping flood. For a moment he swayed drunkenly. Then his mangled arms came up out of the water, clutching a boulder to his bloody breast.

Like the hammer of Thor, the rock crashed down upon the vampire shell; and Lee Tong scrambled up the slippery side of the cliff, guiding the steps of the giant, who reeled from the loss of blood.

When they had reached the safety of the cliffs, and Lee Tong had stopped the flow of blood with bandages torn from his shirt, he stood in the trembling star-shine and looked down into that black abyss from which he had escaped.

"A man must be brave to cut off his hands—even to save his life," he admitted, without a trace of emotion in his voice.

"My life?" the big man gasped, in the agony of muscles that were beginning to swell under the bandages. "I'm too tall for that tide to hurt me any,—it wouldn't have covered your head if it hadn't been for the wind pushing the water into the cove, —and in the morning the shell would loosen when the sun got hot."

"Is that the way of the white man—the way of the new religion?" the hunchback stammered.

"That's all right," the Tartar soothed him, dropping back into the pidgin English of the abalone camps. "White man make very good wooden hands. Long Sing stand on street corner and sell fruit, —Lee Tong go back to China, where they got to have all their fingers to make living."

The dwarf looked up at the man who had saved his life. The blue starlight softened the lines of his homely face.

"Lee Tong never go back to China; he's going to learn the new religion." There was still a touch of the fatalistic East in his awed voice. "God made Lee Tong's body crooked like the manzanita trees that grow among the rocks, but he made his memory as tall and straight as the redwoods back in the forest. I think if little man like me stand on street corner and tell everybody about the thing Long Sing done to save the life of a miserable, no-good Chinaman—then fellows buy a lot of fruit."

The cormorants moved restlessly among the rocks. The drumming of the outer beaches softened till it was nothing but a lullaby,—a droning chant of brotherhood, —as two shadows crept up the hill-trail and merged into the murk of the night.

NEXT month: THE GLOVED REVENGE, *by John Berry,* author of THE CLOD, the prize winning story in the April number. (See page 2.)

THE JUNGLE'S ACCOLADE

BY HAPSBURG LIEBE

Man cannot possibly survive without the aid of the rib that was taken from him and improved so long ago. In this story, the characters are confronted by a difficult situation, for there are nine men and only one rib.

AUGUST SLAEGER ran guns and ammunition from Chinese ports to Emilio Aguinaldo's army, made counterfeit pesos, smuggled silks and whiskies and opium, and was father and king to as fine a crowd of cheese-colored Malay cutthroats as one would care to see beheaded; and he did it all in spite of, even in defiance of, the more or less efficient secret service the Americans had organized in Manila. It was not safe to cross August Slæger,—who, his name notwithstanding, lacked a great deal of being all German,—and it was nothing short of dangerous to know too much concerning his affairs, for those who did, had a fashion of disappearing mysteriously and completely. Slæger balked at the shedding of blood when there was a less violent and sure alternative; for bloodshed was messy, and it was too apt to leave a trail behind it. Those smart detectives, they caught men by their fingerprints!

George Leef sat up weakly in the thick blackness and tried to remember. At first his brain seemed wooden. Then he began with the moment when he had broken conference with the president of the Manila Banking Company, and shadowed himself down the Escolta and into the San Miguel. He had ordered a glass of red beer. The almond-eyed waiter had looked at him queerly as the beer was put on the small mahogany table before him. He had left the San Miguel and gone in a caromatta toward his hotel on the Calle Alix; he remembered being sleepy, very sleepy....

The thing he was sitting on, or in, lurched suddenly, and he instinctively threw out his hands. His fingers sank into a soft, damp, hairy mass that gave up a peculiar, rotting odor; this he immediately recognized as old abaca, native hemp. The strong scent of old copra was in his nostrils, too. Then he knew; he was a prisoner in the hold of a little island schooner. He quickly reasoned out the truth: he had been only too well acquainted with the works of August Slæger, and he was being taken to join those other unfortunates whom Slæger had so mysteriously put out of the world of men. But Leef was not very much frightened; to him it was another adventure in a land of adventures, and nothing more.

He looked around him. Not a ray of light was visible. Either it was night, or the hatch covers had been carefully and closely fastened down. He could hear nothing save the occasional slush!—ush! of the little vessel's bluff bows as they drove themselves into the foaming waters of a deep sea swell, or the occasional slatting of dirty sails. An hour passed. The schooner lurched violently and heeled over, and George Leef was thrown halfway across the bottom of the stuffy, ill-smelling hold. His hands collided with the legs of a big man, and the unknown moaned. Leef shook the legs hard.

"Get up, you!" he commanded.

The heavy figure writhed uncertainly and moaned again. Again Leef shook him and sharply ordered him to get up. For a reply there came the half coherent mouthing of one who is not quite conscious, and in it Leef caught the name of a woman whom he knew slightly.

"Get up!" repeated Leef; this time he shouted it.

The man sat up slowly and with difficulty, muttering, "Who are you?" There was a foreign twang to his speech. Leef could hear his labored breathing.

"It appears that I'm somebody that August Slæger doesn't especially like," answered George Leef: "And I take it that you're another such person; eh?"

"August Slæger," mumbled the other, as the truth dawned on him also, "why, yes, of course, *mon ami*, it must be Slæger's work. I am Raoul de Montefort, of the *Campania Maritima*. The American Government, you know, offered a considerable reward for evidence that would convict Slæger, the fox, and I had a chance to get it easily. So here I am with you, and," quietly, "we are doomed."

"I remember you now," said Leef. "I met you at the Trevanas' *baile grande* in May. You were monopolizing the attention of the prettiest girl in Manila."

"Ah, the Englishwoman!" De Montefort exclaimed. "Yes, Celeste is quite the prettiest girl in Manila. And you are—"

"George Leef, formerly a lieutenant in a volunteer infantry outfit, at present a member of the Manila Secret Service," supplied the American. "Tell me this," he went on, "how did they get you?"

"How did they get me?" The Frenchman collected his thoughts rapidly. "I was walking with Celeste on the Luneta, just at nightfall, when a black cloth—really, it must have been a blanket—but *mon Dieu!* Celeste! What became of her? Here am I but where is she?"

From the blackness to his right came a feminine voice in tones that were low and as clear as the tones of a bell of silver: "Your solicitude is rather sudden, isn't it, Monsieur de Montefort?" somewhat whimsically. "You quarreled with me during the entire afternoon!"

"Celeste!" painfully. "You too!"

"Why not?" murmured the young woman. "I recognized August Slæger, from your description of him, among those who attacked you; you had told me all that you had found out concerning him; I knew too much, you see. If, as you say, we are doomed—"

Her voice broke pitifully, in spite of her. Neither man ventured to speak for a minute. It seemed to them that there was nothing to say. Why should they raise a hope that must soon be shattered? De Montefort now thought only of Celeste, and Leef was a hundred times more than sorry for her. She was a hothouse plant, a hyacinthine creature, ethereally beautiful, with her sky-blue eyes and golden-yellow hair. In her way, doubtless, she was strong; but it was a strength that was unused to coping with such desperate situations as this.

After two leaden hours, a ray of light, feeble at first, came down from between two warped boards in the hatch-cover directly over their heads. Day had dawned. Though they knew that they could scarcely better their condition by gaining the cutthroat-lined deck above, Leef and De Montefort searched everywhere for a possibility of escape—and failed to find it. More hours went dragging soddenly by, and the three in the hold began to suffer from thirst. Leef and the Frenchman called aloud, but there was no response. The little ship might well have been a phantom ship. There was no sound save the slatting, now and then, of the dirty sails, and, now and then, the maddening slush!—ush! of the bluff bows in the foaming brine.

Late in the afternoon, the hatch over the prisoners was opened about halfway, and a row of diabolically grinning Malay faces peered down into the semi-gloom of the hold. Among them was one great face that was unforgetable; it was darker, more cunning and more barbaric than the others, and from its thin upper lip dangled a coal-black, walrus-like mustache. In this savage seaman's veins ran the blood of the wily Chinese pirate, the fierce Moro, the South Sea Islands cannibal.

"Me Ngan Tai-Po; me skipper," he said proudly, addressing Celeste in particular, while the two big men at the young woman's side stared and wished wildly for a weapon.

Celeste's countenance was full of the spirit of entreaty. "Give us water, and something to eat," she begged.

Ngan Tai-Po went nimbly to his bare

feet and faced about, and those below saw at his waistline the flash of the silver-mounted hilt of a flame-shaped Moro kris, deadliest of all daggers. He spoke in his pidgin English. Another moment, and a huge white man leaned over the edge of the hatch. He had curly black hair and pointed black mustaches; his eyes were keen and sparkling, and his jaw was that of a beast. The prisoners at once recognized him; it was August Slæger, arch-criminal, himself.

"Give us water," pleaded Celeste, "and something to eat."

"Close the hatch," ordered Slæger; and his men hastily obeyed him.

Another night came, and with it, lowering clouds and rain and strong winds.

When the new day was two hours old, the schooner was brought to in waters that were fairly calm. The three who knew too much were taken, one by one, to the slippery deck, and thence to a small boat that rocked restlessly beside its mother vessel. Another half hour saw them placed on the palm-lined shore of an island that was far from the steamer lanes, and there they were left—marooned! The small boat returned to the schooner, and the schooner made sail and began to merge into the drab horizon.

Celeste and the two men sought the shelter of a clump of fruitless banana plants. The woman looked first at one, then at the other, of her companions. There was a hint of reproach in the light of her blue eyes.

"We couldn't prevent it," said Leef. "If we had but raised a finger, they would have killed us."

Celeste could not doubt it. She remembered the krises, the barongs, the weapons of the Malays.

"Is this where the others who disappeared were taken, I wonder?" she asked.

"Without doubt," answered the American. "I saw a strip of cloth hanging from a bamboo a little way around the beach; it is one of their futile distress signals."

"The wind is rising, and the rain is coming again," observed De Montefort. "We must find a better shelter for poor Celeste."

They went toward the interior of the island. It was a jungle of tall grasses and liana vines, banana-plants and bamboos, stunted seraya trees and stately cocoanut palms; starring it here and there were flowering hibiscus, ilang-ilang, frangipani, wild orange.

Fifteen minutes of difficult traveling, and they drew up in an open space before five huts of different sizes and shapes. These were of bamboo framework tied with vines and thatched with grasses. At the biggest of them Leef hallooed. His call was answered immediately. From the huts came five men in tatters—men whose gaunt faces were almost hidden under varying lengths of beard. Their eyes were wide and expectant; it was plain that they hoped for rescue.

"Slæger's colony!" exclaimed De Montefort. "Gentlemen, I regret to say we have come to join you—"

"Let's get the little lady in the dry," cut in Leef.

He caught Celeste by an arm and hurried her into the biggest of the five huts, and the others crowded in behind him. Brackish water was brought in bamboo joints and in cocoanut shells; the five bearded men also produced mangoes and plantains, smoke-dried fish, and cold iguana meat that had been soaked in sea-water for hours before being broiled on hot stones. While those who were thirsty and hungry drank and ate, the others squatted, after the fashion of the most primitive peoples and watched silently. And always their eyes strayed back to the woman.

The man who wore the longest beard, of course, had been marooned longest. He was a big blonde man, serious, viking-like. To him George Leef turned with eager questions the moment his appetite was halfway satisfied. The answers came readily, intelligently:

His name was Illsworth; he was an English adventurer, and he had once captained a vessel for August Slæger. His four companions were named Kovski, Weinberg, Sanquebel, and Bellini. They called it Hell's Island. There was plenty to eat and to drink, such as it was. Always they had fruits for the taking. With stones and clubs they killed sea-birds and iguanas. They stretched a strong bamboo and liana fence across the mouth of a little inlet at high tide and had fish when the tide went out; once they caught a monster saw-fish. Sea-water salt was their gold. Weapons? They had only small knives that they had made of steel springs taken from their shoe soles, and clubs. More and more, they were growing accustomed to the life; less and less, they longed for the world beyond the sea—

"But why," interrupted De Montefort, "didn't Slæger kill us outright instead of —of this? I cannot understand it!"

The man of the longest beard smiled indulgently. "Slæger," he answered, "always fears being caught and convicted. To kill a man is one thing, you know, and to maroon him for a year or so is another thing. It may be that he figures on making his release the price of our salvation, in the event they get the goods on him; who can tell?"

At that, De Montefort saw a ray of hope. "What a party this is, *mes amis!*" he exclaimed light-heartedly. A representative of almost every nation is here among us—how peculiar! But you English, there are two of you, while—"

He had turned smilingly toward Celeste, and something he saw in her face stopped him. She rose, slender and straight, that ethereally beautiful, hyacinthine creature, and her golden-yellow head almost touched the thatched roof.

"While the matter may be one of small importance, Raoul," she protested mildly, "I wish you wouldn't presume so. I am not an Englishwoman; though if I were, I should not be ashamed of it. You can hardly classify my nationality. I have, I think, a little of the blood of all of you, and I am proud of every drop of it. I am only—a woman."

There was something very striking in her manner of saying it. For a silent moment the deeply-set eyes of the viking-like Illsworth drank in her delicate beauty; then he bent one great, bare knee, and made a sweeping salute over the imaginary breech of an imaginary rifle.

"Hail to the Queen of Hell's Island!" he said smilingly and yet seriously. "And God save our queen!"

The others quickly took the cue. They repeated, with a worthy enthusiasm, "God save our queen!"

"This hut I give to her for her palace," continued Illsworth.

The men went to one of the other huts; there they sat in solemn council, and pledged themselves to loyalty to their liege lady as long as they lived on the island. But the pledges of men are sometimes not even so good as scraps of paper ....

About noon a furious tropical storm sprang up, in which there was little or no rain. An hour before sunset, Celeste and her seven subjects went to the north beach to watch the storm die in the waves, and there came face to face with August Slæger and his savage skipper, Ngan Tai-Po. The two were drenched with sea-water and half drowned, hatless and coatless and weaponless. A broken and splintered hatch-cover, lying where the waves had cast it up, told of the manner of their coming.

"So!" cried the Frenchman. "Your vessel was wrecked, and you are to have a taste of your own medicine! Where are the others?"

Slæger spat wryly and said nothing Ngan Tai-Po answered sullenly: "Him all sink in sea."

"These," said Celeste, queerly for her, "were the strongest, therefore they survived. It is the greatest of all laws, that only the strongest may survive."

"There's no escape for us now," growled Illsworth. "None but Slæger and that one crew knew of the existence of this faraway island. Well, with a vine we hang Slæger and that dusky there—"

"No," Celeste objected; "we hang nobody, yet. You, yourself, named me Queen of Hell's Island, and queen of Hell's Island I am. These two shall be slaves to us; they shall gather the fruits; catch the fish; kill the birds and the iguanas that we eat, and bring water for us."

At this, August Slæger found his

tongue. His heavy countenance was clouded with wrath; his big hands clenched as he took a step toward Celeste.

"I will be no slave for you, you ——"

George Leef, American, struck him squarely in the face and closed his brutal mouth over a name that was not good. He reeled backward, caught his footing, and went with a roar of insensate rage toward Leef—and Leef met him halfway and knocked him down.

"Enough of that," quietly said Celeste. She bent over the supine August Slæger. "So you refuse, now and forever, to be a slave to us?"

"Yes!" declared Slæger. The word gurgled through blood.

Celeste straightened and turned to the big Englishman. "Mr. Illsworth," she smiled, "you may get your vine."

Only when the stiff noose was placed about Slæger's neck did he give in. Like the coward he was at the core, he begged, pleaded, implored and whined. Celeste gave him his life, and he and Ngan Tai-Po, from that same hour, began their slavish servitude.

The next day was a beautiful one. Hell's Island had become an emerald gem set in the sunlit and shimmering tropical sea. Late in the afternoon, George Leef came upon Celeste walking alone on the west beach, half a mile from the huts. She appeared to be thoughtful, but she showed no sign of grieving over the fate that had been forced upon her, and for that Leef was very glad. He noted that a hibiscus blossom gleamed in the gold of her hair, and that she wore a spray of sweet ilang-ilang at her belt.

"It's hardly safe, is it," he said smilingly, baring his head respectfully, "for you to be so far from the protection of your more or less gallant knights? Slæger and that cannibal man of his were not hung with a vine, you know, as they should have been."

"Not hung!" exclaimed Celeste, as though the idea shocked her. "We'll pass that up, Mr. Leef, if you please."

"All right," Leef agreed. "But—it's better to hang a man before than after. I liked the way you put that survival business yesterday, Queen Celeste. 'Survival of the strongest' seems to me a better expression than 'survival of the fittest.' And yet, the strongest are generally the fittest. I find myself wondering—who will be the survivors, the two survivors, of this, Hell's Island?"

"I wish they had called it by some other name," murmured the woman. "Eden Island for instance."

"It's appropriate," said Leef, "except that there are too many Adams and too many Satans here."

"Why," suddenly asked Celeste, "shouldn't we all survive and ultimately be rescued?"

For a moment, Leef was silent. Then he blurted: "Listen to me, and try to remember all I say—and I'm going to talk fast, for there may be an interruption at any minute.

"There are men on this island who will come to love you madly, savagely, before long. It is the inevitable. And upon your—er diplomacy, depends largely your safety and the safety of the rest of us. You must try to be as unfeminine and uninteresting as a wooden joss,—which will be hard for you; and you must be careful that you show no particular favor to any of us. Why? The thin veneer of civilization wears off quickly in places like this and under circumstances such as these, and most men are jealous and unreasoning brutes when that veneer is gone—that's why. It is not easy for me to say these things to you so bluntly, but it's better for you to know. And now please go back to your palace, Queen Celeste," with a bow and a very little smile, "and I beg you not to go so far from it when you walk out alone again."

At first she seemed on the verge of anger, but the light of appreciation soon broke over her countenance.

"I'll remember, and I'll try hard to obey," she promised; and with that she held out a very dainty hand to him.

Leef raised the hand to his lips and kissed it with a certain reverence. Already he loved her, but it was not because she was the only one of her sex in his narrow world; he would have chosen her from a million times a million women.

As she went toward the huts, he followed to guard her.

Months went by. The love of George Leef grew and grew, but he smothered it bravely. Neither by word nor by look did he give a sign of it even to Celeste; rather, he appeared to be anything but fond of her, and he feigned so well that Celeste herself was deceived and more than a little piqued, for Celeste, as she had once told her subjects, was only a woman. Each of the other men, love-mad, had begged their queen to make him King of Hell's Island by taking solemn marriage vows with him before God, and this included the slaves August Slæger and Ngan Tai-Po. But the queen would not. In no way would she show an especial favor.

As the days ran endlessly on, tigerish blood sprang up between the seven men; they had received the primitive accolade of cave and jungle, and they were ready to grapple with God and Destiny in their determination to win the kingship of Celeste's heart. They walked and ate and slept with clubs in their hands. Soon they began to fight, and each fight was a little longer, and a little harder, and a little bloodier than those that had preceded it. The lust for battle was as contagious as the germs of a contagious fever; even George Leef, and the Frenchman, and Illsworth, who would have been inseparable friends elsewhere, came to blows at the slightest provocation. Leef held his own with all of them; but he had to use his teeth when he fought the big Englishman.

An afternoon came when Celeste slyly whispered to the American and asked him to meet her on the west beach. Leef knew that it would mark him as the lame wolf of the pack, if the meeting became known, but he went. He found her looking distraught.

"Something terrible seems bound to happen soon," she began. "What can I do to prevent it?"

"You mean, of course, that our 'survival of the strongest' stunt is going to be pulled off," muttered Leef. "I don't know what to advise you to do. And I'm sorry I don't. But when the extremity comes, you may count on me."

Celeste straightened, there on the pure white sands, before him, and a flush ran over her hyacinthine, flower-like face. "Why is it that *you* dislike me," she demanded imperiously, "when all the rest are wild with love for me?"

A struggle began in the American's breast; that strange thing that made him like to sleep on the ground in the blessed dark was goring away at the remnants of civilization's thin veneer. He did not speak. Celeste went on, passionately and yet innocently:

"I am human, and I have the great weakness—or is it a great strength?—of the human race: That which I possess, I do not want; I want that which is denied me; I want your regard. George Leef, why do you dislike me?"

"Dislike you!" cried Leef. "Celeste, I love you more than any other man ever loved any other woman in the world! I hoped so strongly that you cared for me that I believed you did; and then, for your safety's sake and for my own safety's sake, I pretended...."

Half an hour later, Eugenio Sanquebel, the Spaniard, dashed from the jungle to the centre of the space that had been cleared about the huts. His dark face was working almost convulsively.

"Illsworth!" he called. "Illsworth!"

The Englishman dropped a strip of paper mulberry bark that he had been beating out for tapa and hastened to Sanquebel.

"Illsworth," fumed the Spaniard, "your cake and my cake and the cakes of these others is what you call dough, as you would say! *Maria Santissima!* Did I not see Celeste kiss that Americano but now, there on the beach? Twice she kissed him,—long kisses,—with her arms about his neck; no, it was a dozen times, Illsworth. And he said to her: 'Darrling!' Softly like that: 'Darrling!'"

"So that is why," mumbled white-faced Illsworth; "that is why."

While the six half-naked men were talking and swearing over that which was to them the loss of all that was worth having, George Leef appeared in the open space behind them and overheard. He gripped his seraya club, straightened proudly in his tatters, and stood waiting and staring defiantly. He knew that between them, the six of them and the one of him, there must be blood-red hatred and war unto death. And August Slæger and Ngan Tai-Po,—they too, would be his mortal enemies when they learned. It was a fearful situation. The pack is always quick to fall upon the lame wolf.

"Do you really expect to get away with it?" said Illsworth.

To spar was as futile as a whisper in pandemonium. To attempt to reason with them was also futile. There was no mongrel strain in them; they represented the average, rather than the slush, of humanity; it was the jungle's accolade. And yet, Leef tried to reason with them.

"Is it fair for eight men to fight one?" he asked quietly. "I did not try to win Celeste's favor; you know that. If she chooses me for a husband from the nine of us, it is no fault of mine."

"True, O King," sneered the Englishman; and he added, with a contemptuous twist to his bearded lips: "thou royal imbecile!"

They stepped toward him. The American raised his club and took a step backward, and the others saw his great muscles rippling and slipping lithely, leoninely, under his bare and sunburned skin. "I'll get three of you, anyway—and you first, Illsworth," he declared.

From the jungle wall, Celeste had been watching and listening, unobserved.

Now she ran between George Leef and his enemies.

"You think you are men, you six," she panted, and her eyes flashed like the flash of fire, while the part of her clean, rangy figure that showed through her tattered clothing, had the tensity of a statue of iron, "but you are no more than paper dolls! Whoever touches this one man shall die a terrible death—and not at the hands of George Leef!"

The six dispersed, and as Kovski turned away there came from deep in his hairy throat, a rumble that was much like the growl of a dog. Each knew that to make a hostile move toward the American, in the presence of Celeste, would be to lose favor with her for all time. Therefore they chose to wait. Any night they could kill him,—any night.

But that night, by orders of the Queen of Hell's Island, the one man slept hidden in a bamboo thicket, and early in the morning he met the slave, August Slæger, and the two fought savagely.

Several hours later, Ngan Tai-Po rushed excitedly to Illsworth's hut.

"Slæger, my master," he mouthed, his walrus-like mustaches bobbing up and down ludicrously, "him dead! Lugu-lugu kill my master!"

"Lugu-lugu, your great-grandmother!" sneered Illsworth. Always he sneered now.

"A great serpent, eh?" came sourly from De Montefort. "There isn't a snake on this island, Tai."

However, they followed Ngan Tai-Po into the jungle. Lying under a flowering tree, face downward, they found August Slæger. In the top of his head there was an even row of four small holes, each of which was of about the diameter of a man's third finger.

"He was unfit to survive, therefore he perished," quietly said Celeste. She continued: "Those are the marks of teeth."

And she was right: they were the marks of teeth!

Her voice, low and strong, came again: "This child of the dust, this paper doll, dared to lay his hands on George Leef. He died a terrible death, as I had threatened. And so it shall be with all who dare to lay their hands on George Leef."

The silence which followed was finally broken by Ngan Tai-Po,—by Ngan Tai-Po, the jungle-born and the godless:

"No got mucho iguana meat." With a bare brown toe shaped like an adder's head, he touched that which had been his master. "Him fat. Me cook him. Him better meat iguana meat. *Segoro!*"

Celeste gave him a quick, sickened

glance. "Take Slæger to the sharks," she commanded, turning toward the huts.

During the weeks that came next, Leef slept hidden in the jungle.

The original five and De Montefort very soon threw off the impression the mysterious affair had made upon their minds. The primitive life was new; they had no traditional superstitions or beliefs to uphold their remembrance of Slæger's strange and tragic death. One day Bellini attacked Leef; and, although Leef had whipped him, Bellini met the same weird and apparently inexplainable fate that had overtaken August Slæger. Then Weinberg went in the same way, then Illsworth, then Kovski, then Sanquebel, then De Montefort; all within half a year, and there was left on Hell's Island only Celeste and Leef and Ngan Tai-Po.

And then, one morning, the American awoke to find a queer thing, a savagely beautiful thing, lying on the ground beside him. It was a club, and such a club! It was nicely tapered to the handhold, of red seraya, and was heavy; in the bigger fourth of it were set rows of gleaming white teeth, the hard, strong teeth of a monster sawfish. Leef knew this was the lugu-lugu. Ngan Tai-Po had made it; with it he had killed DeMontefort and Slæger and the original five.

At the sight of its red stains, dark red against pale red, the soul of George Leef came to revolt. He rose and took up the barbarous weapon, and he had no more than straightened when his ears caught the sound of a piercing scream from somewhere nearby. With the terrible club in his hand, he ran, and saw Ngan Tai-Po tearing through the jungle with Celeste in his great brown arms. Leef followed and struck down Ngan Tai-Po, the jungle-born and the godless, with the very weapon his own savage brain had devised.

The two who had survived faced each other. The man threw down the club and took the woman's slim hands in his.

"We were the strongest," she said, "you and I."

"Say, rather, that you were the strongest," smiled Leef. "You, the hyacinthine, the ethereal, the ultra-feminine. While I may have been the strongest one man, it is by your will that I live, your mate. But it is human love that is the survivor, Celeste. It was love that made you promise yourself in marriage to the cannibal man when he had killed all save me; it was love that made you steal the lugu-lugu club and then entice Ngan Tai-Po into a trap—oh, I have already guessed it all! But I do not blame you. Love had to survive, and there was no other way. This is in a great measure the history of the world, this that we have lived here...... We shall be happy now, for there is no longer a serpent in our Eden, my Eve. And if we are never rescued...."

A Visayan barote took them off a year later.

TROOPER McGowan fished a little school-teacher out of the lagoon one night and thereafter became quite mad. So did the little teacher. And the southeast wind, which was always more or less insane, chuckled as it recorded another victory. Look for this story, WHEN THE BAND PLAYS *by Helen Topping Miller,* in the August number.

THE UNSULLIED MIRANDA

BY MRS. DAVID A. WASSON

The skipper of the "Miranda" undertakes the task of making a record run without encountering a mishap to smear the ship's untarnished name. He soon learns that his crew is out for prize money, not a medal for deportment.

THE bark *Miranda* lay alongside the Ocean Shipping Company's corrugated iron warehouse in Charleston harbor, tapering yards a-cockbill, and deep with general cargo for Rio de Janeiro. Her topsides were shiny black adorned with a brilliant yellow stripe. Her iron work was dazzling with red lead; but the gloss covered a long year's toll of knocks and gouges, cemented seams and butts. The stripe showed what might have been in doubt before, that her sheer wasn't what it had been forty years ago. However, the *Miranda* had grown old gracefully.

President Gearing of the Ocean Shipping Company, and Captain Clear, the new skipper, stood surveying her from the wharf. President Gearing was tall and spare, slightly stooped and very gray. There was a sadness and wistfulness about his eyes, such as sometimes comes with years of introspection and dreaming.

"I want you to be good to her, sir," said President Gearing as his eyes rested affectionately on the bark, "for she's been good to us. The rest have forgotten the old girl's services, but I haven't. I am thankful sir, that I am not one to consign sentiment to the scrapheap at the bidding of utilitarianism. Oh, yes, they admit that she's been less trouble than most of her kind,—never a big repair bill, never a spar carried away below to'gallantmasts, never a crew unruly, never a blot on her escutcheon. But what does that amount to when she no longer can pay big dividends? Flowers and wine for her debut, but a wreath of smoke and grave waters for her decline," he added bitterly. "They wanted to make a barge out of her,—a barge out of the *Miranda!* They said there wasn't a real skipper left; that the men who could sail the *Miranda* to profit had long since gone the way of her sisters. They claimed that the very ocean she displaced was needed for the new craft. The company thinks I'm soft; in fact—well, I am a bit soft, and by George, sir, I pray I may always be just so soft! Are you a sentimental man, sir?"

The new skipper looked anything but sentimental. He was short and chunky, with an undershot jaw as blue as his shiny serge suit. His eyes were black and piercing, and his rumbling voice seemed to come from just beneath the massive gold watch-chain on his vest. He laughed shortly at the president's question and answered.

"No, I certainly am not, sir; but I guess I can keep her afloat and respectable."

"Have you a home, Cap'n?"

"I live at Cape Porpoise."

"H-m-m—well—er—the fact is, the *Miranda* was my home—the only home I can remember."

"She's a likely looking craft yet, sir," Captain Clear admitted.

"Likely! Yes, she's likely enough,—she's more than that, Cap'n; she's sacred to me,—sacred."

"That so, sir?"

"She is associated with the sweetest moments of my life," continued President Gearing. "I remember so well the day I brought my wife home; the *Miranda* was strung with flags and hung with lanterns from stem to stern. Ah, that was a welcome! Then she was fragrant with flowers the day our little son came to live with us,—we were in Japan,—and fragrant too, the day she left there.

"It's hard sir, to be told that my old home is no longer worth manning. She's been out of commission for the past five years. Then, with the great demand for tonnage since the war, came a chance for the *Miranda*. It's up to her to make good. Pretty hard on the old lady to be put on probation at her time of life. At any rate, if she fails, she'll go down, sails set; and if she wins, or rather, by George, if the *Miranda* should happen to down anchor at Rio before that new five which was launched at Bath last month, there's five hundred dollars for the captain and a hundred apiece for the crew. Guess I'm feeling more than usually soft this morning."

They shook hands and separated. President Gearing hurried up the wharf and the captain went below.

Captain Clear sat down thoughtfully at his desk and stared fixedly at a large portrait of a woman which hung on the panelled wall. He was there when the steward rang the supper bell. He was there at midnight when the first mate notified him that the crew had come aboard. Presently he went silently to the fo'c's'le and among the heavily sleeping Jackies. Calmly, he searched them and theirs, tossing over the rail any bottles which he found.

In the morning, blond and strapping First Mate Mellody brought the despoiled and disgruntled huskies back to a cheerless universe with generous drawbucketfuls of salt water forcibly applied.

The sky was blue and fathomless, and between it and a deep indigo sea, whistled a ripping, white-capped nor'wester. To the mystification of all though, the *Miranda* hauled off into the harbor to make room for the next vessel on the berth and anchored. Perplexity grew into resentment. There was much grumbling among the men and guarded criticism by the mates. But the *Miranda* let the fair wind blow away for twenty-four hours.

"Skipper seems to have lost his pep somehow," remarked Mellody to Jones, the second mate. All day Captain Clear puttered about with never a word for his mates. He bought a second-hand yawl-boat somewhere ashore and lashed her, bottom-up, beside the long-boat on the forward house. He dickered for a rusty anchor and chain and several spare sails in a junk shop on the waterfront, and carted them aboard in a lighter. Yet the *Miranda* was well-found in the first place, and supposed to have been ready for sea the day before.

"Ah reckon he jes' makin' excuses fo' not gwine sea on Friday!" surmised the cook, rolling his eyes.

Finally, he brought a carpenter aboard and had him knock up a mysterious cupboard in his stateroom.

"Medicine chest?" hazarded Jones to the first mate.

Mellody laughed. "What would he put in it,—smelling salts?"

Next daybreak, Captain Clear scanned the sky critically and ordered his crew to get under way. The men forgot their grievance in their eagerness to be off, and ran the mainland out of sight long before noon. The wind poured along with the ship, like an airy torrent, as she roared offshore. Swelling duck aloft pulled a horsepower per inch, and every piling surge boosted mightily. The sun fired a sapphire sea to the clear-cut horizon, and never a prettier day dawned out of the sky.

The mufflered and reefered members of the second dogwatch, Mellody's, were shuffling expectantly toward the warm fo'c's'le when the skipper hailed Mellody. The mate showed marked disapproval of the order he received and bawled:

"Don't be in such a sweat, you fellers, yer got to clew up the courses and royals before yer turn in!"

The men turned like stags at bay. "Ay tank skipper she bane fool!" observed a patient Swede, and the men climbed angrily into the rigging. But the captain only wanted to make sure of shortening sail before King Neptune shortened it for him. To all appearances, however, the jolly monarch was in one of his lightest moods.

An hour later, Captain Clear deftly dressed a grimy hand from which little Tad Mace had lost the nails while clawing at a shuttling royal. The little wretch was suffering cruelly, but there was not the slightest suggestion of reproach in the grateful look he gave the captain when the hand was neatly swaddled in an old napkin. Captain Clear was touched, for the rest of the men had shown in a thousand ways their utter contempt for their captain.

"Nasty job aloft, Tad," the captain smiled.

"Fierce, sir."

"S'pose if you'd been big enough you wouldn't have gone, eh?"

"You're the doctor, ain't yer, sir?"

A wistful smile played timidly about the deep lines of the captain's mouth as if it were trying to coax those old creases to relax in unwonted softness.

The men made a great uproar over Tad's accident, and cast many a vindictive eye in the direction of the captain. They treated Tad with unheard-of tenderness as a reproach to the author of his mishap.

"Jones," summoned Captain Clear.

"Sir?"

"Am I skipper here?"

"Why yes, sir."

"Then why all this sulking when I give an order?"

"The men think you're a little more prudent than necessary, sir; they don't like to go aloft at every puff, sir; and they blame you for Tad's getting hurt. He's the kid of the crowd, you know, sir, and we're all fond of him."

"Thank you, Jones. Er—one moment, Jones. Do you know President Gearing of the Ocean Shipping Company?"

"No, sir."

"Well, he's one of the finest old chaps I ever met—a great old chap. He asked me to be good to the *Miranda*—in a way that I never happened to hear a man talk before. I'm an old shellback, Jones, but what he said got under the skin—so, well—I am being pretty careful of the old *Miranda*."

Jones blinked and swallowed as if to aid his comprehension in grasping the significance of the skipper's strange confidence. He only answered, "Yes, sir."

The *Miranda* wallowed along under shortened canvas all night, and the surly crew made sail again in the morning. But that evening, after a splendid day's run, with not a cloud from zenith to sea-rim, Captain Clear called watches to take in sail. The northeast trades, strong and true, pushed the bark along at steamer time for days on end, but each night came the order to shorten sail, blow high or blow low. The men spent most of the time in the rigging, and the captain's popularity decreased steadily. Yet he was rather well known along the coast, and had always enjoyed the reputation of allowing nothing in the way of wind and sea to hinder him in the discharge of his duty to his employers. He was never known to show the white feather, and many were the tales of his daring.

Towards Tad and the second mate he had a warm feeling of friendship. Tad had refrained from joining with the men in denouncing his prudent policy, and he had overheard Jones offering excuses for the *Miranda's* slow trip. He had waited, breathless, to hear Jones relate his captain's sentimental confession; he listened with fascinated dread for the raucous outburst of Mellody's coarse laugh and the ribald hilarity of the crew. But, bless him, Jones had reminded them that the topsails were not so good as they used to be; that the quarter-mile long following seas might poop her in the night; that it was the hurricane season and they were getting into ticklish latitudes. Never did he allude to the captain's tender solicitude for the *Miranda's* precious old hull. How grateful he did feel to Jones.

One night, when they had hit the southeast trades and were clewing up after a brisk day's run, they spoke a vessel bound to Rio from Norfolk. The captain hailed the *Miranda* through his megaphone.

"How's the race?"

Mellody, who was at the wheel, answered.

"What race?"

"Heard you fellers were running for big stakes!"

Mellody replied that he didn't know what in —— he was driving at. Just then Captain Clear came on deck, and Mellody handed him the megaphone saying, "That fellow thinks we're racin'! He'd think we was regular cup defenders if he could see us tuckin' the *Miranda* in her little bed every night!"

The captain of the schooner persisted.

"They told us at Norfolk that old Gearing had put up a hundred apiece for you on the *Miranda*. How you making it?"

"Can't make you out," answered Captain Clear, and he turned to go below. Mellody gave the wheel to Jones and followed.

"See here, Cap'n," he said, when they had reached the cabin, "do you know anythin' 'bout the *Miranda's* racin' for big stakes?"

The captain was silent.

"We all thought you was runnin' a trainin' ship for lily-pad sailors; we didn't dream you was racin', honest!"

Captain Clear absently snapped the leaves of the log.

"Look's like you hadn't used us quite fair, Cap'n," began Mellody, on a new tack, for the captain's little eyes were smouldering.

He answered at length with maddening deliberation.

"That's a fact. President Gearing did offer a hundred dollars apiece to the men and five hundred to me if we docked before the Mary H. Brown, but he also—"

Mellody jumped to his feet.

"By Jupiter, there'll be the devil to pay and no mistake! A hundred apiece!"

"Yes, and five hundred for me."

"You! Rot! A hundred cold iron men you would cheat us out of! Bad enough to be drivin' the men into the riggin' every night an' tearin' the fingers off'n 'em, but when it comes to out an' out cheatin' them out of a chance to earn a little extra money—wow! I wouldn't be in your boots for a farm!"

The captain reached quickly into his desk drawer, and as quickly thought better of it. Mellody saw the action and strode on deck. "Look's so I'd made a mess of being good to the *Miranda!*" remarked Captain Clear to the gentle face in the portrait over the desk.

At two, when Captain Clear turned out to stand his watch, as was his invariable custom, the *Miranda* was boiling along under full sail. To his demand for an explanation, the patient Swede at the helm only shrugged stupidly and said:

"Mr. Mellody, she give order!"

"Oh, she did, did she?"

Captain Clear went below in a rage and yanked the slumbering Mellody from his bunk.

"How dare you disregard my orders, sir! This is mutiny!"

Mellody sprang; they clinched and staggered out into the cabin in locked embrace. For ten minutes they wrenched and swayed, rocked and strained, noiseless, with the exception of sharp whistling exhausts of breath and the padded scuffle of heavy feet. Gradually, Mellody's superior height and the captain's superior years began to tell. There was a splintering of furniture and a crash that shook the cabin. Mellody stood menacingly over the prostrate captain.

"Perhaps you call this mutiny too, Mister Clear," he gibed, as he helped the limping captain to a chair. "If this is mutiny, there's an ugly name for what you've done, too!"

"No, not mutiny," groaned the captain; "the Miranda has never had a mutiny. I'll turn in, I guess,—and you may give my order to keep the *Miranda* on her course day and night, under full sail!"

Next day, Captain Clear suffered from a badly wrenched knee and bruised shoulder, while Mate Mellody secretly nursed a tender joint or two. There was a certain crispness lacking in the captain's dignity, a new and jaunty insolence born in the mate's demeanor, and a half-suppressed exuberance in the faces of the crew. It was an accepted fact that Mellody was in command of the *Miranda*, the men in hearty accord, and the captain, in a pitiful minority, a helpless figurehead.

The *Miranda* labored over the long seas, rails under and snowy canvas bellying. She seemed in a fair way to make up for lost time, and lent herself absolutely to the urge of the buffeting breeze, tossing her spray with joy at her rejuvenation.

In spite of the strangely reversed state of affairs aboard, Jones always addressed Captain Clear with his customary respect.

"Captain Clear, sir," he began, "Tad Mace has been laid up for a couple of days and I thought you ought to know, sir."

"You know just about how much good my knowing anything aboard this craft amounts to now."

"But something ought to be done, sir. The cook mixed him up some ginger, and I gave him a hot brick, but I think he's in mighty poor shape, sir."

"I'll go and have a look at him."

He found the lad tossing in his bunk, flushed with fever and pain.

"Let me press a little on your bowels, Tad," urged the captain.

"Ouch! Gee! No! You're murderin' me!"

"Murders you when I press so, does it? Hm-m!"

"Better keep yer hands off'n him, Clear," ordered Mellody. "He's stood enough from you already. We don't want no meddlin'!"

"Looks like appendicitis to me; 'tis just how she started with a fellow last trip," Captain Clear answered, ignoring Mellody's insolence.

"Well, what of it?" growled Mellody.

"I should say the boy ought to be put ashore. They have to operate mighty quick for that kind of thing—or—"

"Well, that's a cool proposition, now ain't it? Who asked yer to come pokin' around here, anyway? What kind of an old woman doctor do you think you are? Listen to him, Tad! 'Here boy, (he mimicked Captain Clear's attempt at a sickroom hush), let me press on yer bowels! Appendicitis! We'll go right ashore and have us an operation this minute!' Triflin' little matter—to go ashore! We ain't in no hurry! Yer bound to try and cheat us out of our money, any way we fix it, now ain't yer?"

Captain Clear flushed and looked from the derisive Mellody to lowering Lascar, and felt the boy's cheek with the back of his horny hand.

"Perhaps it would be a little too hasty, Mellody; perhaps it would," as he looked critically at the boy.

"Mellody," he said suddenly, "I'd like to see you alone—oh, any time, any time when it's convenient."

"What d'yer want?" demanded Mellody, when they were alone in the captain's stateroom.

"It's about the health of the men, Mellody,—I'm worried."

"Yer always worried, ain't yer?"

"We are in very unhealthful latitudes, and I think a little tonic would be a good thing for us all. We don't want all of us in little Tad's fix."

"The devil! No!"

"I've been on many more trips than you, Mellody, and I know we can take no chances with an epidemic among the men. Tad's case may be appendicitis and it may not be!"

Mellody paled slightly. "Do yer think there's a chance it's—"

"There's only one thing to do and that's to send the men to me for a dose of something which I brought on purpose." He pointed to the mysterious cabinet. "I'm sort of a quack on the side."

Mellody was impressed, and the men filed in, three at a time. First, big Joel Neilson opened a large bristly jaw to receive a tiny white pill, then the Lascar and Sam Whitman did the same; the Lascar gulped his gratefully, and Sam, preferring to accept his between reluctant thumb and forefinger, rolled it doubtfully until it seemed chocolate-coated.

They made room for the cook and Carl Hansen, followed by Mellody himself. Mellody laughed as he took his, but the others reached solemnly and greedily for the preventive offered. Next came a little yellow Frenchman, reeking of iodoform, and two stolid Swedes. The rest would report as soon as they were off duty.

Jones appeared alone as the last three shuffled out.

"Jones," said the captain, with his old

air of command, "give these pills, one each, to those two Cape Codders and the Porchegee. Tad doesn't need one and don't take one yourself. Come back here as soon as the Lord will let you!"

Jones returned, breathless.

"Aren't you going to give me a pill too, sir?"

"You shall have one if you want it, but first, how's Tad?"

"I think he's pretty sick, sir, pretty sick. I feel awful sir, awful about Tad."

"So do I, Jones; and we'll take him ashore,—you and I."

"Take him ashore, sir? How? The men would never stand for that sir, and Mellody—"

"Yes, Jones, I'm the captain and you're the crew!"

"And the men?"

"By this time they are about as harmless as a pack of school-teachers on their first voyage."

"Why, what do you mean, sir? You haven't—"

"No, I haven't. Those little sugar pills we have been passing around are the strongest individual doses of seasickness ever concocted. It is a drug known as apomorphine, harmless, but effectual. And who's afraid of a seasick crew? It may or may not interest you, but I was not afraid. It was on account of Mr. Gearing's giving me the *Miranda's* honor to preserve."

"Very good, sir; what are your orders?"

"First, we'll go on deck and inquire as to the health of our mutinous friends, then we'll see if we can get some of the muslin off so the *Miranda* will behave under her reduced crew."

The sight they met was a sorry one. Some of the men were doubled up and howling with pain; some were leaning pathetically over the rail, while others, including Mellody, were crisscrossed in the scuppers in a state of catalepsy. Neilson had dropped at his post,—a great sodden heap of misery. Jones grabbed the wheel.

"Here's your course, Jones," Captain Clear said briskly, as he gingerly stepped over the inert Neilson. "We'll head her for Pernambuco; there ought to be a hospital there. If Mellody crawls, give him this," and he handed Jones one of the fatal pellets. "I'm going to rig up an ice-bag for the patient."

Jones looked after the skipper with wonder and admiration struggling to shine in his lusterless eyes. Some of the men needed no second dose, but were dragged into the fo'c's'le as soon as the violent first stages had worn off and they were merely exhausted and helpless. Mellody was given a second pill as a matter of precaution. He hurled many a husky oath and promised many a rich retaliation, but his threats were accompanied by feeble gestures and puny attempts at belligerence.

Jones and the skipper stood watch and watch. The *Miranda's* guardian spirit hovered over her, conjuring a steady fair wind and soothing fractious seas. Captain Clear spent what few moments he could snatch from his numerous and varied duties, at the bedside of Tad Mace, ministering to his needs with a gentleness hitherto unsuspected by himself. He knelt occasionally in spite of a stiff knee.

The *Miranda,* even under the necessary shortened sail, made good time to Pernambuco. She might have been a derelict for all the activity visible on deck as she swung to anchor. At the sight of a tiny white pill, not at the point of a revolver, the crew were cowed into a complete surrender. And then the navigating of the six-hundred ton bark by the skipper and his second mate had stirred the depths of those stolid bosoms into something like respect. At any rate, when the captain told the crew to get their dunnage together and pile over the side into the waiting tug unless they wanted to swim, they begged to be allowed to stick to the ship.

Tad was hustled to the hospital, where the operation took place at once. The captain waited anxiously until a soft-footed nurse reported that the boy was coming through safely. He paid the bill in advance, tucked Ted's passage home under his pillow, and after taking an affectionate farewell of the semi-conscious lad, hastened back to the ship.

When they reached Rio de Janeiro, the *Mary H. Brown* had discharged her cargo and returned in ballast. No allusion was made to this significant fact by the *Miranda's* weak and shaky crew. The *Miranda* was unusually fortunate in securing a return cargo of hides, and the home voyage was uneventful and tranquil.

President Gearing was at the dock to welcome them. Captain Clear gave him a hard grip, but couldn't quite meet the sad gray eyes of the other.

"I guess the *Miranda* isn't any too proud of this trip," he began. "We made a slow run, but here she is, safe and undefiled," he finished, with a half smile.

"I did want to see the old girl whip that five-masted upstart, but of course you had to take what you could get in the way of wind."

"Oh, we had a good enough chance,—it was my fault, sir." And then he told President Gearing of the *Miranda's* errand of mercy, omitting the episodes of the fight in the cabin and the white pills.

President Gearing listened intently to the tale of the *Miranda's* slowest trip on record and then looked proudly at her skipper.

"So you're not a sentimental man, sir?" he laughed.

"No, sir. 'Twasn't sentiment exactly; it was having that picture of your wife in the cabin that did the business. It's kind of softening, sir, to go shipmates with a face like that. I guess I came to understand about how you felt about the *Miranda*."

In the August issue: THE CUP ON THE NAIL *by John Matter,* a story of a homesteader who affected a fighting mood every time a stranger within the gates failed to return his drinking cup to its appointed place on the right hand nail over the water bucket. Mr. Matter is the author of the story BIG BROTHER in this number. (See page 28.)

Another story for August will be THE MEANNESS OF PETE JERDO *by William Merriam Rouse.* It tells how the "meanest man in Curderville" became a hero by mistake and then decided to live up to his new reputation.

THE LOVE OFFERING

BY ALICE GORTON WYNN

A fugitive from justice, facing the prospect of a renewed acquaintance with jail bed and board, perfects an ingenious plan for providing for his wife and child during his absence from the home.

A TALL, weather-browned man came striding across the the rice-field toward his little cabin. He wore a laborer's overalls with a red handkerchief knotted easily around his sturdy throat. A scrap of white paper fluttered in his fingers. He had picked it up on the main thoroughfare beyond the rice-field.

There was no circulation of newspapers among the simple Acadians of Bayou Queue-de-Tortue. Who had dropped it? The bold headlines of an article were torn from the remainder of the printed sheet. What the man read there blurred the glory of the noonday sun.

$1,000 *Reward for Reliable Information Concerning the Whereabouts of Helaire Lapine Fortenot—Believed Hidden Somewhere in Southwest Louisiana.*

He crumpled the fragment into a hard bullet with his strong fingers and trampled it into the damp loam.

He could see his small home just across the Bayou Queue-de-Tortue which lazily winds its sluggish way through evergreen savannahs. His wife, Zanette, was out under a catalpa tree battling the clothes of the week's wash. As she laid a folded wet garment on a bench and pounded it with a wooden paddle, her back and arms showed the soft roundness of a very young woman—almost a child. By her side, a two-year-old boy pounded imaginary clothes with a piece of shingle.

The man quickened his step at the adorable home scene under the catalpa. Zanette did not turn until he heaved the spade from his strong shoulder to the step. Then she danced to him with the grace and fleetness of a ballet artiste.

"Mon good Helaire!" she caroled between kisses.

The man swung the clamoring child to his broad back, but paid little heed to the baby prattle. A driven look was in his eyes.

"I have not time to eat now, Zanette. I'm going hunting back of the Jumonville place. I must hurry. Wrap me up some lunch, my angel."

"Dinner ready to take up, Helaire."

"It is far, Zanette. I must be going," he emphasized.

Helaire tried his gun and stored a supply of ammunition in his hunting-horn.

"I may be late getting back, Zanette. You and little René will not be afraid with your mother in the house. By-by, my sweet."

Zanette stood in the door and waved her hand and the baby's hand to him as he turned to look back for the third time. When he followed the curve of the road, and he could see them no more, a convulsion writhed across his features and left his face pinched and gray.

"O gentle Virgin," he prayed, "look down from Heaven in pity on the little mother and her child! I must leave them. Zanette will think no evil of me. She will think I am dead. She will grieve and she is so young, she may forget." He thought of the officers probably already on his track. The newspapers had surely been seen in Evangeline, a town seven miles away.

"Oh, my God," he groaned, "I served five years of my life behind the walls. Was not that enough? Must I slink around once more like a beggar mongrel?" A look of desperate resolve ossified on his face as he fondled his weapon. "I'll die before I let them take me."

Helaire stumbled through the spikes of dwarf palmetto across the open prairie, never stopping to eat or rest until he had reached the cypress swamp, ten miles from home. He was thirsty. He had forgotten to fetch water. The ill-smelling marsh-scum sickened him.

In the middle of the morass, dim and dark, even in daylight, from the cordage of vines and low hangings of Spanish moss, stood a storm-bent tree, gaunt and spectral, raising dead arms toward heaven. He had noticed this tree before when hunting. In its hollow crypt Helaire stowed his food and ammunition. Walking to and fro on the upstanding cypress knees he gathered moss from the neighboring trees and prepared a pillow against which his pain-racked head could spend the night. Just before the dense blackness settled down, he saw a big moccasin snake coil itself on a limb above his head. He knocked it into the water with his gun before mental and physical exhaustion compelled sleep.

In troubled dream, he saw his father's sugar plantation on Bayou Teche in the parish of Terre Bonne. As a hovering spirit, he saw himself a wild scapegrace, a truant from school—a good-for-nothing. He heard his father express gladness that the boy's mother was dead and untouched by his wrongdoing. Helaire saw the boy, grown into a man, his hot blood fired by insult, shoot a comrade over a gaming table, and the murderer sentenced to distasteful labor behind prison bolts. His father's old coachman, now a priest's chauffeur, entered the penitentiary cell in his employer's stolen ecclesiastical robes and handed the incarcerated man a heavy file. Helaire awoke.

The night was soot-black, except during the fleeting pyrotechnics of heat-lightning which cut jagged streaks across the inky slush and showed the wind-swayed moss-ghosts dancing with locked, transparent hands. Helaire closed his eyes and eased his cramped body by climbing out of the hollow trunk into the tree-crotch and dangling his deadened legs.

He thought of his little cabin under the blossoming catalpa; the bayou in front, across which floated a pontoon bridge tangled in water-hyacinths, where the blue herons waded and fished. He had hoped soon to make enough money to buy a few acres of rice-land and to build a fitter home for Zanette—the little Arcadian girl whom he had met and married three years ago—Zanette, who combed her black hair in such mazy rolls, and whose skin was the cream of a new-blown magnolia. Their little boy, René, had his mother's curls, and eyelashes like raveled silk.

Zanette had never known unhappiness. She slept with a smile on her lips at night and waked with a song in the morning. She was very ignorant of the world. She thought him a pattern of nobility.

His poor shack of a home had been kept sweet and fresh. His tin lunch-basket excited the wonder of the other laborers at meal hours, for it showed rare touches of love and care. There was always a homemade napkin, and brightly polished pewter-ware; the bread was always light and the coffee clear.

Now he was deserting, and leaving her and the child to the extremity of poverty and distress; for the old bedridden mother had not the scantiest necessities of existence. Zanette's lustrous eyes would dim from hardships and her limbs grow misshapen with drudgery in the fields. If there was only some way to provide for her.

"Perhaps I could get the reward as I saw that miner do in the moving-picture show. $1,000 would keep Zanette, her old mother and the boy for a long time." Helaire covered his face with his arm to shut out the vision. "Back to the handcuffs and the bars! There is no other way, Zanette."

The gray morning crept in at last under the glooming cypress trees. Helaire swallowed a few mouthfuls of food and picked his way on the cypress knees out of the boggy slough. When he reached open, higher ground, he seated himself, searched an old notebook for a clean blank leaf, carefully sharpened a pencil to a very fine point and began a letter. He imitated small, feminine handwriting.

"To the Sheriff of Evangeline,—

"My husband, Helaire Lapine Fortenot, will be at home this evening at eight o'clock. The house is under a catalpa tree, on the bayou road, opposite the pontoon bridge.

Zanette Fortenot."

A poor little smile twisted his mouth, for Zanette could not write the simplest sentence in English. She did not know his name was Fortenot. What did it matter, if she got the money?

Helaire folded the note and placed it in the notebook. It was the morning for the mail-rider to make his bi-weekly trip out from Evangeline to the post-office in the cross-roads store. Helaire had no acquaintance with the postman. He had not received a letter for three years. He made his way to the route of travel, waited for the mail-rider's appearance, purchased a stamped envelope, sealed and mailed the letter.

Helaire looked at the sun. By steady walking he judged he could reach home at seven o'clock. He wanted a little while with Zanette and the boy before he went away forever.

When he emerged from the strip of woods nearest his home, Helaire heard the whistle of the rice-mills in Evangeline bellow out the seven o'clock hour. He could see the little cabin under the catalpa sketched in amethyst against the brilliant shield of the setting sun. With his gun on his shoulder, he walked the distance in regular strides and vaulted the low fence. His need of food was faint compared with the love-hunger in his heart, but he must not frighten Zanette.

"Hello, Zanette! René!"

A joyous gurgle, a dash of swift feet, and two small forms were cuddling in his arms. Soft lips touched his face and neck in a dozen places.

"Oh, Helaire, de hunt was long to René and me. We lonesome. What you shoot?"

"Bad luck, Zanette. I walked all day and all night. Didn't find any game."

"Das terrible," she laughed. "My mouth it water for some deer meat."

"Has anyone been here, Zanette?"

He licked his cracked lips and cooled his aching eyes against little René's bare shoulder.

"Non," Zanette told him. "Saint Therise! You must be hongry, yes. Supper ready. I fix de gumbo nice."

Helaire sat up to the table with René on his knee and tightly held in the angle of his left arm. Almost unconsciously, he poured the gumbo and rice down his throat. Zanette flitted around the table and the stove, sitting on the edge of her chair to eat between flittings. Once, as she passed behind Helaire, she paused to give him a little kiss on the top of his head before skipping on to the cupboard.

"Some strangers will visit us tonight, Zanette," Helaire dragged out. "They will come about eight."

Zanette's eyes widened, mystified. "How come?" she asked.

"Their business is with me. They want me to go away with them and get a better job," he lied. "They will give you money—my pay in advance. You will be careful and use it until I come back. They will be mad if you ask them questions."

Zanette spun around on her tiptoes and trilled a little ditty. "Das fine!" she concluded. "I go put on clean robe, and René must be wash."

She paused on her way and a note of solicitude quavered through her speech. "How long you be gone, Helaire?"

"It may be some weeks before I can come for you and René. Just as soon as I can I will. You know that."

"Das all right, Helaire, but it is hard—me and René—separate from you. We think of not'ing else till you come."

An automobile speeded along the road down by the bayou. The long rays from the searchlights flared in and dimmed the little kerosene lamp. Helaire sat still, his muscles rigid, trying to hide his stunned despair.

A slight crunching of feet on rice-chaff, and a sharp rap sounded at the door.

Zanette answered the knock, René holding on to her dress with both hands.

"Entre," she invited.

Helaire arose, his face the color of a bleached bone, and advanced toward the two men who entered behind Zanette. His tongue and vocal chords felt paralyzed. The blood was beating at his heart like knife-stabs.

"Helaire Lapine Fortenot?" interrogated the foremost visitor.

Helaire nodded his head.

"Escaped from Baton Rouge and in hiding for three years?"

Helaire swallowed hard, trying to loosen the muscular tension in his throat. He was glad Zanette was getting chairs and did not understand. Again he nodded his head.

"I bear a document which concerns Helaire Lapine Fortenot, sentenced to the penitentiary for killing a man in the parish of Terre Bonne."

The officer held the paper before Helaire's anguished eyes. Helaire read a line and read it again. His eyeballs bulged in bewilderment. He took the sheet from the stranger's hand and slowly took in its message. His head whirled with intoxication. The blood leaped through his veins. It was a certificate of his freedom, from the State Board of Pardons, based on the peculiar circumstances of the crime, and the exemplary conduct of the prisoner while in confinement.

"Your friends obtained it for you," the officer informed. "It has been published in all the leading papers. Your people concluded that you were dead."

"Will you sit, Monsieurs?"

Zanette came, bringing two chairs.

There were no other seats except a homemade bench which had served at the supper table. Helaire sank on that, a great peace calming his soul and irradiating his features. René crept between his knees and burrowed into his breast with his curly head. Zanette sat on a footstool at his feet, her small brown hand on his knee.

"You see the happiness of Paradise, my friends," Helaire gloated.

"All will be pleased to hear of your new life," advanced the other man, who had not spoken.

Helaire bent and kissed his wife's forehead. "It is the little madonna has worked a miracle."

"I am a lawyer from Terre Bonne," the second stranger introduced himself. "I have other news for you, Mr. Fortenot. Since you have not seen the papers, you do not know that your father is dead?"

Helaire shook his head.

"His will leaves the estate to yourself and sister. We offered a reward for information concerning your whereabouts. We have been scouring the country to ascertain whether you were dead, or living, hidden in some remote region."

"The passenger train passes Evangeline at eleven. Can you go with us? The car is waiting."

Zanette anticipated his answer. "Oui," she dimpled. "Like you said, Helaire. We stay, René and me."

Turning to the lawyer, every feature eloquent with searching interrogation, she breathed, "He come back soon?"

"Just as soon as the business is settled," he assured; and added, "we will be ready to start in thirty minutes, Mr. Fortenot."

The two men went out to the automobile. Helaire followed and spoke in low tones to the lawyer.

"My return may be delayed. Can you furnish me a small amount of money to leave with my wife?"

"Of course; I should have thought of it." The attorney searched his wallet and handed Helaire a roll of bills. Helaire raced back to Zanette.

"Here is money the men advanced for you, Zanette. Use it carefully and it will tide you over until my return."

"You have so long name, Helaire. I not know you name Fortenot," puzzled Zanette. "I thought you just name Helaire Lapine."

"No man has daily use for three names, Kitten. I was christened Fortenot. Father Cohan, who married us, he knows the name Fortenot."

"It all happen just like you say, Helaire. You go to get the job. I receive money. Mon good Helaire!"

BIG BROTHER

BY JOHN MATTER

Hof could navigate a four-horse truck through crowded Chicago thoroughfares and pilot schooners of beer across the bar with equal facility. Naturally a man of his ability wasn't going to lose his head just because he happened to be more than forty-five minutes from Lake Street.

HOF TAYLOR was finding life dull in the late afternoon. If life had been a knife, he could not have cut his finger with it.

"I couldn't nick hot butter," Hof soliloquized, bitterly. "I couldn't stab a jellyfish, I couldn't whittle potatoes, I couldn't rip water with it. My goodness, but life is dull. I was happy when I was truckin' down 'round Lake Street in old Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A., but I didn't have sense enough to know that I was happy; so the happiness didn't do me no good. And now that I'm homesteadin' on the Arctic Circle, I'm unhappy and I have sense enough to know it. But the knowin' don't do me no good."

The wind thrust across the Saskatchewan prairie and worried the corners of Hof Taylor's house so that the flimsy shack waved in petulance. The unhappy owner tilted his chair against a wall and braced his feet against the stove.

"Blow, you son of a hurricane," he continued. "Shove, and yank, and jerk, and whipsaw, till the cows come home. You can't put my fur on end. I come from a place where the wind is made and boxed up and sold, and I used to meet you on Lake Street when you was no bigger than a whiff. How'd you leave the folks in Chi, or didn't you leave none? I wish I was back there. I wonder who will win the jackpot in at Rancey's this evenin'. I wonder if any of the boys will ante for me and say, 'Good old Hof Taylor! Too bad the squirrels caught him. Went nutty over the beauties of farmin', he did, and the joys of fresh air, so he did. What do you know 'bout that?' Farmin'! All I've raised to date is biscuits, and they didn't raise far enough to stretch my jaws. Fresh air! I've seen all the fresh air that lives, and I don't care if I never sees more. Black coal smoke is what my system specifies. And my ears hanker for the twilight song of the elevated, and my feet ache for hot, spongy asphalt, and my nose itches for river ozone, and my eyes burn for the glad lights, and my hands smart for the heave of the reins when the team stands on their toes and swells into their collars. And oh, for a tub of suds! Oh, I'd trade my homestead for one Chicago pavin' block and throw in the blue sky. 'Home, Sweet, Home.' That's where this child wants to be. It's a grand song. I'll have a little on my mouth organ."

He drew a harmonica from his vest pocket and pressed it against his lips.

"Play, baby," he admonished. "Play sweet and low for your Uncle Hof. He's terrible lonely and homesick."

The instrument had time to respond merely to the extent of three bars, when a man's figure appeared in the doorway. The musician became aware of the figure by the shadow that filled the one room of his house. He returned the harmonica to his vest pocket and turned his head inquiringly.

"Come in and set down," he invited. "Are you a homesteader, too, poor fellow, or are you human?"

"Who, me? I never heard of homesteaders 'fore now. Come to think it over, guess I did read 'bout them somewhere, along with pollywogs and beetle bugs in some book dealing with the curiosities of nature. Me? I'm a rancher. That's my ranch, six miles down the coulee. You can see a couple of the buildings, if you step outside."

"I've seen 'em. They're the only things 'cept country to see in any direction whichsoever. I was thinkin' of prancin' down there right soon to investigate what them buildings was and who was in 'em."

"I've saved you the bother. Don't you farm none? That's what I thought homesteaders was for—to stick seeds in the ground and pull weeds."

"Farm? What'd I farm with? A knife and fork? Listen. You can sob on my shoulder. I spent half of my bundle of kale in St. Paul and Minneapolis on my way up here. It ain't fair to have two such big towns so close together, is it, now? And the other half I flipped in gettin' located on this homestead and buildin' this brown stone front and back. Since then, for two weeks, I've been settin' here caculatin' how big a fool I am. My 'rithmetic and all my patience was used up when you come passin' by."

"Where are you from?"

"The southwest corner of Lake Michigan. Get off and turn to the right and ask anybody. Hof Taylor by name; truck driver by inclination and profession. But as soon as harvest comes, I'm goin' thrashin' and make some money to start farmin'. What do you raise—muley cows?"

"Only on holidays. Week days I raise horses."

"Horses!" cried the homesteader. "Now you're beginnin' to take holt. My middle name is horse. I had a team, comin' five, three-quarter Percheron, that could snake two ton through any traffic that ever blocked State and Madison at noon on the day before Christmas and never slip a hoof. Five hundred, I took for them, and I kissed them goodbye. Soon as I salt down five hundred I'm goin' back, and if the lad I sold 'em to won't exchange 'em for half a thousand flat, I'll bale him in a wad and feed him for hay. And if he has let that team fall on the cobbles and skin their knees, why, I'll chop him up for chicken feed."

"My, how bloodthirsty!" remarked the rancher. "Can you ride?"

"Anything with four legs and a back. I rode over at the stock-yards for a couple of years."

"Ever do any horse stealin'?"

"No, I'm an honest man."

"No? Well, listen to my proposition just the same. My name is Dow Carpenter. You're new in this country and you don't know me. I came up here to your shack this afternoon to chase you out. I didn't wish no homesteaders playin' 'Home, Sweet Home' in my ear. I wants free range for my stock. I'm figurin' on grazin' cattle next year."

"All right. Graze tarantulas and billy-goats if you likes. You didn't chase me. What next?"

Carpenter gazed steadily at his host for several seconds, and the homesteader as steadily returned the look. "I wants the land for free grazin'," at length remarked the rancher. There was something approaching persuasion in his voice. "I don't see why homesteaders has to horn in on this rough grazin' land. There's plenty of better farmin' country up north."

"I don't know either, when it comes to knowin'. I just whirled 'round three times and lit here."

"You're the second one to light. Bye-and-bye, they'll be droppin' like ducks, if us ranchers don't do somethin'. Last year some fellow took up a homestead eight miles west of me. He didn't last long."

"What happened to him?" asked Hof Taylor. "Or is it unmentionable?"

"Probably so, to him. First, his barn blowed down; then some shortsighted person mistook his horses for antelope and shot 'em, and then his house burned one day when he was gone to town for grub. He sure had tough luck."

"What became of him? Did somebody with bad hearin' mistake him for a cockroach and poison the poor insect?"

"It would have come to that, but the miserable cricket left afore anybody could squash him; went back to his mamma, I reckon. He was too young, anyway, to run loose. Looked about twenty-one with no wisdom teeth cut."

"What was his name?"

"Harris, or Harrison, or some such like that."

"So you ran him out?"

"I ain't braggin'. I sort of coaxed him out."

"And you come visitin' today to sort of coax me out?" asked Hof Taylor.

"I come to size you up."

"How do I size?"

"Too heavy on your feet to run. But I think I can buy you out."

"How come you at that think? I ain't nothin' to sell, 'cept this hen-house we're reposin' in so comfortable. The land ain't mine yet, and won't be for three years. Think again and maybe you'll astonish me."

"You can sell your valuable services," stated the rancher. "If you can rope and bridle five hundred dollars and your fare to the southwest corner of Lake Michigan, you'd be willin' to go, wouldn't you?"

"Go? That ain't no word to use 'round me; I'd fly. Man, I can feel the pin-feathers on my arms already."

"You don't fancy homesteadin'; and I don't fancy homesteaders. If I show you an easy way to earn five hundred and return fare both of us gets what we wants."

"Proceed some more. You talk better'n patent medicine."

"Now, we're smoochin' long nice, knee to knee," said Carpenter, settling himself on the doorstep. "Ride easy, and I'll proceed. Listen. There's a bunch of horses down in Montana that I wants to drive up to my ranch. Owin' to circumstances beyond my control, it's necessary to do the drivin' at night and, furthermore, on a night like tomorrow night, when there's no moon. You understand the beauty of my conversation?"

"My brain is slower than molasses in January, but I feel a thaw arrivin'. Proceed some more still."

"It's fifty miles to the Montana line," continued Carpenter. "My ranch foreman and me start this evenin' at dark. The ranch hand I expected to go with us had the poor judgment to let a horse throw him yesterday as far as next week, and now he can't ride a rockin' chair. I need a third man, and I can't spare no more from the place."

"The thaw is sure arrivin' fast."

"We'll come by here leadin' a horse. You climb on top that broncho and travel with us. You're to ask no questions, but do as you're told, and keep a clamp on your jaw. Tomorrow we rest, and tomorrow night we herd the bunch north to my place. Two hundred and fifty dollars will be tucked in your garter as soon as the last animal is in my corral. In 'bout a month, there'll be another bunch needin' exercise at night, and another two hundred and fifty for your other garter. In the meantime, betwixt and between, you can ride range for me and earn your care fare. Think it over and let me know inside of ten minutes how you think."

"Ten seconds is nine two many," replied the homesteader. "I only know of one better business and that would be clippin' coupons with a band saw. But why stop at two little travelin' parties? I'm not special busy at this time of the year, and garters is cheap, and anybody who will pay me two dollars and fifty cents per mile for me to ride with them can start for Halifax and I'll enjoy followin' 'long after."

"There'll be only two ridin' parties and no more," replied the rancher. "Ridin' at night arouses curiosity, and I don't like to have myself talked 'bout. My feelin's are sensitive. Besides, I'm goin' into the cattle business this fall with some meat packers, and I won't have time for pleasure trips."

"But how do you know that I won't hurt your feelin's by talkin'?"

"I don't know, but I'm gamblin' you won't. Just like you're gamblin' I won't. If you did talk, after the trip, you would have just as much to talk yourself out of as I would. It works both ways, don't it? As for what I've said so far this afternoon, print it on handbills, if you feel that way, and pass the bills all 'round. It would be your word against mine, and you're a stranger on this shank of the prairie."

"One more question before I clamp my jaw and do as I'm told. Where's your affidavit that you'll pay me the two hundred and fifty simoleons when the last cayuse is in your corral tomorrow night? My garter is stretched all out of shape already. Somehow, my curiosity gets the best of my good manners."

"I'll bring the money with me tonight, and you can put it any place you like 'round this mansion until you get back. Any place, just so you and me knows where it is."

"Real money? No check? Funny how lively my curiosity is this afternoon."

"Real money—bank notes. Which color do you prefer? Your ten minutes is up. Yes or no?"

"I'll try anythin' once."

"All right," answered the rancher, arising from the doorstep and taking up the reins that his saddled horse dragged on the ground as the animal cropped the grass in front of the shack. "Have the dishes washed by eight o'clock tonight. We'll be ridin' by shortly after eight."

"Must you be movin'? Well, so long. Looks like the sun would set in the west this evenin'. Hurry back."

Herb Essley, foreman on the Carpenter ranch, was washing his russet-tanned countenance from a tin washpan on the sill of the bunkhouse in preparation for his supper, when the proprietor rode around the corner of the barn and dismounted. Soap suds covered Herb's face and he could not see. He turned his head and reached blindly for the towel.

"Dow?" he inquired.

"No," answered his employer, approaching. "This is Santa Claus."

"I didn't hear no sleigh bells and it's a long time till Christmas." Herb rubbed his visage vigorously, and one eyebrow appeared above the soap line. "Did you run that homesteadin' fellow back where he belongs?"

"Run nothin'," answered Dow Carpenter, testily. "That fellow has locmotor aphasia of the brain and hind legs. He wouldn't run to a fire." The rancher kicked the bunkhouse disgustedly. "He wouldn't run from sizzlin' dynamite."

Herb rubbed again and a second eyebrow appeared. "What you goin' to do 'bout that homesteadin' prairie wolf? Pretend you don't see him when you pass each other on the way out to pick wild flowers of a mornin'?"

"I'm goin' to take him with us tonight."

"What?" cried Herb, opening his wide big eyes and with a howl of pain promptly closing them. "Wait a minute till I can look you over and determine what brand of tanglefoot that homesteader poured you." He rubbed briskly and at length opened his eyes. "You never was much of a snifter, and even now your headlight don't seem blazin' bright. Where does this idea catch you worst, or can't you say? Tell it to old Doc Essley and he sure will write you a prescription in plain English. Snort out the idea."

"It's this way, Herb," began the rancher. "I'm gettin' cold feet clear up to my knees concernin' this Montana trip."

"We've done the same, identical thing in the past, and the damage was nothin' or less. It's a cheap way of acquirin' horses, and I admires my percentage of the gate receipts; so does the two lads in Montana. What we have done once, I reckon we can do again. Them's my sentiments."

"True enough, we've pulled the trick afore, but every time we makes the play our chances are taller, heavier and wider. This deal is all set and I'll play it out. The two boys across the line has the horses up against the border waitin' for us. We'll start tonight—"

"Good! You're shoutin' now."

"And after tonight, I'm through. It's gettin' too dangerous—harder for our men to land jobs on the big Montana ranches, harder to sell horses. The owners down there are countin' heads more careful and makin' certain every young animal is branded. Also, they're lookin' more critical at brands horses has already. Maybe they don't actually know they've been losin' some of the young horses and maybe they don't know they've been losin' them this direction. Maybe they're just on the verge of beginnin' to wonder. I don't know, but I knows this: after the deal tonight, I goes into the cattle business and I goes straight. Do you travel with me?"

"The straightest way is the shortest way home," mused Herb. "I ain't no home but this. I travels straight if you do. Farewell, big gate receipts."

"Farewell," echoed Dow Carpenter.

"This homesteadin' badger, how does he cut into the pie?" asked the foreman. "I ain't ever asked him to pull up a chair. I ain't even seen him. What's his name, or ain't he named?"

"Hof Taylor, so he said."

"What did you make such a pet of him, for? He must have purred and rubbed your shins."

"You remember that young homesteader, Harris or Harrison, or whatever his name was, that we run off last year? You remember he made no holler? He just disappeared. But there was talk up and down the trail to town. It ain't in the nature of things for a man, even a cussed homesteader, to have his barn blowed over, his horses shot dead, and his house burned down, all in six weeks. Some folks sort of looked our way inquirin'-like—"

"Let 'em look. It will do 'em good."

"It didn't do our reputations special good."

"My reputation ain't ailin'. You can't keep folks from thinkin'. That's what they believe brains is for. But they think twice and repeat afore they talk once whenever I knocks on the front door. Concernin' this here homesteadin' caterpillar—did he blight your reputation?"

"No, not as I noticed. I don't intend that he will. He has a snoutful of homesteadin' this very minute. He's blowed his money paid him for a truck team. All he wants now is carfare and five hundred dollars to buy back his team in Chicago and he will hasten to where he belongs."

"If you're startin' a subscription list for homesick homesteaders, pass right on and try the next house. I'm powerful short today, and the rent is due, and the children need new shoes, and the missus wants a—"

"I wouldn't subscribe to a new rope to hang him with," asserted Dow Carpenter, "but I'll have him caught ridin' a horse that don't belong to him."

"How so?"

"Leave that to me. And leave to the Montana ranchers the merry little fact that they will make life interestin' then for our homesteadin' friend. And while that is proceedin', you and me will be back here sleepin' quiet and peaceful. He won't never return to bother us."

"How so, once more?"

"I told him I was short a man to make this trip tonight and that I would pay him two hundred and fifty to go with us. Also, that I would pay him the same to make a second trip with us a month later, and that he could chore 'round in the meantime and accumulate his car-fare to Chicago. He grabbed like a coyote at a roosting hen. You and me ride by his place tonight, leadin' a third horse for him,—Baldy, the sorrel."

"Baldy, the sorrel!" ejaculated Herb Essley. "Why, that mangy runt can't carry a full-grown man to Montana and back. He can't carry his tail up that far. He will go lame afore we are half-way to the line."

"I'm countin' on Baldy goin' lame. If he isn't limpin' by the time we hit the border, I'll trade mounts with the homesteader and make the sorrel lame."

"But I don't see—"

"You ain't paid to see, think, or smell. You're paid to do what I tell you to do."

"Is that so? Do you mind if I sneeze now and then, Mister High Horse?" returned Herb Essley.

Two hours later, the rancher and his foreman rode to the homesteader's shack. Dow Carpenter dismounted, and leaving his companion outside, opened the door without knocking. Hof Taylor, with chair tilted against the wall and feet braced against the stove, was devoting himself to music. His hat was on his head, and his coat was on his back.

The rancher closed the door and remarked, "How high can you count?"

The homesteader finished the chorus of "Home, Sweet Home," and carefully tucked the harmonica into a vest pocket before he replied, "Fingers, or pencil and paper?"

"Suit yourself," answered Dow Carpenter, tossing a package of bank-notes into the other's lap.

"Pretty, pretty," said Hof, smoothing the contents upon one knee. "Now, let's see if you and me speak the same kind of 'rithmetic." He counted the bills slowly. "Grand total, two hundred and fifty dollars, and no cents. Correct. Where shall I hide this legacy?"

"Hide it where you please. Get action; we're due to be movin'."

"How would this suit?" asked the homesteader, stuffing the bank notes into an empty baking-powder can, and raising a short section of board from the floor beneath the stove, disclosed a hole dug in the ground. "After you left this afternoon I spent one hour of my valuable life preparin' this safety deposit vault."

"Good enough. Slap in the can and cover it with dirt and put back the board."

"There we are," replied Hof Taylor, when the orders had been fulfilled. "And now you and me has a secret between us. Ain't it sweet to have secrets between you and me?"

Three horsemen rode south through the night. One was short and one was tall and one was neither short nor tall. They rode in single file for miles across the open prairie and not one addressed another. At midnight they struck a trail that angled southwest.

"Fair time," said the short man, drawing rein. "We're half way there. Everybody happy?"

"I ain't," replied the tall man; "neither is my horse. I suspicion that he is thinkin' 'bout goin' lame. He told me three miles back that I was too heavy for him. He didn't have nobody else to talk to and neither did I."

"Don't you believe anythin' that broncho tells you," advised the man who was neither short nor tall. "I've rode him a hundred miles between sunup and sundown."

"You mean it seemed like a hundred miles to you. This cayuse wouldn't go a hundred miles for a carload of oats. He told me so two miles back. I didn't ask him; he just up and told me."

"Tell him to keep travelin'," said the short man. "We can't have no lame brutes in this outfit. Come on."

"Hear that, little horse? Be reasonable and mind your boss."

One hour later, the tall man remarked, "This horse ain't the least bit reasonable; he's done gone lame."

"Bad?" asked the short man.

"Tolerable, I should say. He told me just now he was good for somethin' like ten miles if necessary."

"It's necessary, and no mistake. Ten miles more will put us close to the border. You can walk the rest of the way."

"I don't like to walk," wailed the tall man. "Be good, little horse, be good to your Uncle Hof."

The little sorrel did his best, but Hof Taylor dismounted within half an hour.

"As I said, I don't like to walk, but I'd rather walk than ride this cripple," he stated.

"I don't believe you know how to ride," stormed the short man. "What'd you let the sorrel go lame on you for? You told me you could ride anything with four legs."

"So I can, Boss Carpenter, but this here animal only has three legs and a half. Get me a four-legged critter and I'll show you."

"I will as soon as we meet the other boys. You'll have to walk there. Come along this trail as fast as you can. It will be daylight inside of three hours and by that time we all want to be under cover. Listen to me, now, and get this straight, my homesteadin' friend."

"I'm listenin' with both ears."

"Follow this trail and within two hours you will cross a stream. You are over the border then. Soon you'll come to a fork in the trail. There's a scrub willow in the fork. Take the right-hand trail and keep travelin' till you start down into a coulee. That'll be 'bout three miles further on. Watch for us in the coulee. You understand?"

"Plain as plain."

The rancher and the foreman cantered on through the darkness; the homesteader, afoot, and leading the limping sorrel, proceeded to follow.

"Little horse," mused Hof Taylor, "I smell a mice. But whether it's a field mice, house mice, white mice, grey mice, or bobtailed mice, I can't tell to you, and I can't tell to myself, either. For why did they give me you to ride? Not that I has anythin' personal against you; not that, at all. You're a nice, sober little cuss so far as you go, but you don't go fifty miles to Montana with your Uncle Hof straddlin' your back. I knew your shoulder was off the minute I set in the saddle, and I knew you was goin' lame this side the border. I wonder if my friends down the trail knew as much as that? They looks like smart men. For why did they make you and me acquainted? Howsomever that may be, I don't regret that they did, for I'm interested in willow trees and I hates to admire them with a crowd of two or more hangin' 'round. I don't mind your bein' present; I don't mind you in the least; you and me is comrades in misery. It's my unsolicited opinion that walking through this cave of a night is a gritty way of earnin' two hundred and fifty. Speak up, Baldy, and tell us what you think 'bout all this."

The sorrel did not answer, but continued to limp philosophically along behind the tall man. In time they came to a stream.

"I hates to ride you across," remarked the homesteader, "but I hates worse to have my feet wet. I may be compelled to do some sprintin' within the next twenty-four hours, and I sprint best in dry socks." He mounted the sorrel and rode through the water, dismounting when the opposite bank was reached. "Here we are, on the trail again, and no damage done your shoulder, I trusts. That willow tree in the fork ought to be showin' soon. Come along, Baldy."

The tall man found the tree a quarter of a mile down the trail.

"Somethin' tells me," he ruminated, "that there's a hole in the right side of the trunk of this tree, 'bout six feet from the ground where a limb has broke off. Sure as you live, Baldy, here's the hole. It would make a ripsnortin' place to hide a little note in. And here's a little note all writ and in my vest pocket where I keeps my harmonica. That's coincidence. Always make the best of coincidence, Baldy; don't you forget that. Supposin' I just shove this little note in this here little hole and we goes on our way rejoicin' and sees what happens? You wouldn't tell nobody, would you? And you haven't objections, have you? The ayes win. In goes the note. Come on now, Baldy; we mustn't be late arrivin' at the coulee. Your boss was snappish the last we saw of him, and I don't propose to let his disposition curdle and me be to blame. Him and I has a secret, and you and I has a secret. I'd rather have a secret with you Baldy, than I would with him."

The first silver of daylight was streaking the eastern sky when the tall man and the sorrel horse descended the bank of the coulee. Half way across the flat bottom a whistle smote the pedestrian's ear from the left of the trail. He trilled a bar of "Home, Sweet Home," and turned to the left.

Herb Essley arose from the ground to greet him with, "You're a long time comin'."

"I don't wear spring-heels and one of my corns is hurtin' me powerful. What's the menu now?"

"Follow me."

"More walkin'? My contract didn't mention walkin'; it said I was to ride. Pretty soon I'll be lamer than this little horse and then I'm liable to set down on you and cry. Where's that new horse the boss promised me?"

"Over here in a clump of willows. Make your feet twinkle, corns or bunions. We've got to drive that herd farther off from the trail before daylight comes, and it's comin' fast now."

As they approached the willows, Dow Carpenter rode forth, leading a horse by a rope.

"Here's your new broncho," he informed the homesteader. "Throw your saddle and bridle on him quick. We're goin' to take the herd a ways down the coulee. You follow along behind and don't let any stragglers past you."

"How many are we?"

"Two lads who brought up this herd, and us three who rode here tonight."

"I walked part way. Don't count me a whole one."

"I'm worried 'bout the other two boys and the second bunch of horses," continued the rancher. "We ain't seen a sign of them yet, and they ought to have been here long ago."

"Maybe all their critters went lame," suggested Hof Taylor.

"They must have been late startin'. We can't wait here any longer. Are you ready?"

"What'll I do with Baldy?"

"Turn him loose. He will edge in with the others."

"Goodbye, Baldy. Whoa, there, you great, big stepladder! Let your Uncle Hof climb aboard. He's kind to dumb animals, but he don't like 'em too dumb."

In the light of dawn, the five men drove the herd of young horses east along the coulee bottom. Herb Essley rode beside his employer.

"The lads tells me," he vouchsafed, "that the ranchers down here has a reward posted of five hundred dollars for information leadin' to the apprehension of certain unknown parties—or some such words. How would it be for you and me to tell on each other and split the reward?"

"Most pleasin'. Try it and see."

"I can see it without tryin'," said Herb Essley. "The two lads also tells me that the ranchers of this section are ridin' range freely, on the lookout for them unknown parties; with blood in their eyes."

"That so? All the better. This here homesteader, whose corns hurts him, thinks there's two more men to join us with another bunch of horses. I led him on to think so. 'Bout five o'clock this afternoon I'll send him out to hunt the other men and find what the trouble is. He won't find the men, but I'm expectin' he will find the trouble. I'll give him orders to ride south fifteen miles and look 'round. That will put him onto the Lazy Y ranch. Probably he will stop afore he gets that far—stop by request of some of the Lazy Y men. And he will be ridin' a Lazy Y horse, which fact will be interestin' for him to explain."

"His explanations may interest us."

"How so? By dark we'll start north with our herd. Not a branded animal, except what we rode down, goes back with us. I warned the boys that last time that I wanted no more branded horses included. I suppose they slipped some in, havin' the same thirst for gate receipts as you has. If they did, every brand comes out, and the two boys who brought them up here can start them south this evenin'. By the time this homesteader can bring our name into his conversation with the Lazy Y men, we will be across the line. By this time tomorrow, we will be back on the ranch and there won't be a brand there that don't belong there."

Several miles farther on they came to an opening in the north coulee bank.

"Drive 'em in," called Dow Carpenter, and the forward riders turned the straggling herd toward the opening.

Hof Taylor, bringing up the rear, was the last to enter. He found a corral designed by nature. "Some barnyard," he muttered to himself, watching the horses scatter over the half section of land in the blind coulee and begin eager grazing. "Some barnyard; only the gap has to be watched."

Herb Essley was busy with willow branches and matches. "Green wood and hard to start goin'," he said. "Coffee and bacon for breakfast. Can you drink your coffee black?"

"The blacker, the stronger," replied the homesteader. "And I certainly need strength. My corns are worse than the evil of temptation. After breakfast I'll have a sleep, if there's nothin' better to do."

"You'll have your turn guardin' the gap," said Dow Carpenter. "After that you can drop dead if you want to."

"If you give me the first watch, I'll try to oblige."

"It's three-thirty now. I'll take the first trick from four to six, 'cause I hates to miss my rest. Herb can have from six to eight for the same reason, only more so. You can have from eight to ten."

"Then at ten o'clock," replied Hof Taylor, "all I'll suffer just to disoblige you, will be a stroke of paralysis."

At ten, however, he lay down and promptly went to sleep. At four o'clock he was awakened by the rancher's hand upon his shoulder.

"Get up. We need you."

"I knew you would," answered Hof.

"The other herd hasn't come in," continued the rancher. "Somethin' has delayed the boys. We have to start north at dark. I want you to ride south fifteen miles or so and look 'round. If you run across the boys, tell 'em we're here waitin', and if they can reach here by dark to keep comin', but if they can't make it, tell 'em to turn their horses loose and go back. Whether you find the boys or not, return here by dark."

"That's some ride, with fifty miles ahead of me tonight, and my corns still jumpin' up and down."

"You said you could ride; I never said you could. There'll be a fresh horse for you tonight."

"I'll do it to oblige you," replied Hof Taylor, "'cause I admires you so much. Any grub handy?"

"Cold bacon and hot coffee. Help yourself."

A few minutes later, Hof Taylor rode out of the natural corral into the coulee. He crossed the bottom and climbed the opposite bank, and continued south. For half an hour he rode, then halted and looked at his watch. "Five o'clock," he said. "I'll loaf a while, and then by the time I gets back there, things ought to be just 'bout beginnin' to happen." He drew the harmonica from his vest pocket and devoted himself to "Home, Sweet Home." It was his intention to play for fifteen minutes, but he found the charms of the melody so compelling that the half of an hour went by before he sighed and glanced at his watch. "Sufferin' smokestacks!" he exclaimed, and hastily galloped in the direction from which he had come. As he approached the coulee, he slowed his mount to a walk, cautiously drew near the bank and peered over. Below, he saw something that caused him to ejaculate, "Things has happened!" and to ride quickly down the slope.

The herd of horses was being driven west along the bottom. Four men, whom Hof recognized as his former companions, followed in single file. Their arms appeared to be bound tightly to their sides. Behind the four came six strangers.

"Your name?" asked the leader, as the homesteader drew rein alongside.

"Hof Taylor."

"You look the description. Prove it."

With a smile, the homesteader drew the harmonica from his vest pocket and played "Home, Sweet, Home."

"Here's a check for five hundred," said the leader, tendering a slip of paper. "It's made out to you. Are you ridin' our way?"

"Thanks, no. I've a rendezvous at a scrub willow in the fork of a trail;—a rendezvous with a fellow named Harrison and a bakin' powder can that comes out of a hole under a loose board; eh, Carpenter?" The homesteader winked, but the rancher did not return the salute. "I guess I'll have to change horses for that sorrel over there that's limpin'. This critter don't belong to me."

"Don't bother," said the leader. "Keep the horse you're on. He's mine, and I gives him to you."

"Thanks, once more. Any word for Harrison?"

"Say goodbye for us again. He was a good ranch hand. I hates to lose him. I reckon he's headin' East as soon as he meets you."

"East is the word for him and me, too," replied Hof Taylor, gathering up his reins. "Well, so long. Oh, yes! I most forgot somethin' I wants to tell my boss. You may be glad to know Carpenter, that Harrison is a friend of mine. Fact is, he's a relative of mine. Wanted excitement and run away from home;—changed his name. I'm glad he did, if he had to be tripped up by a tumbleweed like you. And now I meets him and the aforesaid bakin' powder can at a scrub willow in the fork of a trail not so many miles away. Yes, it was all arranged by a little note. You see, I'm his big brother. Ask Baldy, the little sorrel horse. I told Baldy all 'bout it."

Dow Carpenter said nothing, but continued to stare upon the ground as the cavalcade moved forward.

UNMASKING CLEO

BY FRANK X. FINNEGAN

Cleo was the doctor's prescription. He was to be taken either before or after meals in doses of two hours' duration. He was a good horse, but not so good that one could shake him well before using and have anything left to saddle.

BRANTWOOD insisted that I should go with him to help in buying the horse. That is how I got into it. I had plenty of my own affairs that required attention and, more than that, as I frankly told him, I know only one point worth while about horses—some are trotters and some are pacers. Aside from this distinction an animal might have spavin, ringbone, hives, heaves and all the other cavalry discomforts without me being a whit the wiser. But these striking facts did not influence Brantwood in the least.

"I want you along so I shall have a witness to what this fellow says about the horse, in case I have to take him into court," he said. "I don't expect any trouble, but he might exaggerate. Of course, I'm not going to ask your opinion about the animal. I was raised on a farm and I ought to know something about horses."

I was bound to admit that he had me there. The things Brantwood ought to know about make up too extensive a collection for anyone to decide upon its limitations; but I hoped it might not be too late to rescue him from the mendacious horse-trader.

"Anyhow, what on earth are you buying a horse for, in this generation?" I asked. "Everyone I know, who can't afford it, is buying a touring car or a runabout, and those with marked homicidal tendencies are going in for motorcycles. Yet here you come trailing along at the tail-end of the procession, talking about buying a horse. What's the idea?"

He looked at me coldly. A sensitive soul would have suspected rebuke in his manner, but it glanced off me like criticism off a Murphyized nerve.

"I'm not doing this to be eccentric," he said. "You know well enough that I'd have a car if I had the time to spend in court and the money for the fines. This horse was wished on me by Doctor Mœbius. He looked me over a week ago and prescribed a long, slow ocean voyage. I convinced him that he had got track of the wrong Brantwood when he was looking me up in Bradstreet's, and he compromised on a saddler. I'm to ride two hours a day."

"If the horse will permit you to do so," I suggested.

"That's the sort of a horse I intend getting," Brantwood declared, with as much enthusiasm as his Plymouth Rock nature ever exhibits, "and this man Maiwurm tells me he has just what I want. Come along, before someone slips in ahead of me and gets it."

When we met Maiwurm in the reception hall of his livery stable I immediately decided that he was an object of suspicion. He had sage-green whiskers and one of his eyes was of such a roving, rollicking disposition, that he could not fix it on anything definite for more than a second or two at a time. It suggested that he might have been born in one of those lighthouses with the revolving lamps they have down near Sandy Hook. He welcomed "Branty" with too much cordiality, and looked me over coldly. Something seemed to tell him that I belonged to the opposition.

"How's the horse?" Brantwood genially inquired.

"I've had a time keepin' that horse for you," he wheezed through the emerald furze. "There was a fellow seen one o' my men exercisin' that horse out here yesterday and he come in to me with a hundred and twenty-five dollars, cash money, and offered me it for that horse. But I told him it was as good as sold to you, and I never went back on my word when once I passed it."

This sounded encouraging. If the horse was only half as honorable as Maiwurm admitted himself to be, Brantwood would have a chance.

"That was good of you I must say," he declared. "When I make up my mind to have a thing, I don't like to see some other fellow get it first. He went away pretty mad, I suppose."

"Well, he paid me a deposit on the horse in case you wouldn't take it," Maiwurm declared, and I could tell by the roll of his wandering eye that a leaning toward fiction was a dominant trait in his temperament."

"Let's see the horse," I suggested. "I have matters of importance pending in the busy marts of trade."

Mr. Maiwurm ogled me for an uncomfortable second or two, and then shouted an order to the lower regions of his stable. After a little while, during which interim Branty nervously examined prints of sporting gents in red riding coats being tossed over fences by 'unting 'orses that had refused to jump, a dejected hostler crawled into our midst, leading a mild-eyed horse with high, intellectual hips and a permanent air of surprise.

His nigh foreleg had a jaunty curve to the rearward, that was strangely absent from his other members, and as I walked around to diagnose it, he seemed to eye me reproachfully.

"What do you think of him?" Brantwood inquired anxiously.

"I think he would look better to the naked eye if he were re-upholstered," I ventured, "and something might be done by an expert to take the spring out of his leg. It looks to me as though this animal might have run away from home to join a circus in his earlier days and had practiced standing on one foot. His weight was too much for the leg."

"He wasn't never in no circus!" Maiwurm retorted indignantly. "This here is a gentleman's saddler!"

"That leg *is* a little off, isn't it?" Brantwood admitted. "Still, you often see a horse whose legs aren't exactly mates. That isn't so bad if they sort of work together, you know."

He stepped around in front of his prospective mount, and the horse sighed heavily into his shirt bosom. Branty drew back in alarm.

"How about his habits? Does he bite or kick?" he demanded.

Mine Host Maiwurm turned on him a wavering glance that was intended to express grieved surprise at this insinuation. If he had raised the horse on the bottle and personally attended to its early training he could not have been more hurt.

"Bite? This horse? I should think not!" he retorted. "I wouldn't sell you no horse that bites! And the only time he kicks is when he doesn't get oats enough," he added, with a playful wink at me, which closed down the lighthouse beam temporarily.

"In that case," I interposed, hooking an arm jauntily over one of the handy hipbones, "I should judge that his life has been one long tango."

Brantwood frowned his disapproval and patted the nag affectionately on its throbbing thorax, having evidently forgiven the wrecking of his shirt front. He was beginning to pine for action.

"Well, trot him up and down. Let's see him move a litttle," he suggested. "I want to watch his knee action."

"All right," Maiwurm said, almost cheerily. "Take him out, Joe. Give him a good, lively trot. This is a horse that's got lots of action, too," he assured us.

The dejected hostler awoke with a start. It was cruel of his brutal employer to bring him back to the workaday world so suddenly.

"Come on, Cleo," Joe said, tugging at the halter strap. "Giddap! Click, click, click!"

"Wait a minute!" I interrupted. The horse was perfectly willing to do so. Joe showed equal enthusiasm about postponing the exercise and became rooted to the spot.

"Do I understand that this horse's name is Cleo?" I demanded.

Maiwurm's roving eye traveled rapidly in my direction.

"Yes, that's his name," he said. "What of it?"

"There's only one thing for you to do if you buy this horse," I suggested, turning to Brantwood. "You'll have to get him a pink saddle and a baby blue bridle or else have him christened over again. In fact, I think the latter plan would be better. You can't expect to call a horse 'Cleo' in front of a self-respecting park policeman and get away with it."

Brantwood looked at the three of us for a moment as though the suggestion were highly disturbing. Then he shrugged his shoulders and motioned to the ennuied hostler to proceed with the demonstration.

"Oh, come on!" he said testily. "Let's see what the horse can do. I'll call him Bill if I want to. Get him outside, Joe."

Thus admonished, Joseph leaned once more against the strap, and it was borne in upon Cleo that his vacation was about to be interrupted. He clicked his ribs together sharply and shook his head at the hostler in violent negation of the suggestion, but Joe continued to heave until the horse grudgingly moved across the stable floor and into the street. There he paused to look around the neighborhood, ignoring the efforts of his guide to lure him down the street.

"What's the matter? Why doesn't he trot along?" Branty demanded.

"I think he is acquainted with the family over the way and he is trying to see whether anyone is at home," I suggested.

"He's just lazy a little—feedin' too well and not doin' any work," Maiwurm explained. "I'll start him."

He brought a whip from the office and approached the ennuied saddler with determination flashing from his good eye. At the same moment, Cleo caught the idea and started down the block so impulsively that he left the hostler two lengths behind at the quarter, and was still going strong when Joe overtook him. They made the turn at the end of the street without an upset and on the trip down the home stretch we had an opportunity to observe the knee action that had been worrying Brantwood.

"Doesn't he raise his hind legs a bit high?" he wanted to know. Maiwurm had been expecting the question and he was ready for it.

"No, no. He got that from being trained to saddle work on country roads where he travelled in soft mud a whole lot," he explained. "I sort o' figure he lifts his feet that way to shake the mud off 'em."

"If you will both pardon the digression," I interposed, "I was once personally acquainted with a horse that put in seven years as assistant to a house-mover. His share of the work was to walk around a windlass ten or twelve hours a day and step over a rope every round trip. In the course of time that intelligent animal learned to lift his feet so high you couldn't trip him on a telegraph wire. Has Cleo ever been connected with the house-moving industry?"

The livery man was composing what would doubtless have been a withering retort, when Joseph arrived with the horse, both breathing hard and willing to call it a day right there and knock off work.

"Well, what do you think of him?" Branty asked me when Cleo was posing for us again, his curved front leg showing to splendid advantage against the red brick of the livery wall.

"I don't mind telling you frankly, right here in front of Mr. Maiwurm," I said. "If you are convinced that horseback-riding would be of benefit to you, I don't think you could invest twenty-five dollars to better advantage than by buying this horse."

Maiwurm grabbed at his necktie.

"Twenty-five dollars?" he yelled. "Why, this horse is worth a hundred and seventy-five dollars, just as he stands!"

"That may all be," I admitted, "and the way he stands certainly has its unique points. I wouldn't pretend to say what Cleo might be worth from your point of view, Mr. Maiwurm. I was merely telling Mr. Brantwood what I thought he ought to pay for the animal. And as far as the way he stands is concerned, I wouldn't worry about that because it might be corrected by a simple operation."

Brantwood had been looking at me curiously, as though he were trying to decide whether the excitement had gone to my head.

"There's no use talking nonsense," he interjected. "I came here to buy a saddle horse. Did you ever see anyone get a horse for such a foolish amount of money as twenty-five dollars?"

"Let us not go into the things I have seen along that line," I urged plaintively, "because I have already torn myself away from important matters of big business, and *tempus* is *fugiting* very rapidly. Just in passing, however, I might say that once, on the southwest coast of Arizona, I saw a certain party get a horse for considerably less than the modest sum that has been mentioned. In fact, all it cost him was the fatigue incidental to saddling and mounting the fiery charger in the dark of the moon. He got the horse and the gang got him and he got his—and the matter ended there."

For some reason, this airy persiflage did not appeal to Mr. Maiwurm of the roving eye. From the moment I placed a price upon Cleo his worst suspicions were confirmed and he turned a faded and odorous shoulder upon me.

"What do you think of his action?" he asked Brantwood, nodding toward the horse, which was going to sleep with its head on Joe's shoulder.

"Why, it's all right, I guess," he said timorously, "but I was just thinking—doesn't he breathe kind of funny?"

"Breathe funny? I never noticed nothin' funny about his breathin'," the livery man retorted.

"Don't blame the horse," I interposed, laying a hand on my misguided friend's arm, "he's trying to keep from laughing. He overheard Mr. Maiwurm saying he was worth a hundred and seventy-five dollars."

They walked stiffly away from me after that. It was evident that Brantwood resented my reflections upon his horse-sense. Maiwurm went up to Cleo, seized her sensitive upper lip and elicited a broad smile.

"Look at that!" he exclaimed, as though we had suspected the horse of being a toothless old wreck.

"Fine set of teeth," he admitted. "Don't you think so?" he added, turning to me.

"They appear to need cleaning, but aside from that I guess Cleo can gnaw his way through life, all right," I said. "What's the idea of the dental display?"

Maiwurm had a withering glance of scorn for my ignorance.

"It shows how old the horse is," he explained. "He has one tooth for every year."

"Ah! And this is his second set, of course," I suggested.

The livery man did not deign a reply, and Branty said something cutting about choosing the time for my cheap comedy.

"All right; I'll take him," he then said to Maiwurm. "He looks pretty good to me."

He brought up, from an inner pocket, a roll of yellow bills that looked like a pound of butter, and the horse dealer managed to focus his rollicking eye on it as they moved toward his grimy office.

"Here! Wait a minute!" I called to Brantwood. "You're not going to buy this horse without trying him under the saddle, are you?"

"That isn't at all necessary. I know a horse when I see him," he returned stiffly.

I gave him up, with a sigh of resignation. There's no use wasting gray matter on a man who has made up his mind to make an ass of himself, so I waited outside the office while the negotiations were concluded. When they emerged, Maiwurm had a decided list to starboard, and I shrewdly guessed that the roll had changed hands.

"I'll send Joe around with him tomorrow, Mr. Brantwood," he said, "and if you haven't decided where you're goin' to buy your saddle and bridle, I can give you a card to a brother o' mine in that business who can save you a little money."

"Get thee behind me, Maiwurm," I genially observed. "Whatever money your family saves will be credited to the general account."

We went away then, after Branty had cast a lingering look of rapture over Cleo's prominent points of interest as the fatigued hostler led his purchase back to the lower regions.

It was a week later that I met Brantwood again. Horse was uppermost in both our minds and I delicately inquired after Cleo.

"Cleo has only one bad habit, so far as I have observed," Branty informed me.

"His humorous breathing?" I ventured.

"No, I haven't speeded him up to that as yet," Branty admitted, "but he has a most annoying habit of stopping short whenever he feels like it. He goes along all right for a few squares, then he suddenly turns a corner I hadn't figured on at all and brings up at a dead stop. After I wheedle and coax him a little, he starts again and goes on until he gets ready to stop, and there we are—marooned! I can't understand it."

"My dear Watson, nothing is simpler," I replied. "You've been a bit unfortunate in choosing a place for your morning canter, that's all. You seem to have struck Cleo's old milk route. The habit of years is strong in dumb animals, and when you guided your mount into the familiar avenues where he had served so faithfully, and he saw again the customers' homes, wreathed in the mists of the morning—"

"Oh, forget it!" dear old Branty said, quite peevishly. "That isn't a bit funny. I thought maybe you could suggest something. I'm going to see a veterinary about the nag. Maybe he could cure him.

"Good idea," I admitted; "but if you'll take a tip from an innocent bystander, you'll advertise for bids. I imagine it would be quite a contract."

We parted with a distant air of hauteur on Brantwood's side, but when he called me on the telephone a few days later he had recovered his *camaraderie*. In fact, he was solicitous as to my health and well-being, beyond his usual inquiries.

"Oh, by the way, you remember that when you were going with me to buy that horse I told you I might want you to go to court as a witness for me," he suggested.

"Distinctly," I admitted.

"Well, I guessed right. I do want you," Branty replied.

"My worst fears are realized. You are going to sue Maiwurm for obtaining money under false pretenses," I ventured.

"Worse than that," Brantwood returned. "I have been arrested for horse-stealing. I am out on bail and will need you at the hearing tomorrow."

"What's the idea?" I gently asked.

"Cleo and I got caught in a rainstorm yesterday," he explained, "and I had to take shelter in the nearest house. Cleo went straight to the barn when I rode in at the wagon-gate, and the fellow who owns the place came out to see what the racket was about. Blessed if he didn't claim the horse! He said Cleo was stolen out of his barn a few weeks ago. He's a milkman and he knows every harness mark on the nag!"

"Harness marks?" I repeated. "We didn't see any harness marks, did we?"

"No; because that thief, Maiwurm, had glued horsehair all over them," Branty said, "and when the rain washed it off, there they were. Why, that horse was painted up like a chorus girl. You wouldn't know him now!"

"I don't suppose he'd know me, either," I suggested. "But then, we met only once. I take it that the dairyman was hectic and wrathy."

"The chump wouldn't listen to my explanations at all," Brantwood complained. "He called a big, two-fisted hired man to hold me in the barn while he telephoned for the sheriff and, if the justice of the peace hadn't had a little common sense, I might have been in jail all night! You'll be on hand tomorrow to go to court with me, won't you?"

I said I would and hung up. I hate going to court. But when a fellow has fool friends like Brantwood—

Ah, well. They're what help to make the world go 'round.

THE ENGINEER AND THE PILOT

BY NATHANIEL DICKINSON

It is dangerous business for an engineer with greasy hands and overalls to introduce his girl to a pilot with manicured nails and immaculate uniform, and then try to repair the damage when Romance sustains a compound fracture.

PATTERSON leaned out over the low rail of the gangway-port and surveyed the river above. It was black, as black as the pall of the sky above it, as black as the grime on the engineer's hands, as the frown on his dark face and the mood which caused it whenever the picture of the dapper young pilot, in his natty blue uniform and black-visored cap, on the upper deck, passed before his mind and stirred afresh the hate which lay smouldering in the depths of his soul.

There was something soothing, then, in the very anger of the elements to the engineer of the *Sayville.* The startling, vivid whiteness of the white-caps which here and there showed their teeth against the black-green of the river, the dull glow of red, half-way up the northern horizon, which marked the track of the coming storm, and the yellow-white glare of the twisting lightning which played against the inkiness in the northeast were all akin to his mood, and strangely comforting.

"We'll get it," he prophesied gloomily to himself, "and it looks like hell-fire," he vagarized, and then fell to wondering what hell was like, and if it could be any worse than his present existence.

For Patterson was in love, and only this morning he had discovered the full metes and bounds of this passion and the other great one—Hate. For the one he was indebted to a certain girl whom he had known but a month; for the other to the young pilot of the *Sayville,* whom he had known for years.

That it was all his own doing, this present condition of affairs, did not tend to ease his hate, or his love. Two weeks ago he and Bolton, the pilot, had been friends, and harmony reigned between the engine-room and the pilot-house. Then, in a moment of that foolish confidence which lovers have, he had taken the pilot to call on the girl he was to marry, and this had been the beginning of the end as far as the rough engineer was concerned, for the pilot's hands were not grimy, and his voice was low and pleasant, and well in keeping with his good-looking face and active figure, and then, too, conscience and love are sworn enemies, and the girl was not without her charms. So, from a friend of both, the pilot became a friend of each, which is vastly different in such cases, and a coolness grew between him and Patterson, for his visits became too frequent, and were too obviously welcomed for the engineer to pass unnoticed.

But Patterson's pride was of a nature which kept him silent, and in silence the coolness grew between him and the girl he loved and his old friend, Bolton. And then, this very morning, had come the inevitable. When he had gone to say good-bye to his promised wife, he found her in the little garden he had grown so to care for, in the arms of another man—Bolton.

Something had seemed to snap in him, then, for he had stopped in his tracks with an expression almost of horror in his eyes. He was too dazed to be angry then. It was the going of his faith in woman and in man, and his simple mind needed time to digest this perfidy.

The girl had sprung from the arms of her new lover with a cry of alarm, and he stood ready to fight for his very life with the man he had wronged, for there was that in the other's eyes which was not good to see.

But the big engineer had slowly passed his huge hand across his eyes, turned and walked out the gate and down the street again. There was something terrible in this—more so than if he had vented his rage then and there, and it hung over the two and their clandestine love like a cloud, making her fearing instead of loving, and him strangely awkward.

Now, the cloud had passed from Patterson's brain and left him with one clear thought, and that the desire to kill. Anger which stirred him to the very depths swept over him in waves from time to time and grew on him as he dwelt on his great wrong. Beads of perspiration which were not the result of the temperature of his engine-room stood out on his forehead, and now and then in a sane moment he felt, with a queer sub-consciousness, that his nails were driven into his palms and that every nerve in his body was tingling.

The jingle of bells in the engine-room called him back to the present and his post. He cast a last look at the black thunderstorm, and went back to his engine as though he had said a last good-bye to this world.

When the *Sayville* cast off her moorings at six o'clock and swung away from her dock, the rising storm had already brought night down over the river, and the dull red in the north had faded in the approaching rain.

Up in the pilot-house they had called for full speed in spite of the narrow channel, in the hope that the steamer might run away from the storm, as might well have been the case had this storm, as many other thunder-storms, been localized within a radius of a few miles. But they were in its track, and but a few miles down-stream it overtook the *Sayville* and swept her decks from stem to stern with a deluge of driving rain.

Down among his throttles and levers Patterson received the signal to slow down to half-speed. The pilot had rung that bell, he knew, and to the wild-eyed engineer there was a subtle mockery in it that awoke afresh the rage in him, that his work had for the time driven out. For a moment he stood there motionless, hesitating whether or not to obey the signal and then, his reason coming back to him in a measure, he slowed his engine down.

But a thought had come to him with this hesitation—a thought that widened his eyes and made his head feel strangely light, for it came to him that there was a place on the river, where, if he had hesitated even this short time, it might have meant the death of those in the pilot-house, and this was at the draw-bridge which spanned the river five miles below at Middleburgh.

The draw-men on this and the crew of the steamer were sworn enemies. Time after time the draw had been swung so tardily that the *Sayville* had to back at full speed to save crashing into it. Once, even, the steamer's forward deck had swept under the slowly swinging draw, and for a fascinating minute the huge structure had swung before the scared faces of those in her pilot-house as her reversed engines held her and then slowly, very slowly, backed her away from danger.

This incident had cost one draw-man his position, but another as inimical had come, and the feud waxed stronger, until of late it had come to be the custom rather than the exception for the *Sayville* to have to back her engines on entering the narrow channel between the island above the bridge and the left bank, before the slowly opening draw.

This Patterson knew and counted on in his plan for revenge, and now he blessed these same draw-men as he had often cursed them, down in the bowels of the steamer, and waited all too impatiently in the delirium of his black hate for the time to come when he should know by the signals that they were approaching the bridge. What did it matter to him that with the guilty the innocent might be murdered? What mattered it to him that he was imperilling the lives of two hundred, passengers and officers and crew of the steamer? He had but the thought for one thing, and that was the death of the pilot.

In the pilot-house all was dark but for the shaded binnacle light. Bolton stood at the wheel. At his right hand was the mate, at his left, one of the quartermasters. Far down the river, the lights of the drawbridge twinkled red and green and white in the dark night, and the pilot breathed a sigh of relief, for the river widened below this, and it had been a wild trip through the storm, with the flashes of lightning flooding the river in brilliant light one moment and leaving it in darkness so intense the next that he could not see the forward deck below him.

The lights on the bridge grew, and out of the night its huge framework took form like some Titan net spread to catch the steamer. They were but a hundred yards from it now. "Give her the whistle," ordered the pilot, and the quartermaster pulled the cord and sent a hoarse blast out over the river, which sounded like the bellow of some huge leviathan, and died away in many echoes among the hills on either side of the stream.

But the lights on the bridge did not change. A bar of light from the steamer's searchlight threw the dripping structure into sudden daylight, and played along the draw, searching each nick and corner with its brilliant rays and sending a path of light down the river beyond. Then and only then the men on the draw tardily started to swing it.

"Stop her and back her!" the mate ordered. Bolton gave the signals, and all three waited expectantly, anxiously. The vibration of the engines ceased, and for a moment the big river-boat glided on in stately silence.

And then, with the structure of the bridge towering but the steamer's own length before it, came the vibrations again, and the *Sayville* seemed fairly to leap forward, with her engines running at full speed ahead!

For a moment the men in the pilot-house were startled out of speech and action and then, with an inarticulate cry, the mate snatched the bell-cord from the pilot's hand and pulled it furiously. But still the engines pounded ahead at full speed. The steamer's forward deck swept under the draw, which had swung but a few feet, and the towering mass of the bridge loomed before the pilot-house. "Hell!" cried the mate, and, his courage deserting him, he flung the pilot-house door open and sprang out, the quartermaster close on his heels.

Bolton, alone, stood at his post. Whatever else his faults, he had the courage which makes heroes. He knew now. It came to him in a moment—Patterson's treachery and its cause. In a way, he told himself, he was responsible for the lives of the passengers, of the officers and crew of this boat, for had it not been for him, all this would not have happened. And yet, as he faced death, a last wistful thought of what might have been came to him as the face of the girl passed before his mind's eye in that kaleidoscope of impending dissolution which comes at such a time.

For a moment he stood thus, and then it seemed to him that the mass before him was hurled at his head. He ducked, instinctively. Then came a rending crash, a shudder ran through the steamer, and he was hurled to the deck. As he lay half-stunned, he saw the dark mass of the bridge sweep over him, saw the deck-house swept before it like paper, and the big funnels bend and crash to the deck below, and then he saw that the black sky was above him again, and realized that he was still clinging to the wheel, and this, with its strong bracing, had protected him from the deck-house, which had gone to pieces on it. He put it hard over and headed the wreck for the soft bank.

So Patterson, the engineer, did not gain his wish after all. But that was Bolton's last trick at the wheel. His life had been spared, but his nerve had gone forever.

Down in the engine room they found a raving maniac where once had been the best engineer on the river.

And the third actor in this tragedy—the girl who was to marry each in turn? She is the wife of another.

(*Continued from page 2*)

big incident does not stand out so prominently as it should, because the author, in filling in the framework of his plot, has created an obvious lack of proportion between his incidents and the desired impression. The story, therefore, while fulfilling certain requirements, fails to fulfill some very important ones.

The Terrible Brink is a story that does not depend upon clever plot construction for its appeal. The author shows a thorough knowledge both of the rattler and its habits and the workings of the brain of a strong, healthy man under the stress of unusual circumstances. And having placed the man in a perilous position, the author wisely refrains from investing him with any overdrawn qualities of heroism, but puts him through a series of emotions: the struggle against fear, the quixotic resolution to face the reptile whatever the cost and finally the saner and firmer resolution which proves to be his salvation. The character fights two battles: one the physical effort to keep his position, the other the mental struggle of suspense. It is a true fight of silent waiting rather than action. That the whole story hinges upon a trifling fact about the habits of a rattlesnake, makes the art in its telling more admirable. This story is an allegory that should be ranked with "Everywoman" and above "Experience."

The Subscribers' Serial has an ingenious plot, but it is a story which does not achieve high rank because of poor workmanship. The short, jerky style is tiresome. The self-consciousness of the author is plainly in evidence. In fact the story is not written according to Hoyle. Or is it J. Berg Esenwein?

The Epic of Old Cark is a straight narrative tale without much punch or surprise. The interest is chiefly maintained by the incidents as they materialize. There are many pleasing features, but the story lacks something to make it superior. This may be due largely to the author's failure to enlist the reader's sympathy for Old Cark.

The five dollar prize winners in the fifth contest were Mrs. Alice Cameron, Detroit, Mich.; G. Lombard Kelly, Augusta, Ga.; Elmer I. Ransom, Augusta, Ga.; E. A. Kirkwood, San Francisco, Cal.; Albert E. Brager, Philadelphia, Pa.

Members are requested to consider the purchase of the long promised club emblems, which are now ready for distribution. The emblem is a small, neat button of rose gold containing the well known Black Cat head and the words "Black Cat Club" in very small letters. This button is obtainable in two styles, the pin and the screw back. Either style will be sent postpaid on receipt of twenty-five cents.

The Eighth Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (July); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before August 1st. Prizes will be awarded August 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the October BLACK CAT, issued September 15th.

A PRIZE OF $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES OF $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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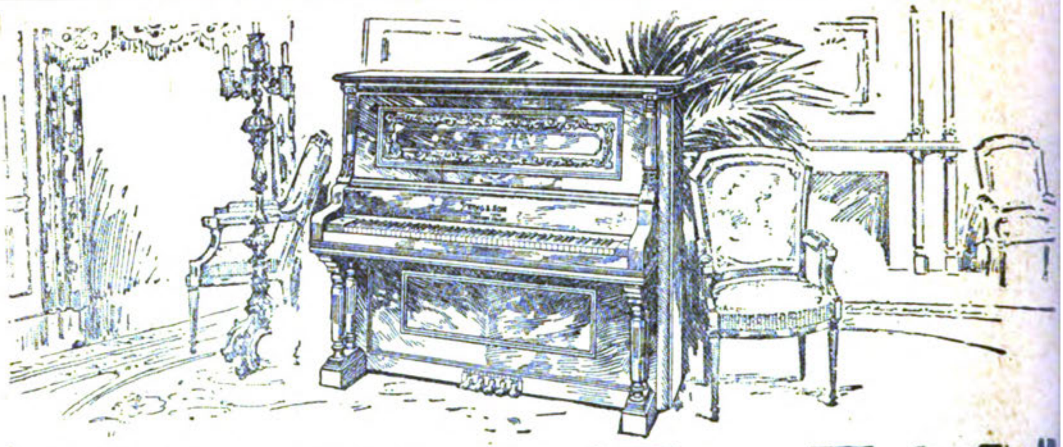

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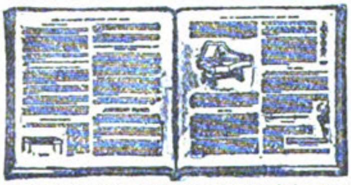

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Olivette Bourgeois

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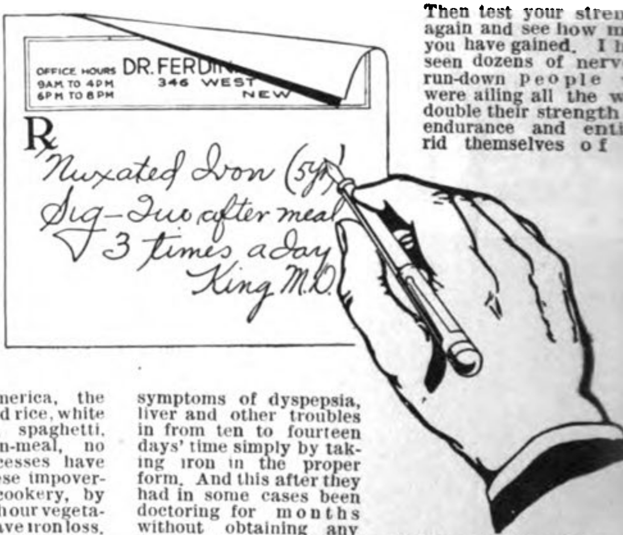
IT is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually in this country alone are taking Nuxated Iron. Such astonishing results have been reported from its use both by doctors and laymen, that a number of physicians in various parts of the country have been asked to explain why they prescribe it so extensively, and why it apparently produces so much better results than were obtained from the old forms of inorganic iron.

Extracts from some of the letters received are given below:

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York Physician and Medical Author, says: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron." Pallor means anæmia. Anæmia means iron deficiency. The skin of anæmic men and women is pale, the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails and they often become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.



In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated corn-meal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt.

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied both in this country and in great European medical institutions, says: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If the people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or rundown, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages, I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron — Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth."

Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your stren again and see how m you have gained. I h seen dozens of nerv run-down people were ailing all the w double their strength endurance and enti rid themselves of symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few c The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red col matter in the blood of her children is alas! not that ki iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easil sorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherw may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete prize-fighter has won the day simply because he kne secret of great strength and endurance and fille blood with iron before he went into the affray; while another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply fo lack of iron.

Dr. Schuyler C. Jacques, Visiting Surgeon St. Elizal Hospital, New York City, said: "I have never given out any medical information or advice for pu tion, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty mention it. I have taken it myself and given it patients with most surprising and satisfactory re And those who wish quickly to increase their str power and endurance will find it a most remarkab wonderfully effective remedy."

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The Black Cat

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Contents

Cover Design . . .	*Olivette Bourgeois* . .	
The Black Cat Club . .	. . . . . .	2
Ted and the Sorrels . .	*G. B. Buchanan* . .	3
The Death Mask . .	*Ladd Plumley* . .	11
The Nerve of Timid Thompson	*Earl G. Curtis* . .	16
In the Name of Kentucky .	*Hapsburg Liebe* . .	20
Every Man . . .	*Anna Brownell Dunaway*	25
Beatty	*Henry D. Muir* . .	31
Wardens of the Chaparral .	*Roy L. Sharpe* . . .	37
Ram Singh and Engel Sahib	*Will Kenyon* . . .	42

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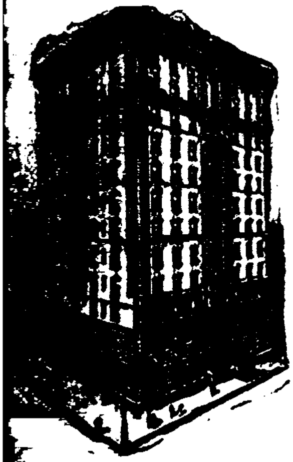

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

CRITICISING the stories in the June issue is a task which sinks almost to the level of a coroner's inquest according to one of our lady readers. Running her finger down the table of contents she says: "Here are six dead first pop, and three in the second story. Six nearly die in the third, or think they do, which is just as bad. Two are moribund in the fourth. Three are slaughtered in the fifth and one in the sixth. Forty-eight fall in *God's Half Acre,* and there is a "pool of blood" on page thirty-six. Three are murdered in the last tale. That makes sixty-four dead in forty-two pages. Why it's worse than Shakespeare."

It is bad, isn't it? Reminds us of the "Blood—blood—blood—blood—blood—blood—blood" song in "Miss Springtime" and of the days when we had a list of undertakers' telephone numbers pasted over our desk and we used to call each one at least twice in a morning and irreverently ask, "Anything new?" Perhaps being an obituary editor wasn't the best training in the world for magazine work. It certainly doesn't seem so when an editor can get out a "Bloody Number" and be totally unconscious of it. We apologize.

Frederick J. Jackson, author of the story *No Other Gods Before Me,* was the winner of the $25 prize in the June contest. The $5 prize winners were: Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; A. W. Breeden, Calhoun, La.; W. K. Jones, Moravia, N. J.; Elliot Field, Cleveland, Ohio; G. Lombard Kelly, Ashville, N. C. Stories are criticised in the order of their standing in the contest

No Other Gods Before Me is a study of the psychological effect of the memory of early moral training on the mind of a desperado. It doesn't excel because of its plot, but in spite of it, for the plot is neither original nor striking. The general structure of the story is simple and suited to the theme, the suspense is well maintained, the various scenes are well visualized, and the style like the structure is simple and direct. While there is plenty of action the story lacks that swiftness and directness that is pre-eminent in one or two of the other stories. This drawing-out is necessary to a certain extent to properly develop the dominant character, who has reverence as a superstition, taking the place of morals and principles. It is a story strong enough to be recalled many times after it has been read and should rank high in any collection.

Mystery and suspense are the chief elements that hold the reader's interest in the story *Faith, Hope and Justice.* It is a type of story which cannot fail to hold interest inasmuch as it depends upon a small point which is kept from the reader until the end. The idea of the course of defense proceeding from the drug sign of Ingersoll & Payne is exceptionally clever, and the reference to the sign is an elusive clue to the outcome. Here the properties of sentimental self-abnegation and old college friendship are brought in, but the story would have lost nothing in dramatic possibilities if the accused had not been a college mate of his lawyer. The very facts of the prominence of both attorney and client, and both residents of the same place, were sufficient motives without introducing the element of "old time's sake." The story is technically good as it has one dominant character, one supreme incident and leaves a single impression. It is ingenious and concise and appeals to the intellect rather than to the emotions.

The Prod is a masterful example of the story that is grewsome without being offensive. The structure of the story is suited to the purpose and the author attains some distinction of style in the repetition of the main cinema, or motion picture of Charde crawling forward with the sled under the driving force of the "prod." The background, the general situation and the character of the one actor are brought out in spite of the briefness of the tale; and the suspense is perfect. The author knows the value of contrast and repression. The reader is pleased to find in the ending that sodden human nature has been retrieved by the throb of elemental love.

In *The Smile of Joss,* the author gives an insight into Oriental character that shows considerable analysis of the subject. The viewpoint throughout is that of Sam Wren's sympathetic creator, hovering about and within, interpreting Sam's every thought, mood and action, and so engrossed in the hero's welfare that nothing is allowed to creep in outside his intimate ken. Sam Wren is made very real; he acts, thinks, and feels as one would expect a Christianized Chinese to do in time of danger,—seek help of the gods he has abandoned, particularly as his danger was incurred in the service of the new religion. The inscrutability of the Oriental and the implacability of Tong hatred is well sketched. Out of thirty-two paragraphs, but three are dialogue, and the dramatic style employed in the direct narrative is the main reason for the unity and thoroughness of

(*Continued on page* 45)

TED AND THE SORRELS

BY G. B. BUCHANAN

Being a memorandum of certain events in the lives of two sorrels and a cow puncher, and having to do especially with the man's determination to ride one and his desire to serve the other.

"BOYS," said Jim Cordon, boss of the Bar O, "there's going to be a little music today. We got to do something with the big sorrel."

The big sorrel eyed us curiously from behind the corral bars. He was fresh from the grass, a five-year-old, and as pretty a stallion as you ever saw. He was a monster in size, but he had superb action. As a cow horse he would himself be too big. As a sire for cow horses he had size and action and vitality that would be worth money to a breeder. We had been after him before in the roundups, but he had always eluded us. Now the ruse of a band of stallionless mares had tolled him into a corral skilfully hidden among the cotton woods along Hell Roaring Fork. Then had come as nasty a fight as twenty cow and horse men could put up, when we started to bring him up to home quarters. But we got him there—now he was to be broke.

"Your pretty clothes," Ted Cammack, the star buster of the outfit, remarked, "will be dirtied today, sorrel." Ted always did have a mean way of accenting things. It must have been his accent for, as he spoke, the big horse threw up his beautiful head and blared a mighty challenge. He pranced away a few steps and blared again.

"Ho-ho," sneered Ted. "Ready for it, eh? Well, you may be it—you may not—the hoss never yet got under his laigs that beat Ted Cammack. All right, boys, put his panties on him."

It was a long fight and a hard one, to put his saddle on the stallion—a fight which does not need to be described for the story has been told many times by abler pens than mine. And, anyway, our story concerns the *other* sorrel as much as this one. Suffice it to say that, in due time, the sorrel's slick, shiny coat was dirtied for sure; suffice it to say that Ted Cammack had the fight of his life—finally coming a cropper to the tune of four broken ribs, a broken leg and a broken arm. Even then the big horse wanted to stamp his life out as the buster lay swearing on the ground. The boss, himself, threw the rope which choked the horse away from Ted. Ted was laid up for weeks—during which the sorrel had his liberty prolonged, for if Ted Cammack couldn't ride him, none of the rest of us had any show at all.

Thus began the course of true hate. The big horse got friendly with most of us—so long as we let saddle stuff alone. But to Ted Cammack he never failed to show his teeth and blare his challenge and dance his hostile notions. Ted spent hours, recuperating, in cussing the stallion. "Well, some day, you old reprobate," he always ended, "I'll ride you." And the horse invariably blared back in a way which plainly showed his derision.

The horse was unusual in many ways, one of which, as I have said, was his evident good-humor with most of us. Many a stallion let run to that age, and who then beats out the buster, turns sour. Most others are a bit dull, but this horse had intelligence. We could see it in his fiery eyes as he followed us around the corral fence, he inside, proud, haughty; us outside, wishing he was broke, for the heart of a cowman, even though it quails at breaking it, never fails to respond to the lure of a beautiful horse.

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He followed us around the corral, and one day he learned the trick of opening the corral gate by watching us do it. Next morning we found him down in the house lot—that several section area of fenced land in which the work beasts and house cattle ranged. It ran down to Hell Roaring Fork; down at its lower end was included in another fence the Bar O graveyard.

It was a silent place and, as private graveyards go, much peopled. The old free days of the cow country found a high ratio of interments for its population, especially male, and, at that, the population was mostly male, so far as white folks go. I think it was old Colonel Fritter—who started the Bar O business—who did it; he was from Kentucky. But whoever it was, he sent back East for two pounds of Kentucky blue grass seed and strewed it upon the surface of the Bar O cemetery. It must have been the sheltered location down in Hell Roaring Fork valley. Blue grass usually doesn't take kindly to the State of Wyoming; but in the Bar O graveyard there was as pretty a growth as one could wish. Old Fritter is there now—I guess he thinks of that bit:

Under the sod and the dew—

Well, anyway, the big sorrel went down there and whiffed the blue grass. He tried the fence, but it was a good fence, so his belly hungered. There was a gate, but the horse didn't know how to work it.

One day Bill Toten, a cowman, met with a sudden and distressing accident. It concerned an unfortunately placed suspender button and a crooked poker game down in Mesa. Bill came home tied to a horse, while the dealer, who drew first, (thanks to Bill's unfortunate collision with his suspender button), hot-footed toward the rising sun. He got to Colorado about three meters ahead of Ted Cammack, for which he should have given thanks. Ted and Bill had been bosom friends.

"Poor Bill," said Ted; "that's what comes of associatin' with bad company. So long as Bill lead a upright, moral life, and held up his pants with a respectable belt, he never had no accidents—he did to the other guy before he done to him. But now he gets enamored of a pair of red-white-and-blue gallusses such as faro dealers, saloon-keepers and card sharps wear, and first thing he knows he's bored. Well, we go to give Bill a fune*real.*"

So Ted went into the corral and roped up his own beast and Bill's. The sorrel watched the outfit leave; Ted Cammack riding and leading Bill's horse with his saddle empty. The horse saw the boys come out of the bunkhouse with a long, queer-looking box. It was rough, perhaps, but it was better than many. The boss followed with a bible, and strung out behind, marched the rest of the outfit. The sorrel followed the cortege, keeping pace and acting very quiet. Maybe, or maybe not, he understood.

"Yeh, you big brute," Ted soliloquized, "we're goin' buryin'. White folks does better with their relics than hosses. We plants ours in the State of Wyoming,—they don't litter up like your kyote funerals."

The grave was already dug. We put the coffin in. The boss read some bible, and the rest of us said what we knew of the Lord's Prayer.

The sorrel had come with us as far as the gate; he stood outside while we did our duties, then, when we came out of the enclosure, he watched us seriously. He followed us back to the ranch house quite as gravely as before.

Next morning he was gone. Ted Cammack, passing the graveyard on his way to the range, spied a horrifying desecration. The horse was in the graveyard, having copied our way of opening the gate. Not only had he devoured the blue grass, but at that moment his glistening body reclined upon Bill's new-made grave. As Ted rode up, the sorrel ducked his head and rolled in ecstacy in the fresh-dug soil.

"Believe me," said Ted mournfully, to the bunkhouse, "it busted my heart. Bill, my best friend, he lyin' there asleep—dead—not able to defend hisself, and that nag—my worst enemy—wollerin' on him. You heard me shootin'? Yeh, I druv that horse outa there pronto."

Ted could never get over it,—his best friend being wallowed on by his worst enemy.

There was some shenanigan with a cattle shipment pulled off down in Cheyenne, shortly after Bill's sad removal from our midst. The boss rode down to see about it. He came back sober. It was suspicious. Taken with what followed, it was sufficient to convince us that dire machinations were afoot. The week after the Cheyenne trip the boss went down to Mesa to see the District Attorney—something about Bill's demise, he said. He didn't come back for two days. His pony was cold blowed; the boss was cold sober. Now a cow horse doesn't go cold blowed coming from Mesa, which is barely fifteen miles; nor did the boss's legal consultations usually end so aridly.

The next week it was Mesa again—to see about some fence wire—yet we hadn't dickered a mouthful with old man Davis, who monopolized the only post timber on Hell Roaring Fork.

"We got to herd ride the boss from now on," said the bunkhouse. In an unobtrusive, but no less effective way, two cowmen followed on the trip to discuss fence wire.

"Fence wire," they scorned, returning. "Yeh, he goes to Cheyenne. You guessed it—it's a female."

"Poor old Jim! Well, we done our duty the best we could. Who is it? Is it anybody we know, or some designin' hussy that spots Jim's gold-plated saddle?"

"No, we don't know her. At that, though, she maybe is designin'—all females is. The outstandin' feature of her psychology is her hair,—sorrel as the big hoss. Stand 'em side by side and you couldn't tell which was hoss and which female hair."

"Which," mused Ted Cammack, "is plenty. There's good sorrels. Well, all I gotta say is she better not waller on Bill."

"Huh!" retorted the cook. "It wasn't so much Bill gettin' wallered on as Mr. Cammack. Did I dream it or did it happen—laig, arm, ribs?"

"Well, Ted needn't worry none. She couldn't bust none o' Ted's bone. She ain't much more'n a hundred and ten, maybe fifteen. She's what that foreign feller called *muttum in parvenue,* or much in nothing."

"It's them little females that does the worst to a big bum," Ted said gloomily.

"Yeh; they bust's things most. Maybe she can't bust Ted's laig, but I mind a show down to Codyville—there's a little much-in-nothin' like this here one, that pulverizes a guy's heart. He's a big feller, too—maybe fifty pounds more of him than Ted."

"Huh!"

"What's the dame's game, anyhow?" asked another. "Is she a biscuit shooter, or does she faro, or is she one of these here painted deserts?"

"She ain't none of them; it might be better if she was. The boss might come to his senses then. She's the most dangerous maverick on the range—a decent, honest, good-lookin', intelligent young woman. Her game is trained nursin'."

"The boss is done, amen!"

"Yeh. Y'know that hosp'l joint there in Cheyenne, which maybe is run most for itinerent invalids, there not bein' much cause for lengthy illnesses among our native populace—well, the boss goes up there to see his cattle feller, he bein' took sudden with a 'tack of somethin'—maybe buck ager—when he hears the boss is ridin' the trail to see about that shenanigan. Well, little Much-in-nothin' is herd ridin' this cattle feller, and that's where the boss sees her first.

"But how she come to be in Cheyenne first is like this: She comes from back East somewheres, herd ridin' a lunger gent. She herd rides him private, but to be near medical comfort, they lives at the hosp'l. I hears this lunger gent is pretty much a sport. He pays his bills prompt for a while, then he slows up. But he's got lotsa references and talks of his rich relatives back East, so they don't push. He up and dies. Then they find he's not only a four-flusher and ain't got no relatives at all, but he's likewise in debt to every drinkin' and gamblin' hell in town. Well, he's in debt to the nurse, too, for her salary, so she's broke likewise.

"Well, the hosp'l never hears of this charity stuff, I guess, so they fasten on poor Much-in-nothin' for her board, if they can't get none of the gent's. Course the contract was with the four-flusher that died, but they threaten to blacklist the girl with the hosp'ls back East, so she's working there in the hosp'ls for twenty bucks a month to pay off her board bill to the hosp'l."

"Ain't it tough? But I guess a rich rancher like the boss would come in handy for little Much-in-nothin'."

The boss made frequent journeys down Mesa way. He traveled to other parts also, even over to Dingley's, where old Sim Born lived, who had sworn to perforate the boss pronto on sight.

He was getting so he didn't look us in the face any more, knowing he hadn't told us a true word about his journeyings since Bill died. Then one day he came back—this time from up Nogale way—dead drunk. We knew it was done—one way or the other. We didn't know which way the hands lay, but we knew the game was closed.

"Well, boys," Jim said, when he had cooled out, "I got—I guess maybe I got a little surprise for you all. What're you laughin' at?"

"Surprise nothin'," we yelled. We knew then she had said "Yes."

"When's it going to be pulled off?"

"What?"

"The nupchuls."

The boss looked at us silent a while. "Who told you?" he said.

"You did. Yeh. Any one-time straightforward party, who gets so he can't look his own cowmen in the face when he tells them his hoss went cold blowed comin' from Mesa, better look out. You big liar, we been herd ridin' you ever since you sprung that fence wire fib!"

The boss scratched his head and blinked. "Shucks," he said. "Well, what do you think of her?" he went on, hopefully. "Ain't she just one little peach, though?"

"I seen better."

"There don't no good sorrels grow."

"Them much-in-nothin's make me sick."

The boss pulled his gun. "Any guy wantin' to keep Bill company just second them remarks—or make others. She's the sweetest, best, dearest, kindest, whitest dame in the world, and don't you forget it."

We all laughed and let out some gun play. "When's the nupchuls? Is they public?"

"You bet! The whole state o' Wyoming is invited. The boss o' the Bar O knows how to get married. It's next week, on Tuesday, the stunt is; the nupchuls lasts all week."

Well, we married them good and proper. Even the big sorrel put in his hand, dancing around the corral as proud as a peacock, while all the cowmen and boss ranchers found time to call him pretty names. A couple of daring ones tried their legs over him—with sudden and sufficient results. And, like the tiding bearers said, the new missus was so like him in hair that there was no other name for her than "the other sorrel." She seemed a bit shy—who wouldn't, dumped from the quiet seclusion of the East and hospitals into the queen of the Bar O? She tried not to show it, though every every time the boys used their guns she went white. Of course there wasn't much family life during the nuptial week. After that—well, the old Bar O changed!

It didn't matter to the boys, though, if they got Hail Columbia when they moved the State of Wyoming into the State of Happiness. We went meekly to the door to spit; we didn't target our guns at the ceiling beams any more. But there was pleasure just the same in the Bar O's old kitchen. She even revolutionized the bunkhouse. The things we hadn't known about hygiene were awful! "It's a wonder," the cook said, "that there's any cowmen livin', livin' so unhygenick as we done."

"But you'll do as I say?"

"Oh, sure." And, darn us! we did!

So, like I said, things changed. The men changed. She didn't like fire-water. The boys cut it out—some—only of course lifetime habits don't die so easy—for another man's wife. They didn't even die in the boss for his own. Still, she wasn't always hypercritical. It wasn't long, therefore, before the boys were all more or less in love with her—and Ted Cammack was hit hardest. Which only shows how contrary human nature is. He'd even have let her wallow on Bill, and his legs, arms and ribs weren't in the scheme of things any more.

And, as things naturally came about, she was thrown much into the boys' company. The boss of a big ranch has lots to see to; he hadn't time for fancy play. I guess when he was courting,—I guess every man does,—he thought that when they married he'd never leave her; he'd always be her company and she his, but you know how it is. Getting married means responsibilities. He's got to look ahead to make more money. Well, he's got to attend to business even if it does mean leaving the wife alone more than he had intended.

"Now Sugar-plum," the boss would say, "the whole ranch is yours,—make yourself at home; ride, fish, hunt; have a good time." Then he busts off to the range, or to town, or God knows where, and don't show up again till night. He tells the wife to ride—never thinking she don't know how. Riding's second nature to the boss—maybe second nature to Wyoming girls; but the missus was from back East. Honest she'd never set a horse in her life, except a rocker horse. He told her to fish—Hell Roaring Fork was full of the biggest kind of trout. The girl had fished some, with a bent pin and sitting beside a puddle. Well, Hell Roaring Fork was no place for a tenderfoot angler alone. He told her to hunt—never thinking she'd never fired a gun.

Now, I don't mean to criticise the boss —maybe no man is to be criticised so soon in the married game. He didn't intend it, only of course ignorance isn't much of an excuse. If he'd have been back East and told her to enjoy herself by going down and buying out Burdick's millinery shop, she'd have known what to do, and how to do it, and wouldn't have needed to run to Jim, Sam or Tom for teaching. He told her to ride and hunt and fish. It's only natural that she got somebody to teach her. Now the buster of a cow-outfit works like hell when he does work, but he don't work often. So, as the cards fell, Ted Cammack taught the other sorrel the things she didn't know.

Now I don't know—probably no one other than the woman herself ever does know what she marries a man for, and lots of times she don't know either—what the girl married the boss for. It wasn't any cinch—that job in the hospital. I guess the boss offered a way out. Now understand, I'm only supposing. The boss is a handsome guy; he's got a good property, and lots of the girls were stuck on him.

But there was something terribly fascinating about Ted Cammack. He was quiet, and slim and hard and brave. Yes, the boy was no coward—no more than a quiet, slim, hard blade of steel. And, find them where you will, the man whose courage and heart is true is gentle with women. So, like I said, being with him so much, seeing his courage and gentleness, and the honest love no man can hide from his eyes, the missus forgot sometimes that Ted was not the boss. One day the explosion came.

It wasn't the boss; for he was miles away. It came from Ted and the girl themselves. 'Twas the sorrel started it. He'd been in the graveyard again. Then he was put in the house corral and left sulking. The girl was acquainted with the sorrel—it seems birds of a feather flock together. The big horse let her pat him and pull his mane and kiss his nose. Yes! It was sickening how that brute took to her! Well, Ted and the missus had been riding. They came in and Ted turned out the horses. The girl saw the sorrel and called him to the fence. He came to her, obedient as a lamb, and held out his head for her to pat and kiss. Then Ted came up. The horse bared his teeth.

"What you see in this beast beats me," Ted said.

"Oh, he's so beautiful. How big he is! What a wonderful head! And his hair—don't you just love to run your hand over it?"

"I love to run my heel with a good twelve-point spur over it," Ted retorted grimly. "Why, this beast is my worst enemy; or," he corrected, "he was."

"Why, I love him!"

So Ted told her all about it; beginning at the broken leg, arm and ribs, and ending with the desecration of Bill's last resting-place. "And," he concluded, "the beast hates me just as much as I hate him. Watch." Ted reached out his hand. The sorrel bit at it; he blared; he pranced around. Ted watched him, sneering. "But," he went on, "some day I'll ride him,—that's all I'm living for now,—to ride this nag."

The girl looked curiously at Ted out of the corner of her eye. I wonder do women have senses we don't? "I wonder," she went on briskly, "if he ever will be tamed—broke I guess is your word—his spirit. Look at his eyes,—how they flash. Look at his neck,—how proud he is!"

"Yeh," Ted admitted, softly. "It'll be a man's job—to break him. But other things just as hard has been done. Did you reckon I'm a guy to get broke easy either—my spirit? I'll ride him just the same. Frankly, I don't think he ever will be lady broke—he went too long—but some day he'll be rid—by me. I'm studying him, and believe me, it'll be some ride. Won't it, enemy?"

The stallion blared.

"I'm beginning to like riding," the girl said presently. "I'm beginning to like Wyoming, too. I didn't at first; it was so different."

"Yeh. I reckon it must have been. Like me once. I got in a Wild West Show to ride broncs. They had a bunch of spavined, broke-down cavalry plugs that bucked like grandmother's rockin' chair. Say, it was the biggest bunk I ever see. It was back East. I'd signed to ride them nags all one summer. The boobs et it up—but homesick! Gee, I know just how you felt. And that dirty four-flusher that got you in bad with the hosp'l! But I'm glad you're beginnin' to like it. The boss is a fair-to-middlin' guy; he'll do right by you."

"Oh," the girl said, slowly, "it wasn't Jim—it was—the rest of you."

Ted looked away across the range. He was a gentleman, like I said. He knew the girl was Jim's. "Well," he said simply, after a time, "the time has come. We got to cut it out. Like I said, the hoss was my worst enemy. The boss is him now. He beat me to it; and if he hadn't, I'd have had no show; he had the ranch and I nothin'. But I'm a fair-to-middlin' guy myself. I know how to play the game. I've lost. So, like I said, I can't ride, nor fish, nor hunt with you no more."

For a moment Ted Cammack and the other sorrel looked into each other's souls. But she knew how to play the game too. Then: "Well, if you think best, Ted; but"—again the glimpse into each other's hearts—"I've enjoyed it. You've helped me over a hard place—over a valley of despair deeper than you know—to a summit of—peace."

"Thank you, ma'am. Like I said, the boss is a fair-to-middlin' guy. Don't blame him too much; he didn't think."

"I don't blame him—now. I understand. And I hope you gain—suppose we call it *your* summit of peace—although I can't imagine anything *more* unpeaceful," she laughed, a little sadly; and motioned toward the sorrel's glistening back.

"Thank you; I will—some day."

So they parted. There are thoroughbred people as well as nags.

"Huh," said Ted to himself. "I guess the only summit of peace Ted Cammack'll ever know is a summit like that damned sorrel wollered off'n Bill."

The year ran on into winter,—into spring. The snow melted; the rains came. The coulees and Hell Roaring Fork got monstrous. The State of Wyoming was one hell for sure.

The other sorrel wasn't around much now, but we studiously observed her hygenic orders. In fact, the Bar O was expectant. One night we were all seated in the bunkhouse when the boss came in, white as a Hereford's face.

"My God, boys," he gasped, "she's dyin'!"

"The missus?"

"Yeh. The colt;—things is goin' bad. She sabes such things, hosp'l, y'know. She says she might pull out if she had a medicine man—maybe she'll last till midnight—after that—her strength—an' there ain't no medicine man this side o' Mesa, fifteen mile, and tother side o' Hell Roaring Fork and dark and rainin'. Oh, Lord Jesus, have mercy on us!"

"Well," said Ted, dully, "we got to get a medicine man, then!"

"My God, how? If it was light—if there was time to make a boat—but it's got to be done tonight or never; my little sweetheart—"

"Ride fer a doctor," suggested one of the fool boys.

"Ride! You fool you; no hoss'd live in the coulees, let alone Hell Roaring Fork, and carry double home!"

Then up spoke Ted, quiet, his eyes gleaming in the yellowish light from the lamps. "There's one hoss, and only one, on the range, that's got a chance—the sorrel."

"The sorrel—maybe. But who'll ride him?"

"And," went on Ted, "there's one man, and only one, on the range, that can ride him—me."

"Thank you, Ted, but it'd be murder—"

"Well, that hoss'd be murdered a dozen times for the other sorrel—so'd I."

"Oh!"

It wasn't what the boss said, it was the inflection—the lift in his eyebrows. It was as plain as if he'd said, "Yes, I seen you two fussing around together."

Quick as a flash Ted's gun jumped. "Take it back," he snarled.

The boss wasn't a coward. He'd have stood and fought it out—and died—without turning a hair. He just saw that in the excitement he had done wrong. "I didn't mean it," he said, honestly, "and if you can, Ted—"

"A'right. You checkacoes put his panties on the sorrel, pronto!"

It wasn't that he swung his gun on us that started us out so quick; we just got the thought that the State of Happiness would miss the other sorrel a whole lot, but the State of Wyoming wouldn't care a cent if she was brought out there to the blue grass—even in a store coffin.

We messed in the corral maybe a quarter hour,—it's fast saddling for the stallion,—but we brought him up to the gate, as solidly bridled and saddled as good leather will do it. Ted was standing there at the gate, staring at the lighted window in the upstairs the boss had built when she came;—there in the room where the other sorrel was fighting, fighting—

The horse was kicking and snarling to beat blazes. Ted turned and reached out his hand. "Sorrel," he said, quiet like, "it ain't in Ted Cammack to ask no favors of man nor hoss, for himself. You love me—not; as for me, the quicker you go to hell the better. But there's bigger things in this world than our hate; one is being did tonight. I'm askin' a favor then, from you—it ain't for myself—it's for her—the other sorrel."

The horse had changed a bit. The wickedness was leaving his eyes. He was looking up at the lighted window, his ears pricked forward. He looked like he was listening—listening—

"She's dyin'," Ted went on. "She's gotta have a medicine man. He's gotta be got from Mesa, fifteen mile, an' over the coulees and Hell Roaring Fork, and dark as pitch. Hoss, there's only one hoss on the range that's got a show—and he ain't got many. An' we only got a coupla hours—then—well, hoss, it's you and Ted Cammack or the blue grass'll be dug again—for the other sorrel."

You can take your choice as to whether the sorrel understood that the girl needed him, or that this man would master him by his will.

"Well," Ted went on grimly, drawing his gun and tapping it against the brute's big head, "by Eternity, I'm going to ride you there and back, with the medicine man, if I have to braid every ounce of meat off'n your bones; and if you pull the monkey business I'll blow out your brains when we get back."

In an instant Ted had vaulted into the saddle and shot away into the darkness. We could hear the big beast pounding down the rail, sodden, splashing steadily, the swish of Ted's quirt urging him on; and in the window the light burned palely.

It was one hundred and ten minutes by the clock when they got back. The other sorrel lived. The colt died—so that, after all, the blue grass was dug, but, though the State of Happiness lost a precious thing, it did not lose its queen.

"Ride," said Ted, noncommittally, "yeh; she was a bird. Wouldn't have missed her for nothin', nothin'." The medicine man gave us more details. According to him the sorrel was a cross between a cyclone and a rocking-chair—no more jar than the latter, no more regard for a person's nerves or where he was going than the former. He admitted a slight hesitation at Hell Roaring Fork, but the urgency of the case—neither he nor Ted Cammack ever said it, but the involuntary glance the medicine man gave Ted's gun gave us a hint—urged him on. He was glad he came—wonderful experience—glad to help—any time. Wonderful hoss—wonderful! The sorrel turned his back when the gentleman tried to pat him.

The queer part of it was that though the horse hadn't as many marks as one might expect, if anything the mutual animosity between them became increasingly greater as long as Ted stayed on the Bar O. One sometimes glimpsed a certain courtesy in their hostilities, however, as of one gentleman to another whom he has found worthy of his steel.

Ted didn't stay long though. He drifted off. Then came word that he was dead. The boys were scandalized at his carelessness. Ted had picked a quarrel over in Cross Corners and his gun was empty. He lived long enough to ask them to plant him under the blue grass where the sorrels could wallow on him, but of course the Cross Cornerites didn't understand, and when we heard of it it was too late. But Ted was not forgotten on the Bar O. He's got monuments there. Between forty-nine and ninety-four of the sorrel's progeny, and one of the other sorrel's, are named "Ted."

And sometimes you can see both of the sorrels looking dreamily across the range.

NEXT month: *ANN* by *Fannie Dunagan*, the story of a widow's marriage to her husband's slayer, of the other man who went to jail, and of the doings of two innocent bystanders.

THE DEATH MASK

BY LADD PLUMLEY

An artist, whose hobby is the collection of death masks, comes into the possession of the death mask of a murderer in which he finds an almost perfect likeness of his own features.

THE theory was a horrible one; the doctor had heard something concerning it.

"Take nature everywhere!" the artist exclaimed. "In a clover field you find a freak, but if you search you will find its duplicate. It's so with men." He pointed to the wall where on a black hanging were many plaster casts of faces. "You don't like my death masks?"

"No. Death masks are dead men's faces."

"They aren't pleasant, but they tell the truth. At the moment of death faces don't lie. But that's not why I've collected masks. Look at the two at the end!"

"More gruesome than the others."

"There's a reason. Violent death doesn't make pretty faces. A and B, let us call them. B was a cobbler. He got the American hunch and hit for the States. A fellow on shipboard was too attentive to the cobbler's wife. The cobbler met him on a New York street and stuck a knife into him. After the execution the authorities allowed a mask to be taken."

The doctor shuddered. "They look like duplicates."

"They are alike. And who was A? He was one of Napoleon's officers. He suspected his wife of infidelity. He ran the suspected man through with his sword. He was executed. The celebrated Doctor Antommarchi took the mask. It did not come to me by accident, as did the cobbler's. I recognized the resemblance and bought it."

"A coincidence," argued the doctor. "I hate your beastly theory."

"The similarity could not have been a coincidence. Think of the mathematical probability that two men with exactly the same facial makeup should both commit the same crime!"

"Their deaths weren't alike. The soldier was shot."

"He was not. He committed suicide with a rope in his cell."

"But the cobbler was electrocuted."

"No—hanged. It was before the days of electricity."

"The personal application of your horrible theory?"

The artist unsteadily rose. He pulled open the drawer of a cabinet and selected a mask from the black hanging. He placed before the doctor the mask, and a portrait cut from a newspaper. The he stepped back. "Look at the mask and look at me," he said.

The doctor glanced at the plaster and then at his patient. "There is a resemblance. How did you come by this unpleasant thing?"

"Picked it up over at Ricco's place for a still life study—death study, rather. That was five years ago. Then I discovered the amazing resemblance to my own face. Suppose you read the legend on the back."

The memorandum was brief. The doctor scowled as he read. "I understand," he said. "So this is the basis for those hints of your devilish theory? This murderer poisoned his sweetheart. So you—Bosh! And only a fancied resemblance!"

"You haven't looked at the picture," put in the shaking voice of the artist. "I sent for an account of the murder and cut the picture from a London newspaper."

The doctor attempted not to show how startled he was. He could hardly believe that the picture in his hand was not that of the artist. "There is a resemblance," he said. Abruptly he rose and pulled out his watch. "Another patient," he snapped. "Young man, chuck death masks, fancied resemblances to murderers, and all your damned tommyrot. It's to be a breakaway from the girl, from masks, from everything!"

"My prize picture!" Driscome gasped, but he was not thinking of his picture.

"Your brain is worth more than any prize. Put everything behind you. That is the only thing which will save you. I speak as an expert. Pack your duds and away! Understand? You've got to do it. Run like the very devil from this den, from the picture, from the girl; run like the very devil from everything which is putting you into a padded cell."

"That's not so easy," gritted out the artist. "If I could—"

"There's no 'if.' You must—must! You'll see me again before long. May drop in any time. Shall expect to find you packed."

Left by himself, Driscome sat a long time gazing at the masks. "By heavens, I'll try to do it!" at length he exclaimed. "I'll lock up the damned ranch! I'll go—it doesn't matter where I go."

Hastily he packed a small trunk. He had heard a friend say that the color scheme in Prince Edward Island was most unusual. He had the vaguest idea where Prince Edward Island was, but he knew that it was somewhere in Canada. As he had decided to make a getaway, he also decided that a remote place would be best.

Driscome had met a model in the studio of a friend. For a prize picture he had need of a face of just that kind. For six months the girl had sat for him. Long before the six months were over he knew that the girl was to him far more than a model. She was an East Side girl, with a Russian tailor as a father, but she had been educated in a New York public school. Driscome called at her home; it was with a kind of loathing that he had passed a portion of an evening in the tenement. But the girl was beautiful, and before long he cared nothing for her antecedents and the East Side family. His passion blotted out everything but the girl. He had proposed marriage and had been accepted.

Driscome came of patrician New England stock. Almost immediately had begun differences between the Russian girl and himself. Soon the differences brought the kind of quarrels which, under such circumstances, can be expected. Then, after a few weeks, the girl began to have hours of utter indifference. At such times she would tell Driscome that she had never seriously thought of marriage. There were hours when Driscome knew himself to be an infatuated fool, and with all his power attempted to put the girl from his mind. But his picture was not finished, and she came daily to his studio. Daily there was either a resumption of the courtship or days when the girl evidently wanted nothing but her pay for her hours as a model.

The picture should have been finished sooner, but the artist knew that its completion would end his meetings with the model, and he delayed the finishing touches. When she was away he found it impossible to think of his work. He would lounge indolently in his studio, thinking of her and wishing that he could make her different from what she was. The hours before her coming were filled with hopes that her mood would be what it sometimes was. This had been his condition for many weeks.

Now that he had decided to get away, his mind became more at rest. He summoned a taxi by 'phone. He called up the janitor and asked him to assist with his luggage. He wrote to his club, saying that all letters were to be held until he should send for them. These things completed, he waited for the taxi, and as he waited he became conscious that he was doing exactly as had the man of the death mask. He, too, had made his preparations. He had summoned a hack to take him to a railroad station—he had stated this in his confession. But there the analogy ceased. At the last moment he had summoned his sweetheart for a final meeting. The artist felt sure that he would be guilty of no such weakness.

The cab was announced. As Driscome stood outside the door of his studio, waiting for the janitor to carry down the trunk, he was actually light-hearted. He had sidetracked his infatuation; he had put behind him the most morbid hours he had ever known; he had given the lie to the horrible theory which his morbidness had formulated. He decided that he would go farther. He would leave nothing behind him to remind him upon his return of the months of insanity. He would destroy the mask and the picture.

With this in mind he returned to his studio. He snapped on the lights and pulled the drapery from the painted face. He seized a palette knife and lifted it, but as he hesitated—for the face had not lost its enchantment—he heard steps out in the corridor. Before she entered he knew that she was coming. She ran into the studio, laughing. As long as he lived he could never forget the laughing bronze eyes. "Your trunk is in the hall—you are running away!"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"It cannot matter."

"If you weren't so horrid sometimes, it might matter. Maybe I'll change my mind. *Maybe*—I'm made that way. It's always maybe with me."

"What do you mean?"

"I thought it would be a victory—to tell you. The picture is almost finished. Maybe I'll go away, too. I wanted to say goodbye. Those were nice days—some of them; weren't they?"

"Heavens—*nice!*"

"Well, they were. And I just couldn't go without seeing you again. But you aren't the same. You look—you frighten me! Please—come here!"

She had thrown herself into a chair near the door. Hardly knowing what he did, Driscome stepped to her side. Hating himself, he leaned over her and put his lips to hers. She threw her arms around his neck. "Poor, poor boy!" she exclaimed. But in a flash her mood changed. "That's what I wanted," she said. "I'd hate to feel that you really didn't care for me. And you haven't asked me where I may go. It's a man in Chicago. He says he's never seen a face like mine. I met him in Mr. Rappelyea's studio."

"Not Dentley?"

"Yes, that's his name."

"It can't be that you are actually thinking of an engagement with that brute?"

"I've promised him. The pay is even better than you've been paying me. But—I'm never sure of myself. Sometimes I wish that I were different."

She threw up her arms, and pulling Driscome's head down, kissed him again and again.

He threw himself from her, panting.

"Has anybody told you what particular kind of a devil that man is?" he asked.

The girl laughed; soft low laughter, but laughter that had soft brutality in it. "You are so terribly serious! That's why we don't hit it off as we might. As I said, tonight you look as if you could kill me. I'm afraid of you. Please—please come here again."

Once more, against his wishes, and like an automaton in her power, Driscome stepped to her side, and her heavy soft lips met his. Her bronze eyes were very compelling, as they held his own. "We are so different!" she exclaimed petulantly. "And—yes—I think I will go with that 'devil' as you call him. Then—perhaps I won't. The pay is big—and besides—"

The artist did not know how it came about, but he found himself on his knees before her, with his arms around her, and kissing her frantically. His eyes were wet and his heart was pounding. He urged her to marry him that night.

She pushed him from her. "That's over!" she exclaimed, and her voice had changed with her mood. She said that she was tired of everything. She was sick of living with her folks on the East Side, but she had no desire for marriage. She wanted to know every bit there was of life. As for Driscome, if she had known how he would act, she would not have come. She ended by working herself into one of the fits of hysteria which Driscome knew so well, and asked him to get her something to drink, some wine, if wine could be had, or some whiskey, if he had whiskey.

Staggering to his feet, Driscome stepped behind a portiere, where in a cabinet he kept his whiskey. He turned on the electric light and opened the cabinet, muttering to himself. If he could have known it, no madman was less responsible for his actions. His brain on fire and his hand shaking, he groped amid the bottles.

Suddenly his breath stopped, as his throat contracted so that he could hardly breathe. The bottle he held in his hand had a skull and cross-bones on it, and under the sign of death was the name of a poison. The doctor had given him this sleeping draft, warning him of the power of the drug, if more than a few drops were used.

The frenzied weeks had led to their climax. Tumultuous thoughts half formed in his throbbing brain and then dissolved. There was nothing real. He seemed to hear a voice far within his brain which told him that should she die it were far better than that she should live to be deserted by the creature who desired her.

"Are you going to take forever to get me something?" came the girl's voice. "There must be whiskey. You always have whiskey."

"There is whiskey, and I'm getting you some," replied Driscome, and he wondered at the naturalness of his voice.

With a quick motion he poured out a fatal portion from the bottle. He reached for another bottle and mingled the whiskey. Then came the thought that he must not leave the poison where it could be found. At his side was a basin and a faucet. He turned on the water and emptied the bottle. Near the basin was a window, which, as it was warm in his rooms, had been left open. He knew that on this side of the building was a vacant lot and broken bottles. He flung out the bottle and heard the tinkle of breaking glass.

"I'm getting you whiskey and some cool water," he said, and again he wondered that his voice seemed his own. He also wondered at the fact that the stress of emotion he had been under for the last half-hour had left him. With the two glasses he stepped to the other side of the portiere. With a smile which showed her pretty teeth, she took the glass.

"Most girls mix water," she laughed. "But I like it straight. That's the way I am—I want the full strength of everything. Here's to you! May your next—what shall I call her? But may she be more satisfactory. And I drink to Mr. Dentley. He won't take a picture prize—but you can't deny that he has his points!"

Driscome fathomed the golden haze of her eyes. "Don't drink to me," he groaned. "Don't drink to my love ventures. I've had my last. By all means drink to Dentley—and damn you both!"

The girl had placed the glass to her lips. She lowered her hand. "What a brute you are!" she exclaimed. "Well, here's to you and—to him!" But once more she lowered the glass without drinking.

"Do you know," she said, contracting her eyes to narrow slits, "if I thought you had the nerve to do it, I would think that you had mixed something with this whiskey."

"Good!" gasped Driscome, but laughing afterward with a heartiness which amazed him. "You think I'm poisoning you. There would be reasons. But—hand it to me—I'll drink it myself."

The girl pushed the glass toward him. "Yes, that would be a way out. He had not thought of that before. The other hadn't done that; perhaps his nerve had failed him. With a sudden resolution, Driscome lifted his hand.

"You've proved that it's all right," laughed the girl. She added, "I said that only to see what you'd do. Men of your kind don't poison girls." Once more she raised the glass. As she placed it to her lips it was as if, on the wall opposite, Driscome saw his crime portrayed. In that second he beheld himself a man who had been mastered by love for the beauty of a face and not the love of a heart and soul. In that second he came to know her as she was. And he saw himself degraded to a believer in absurd rubbish. He knew himself as the most beastly thing a man can be—a murderer of women. No thought of punishment came. The thought which mastered everything was that he had sunk to depths he could never have believed possible. As if his soul was that of another and could be read like a printed page, this was presented to him. And in that second he even had time to wonder if all murderers were granted this clear vision at the moment of their crime.

He leaped forward. Not understanding what he was attempting, the girl stepped back. Then her eyes gained from his a knowledge of what he had done. They gleamed with desperate fear. "You did intend to kill me!" she cried.

He did not hear her. He seized the glass and crashed it upon the floor. "You vampire!" he shouted. "Love! Love for you brought me lower than the other brute who desires you. Go—before I do kill you!"

She stumbled toward the door, but she was not quick enough to suit him. With a grip which left a mark for weeks, he seized her arm. He pushed her through the doorway, crashing the door shut and turning the key. While she raced down the stairs, he turned to the portrait. Tearing the canvass from its easel, he threw it upon the floor and stamped upon it. Not content, he slashed it with a dirk which he took from the wall. Then he pulled down the black hanging, the death masks crashing upon the floor. He ground them under his feet, crunching them to powder. As he continued to stamp upon the broken plaster, there came a repeated ringing of the door bell.

"Let me in!" shouted the doctor.

With a suddenness which surprised him, Driscome realized that the studio had ceased spinning around and that the fires in his brain were cooling. On a table was a package of cigarettes. Steadying himself against the table, he lighted one, after which he managed, dizzily, to reach the door and open it. Then he dropped into a chair.

The doctor carefully placed his hat and gloves on the table. He turned to Driscome. "As my car stopped at the corner," he said, "a girl ran down the street as if the Germans were sacking the city. What with the running girl, this broken plaster and the shreds of your picture, I need not ask questions. Looks to me as if something had happened to that beastly theory of yours."

"To the devil with girls and theories!" shakily exclaimed Driscome. "Help me to your car. Take me to the Grand Central. I'm off for a place where a fellow tells me the color is better than even the Bermudas."

IN the October number: KID CARTER AND REFORM *by Howard Philip Rhoades,* the story of a second-story worker who went back to the old home town for "Auld Lang Syne."

THE NERVE OF TIMID THOMPSON

BY EARL G. CURTIS

In which Sloker, hobo extraordinary and joint proprietor of Wander Inn, gives an informal travel lecture and tells how near a man can come to matrimony without hitting it.

SEVERAL sheets had been torn from the greasy calendar that hung in the kitchen since Sloker had surveyed the familiar front of Wander Inn. He faced the door a long minute, then lifted his shoulders and shook himself like a dog just out of the rain; thereby putting behind him the freedom of the open road. Sloker was well aware that when he entered the Inn he would assume full charge, thus knocking from Richmond Ed's legs the shackles of burdensome business.

Ed was not at all sorry when he spied the fat, good-natured face of his partner. His ears were itching for the gossip of the wanderer and his own feet were restless. It was his turn to fare forth into Hoboland. Ed hung around until Sloker's hunger was appeased, and only then did the prodigal partner's words appertain to his long absence.

"Ed, you like to lost your pardner this trip."

"How? Was th' bulls after you?" Ed questioned.

"Naw! But I did come near gettin' married."

"Who—you—Sloker?" Ed exploded into loud laughter, and Sloker's face turned a prodigious pink.

"What you laughin' at, you knot-head?" Sloker inquired, his dignity somewhat impaired. "Can't I get married if I want to?"

"Sure; you don't have to ast me—you have to ast th' woman."

"Which same I did," Sloker stated deliberately, enjoying Ed's astonishment. "There's only one reason I ain't a married man today, Ed. She thought she liked another guy better. Though what she seen in him is mor'n I can percolate through my bean."

Sloker leaned back in his chair and sighed contentedly. He was home. He continued his remarks.

"I left here not quite of a mind which way to flit, an' in that promiscuous attitude toward things in general, drifted round all over. But th' little detail of where to go was soon settled for me. One night I got lit up like a torch, an' th' next day, when th' fuel had all burnt out, I found myself on a train with a gang of hard-rock men, on my way to Pitcher's Pass, where they was diggin' a tunnel under one of th' Cumberland Mountings. Th' boss of th' gang informed me none too polite that I had signed up as cook, that he had already paid me a month's wages, an' that I had blowed it in with th' rest of his rough-necks.

"I couldn't recollect nothin' 'bout it a-tall, but that didn't make no difference with th' boss, who was a guy hard of face an' words. I owed him money an' I had to cook it out. That's all there was to it, so far's he was concerned. When I got it all straight I was as happy as a nigger without no arms an' a pocket full of money, lookin' at a crap game. Right there I figured to beat it th' first chance I got. But th' boss must 'ave been a mind reader for he set by me like I was awful good company.

"I didn't need no squirrel to tell me that 'em hard-rock guys was a bunch of tough nuts. You know I ain't exactly a sissy myself, but travellin' with 'em was somethin' like ridin' in th' middle of a battle royal. All th' way to Pitcher's Pass they was scrappin', an' when we at last got there I was as joyful as a guy could well be at th' fag end of a jag.

"I found at th' camp another he cook, by name of John Thompson, who had been christened Timid because he always evaded a scrap—with honor or without. This here Timid party topped me by ten of th' lankiest inches you ever seen, an' when he set down he reminded me of a carpenter shuttin' up his rule.

"When I got to th' cook shack an' went to work I was plumb disgusted at first, for I found out that I had a woman for a boss, by name Rebecca Meek. She was in entire charge of the culinary department.

"Rebecca was borned in them mountings an' had lived there ever since. She was cert'n'y some woman, Ed. She was 'bout thirty; not too young, you know, an' wasn't bad on th' eyes a-tall. There wasn't nothin' that woman couldn't do when she set her mind to it. She was most capable. Well, to tell it quick, I fell for Rebecca—an' fell hard! Instead of me watchin' for a chance to beat it, th' boss couldn't 'ave fired me.

"Timid an' me was kinder chummy till I found out that he was also sweet on Rebecca, an' then 'twasn't long before we was hatin' rivals. Timid watched me like he was a millionaire an' me a poor man, an' as for me, once I set up near all night list'nin' to Timid howlin' with a teethache, thinkin' maybe he was puttin' up a bluff so he could speak to Rebecca without me hearin' what he said. We slept over th' kitchen, while Rebecca took her maidenly repose in a homey little house up th' hill.

"Mary's lamb didn't have a thing on Timid. Whenever I strolled up to set with Rebecca, he was sure to go, too. An' you can gamble that I never let *him* go up without one able-bodied he-chaperone along to see that he didn't put nothin' over on Sloker.

"Things went along like that for a while, an' Rebecca seemed to like both of us 'bout th' same. At least I couldn't see no difference, an' I cert'n'y looked hard enough. I come to th' conclusion that she'd be mighty liable to take th' first one of us what popped th' question. But so help me Harry, if I could get a decent chanct to lay my palpitatin' heart in her hand without that Timid guy lookin' on. An' you know a man's got delicate feelin's at such times.

"Timid stuck to me like I owed him money till one night I thought I'd lost him. I didn't see him nowheres round. Right then I sighed a long sigh an' made up my mind to ast Rebecca to share what joys an' sorrers th' comin' years helt for Sloker. But when I ambled up to Rebecca's I found out that I hadn't lost Timid a-tall. He was settin' on th' bench just outside Rebecca's open door, outer which th' lamplight shined onto th' clearin' in front of th' house. Timid was all spruced up like a two-by-four dude, white collar an' all. I took a seat as far on th' other end of th' bench as I could an' begin to whistle careless. I couldn't be bothered because *my* clothes had seen cleaner days.

"When Rebecca come out she set exactly in th' middle of th' bench, showin' nobody no favor. There was somethin' in th' air that must 'ave told her that she was a goner this time. Timid hemmed a little an' I hawed a little. Rebecca didn't do nothin' but set there.

"'What a fine moon we have tonight,' said Timid at last.

"'We sure have,' said Rebecca.

"'Aw, I don't know,' I butt in quick. 'I've seen moons much more purtier, huh, Rebecca?'

"'Yep, I reckon so,' said Rebecca.

"Me an' Timid looked black at each other an' nobody so much as whispered. So help me Harry, if I could think of a darn thing to say. Finally it come to me that th' situation would be improved considerably by a little darkness.

"'I don't see no use in th' door bein' open,' I said. 'With such a nice light from th' moon, we don't need th' lamplight out here, do we, Rebecca?'

"With that I edged a little closer to her.

"'That's right,' Timid said, followin' my lead. 'Ain't no sense in th' door bein' open. Th' light hurts my eyes, anyhow.'

"Then Timid *he* edged a little closer to Rebecca. She begins to look at us like she was gettin' skeered.

"'Oh, I couldn't think of shuttin' th' door,' she said, primlike. 'What would th' men all say?'

"'Dang th' men!' I busted out. I was as trembly as a bowl of jelly.

"'Yep, dang 'em!' Timid growled.

"'Mister Sloker! Mister Thompson!' Rebecca said, meanin' for us to cut out th' rough stuff. Rebecca was a lady.

"As easy as we could, me an' Timid, little by little, closed up th' gap between us an' Rebecca. She must 'ave knowed she couldn't put us off no longer. I looked at Timid, an' he seemed busy with his thoughts, settin' there with no more sign of life than a petrified peanut. A bold thought come to me. Th' situation called for action. Just as tender as a lovin' mother, I eased my arm round Rebecca's waist.

"But 'bout half-way round, my hand met Timid's comin' toward me, an' we jerked our lovin' mitts away like we had caught ourselves playin' with th' snout of a alligator. Rebecca was watchin' th' moon an' didn't catch on to none of our didoes. I made up my mind to settle th' thing right there, one way or another.

"'Leave th' blame door open then,' I told her, speakin' kinder bully. 'I got somethin' to say an' I'm goner say it if all th' doors in th' world is open!'

"With no warnin' motions whatever, I grabbed her round th' waist.

"'What he says goes for me, too, an' twice as hard!' Timid said also, an' moreover puttin' *his* arm round her waist. 'I'd say it if all th' world was list'nin', Rebecca!'

"Both of us tried to hug her at th' same time, an' neither one of us did. Rebecca let go a little scream, an' we let go our embrace.

"'I love you, Rebecca,' I told her right out, while somethin' in my bosom jumped like a rabbit. 'My heart is like your open door—open wide for you to come in, an' my love is like th' lamplight spread out on th' grass so purty—like a carpet of gold!'

"'Oh, Mr. Sloker!' said Rebecca.

"'That's goes for me, too, Rebecca!' Timid hollered, kinder wild like. 'Damitall, I don't know no po'try! What he says goes double for me!'

"She stood up an' we did too, both of us hangin' onto a hand. I bowed over th' hand I helt an' kissed it like 'em old courtin' guys used to do in th' olden days of kings an' queens an' th' rest of th' deck. Timid done th' same with his hand. Timid sure was some imitationer.

"Rebecca didn't say a word, but jus' stood there lookin' like she didn't know which way to turn. Then all at onct we seen a man standin' by us. He wore a black bunch of spinach on his chin, but in spite of that hairy handicap, he handled hisself like he was a somebody. Rebecca jerked her hands away from us an' looked at th' big guy like he was th' rent collector an' she was busted.

"'Rebecca, don't you know me?' he ast.

"'Ezra,' she said, kinder doubtful.

"'Yep, Ezra,' the big guy agreed. 'Ezra who went away eight years ago an' told you to wait for him.'

"Rebecca drew herself up pridefully, like th' thoroughbred she was.

"'Ezra,' she said, kinder solemn, 'that's a awful long time for a woman to wait for a man. Eight years,' she continued on, like she was lookin' back an' examinin' ever' month of 'em, 'th' best eight years of a woman's life.'

"She looked at Timid, then at me.

"'Ezra,' she said, soft-like, 'you made me wait a little while too long. During that time—'

"Right there she stopped talkin' an' took a little step an' fell square into th' arms of Timid."

Sloker heaved a deep sigh at the remembrance.

"'Bout two weeks afterwards th' weddin' was to be pulled off, an' when th' day come I was sure one gloomy Gustavus. I wasn't hatin' Timid so much as I was lovin' Rebecca, an' I hadn't give her up yet, even if 'twas supposed to be their weddin' day. I felt like Timid had outlucked me, an' that's all. When that boob Ezra butted in on th' picture th' night we proposed, Rebecca got excited. No blame to her, at that. Any woman would 'ave. 'Tain't ever' one what has three good men an' true claimin' her at th' same simultaneous time.

"Well, there we was, me an' Timid, one on each side of her, not quite understandin' th' thing. When Rebecca broke th' news to Ezra that he wasn't in th' race a-tall, she got kinder fainty an' fell. Somehow or other, she spun to th' left, right into Timid's arms. Now suppose she had fell to th' right; there was Sloker waitin'. I claim 'twas just a matter of luck which way she fell."

"'Twas fair enough," Ed interposed. "'Twas a good gamble."

"'Twas fair enough in a way; but I didn't believe she liked Timid any better than me, an' I schemed to show him up. Durin' th' day I sneaked away from th' cook shanty an' found me a empty blastin' powder can. I filled her up with dirt, an' made a fuse of twisted brown paper, into which I poured a handful of powder. When I got through with th' can it sure looked like a bomb.

"I was wise that Timid wouldn't 'ave answered to th' name he did if he had any nerve a-tall. When ever'thing was ready I would steal up to th' house an' wait till the sky-pilot had started th' job; then I'd throw th' bomb right there in front of Timid. I wanted Rebecca to see how he acted. When that fuse got to spittin', I was willin' to bet any chanct for Rebecca that he'd beat it an' not wait to take her along. That's exactly what I wanted him to do.

"Th' knot was to be tied in th' clearin' that fronted Rebecca's house. Th' moon was shinin' bright an' filled th' open space with a nice, soft light. Th' hard-rock men an' some of th' mountingeers what had been invited was all there when I crawled under some bushes what fringed th' clearin'.

"Th' parson stepped away from th' common ord'nary mortals, an' combed his whiskers with his fingers. That must 'ave been th' signal for Timid an' Rebecca to come forth from th' house, follered by th' Ezra guy, who was managin' th' whole thing an' enjoyin' hisself immense. He didn't hold no hard feelin's an' looked a lot more happier than Timid. They faced th' parson an' I thought I could see Timid's legs tremblin', an' I laughed in my sleeve. Rebecca handled herself like gettin' married was a ever'day thing with her.

"So help me Harry, Ed, ever'thin' was so solemn an' sad that I come near givin' up Rebecca without a struggle. Th' parson started his spiel, an' then I remembered how bad I wanted Rebecca. I struck a match an' threw th' bomb so that it fell right at th' feet of Timid. That old fuse spitted like th' real thing', an' Rebecca put her hands over her ears like she hated to hear it go off. Th' crowd stayed there just long enough to reco'nize what th' thing looked like—and then they left without sayin' goodbye. Th' mounting folks, led by brother Ezra, hit th' trail up th' hill, an' th' hard-rock men split th' wind goin' down.

"But Timid, *he* stayed right here. He snatched th' bomb from th' ground an' drownded it in a rain-barrel that stood at a corner of th' house. I just squatted there in the bushes an' looked. Then th' parson's scattered brains showed signs of comin' together again, an' he turned to beat it. Timid grabbed him.

"'Finish th' job!' Timid said, commandin'-like.

"Th' parson did. I knowed then that Rebecca was not for Sloker. I slid down th' hill to th' cook shack an' just set an' smoked, an' made up my mind 'twas time for me to wander in. I come to th' conclusion that I didn't want no wife, nohow, an' if I did, I was too darn unlucky to ever cop such a fine woman as Rebecca.

"'Bout a hour after Timid had took unto hisself a wife, he come down an' found me settin' there by my lonely. He stuck out his mitt, an' I took it an' shook it real friendly.

"'Well, it's all over,' said Timid.

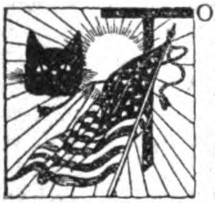
"'I'm doggone glad,' I told him. 'You deserve her, Timid, for 'twas a brave an' devilish ack, you handlin' th' bomb thataway—' an' then I said, apologizin'-like—'even though 'twas a fake.'

"'Aw, Sloker, I knowed that all th' time,' said Timid, with a most outrageous grin. 'I was watchin' you when you made it.'"

IN THE NAME OF KENTUCKY

BY HAPSBURG LIEBE

Twice in the night comes the cry: "Corporal of the guard—post four." And each time the corporal of the guard turns out the relief and finds only an empty hut and signs of a struggle at post four.



TORFELD put down his empty beer mug and beckoned to a news vender. Guben drank the last of his own lager, laced his pudgy fingers together on the little table and began to watch his companion's face. He saw Torfeld's shaggy brows knit as he bent closer to the paper.

"What is it, *mein freund?*" asked Guben.

The other pushed back his helmet and looked over the sheet. "One of our U's has sunk a big liner, the *Lusitania*, with Americans on board," said Torfeld, "and that may bring America into the war against us."

"Bah!" laughed Guben. "The Americans can't fight, won't fight. But here comes— Ah, how is it with you, Father Faubreville?"

Guben rose, and so did Torfeld, to shake the hand of the wizened little padre. Faubreville was a Spaniard, and an adventurer of a strange sort; he was at home anywhere in the world; and whereever there was a war, there one was very likely to find him whom a dozen nations knew as the Little Padre. He never fought; he was still the man of God. Germany and her allies loved him, as did France and her allies. I do not know how it happened that he was in Berlin; by all the laws of precedence, he should have been ministering to the wounded and dying in some field hospital.

When greetings had been exchanged, the Little Padre seated himself with the two members of the Imperial Guard, and fresh lager was ordered. The *Lusitania* episode was promptly brought up.

"But it will amount to nothing," declared Torfeld. "As Guben there has just said, the Americans won't fight; they are weaklings."

"You are mistaken, *amigo mio,*" quickly replied the Little Padre. Faubreville enjoyed rare freedom of speech, even in Germany. "I myself have seen them fight. It was in the Philippines. I was with a regiment there for months, a regiment noted for its dare-deviltry, which called itself whimsically, 'The Suicide Outfit.' Now let me tell you the story of one American; it will illustrate the real American spirit. His name was Munford, and he was from that *Estado* that they call Kentucky. And bear in mind as I tell you, my friends Torfeld and Guben, that America has millions upon millions of men like Munford; and remember also, remember especially, that those like the fellow Carlin, are a precious few."

The Little Padre calmly drank half his mug of beer and began his story of one American, and that one a private soldier:

"The Suicide Outfit was in camp at Catbalogan, which is on the island that was known very aptly as Bloody Samar. One thick, black night the cry of a sentry rang out from the waterfront:

"'Corporal o' the guard—post four—double time! Corporal o' the guard—post four—'

"The words sounded sharp and distinct in the tomblike stillness, like stones thrown against a hollow, metallic wall. The sentries between post four and the guardhouse relayed the call to the ears of Corporal Winton, who was a very good friend of mine.

"Winton had but that moment looked at his wrist watch, having noted sleepi [illegible] that the hour was clos[illegible] that of m[illegible] night. He caught [illegible] by its [illegible] zle and went, dragging the weapon behind him, to the low doorway of the guard's quarters; and quick beside him was private Munford, who was six feet tall, rawboned and serious, all of a soldier and a perfect marksman, and very proud of the fact that he was from that *Estado* that they have named Kentucky.

"'Carlin is on number four,' Winton muttered sourly. 'I am almost decided not to go. Ten chances to one, he is deceiving us again.'

"'Yes, Carlin is on number four,' said private Munford. 'He relieved me there an hour ago. But there is something wrong; it is as certain as that we are a foot in height, my corporal. Did you notice how the latter part of the call faded out to nothing?'

"'I did not hear the original,' growled the corporal of the guard. 'Something wrong? Your honorable grandmother!' exclaimed Winton, in disgust. 'Carlin is merely too sleepy to do his turn, that's all! He will declare that he is sick. You wait, and you will see. But let us go!'

"With that, he roused two others of the guard, and they set out hastily for post number four.

"Let me tell you about the fellow Carlin before I proceed farther, *mis amigos*. Carlin had enlisted as what is known as a low private in the rear rank, and there he had stayed—but with some difficulty. He had been by no means a soldier; he had avoided all the marches possible; he had lied out of duty; he had nothing whatever to his credit, either with the officers or with the enlisted men—with a single exception.

"That exception was big Private Munford. For Carlin, who was oily and heavy and dark, had on the day of his enlistment walked up to Munford and said with outstretched hand:

"'I, too, am from Kentucky.'

"And Munford firmly believed that, since the two of them were the sole representatives his *Estado* had in the company, the company would judge the whole of Kentucky by the doings of himself and Carlin!

"All was dark and silent when Corporal Winton and the three privates approached post number four. There was no breath of challenge as they walked straight up to the nipa and bamboo hut that served as a sentry's box by night and as an office for the officer of the port by day. Winton called Carlin's name softly, but got no response. Then he leaned in at the open doorway and scratched a Chinese match.

"The place was empty!

"But on the ground he found the hilt of a broken bolo and a scrap of pinacloth. Munford bent over, his keen gray eyes as hard as the steel of his bayonet, and picked up Carlin's battered campaign hat. He held it toward his corporal; his corporal held toward him the rough hilt of Carabao-horn and brass.

"'He has given a good account of himself!' Munford cried, in a voice that impressed the non-commissioned officer. 'See there—the wall there is broken through; look at these marks of a struggle, my corporal! I have often told you there was undug gold in Carlin! You cannot wish for more proof that he was a fighter when there was real necessity for it. Had they not stolen upon him, he would have taken some heads, too!'

"Winton very thoughtfully and silently dropped the burnt match.

"'He has been made a prisoner,' Munford continued. 'I am most certain that our company will speak his name without laughing when the truth of the affair becomes known.'

"How anxious was Munford that Carlin should be looked upon as a brave man! To me it was almost pitiful.

"'You are familiar with the orders for this post,' muttered the corporal. 'Take it, and keep a sharp watch on all sides.'

"Munford obediently stepped inside the hut. The corporal of the guard and the two others shouldered their rifles and went back to the guardhouse.

"Winton jabbed the butt of his rifle down in a corner with a lowly spoken imprecation. Captain Gunter was sour because of his malaria, and there was a great chance that he would not like to be awakened at that hour to listen to a report that would say merely that Carlin had been captured.

Had it been anyone except the poltroon, it would have been different. Any other man of the company was worth an uproar, and perhaps a quick march into the treacherous interior of the island; but Carlin was not.

"He stopped turning the question over in his mind and bent an ear toward the doorway. He heard a voice from post number four, a voice so big that there was small necessity for a relay.

"'Corporal o' the guard—*the enemy!*'

"And close after it there came three rifle shots. Then the thick silence of the Philippine night settled down again.

"Winton roused out the two reliefs that were off duty and hastened with them to the hut on the bay shore. Again he met with not a breath of challenge; again there was no response to his questioning voice. A lighted match showed him a rifle's strap that had been cut away, and a handful of Spanish silver, lying on the ground just inside the door. The walls of the hut had been almost completely demolished, as though in a desperate struggle.

"'Now,' said Corporal Winton, a little pale under his deep tan, 'now I can wake the captain. The Filipinos have captured a man who is a real American soldier.'

"Daybreak found private Munford sitting alone among the gray stones that covered the crest of a mountain that rose precipitously behind Catbalogan. In the crooked streets below him half the regiment was hurrying hither and thither, no doubt making preparations for a march to rescue him. Stretched out across the miles that lay between him and the other side of the island, he could see a dense deep-green, jungle-wilderness of bamboo and coconut palm and wild banana; this, he knew, was the stamping ground of the insurgents under General Ramon Invar.

"Munford tipped his canteen and took a swallow of very warm water, then he looked again toward the village below. He saw a thin line of khaki-clad men leaving it, coming directly toward him: to save time they were going to cross the mountain barrier. Munford frowned and rose, and once more began to search the interior with his keen eyes.

"A mile inward, he caught a glimpse of a dirty-white serpent of men creeping over a low hill.

"There was a minute, perhaps, of indecision; then, stooping, darting from one stone to another stone, Munford began the descent of the rugged slope in the direction in which he had seen the insurgents. Soon he had reached the thicker growth of the lower ground, where he quickened his pace despite the tangle of vines, guiding his footsteps toward the hostile forces with the wonderful accuracy of the born woodsman. When at the point which he regarded best for his purpose, he hid himself well in a clump of bamboos and waited.

"A few minutes later, the dirty-white serpent of men appeared in full view before him, about a hundred feet away; they were coming as silently as spirits, and all but two of them were armed with Mauser rifles. At the head of the serpent he saw a figure that was very familiar to his gaze; it was a figure that was low and heavy, and it was garbed in the flimsy uniform of an insurgent officer; in short, it was Carlin, the degenerate, now a deserter and a traitor. Close behind Carlin, brown and wiry, a naked sword in his hand, was General Ramon Invar, who was a very bad mixture of Visayan ignorance, Moro fanaticism, and pure devil.

"But Munford did not evince the slightest astonishment at that which he saw. He moved not a muscle, but waited patiently until Invar's forces were very near to him. Then he called out sharply:

"'Don't let them shoot me, Carlin, my friend!'

"The natives and their white leader halted, and more than a score of rifles were leveled toward the bamboos that hid Munford.

"'Is it you, Munford?' asked Carlin.

"'Yes, it is I,' was the quick answer. 'Why did you not tell me? I would have gone with you! Do you not think the gibes they gave you—cut me to the heart, too? I have always taken your part, my comrade. And now I have deserted for the privilege of being with you!'

"Carlin's eyes brightened under their villainous brows.

"'That is correct,' he replied; 'you have always been my friend. I am glad you came, Munford.'

"He turned to Invar, who stood wondering, his long sword resting uneasily against his thin shoulder. 'General,' said this fellow Carlin, 'that man and I are from the same *Estado*—which is called Kentucky. He is a good man, and he wishes to join you in your fight for independence. Order your men not to fire upon him, General.'

"Invar stepped out of the ranks and looked down the long line of brown faces. He raised his sword and forbade anyone to fire upon Munford. Then Munford, red-faced and perspiring, crawled from his hiding-place and received an introduction to the Filipino chieftain.

"'I will make you a major,' smiled Invar. 'As soon as we are again at my headquarters, you shall have a major's uniform.'

"'We are now on our way to fire down upon Catbalogan from the mountain's crest,' Carlin explained. 'Of course you will go with us, for you will be our very best marksman!'

"Munford shook his head. 'Half the regiment,' said he, 'is now nearly to the top of that mountain. They are looking for us; they think we have been captured, you know—which is just what we wished them to think.'

"'Half the regiment!' cried Carlin, going somewhat pale.

"He turned to Ramon Invar and spoke to him in Spanish. Another minute and Invar's forces had faced about and were moving rapidly toward the thick interior of the island, and the two white men brought up the rear of the line. Invar was afraid to meet the half of that Suicide Outfit there in the jungle! The cowardly surprise attack, that was Invar's way.

"A short time later, and the line had taken to a shallow river, which was the Filipino leader's method of throwing the Americans off his trail in event they gave pursuit.

"After two or three hours of rapid travelling, they entered a grassy and treeless dell, in which Munford saw a double row of nipa huts that had been built on bamboo framework.

"'That,' Carlin informed Munford, 'is our stronghold and headquarters; what do you think of it, comrade?'

"'Not a very strong stronghold,' said Munford, 'except that it would be extremely hard to find.'

"'Hard to find!' laughed Carlin. 'I should say! You see, I had already made arrangement with a spy in the village, which explains how I found the place.'

"Invar led the two white men through the door of a hut that served as his quarters, and there the three seated themselves on a grass mat. Then Invar called to him his servant and ordered that food be set before them.

"'And be quick, Ignatio,' frowned Invar, 'or I shall pass my sword between your head and your body.'

"In a remarkably short time, rice and fishes, with red bananas and yellow mangoes, were placed before the Americans and the insurgent general. The three fell to eating with their fingers, washing the food down with *tuba* from coconut shells.

"When the meal was finished, Invar rose and brought a flag, the flag of the sun and triangle.

"'Major Munford,' he announced, 'will now take the oath of allegiance. You will kneel, Major Munford.'

"Now this was a thing that Private Munford had not bargained for. He swallowed hard and bitterly. Those Americans, they do not like to swear falsely. But in another moment he was on his knees and swearing by the one true God and by the Holy Virgin to be loyal forever to the flag of the triangle and the sun.

"In the afternoon, while the natives and their commander were taking their daily siestas, Munford lured Carlin to the bank of a small lake that lay not far from the so-called stronghold. Carlin sat down and began to remove his shoes, preparatory to bathing himself. Under pretense of following suit, Munford tied his shoes tighter.

"'Carlin,' very slowly said Munford, 'what do you suppose the people back in the *Estado* of old Kentucky will think of you? What will your old mother, of whom you have told me more than once, say when she learns that you have turned deserter and traitor and pulled your heart wrong side out to follow the standard of the enemy?'

"'What do you suppose,' snapped Carlin, that dog, 'they will think of your own deserting?'

"Munford gazed silently at the dark and evil face of the other for a full minute.

"'I came to bring you back,' he said. 'There is time. We can tell them what they already believe, my comrade; that we were captured and brought here against our wills. If you will go back with me, Carlin, my friend, I will wound myself and tell them that you saved my life. I have here my bayonet; see? With it I will slash myself in the breast and on the arms. Will you not do that, Carlin?'

"'No!' cried Carlin. 'I have chosen my path, and I shall keep it. You are afraid, Munford!'

"'I am not afraid, Carlin,' said Munford. 'Oh, my comrade, can nothing dissuade you? Will you not go back with me?'

"'Nothing can force me to go back with you,' answered Carlin. 'There I was a mere private soldier; here I shall be a major. Understand me now, Munford, I will not go back.'

"Munford knew he meant it. Munford rose, straight and grand, a human god, ready for the great sacrifice. His gray eyes burned into the other's small, shriveled soul as though they would set it ablaze with the fire that it so richly deserved; his jaws were clamped against each other as with some terrible madness. Then Munford drew his long, knife-like bayonet from its scabbard at his hip.

"Carlin saw the flash of the shining metal and sprang to his feet with his own bayonet in his hand. Hand to hand they fought, minute after minute. Then Munford, his face and breast covered with bleeding gashes from the other's weapon, saw his opportunity; straight through the heart of the deserter Carlin he sent the slender point of his bayonet.

"He did it in the name of that *Estado* that they call Kentucky. A minute later he put the body across his shoulder and hastened toward Catbalogan with it.

"It was late in the night when he reached the village. He dropped all that was left of Carlin at the guardhouse door, and drew himself up straight; but the corporal of the guard had to hold him that he might not fall.

"'You should have seen the fight Carlin made!' said this Munford. 'He killed dozens of them before they put him down. See the gashes—and that hole? See them, you men who laughed at Carlin—'

"He fainted, and they carried him away to the hospital. And that—listen to me, Torfeld and Guben, my friends—that is the spirit you will fight when you fight America!"

THE third story in "The Pardners of Wander Inn" series, relating the alternate adventures of Richmond Ed and Sloker, will appear in the October number. Look for HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER *by Earl G. Curtis.*

EVERY MAN

BY ANNA BROWNELL DUNAWAY

Being an inquiry into the mormonistic tendencies of men with incidental speculation regarding the probable advantage at times of the Georgette blouse over the mackintosh of the vintage of 1900.

I HAVE been married twelve years and I think that is long enough for any woman to know all that is worth knowing about a man and much that isn't. I am not knocking marriage nor men for I am very happily married myself, but I would just like to emphatically endorse a statement that has often been made in regard to men, and that is, that every man is at heart a Mormon. I endorse the statement advisedly and believe it to be incontrovertible.

I will not even leave Henry out of this sweeping arraignment. While, after twelve years of married life, he is at present writing fairly docile, I have too often observed his weather eye roving in the direction of a pretty woman. Yet Henry is impeccable as husbands go. But he cannot help this tendency. It is his birthright, his inheritance. his prerogative as a lord of creation. He can no more help this attribute than he can help the fact that he possesses a cowlick. Neither can any other man. I am convinced that it is this mormonistic tendency and not money, that is the root of all evil. Almost any woman can get a husband but—can she keep him? That is the acid test.

I knew a lawyer who said that five years was enough to live with any woman. The last I heard he was on his second instalment. I should like to hear Henry voice such an opinion. But then, this story isn't about Henry. Thinking about Clovis and her troubles got me started on my pet theory.

I just wish you could see Clovis as she looked three years ago, at the time of her engagement to Wilbur Farr. She reminded me for all the world of the clove pinks in an old-fashioned garden with flower beds outlined with shells and redolent of rosemary. She had just such sweet, modest grace, and there was always a dash of pink under her clear, white skin, and she seemed to fairly exhale the aromatic freshness of an old-time garden. Henry admired her immensely—within limits of course—and as for Wilbur Farr, he was really carried away. He had come to Westerville to practice medicine directly upon his graduation from a medical college. But a year after their engagement he transferred his practise to the neighboring city of Mapleton. For Westerville was too loyal to its old doctor to be a promising field.

Clovis and her widowed mother lived right next door to us. After Wilbur left, the girl fairly threw herself into the work of saving for her new home. She taught in summer institutes, and finally entered the race for County Superintendent and won, as Henry would say, in a walk. For Clovis was awfully popular. Everybody had known her since she was a little girl, and there wasn't a woman in Westerville but what knew her age to a day.

Three years tells a great deal on a woman's youth, especially if she is working too hard, and presently people began whispering in charitable asides that Clovis was "getting on." Her eyes gave out under the strain and she took to wearing glasses. Not the pretty kind, with a chain and a gold hairpin, but the regular goggles style, with bows that curled around her little pink ears and added ten years to her age.

And she grew careless about her clothes —not sloppy of course—Clovis was too neat for that, but she seldom got anything new and seemed to lose all interest in dressing up. "What's the use?" she would say to me deprecatingly, when I urged her to get something bright and pretty. "What's the use, Auntie Miller? I'm engaged, and Wilbur isn't here and everybody knows me here in Westerville. It's a case of 'love me, love my old clothes.'"

It takes some years of married life to take that kind of conceit out of a woman. But many are that way. After they have become engaged they rest, figuratively speaking, on their oars. But you cannot tell them anything. It takes bitter experience and sometimes a breach of promise case to make them change their views.

When Henry stopped noticing Clovis, I began to get worried, for in matters of this kind Henry is a sort of weather vane. And, after a time, I noticed that Wilbur came less and less frequently. Clovis's mother began to wear a sort of harried look. And Clovis herself began to droop perceptibly.

One night I was sitting out on the porch waiting for Henry to come home from board meeting—I have long ago learned to close my eyes to so-called business appointments that last till all hours of the night—when Clovis came over and sat beside me. I saw at once that something was wrong. All the old, sweet color was gone, and for the first time I noticed how worn and thin she was.

"There, there!" I said finally, breaking a pregnant silence, "tell Auntie Miller."

She broke into a fit of sobbing and threw a letter into my lap. I turned on the porch light, and Clovis walked off toward the syringa bush while I read the letter. It was from Wilbur. There were only two pages, written in a constrained, abrupt way. He told of his growing success, of the fine people he roomed with, of the expenses of city life. Then without preface or warning he closed with these words:

"Clovis, I am convinced that our engagement was a mistake. Three years ago I loved you madly. Now, I am amazed to find that I do not care for you as one cares for the woman he would make his wife. I have tried to be and am true to you, but I feel that marriage under the circumstances will be wrong. We should have married three years ago. Long engagements are all wrong. No, there is no one else. It is only that I no longer care. I want to be free. Will you release me, Clovis, and in the future think of me only as

Your sincere friend,
Wilbur."

When I had read the letter I considered it thoughtfully. It was damaging enough, but even at that, I did not consider Wilbur a cad. Of course in a regular novel such a hero would not do at all. He would be impossible. He would have to be eliminated by gas or a motor accident and give place to another hero whose love was of the lasting quality. But as men go in real life I saw nothing the matter with Wilbur. He was human that was all. He was daily meeting up with other girls,—girls who encouraged the Morman (or the Adam) in him. Moreover, Clovis had faded. She was not keeping up with the game.

When she returned from the shadow of the syringa bush I noticed a determined line about the gentle mouth.

"Are you going to give him up?" I queried.

"I am not," she declared decidedly. "Mother says it is criminal for a man to play with a girl in this way. I have wired him that I am coming tomorrow. Mother is going with me."

"Oh, Clovis," I entreated, "look your—"

But she was gone. I wanted to tell her some things out of my own experience. To urge her to look her best; to play the game fairly; but the opportunity was gone.

Somehow, I knew that Clovis would fail in her mission. She had not been married twelve years as I had. She did not know men. But with all my misgivings, I was not prepared for the look of utter hopelessness that shadowed the gray eyes when she returned.

"What do you think, Auntie Miller," she said to me in a curious, detached way, as if she were speaking of another's unhappiness, "Wilbur still insists that I release him,—after my going to him and all; and after what mother said to him."

Now I knew there had been bungling. In all these cases there is either too much mother or too much mother-in-law. I felt that Clovis's mother had, to use a trite expression, butted in disastrously, but I said nothing. I flatter myself on my discretion; that too, comes with marriage. Too often it is the better part of valor.

I made her a fresh cup of tea and set before her a plate of my hermits. She said she couldn't eat a mouthful, but I noticed, during her recital, that she ate five. That's another impossibility for a heroine of fiction. In stories they pine away and are all but forcibly fed through a tube.

"What did you wear?" I demanded.

"Wear?" she echoed, as if that were as far away from the question as the antipodes. "Why, a mackintosh and rubbers. It was fearfully wet and sloppy. It couldn't have been a worse time," she ended drearily.

I looked at her with an appraising eye. She wore an old brown serge of a style two years back. Mentally, I added to this a last year's hat, mackintosh and galoshes. She caught my eye and blushed faintly.

"I intended to wear my new hat," she deprecated, "but it was so rainy."

"I would count a fifty-dollar hat," I said severely, "well lost for love."

"After all, what are mere clothes?" she said wearily. "That is not the issue."

I did not press the point. Instead, I asked blandly:

"Where did you stop? At the Midway, I suppose."

Clovis regarded me in astonishment.

"The Midway? Why, Auntie Miller, that is the bon ton hotel. It is four dollars a day and up."

"What of it?" said I.

"I couldn't think of being so extravagant," she murmured.

"But you make eighteen hundred a year, Clovis," I remonstrated.

She flushed under my disapproving eye.

"Yes, but you know how high living is. And then I am saving—I was saving"—her voice choked—"for our home."

"Where did you stop, then?" I demanded.

"Why, at the Pacific House. I assure you"—she faced me defiantly, somewhat nettled at my look—"that it is quite respectable."

"It is a hang-out," I remarked severely, "for loafers and railroad men. But tell me all about it. I'll try not to interrupt again."

"Mother waited in her room," began Clovis, after a pause, "while Wilbur and I talked. If I had hoped to win him back, Auntie Miller, I failed miserably. Oh, it was dreadful." She started up and walked the floor in her distress. "Everything was so commonplace, and people stared so, and the rain poured steadily. Men trooped in all wet and steamy, and the supper was horrible. Wilbur hardly tasted it. He said the whole place gave him the jim-jams."

I was dying to say something, but controlled myself. I have not been married twelve years for nothing.

"After supper," continued Clovis, "he put me in a closed electric and took me over the city. The streets are paved and it was much nicer than that stuffy hotel. He showed me where he roomed. It was in a beautiful house in the best part of the town. It was all lighted up, and I caught a glimpse of a grand piano and a young woman playing it. Wilbur said they were very select people. Auntie Miller, I am afraid Wilbur has grown a little snobbish."

"Very likely," I agreed. "A little snobbishness doesn't hurt anybody. A man had better be snobbish than to hang around saloons and pool halls. Was the girl at the piano fair to look upon?"

"I could not see her face, but you are mistaken if you think Wilbur is interested in her. He has just ceased to care. I told him that I loved him too well to give him up, that I absolutely refused to do so."

I looked at Clovis in amazement. She was a gentle little thing and had always been like wax in Wilbur's hands. Now she reminded me of those black-eyed Nemeses of fiction who poison, shoot or stab their faithless lovers.

"Is it well, Clovis, dear," I expostulated gently, "to bind him to his contract? What is an empty engagement if the heart is not in it?"

"Nevertheless, I will not release him," declared Clovis firmly. "Is a man to wreck a girl's whole life with impunity?"

"A man is a man," I said pungently. "He will not be driven; he will not be bound; he must be led. Clovis, listen. I know more about men than you do. I have worked harder to keep Henry's affections than I ever did to gain them. I have routed whole battalions of women, as it wefe, with banners flying. I know whereof I speak. Promise me to do absolutely as I tell you and you will have Wilbur fairly dragging you to the altar."

Clovis stared at me out of startled eyes.

"Tell me how," she implored. "Everybody knows that Mr. Miller is crazy about you. Why, he acts just like a lover—"

"Oh, Henry does very well," I interrupted. "A good husband is a gift of the gods. Still, one cannot be too discriminating nor yet look a gift horse in the mouth."

But Clovis was too troubled to notice this sarcasm.

"Wilbur says," she went on, as if to herself, "that if I will not break the engagement he will have to, in honor, abide by my decision; that he will marry me of course; but his heart is not in it. He does not care to discuss the future. He says it is out of the question for him to marry now; that he must think of his career. He—oh, Auntie Miller, I feel as if I had reached the end of the road. It is terrible to give your heart away and have it treated as Wilbur has treated mine. He loved me once; and now, after three years, I love him more than ever. Why has he changed?"

"The eternal question, Clovis. It is simply unanswerable. Men are men. Don't you remember the words of that silly old song:

'My love is like a little bird
That flits about from tree to tree;
And when he finds a fairer face
He then forgets to think of me.'"

"Their love is only skin deep then," said Cloivs bitterly.

"Apparently. Clovis, I am going to speak with the plainness of an old friend. Wilbur is too sure of you. You should have kept him guessing. Instead, you have worn your heart on your sleeve for daws to peck at—"

"Auntie Miller—"

"I assure you, Clovis," I grimaced in stern parent style, "that this hurts me worse than it does you. It is nothing to be ashamed of, an honest, pure and holy love like yours; but it feeds a man's vanity. It makes him sigh for other worlds to conquer. Now I am going to help you, Clovis; but you must do your part. And you must obey me absolutely. Will you?"

"Oh, absolutely!" cried the girl, a faint hope lighting her eyes. Unconsciously she dimpled, and her eyes met mine with an expression that was perilously near a wink. I took heart of grace. Here was promising material if—

How often that "if" intruded itself in the days that followed. I forbade Clovis to answer Wilbur's letters, which came tardily enough. I took her with me on shopping excursions that left her divided between alarm and sheer delight. I walked her to a famous oculist, who said hers was only a case of eye-strain, and who exchanged the hideous bowed spectacles for a nifty little pair that pinched her Grecian nose at just the most becoming angle. From these dangled a tiny gold chain, and a coquettish hairpin that lost itself in the coppery masses of her red-brown hair.

My greatest stroke of finesse was the elimination of Mother. I found it necessary to run down to Mapleton, and offered to take Clovis along.

"It will be your chance," I told her, "to beard the lion in his den, give him his ring, and set him free from bondage."

Clovis turned white and clung to a chair.

"Shall I—must I give him his freedom?" she begged pathetically.

"Offer it to him. Hand it to him indifferently. Ten to one, if you play the game, Clovis, he will not take it. If he does, he is not the man I think he is; nor do you want him. Do you want a captive for a husband?"

Clovis was trying on a new suit that had just been sent home. It was a beautiful creation and represented almost a whole month's salary; but it quite transformed her. The girl looked chic, stunning, irresistible. She said now as she passed an approving hand over it:

"Just think what the money in this suit would buy for our home."

"Leave the home furnishings to him, child," I admonished, "and to the wedding guests. The world will wag on if you don't have a cuckoo clock. This is the rose-time of your life. Youth will never come your way again; make the most of it."

"I will," she said quietly, and her chin lifted high. With her new clothes a subtle quality had crept into her voice and manner. A sort of aloofness as it were, that sat well upon her. Even her mother noticed the change, but she said nothing. I had seen to that with my usual finesse. Mrs. Harrow had weighed three husbands in the balances and found them wanting. She too, knew something about men.

The day we went to Mapleton the sun was shining bright. I had seen to that too. Clovis was lovely in the new suit that just touched the high tops of perfectly immaculate boots. Her hat was a Frenchy affair with a rose facing that deepened the clove pink of her cheeks. Looking at her, with her well-bred air, correct even to the bag which she carried and to the Perrin gloves, I felt that the battle was half won. Still—who could tell? Was she actress enough to conceal before Wilbur the old, adoring, tell-tale manner?

Henry saw us off, and I assure you his weather eye did full duty in Clovis's direction. This was indeed a good sign and augured well for our success.

"You're the prettiest thing, Chloe," said he admiringly, "that I ever saw—with one exception." And he bowed gallantly to me. Henry is very diplomatic; I will say that for him. And then, too, I did have on a new man-tailored, apple-green suit. As Josiah Allen's wife says, I looked well.

As we neared the station, I took the bull again, figuratively speaking, by the horns.

"We will stop at the Midway," I announced firmly.

"Certainly," said Clovis, in that same aloof, detached way.

Arriving at the Midway, we were shown to a room with appointments that surprised even me—and I am something of a traveler. There is something about the pomp, the brass and buttons of a big hotel that seems to lift one out of the commonplace. After we had looked about a bit and accepted ice-water and all the perquisites of our exalted postion with the laudable aim of getting all we could for our money, Clovis wrote a note on Midway stationery and dispatched it by messenger to Wilbur. Would be dine with Mrs. Miller and herself in the grill room of the Midway at six-thirty?

At ten minutes to that hour Clovis started toward the parlor; but I restrained her.

"Let him wait awhile," I said composedly. "It will do him good."

She looked at me and flushed. Strolling over to the desk she leisurely wrote a postcard. Plainly, Clovis was learning.

It was five minutes past the hour when we descended. As she swept through the lobby, coolly indifferent to the admiring stares, I could not but mentally contrast her to the shabby, drooping figure that had met Wilbur in the dingy parlor of the Pacific House. Wilbur was fidgeting uneasily in a chair, but he sprang up at sight of us and gazed as if he doubted his eyesight.

"Why, Clovis," I heard him gasp, with more eagerness in his tones than I had heard in a twelvemonth.

"How do you do, Wilbur," said Clovis coolly, giving him just the tips of her fingers in the perfectly fitting gloves.

Still dazedly, Wilbur followed us to a perfectly appointed table where obsequious, white-clad waiters stood at our elbows. A Hungarian orchestra was playing behind the palms. Clovis was radiant. Her rose-colored Georgette blouse half concealed, half revealed, the delicate throat and rounded arms. It was over the dessert that she carelessly stripped off a ring that blazed on her third finger.

"Here is your ring, Wilbur," she said steadily. "You do not mind Auntie Miller of course; she has shared our joys and sorrows so long. The—letters and presents I will send to you by express."

But Wilbur was pushing back the ring upon the slender finger.

"Clovis," he begged, "don't. I am not worthy of you, I know. I—I don't deserve you. Is—is there someone else?"

"No one in particular," said Clovis, and I was sure that her downcast eyes held a twinkle. "But I don't want to bind you to this contract, especially since your heart is not in it."

"Heart?" cried Wilbur. "Heart?" He was fairly devouring her with his eyes. I felt that only my presence and that of the diners kept him from seizing her in his arms. "Listen, Clovis." He leaned toward her and spoke almost in a whisper. "I was a fool, absolutely. Can't think what got into me. Why I am crazy—absolutely crazy about you."

"There is no doubt about your being crazy," said I pointedly. "Even the waiters are grinning."

We all laughed, which relieved the strain. Just then a lady with a lorgnette touched Wilbur on the shoulder. Another and a youngish-looking woman was with her, and they both looked, as Henry would say, all to the purple.

"Ah, gay deceiver," whispered the older woman playfully.

Wilbur gulped. Yes, actually, that is the only word in the English language that expresses it. The young woman was regarding him intently beneath half-veiled lids. She was undeniably pretty, but I detected in her make-up all the earmarks of a vampire. Nearly all women have them, but some to a marked extent. But Wilbur, recovering, grasped the older woman's hands beamingly.

"My fiancée, Miss Harrow," he introduced, with the pride of possession in his tones, "and our mutual friend, Mrs. Miller. Clovis, I am so glad to have you meet"—he grinned teasingly; it was plain that Hamlet was himself again—"my landlady, Mrs. Poindexter and her daughter, Miss Estelle."

"Landlady," deprecated Mrs. Poindexter, and countered gaily, "Doctor Farr is one of my hallroom boys." Laughing, they passed on, but I noticed that Estelle, from their table, watched us intently.

"What do you say," proposed Wilbur, looking yearningly at Clovis, "what do you say to the theatre or the movies or a drive—"

"Excuse me," I said, rising. "I am sure Henry would never permit of my gallivanting about in that way. He is very particular about the company I keep. But I would say, Clovis, when you care to return, that the latchstring of No. 24 is always out."

Now, of course, to tell the plain, unvarnished truth, I should have loved to go along for, if I have been married twelve years, I have not yet reached the point where desire fails and the grasshopper is a burden. But I knew my cards too well. So, after I had read everything readable in our room, including the rules and regulations, I fell into a quiet sleep, from which I was awakened by a most ecstatic squeeze. I opened my eyes to behold Clovis bending over me with a sheaf of American Beauties in one hand and a five-pound box of chocolates in the other.

"It's going to be in a month," she whispered shyly. "I have set the day. Wilbur insisted."

"H'm!" said I; "and what about the career?"

"He says he can't make good without me."

"And what about your job as County Superintendent?"

"Oh," smiled Clovis, "there are plenty of people ready to step into my shoes."

"H'm!" said I again; and added somewhat irrelevantly: "That Miss Poindexter is not a bad looker."

"Why, no," agreed Clovis magnanimously, "not at all. Wilbur admires her immensely. He says she has exquisite taste and is *so* sympathetic, and she is a wonderful musician; but his interest in her is merely—purely platonic."

"Ah, platonic," I echoed, and hid a cynical smile in the roses. Marriage brings out the cynical trait in women.

BEATTY

BY HENRY D. MUIR

Starting something he couldn't finish was nothing in Beatty's young life. With him, a motion to lay on the table was always in order, and the volume of unfinished business he accumulated would have done credit to a United States Senator.

WHEN Professor Jarvis sought out William J. Beatty, the village jack-of-all-trades, to assist him in erecting a little summer cottage on the swarded shore of Salmon Lake, he put into motion more psychology than he had taught the class of '13 during the whole long winter. Marvelous to note, some of this same psychology stirred the arid bosom of the professor himself. The reins taken up again in the fall, it was soon observed by the dullest of the dullards that the "exception" now covered at least five-eighths of the "rule." As "Dizzy Lizzie" lightly put it, there was "some curve to the prof."

Yet the initiatory greeting of the two was commonplace to a degree. The professor was on the dubious prowl for "labor;" Beatty was at home quietly spading the garden. Recommended by the station agent for the part, he amply looked it. Short but sturdy was Beatty, (not yet thirty, one might guess), with long, muscular arms, wiry legs, alert brown eyes, and the Celtic grin of good-nature. He was all gusto for the plans. Rome at last was to be built in a day. Yes, he would be "on the job" bright and early next morning and the chips would surely fly.

Certainly this was the man. Though "fiying chips," as an actuality, sailed but sparsely through the executive thoughts of the phlegmatic professor, (for his cottage was of the ready-cut, "built-in-a-day" type, shipped by freight as "lumber"), he accepted the metaphor with a gracious bow. Relief at this ending of the quest, blending with his native though diffident courtesy, even brought him to the threshold of a smile. The extra dollar per day demanded by the optimistic carpenter was a splatter merely in the stream of mutual enthusiasm.

Sure enough; Carpenter Beatty and his tawny-haired dog Pontiac, were found on the tracks at 8 A. M., just below the sleepy little depot, and briskly the work proceeded through the soft, rain-dashed April morning, the marked material being loaded into a stout coal-wagon and brought through the mud and sand to the shrubbed site overhanging the small but cove-indented lake that in all probability never had known the flap of a salmon. This omission, however, did not disturb the professor in the tiniest. He surveyed from atop the first load of his unadjusted cottage, the scene as it lay under light and lifting mist, and his gray eyes sparkled with anticipatory relish of quietudes and solitudes to come. Here, of a surety, the concluding meaty chapters of the Great Treatise would promptly and decisively be drilled into line. Reverie claimed him; and Beatty, descending with nimble leap, was loath to intrude. Still, time the golden, minting him dollars in its stately passage, was now slipping, unbridled; the minutes must have poise and direction; the wage must be earned. So the work speeded. By noon the professor could proudly present for novel self-inspection a worthy brace of mechanic's hands—browned, blistered, slivered. Under the ferreting eyes of Boss Beatty he was becoming "a competent.".

As for Beatty himself, that day and the next, he was a veritable "work glutton." Posts, sills, flooring, frame joists, rafters, roofing, were all as blocks to the ingenious babe. "That airy 'built in a day' blast of the 'ad' is in reality being sounded!"

commented the much pleased professor. "Beatty, you're a wonder!"

Promptly at noon the two would drop tools and lunch genially together under the trees or in a nook of the outlined structure. A distant whistle was sentry to the hour. Also, the 11:59, pausing, as in a bantering spirit of sarcasm, for scarce the fraction of a moment, at the sleepy little Salmon Lake station, was more dependable than watches.

These were the mellowing minutes that knit in an odd accord the professor and W. J. Beatty, carpenter. The yellow, volatile, worldly-wise Pontiac would watch them attentively, applauding alike, with bushy tail, the joke and the adage; his reward being well-merited scraps of sandwiches and crisp, round cakes, to which latter the man of brain was partial. Never tired was Beatty of more than liberally hinting at the peculiar brightness of his pet, and at times a chord of feeling would quaver deep in his throat as he related local persecutions. Even the tin-can-to-tail barbarism, it was shown, was not yet obsolete in these village byways. A draught of cool spring water, from a collapsible cup, always would refreshingly end this social half-hour, for Beatty would delay no longer; all impatient was he to be up and at the task. The professor marveled, but chuckled.

Was it that same dry, scholastic chuckle that ruffled the equanimity of Fortune? The inevitable hitch came. The adjustment and fitting of window-sashes was a network of perplexities and troubles. The front door was illy hung, and the edge was grossly butchered by a too-rash planing for retrieval. The weather turned drizzly and gray, with a persistent bitter wind from the north. Muffled curses drifted to the professor as he sorted boards for his temperamental carpenter. Furthermore, at indecent intervals, midst the havoc of draughts, a crashing of window panes enlivened and made memorable that dreary afternoon. All was more or less carelessly disguised botch or frankly plain bungle. Then came the discovery of a shortage of hardware. Off to the village store, through sleet and mud, went the professor, finding in this three-mile tramp, chill and biting though it was, the distinct period of relief in a sullen and ominous day.

Next morning Beatty figured out for the professor, on a smooth, fair strip of siding, an estimate for "extra" lumber needed for the house and for the building of an eight-by-ten foot shed. The latter clutched for breath; then regaining power of lung, petulantly endorsed the vastness of the heavens. Well he might; for almost to a third of the sum total of cost of material for his modest little "bower" came this blowzy and unproportional afterclap. Beatty was all sympathy. It was indeed preposterous, this sum total—a monstrous outrage—an insult alike to the professorial intelligence and to the layman's—a gross and obvious distortment of natural values. But still—here were the figures. They could not well prevaricate, could they? The basis of it all was the Lumber Trust. Hadn't the professor heard of the advance in the pernicious price-list last fall, and of the further nimble jump all along the line, from shingles to sills? Indignant as the carpenter was, it was plain that his good-nature had returned over night. A magnetic smile broke and broadened sunnily, and his pencil, lightly waved, was a baton to lead off the suspended orchestra of labor.

"That's the main point," mused Professor Jarvis, seating himself resignedly on the doorsill of his three-quarters-accomplished dwelling; "get it done; at all cost, get it done!"

So Beatty was given the commission, and the needed material was ordered by 'phone from a neighboring farmhouse. "I'll pay up for it now," generously exclaimed the professor, foreseeing additional stimulus in the sight and feeling of crisp greenbacks. He opened a large crinkled black leather pocketbook and freely but carefully counted out the bills. The eyes of his carpenter drooped in conventional and becoming modesty, but the money was taken frankly enough, with a furtive figure of language: "It's half-a dozen one way and six the other."

None of the villagers made even a polite pretence of being astonished next day, at a dolorous tale of abandonment and breach of contract. True, the omnivorous rural ear was readily lent in the post-office-general-store-barber-shop-laundry-branch-and-what-not; \ but attention at keenest was perfunctory, with relieved reversions to the topic of weather. A few courteous souls sauntered so far into boredom as to congratulate the professor on not yet having settled in full the wage score with his carpenter.

"He'll be back for the bucks, all right, all right," prophesied Tom Runkle, the easy-going barber; "and he'll do up the work, too, will Beatty—in his own good time and slapdash, makeshift fashion."

But is was billboard evident that this plaint was more than a twice-told tale. Old Hiram White, indeed, never lifted eyes from the *Salmon Lake Star*. "Oh, Beatty!" was all he gently ejaculated, and he shifted an indifferent ear.

Bruce Hinkleburg, the young doctor, smiled reminiscently. "He started a garage once for this dear, blue, accursed devil of mine!" he called from the pavement, mopping a grimed brow.

"He nearly painted a house for me," volunteered another, nonchalantly. And so it went.

In a few illuminant minutes the professor had gathered that his minus one of the chips and shavings was also a paper hanger, a machinist, a tinner, a gas fitter, an electrician, a blacksmith, a well digger, a rubber worker, a cooper, a chauffeur, and a freight engineer.

"Oh, yes, Beatty can do everything!" chirped little Sammy Esentrot, frankly voicing the thought of a perk-eared ring of admirative juvenility.

The professor was becoming case-hardened. It did not greatly amaze him to hear that Beatty's crowning ambition was to go into vaudeville. Said the boyish editor of the *Star*, casting the eye of approval at old Hiram, "I remember, once he brought to me the opening sentimental lines of a song called 'The Only Little Girl,' and really, it was fair sort of 'dope' as far as it went, but—"

"It didn't go far," tendered the professor, wearily.

"Correct, my friend. There was just a verse and a half of it, and it never was finished."

Before night, it came authentically to ear, that Carpenter Beatty had contracted to paint a house and barn, and a store, over in Duck Cove, and had already briskly begun the new labor. "Working like a very Indian," paradoxically added the grinning newsbringer.

That settled it. Back to his lumber pile trudged the disillusioned professor. He now held the key to much mysterious ciphering. So, then, this bit of arithmetic on the shingles, when given the market quotation on boiled linseed oil, was etched as against "daylight and champaign!" and yon smeared network of figures on the unpainted door-panel? M-m-m! Yes, truly, this was capped with the price of white lead! And these scribblings on plasterboard—enough! Why pile evidence? Plain it was that Jack-of-all-trades had not vamoosed under the hot and goading spur of a moment's impulsion.

The wide calm and piny fragrance of the evening, however, were not to be resisted. The happy little lake was music to encircle and foil a vanguard from any savage breast. A cot, an oil stove, and a few simple articles of furniture had arrived from the village with the last of his lumber, and after arranging these as orderly as was becoming in a makeshift encampment, the professor strolled, moodily but insensibly mellowing, down to the shore. Where a spring trickled thinly between rocks into a natural trough, he filled his water-bucket, then relaxed where he could lazily command lights and shadows—the flow, blend, intermediate play—in short, the sunset.

Thus engaged, there came to him a splashing among the reeds, and presently emerged the wet-coated Pontiac, nosing along the hummocks and shaking himself vigorously. Here certainly was a friend. The professor was about to "Hi, Ponty!" when he caught the flutter of a bright-blue dress, and a figure, lithe and young, darted to the uncouth animal, and arms of a witching suppleness were wrapped unceremoniously around the tawny, shaggy neck. Sobbing—no mistake; then, down the breeze, and like the spirit-voice of it, a distinct, "Oh, Beatty! Beatty!"

"By the Dæmon of Socrates!" ejaculated the professor, "here's another bit of Beatty's unfinished work!"

Guardedly he coughed. The blonde head bobbed on the instant, but behind fading flush of cheek and brow lay no confusion, or even annoyance; the long, delicately-curved eyelashes, tear-stained though they were, canopied a friendly and half-amused light. A recognizant moment, tense and silent, had acted the magician.

"Oh, I know of your worries, Professor, and perhaps you have guessed mine."

"Miss Esentrot, I believe—Flossie?"

"Yes. Did the lumber come? Beatty ordered it, you know, from our house."

"Yes, my lumber came all right, being material; but that scamp of a carpenter, being human—where is he?"

"Truly; being human—and Beatty—where is he?"

"Do you advise mere drawing and quartering, Miss Esentrot, or shall I freeze him to the marrow-bone with cool hauteur?"

"Neither, Professor; you must treat him as you do the sun, the wind, the wave. Take him as he is and must be; he's Beatty!"

A tremble was in the voice. The professor leaped into the breach. He had lurked and loitered for it from the start.

"As you do! You know him—and take him as he is!"

"Yes!" The girl held up a diamonded finger.

"Indeed—so far!" exclaimed the professor. "Yet what does it signify—being from Beatty?"

"Nothing!" agreed Flossie; then, reminiscently: "There's been Mary, Barbara, Cecilia, Helen, Georgia, Doris, Elizabeth, Isabelle and Kate, to my poor, certain, present indifferent knowledge; who besides, the Lord knows!"

"But—ah, well! and oh, hades!—why?—Why the—"

"Haven't I told you—he's Beatty?" The deep blue eyes sparkled, then narrowed. "And none of them count, Professor; all straw-girls—not one *knew* Beatty; *we* know him!"

"Perhaps," mused the professor, dubiously. "Well, for an initiatory illustrative lesson, Miss Flossie, how's this? I was informed this afternoon, in Petersen's, that a boathouse had been planned by a set of young city fellows and work will begin as soon as may be. Even now they are scouring the fields for labor. Soon, glancing upward, they'll light upon Beatty, poised like a young god, between heaven and earth. The dripping, slapdash paint-brush will slip glibly to sod—will it not, Miss Flossie? And anon these woods will ring with the recovered music of saw and hammer—but not for me—no!"

The girl was radiant.

"Proof enough, Professor! We know our Beatty!"

The frank enthusiasm of his audience was catching. Almost back to the sophomoric slipped the professor.

"But how about our Beatty?"

"Oh, if—"

"Not at his own game, Miss Flossie; that, I'll allow, lies beyond Hercules; but we must contrive to get him on the hip somehow—and soon. This much looms plain, always: First, he must supplement and ratify your tiny pathetic diamond with the simpler coil of convention—you catch me? Second, he must complete my little cottage. Properly placed, are they not, Miss Flossie? One naturally would follow the other?"

"Surely, Professor! The honeymoon train will wait—my heart's word on that. It's a bargain!"

A quizzical look swept over and rejuvenated the middle-aged face of the arch-plotter.

"One might think, fellow conspirator, and be pardoned for the erroneous thought, that we had succeeded in an admirable tangling of snarled lines."

"Yes, and suppose I were that one?"

"I refuse to suppose it, Miss Flossie. Two troubles make a bubble, you know; and a bubble is the sport of the wind."

The professor's raillery found a worthy teammate.

"Your logic, sir, is convincing. But a sign is in order—is it not—for augury of the event? To be strictly proper, shouldn't there be an Omen?"

"Well thought out, sibyl! Here, Ponty! That's a dog. You shall act in one the Athenian Owl and the Roman Eagle for us, Ponty. Chevalier Miss Esentrot to the home gate, and the battle royal is ours; dog me, if you dare, you mongrel, and all's lost!"

Hands were clasped and shaken, however, with a firm fervor that gave the light words allowance. On the roadway, vivid with the budding hawthorns, they parted—and Pontiac darted ahead of the girl, keen on a scent.

"All's well, you see!" called the professor, half-turning. Then, slowly: "And must it always be Beatty, Miss Flossie?"

"Beatty, always!"

"To know one's own mind is by no means a cheap or a common attribute," soliloquized the bookman, dryly, as he sauntered back to the cottage, switching verdure here and there, for emphasis (a bit unproportionate it might have seemed) to his trite and passing commentary.

The campcot-and-oilstove regime was heroically endured. Desultory carpenter work followed, but the professor did not push matters. Afternoons were given to fishing from a small canoe, or were even more leisurely passed in musing or reading under the oaks and elms. "Beatty's engaged for the job; let Beatty do it!" was the day's matins and vespers.

Well it was that the professor, like most great men, left a wide and unannotated margin for the workings of the twin-gods of Luck. Under the racing light clouds of the third afternoon following the "compact" with Miss Esentrot, he was canoeing down the shelvy shore of the lake to reconnoiter, as was now his frequent custom, the site for the proposed new boathouse, when the puffings of a detested motorcycle—how he hated the pert, I'm coming-clear-the-track-for-me bravado of it!—drew his glance to the narrow cliff-road, winding white and brown, sheer but not high, above the beach. No mistaking the clear-cut Celtic profile of this devil-straddling man; 'twas he—the kernel and cud of his thoughts!

The roving eye of Beatty already had noted him. There was a blithe gesture from the cycle, which was courteously acknowledged by poised paddle. Almost on the movement, the professor chilled.

"Look out! look out!" he shouted.

Not too promptly was the warning volleyed. The little sun-bonneted child, hooded from all but a new world of wild-flowers, was not to be signaled from the track. Beatty did not hesitate. He swerved, with instant decision; and safely enough, so it seemed to the observer below, he was tearing through the cresting gravel of the embankment, when suddenly there was a crumbling, and into the lake shot man and machine. Fortunately for Beatty, he was hurled clear of his wreckage.

A few swift, deft dips of paddle, and the spluttering struggler was collared.

"Hurt, Beatty?"

"No! but—" came gaspings and a frantic swirling of arms.

"So—not of the amphibia! How odd!" was the dry and cruel comment. But anxious line and lights had lifted from the Roman features and an honest relief lay plain. The grip loosened.

"Wha-a-a-t!" sputtered the surprised Beatty. There was a futile, furious, clumsy splashing, and he dipped frothily under. That gaunt and iron arm, however, was ready for him on the rebound. The little boat tossed tipsily.

"Man! get me out of this—and I'll finish it!"

"Finish what?" inquired the professor, curiously.

"House,—what else?"

"Oh, that doesn't matter, Beatty; forget it. Hold still, now, or down you'll go. Beatty, you're a hero—but I certainly am wroth."

"I know, everyone herearound tips me that same spiel."

"Stow the house, Beatty. But, truly, I'm wounded at this last neglect. Why am I not invited to the wedding?"

"Wedding? Wha-a-t in—"

"Your's—and Miss Flossie's."

"Well, of all—"

A careless relaxing of fingers was here manifest—perhaps for that firmer reclutch which clamped at the unexpectedly cheerful: "All right, Professor; you're invited."

"Quite as it should be, Beatty—though an eleventh hour invite, if ever there was one; but I'm not of the ultra-sensitive. I need not remind you, Beatty, that the gay little event happens this eve at 8.30, in Farmer Esentrot's front parlor?"

"A man isn't likely to forget his wedding-date," snapped Beatty.

The canoe had now drifted down the wind to some little distance from shore. Lying almost prone and catching his man firmly, the professor analyzed the situation, and, well satisfied, let the waves work their will. The paddle was lost, and water slopped freely aboard, but inevitably they were destined to beach on a little shrubbed promontory, matched to a sapling for this toy lake.

A few fishers and strollers (plain time killers) from the unpretentious but happily-conducted Wren's Nest, were banding their forceless forces here, shooting the usual heroic directions, and allowing matters and moments to drift. The professor with his gripping burden desired nothing more of them. Presently Beatty grounded. His "All right, now!" was welcomed by the strained arm.

A ready line of brawn now flashed from the group of embryo heroes.

"No case, this, for the pulmotor, friends," remarked the professor genially, amid congratulations. "Just a casual encounter and confidential greeting of Titans. Ah, here's more luck!"—spying little Sammy Esentrot. Two brief notes were promptly scrawled in pencil and a bounding, silver-jingling messenger dispatched.

"Now, Beatty, we'll see what's left of the cycle, before we join the Esentrots for supper. And you certainly need a shift of raiment! Why, yes, you can crawl into a suit of mine, turning up coat sleeves and trousers a trifle. How fortunate, Beatty; —over at the cottage lies a certain dusty suitcase containing what our foremost and still unhackneyed society writers choose to call 'the conventional black'!"

At Peterson's next morning, the name of Beatty, so lately slumped, commanded again the par of pricked-eared attention on the conversational exchange. Even Old Hiram laid aside his *Star* for this latest pert and uninked item of village news. Spread as it might, conjecture bumped blank walls. Beatty, the uncapturable, captured,—and by little Flossie of the Esentrots! Unbelievable! The young editor rubbed hands gleefully as he anticipated Friday's issue and a front-page article, politely sardonic, under the caption, "A Life Contract," suggested perhaps by Bruce Hinkleburg's remark that this mysterious bolting into matrimony might have been a sudden and desperate subterfuge to escape the fulfilment of the boathouse obligation contracted in the antique mist of yesterday.

So colloquy buzzed in the village. But what train-length of packed surprises might equal the professor's overpowering solitary one, when W. J. Beatty, carpenter, appeared on his partial-threshold that morning, shortly before eight, and announced that work must proceed!

"But," cried the astonished man, "but, consider, Beatty, you're now of the order of St. Benedict; off you must pack instanter on the bridal tour, in obedient pursuance of honeymoon laws. Besides, there's the painting at Duck Cove; also your contract on the boathouse."

"Oh, don't worry, Professor," responded Beatty; "boathouses and honeymoons will get their innings. It's six one way and half-a-dozen the other."

"Good-humor is certainly a valuable asset," commented the professor, audibly reflective. "Well, Beatty, what next?"

"We'll put in the porch pillars," said Beatty.

WARDENS OF THE CHAPARRAL

BY ROY LYNDON SHARPE

Out in the chaparral an unusual power watched over Mug Slaughter, aiding and abetting him in his high crimes and misdemeanors and keeping him out of the clutches of the police.

MUG Slaughter was booked again for misdemeanor. How many times his name had been entered under that category on the blotter at the central station no one in the department could have told without consulting the records. A predilection for burning liquids had marked him with a lurid bulb of a nose and drooping purple pouches beneath the eyes, and his frequent offenses against the statutes, made and provided, had fired a majority of the down-town squad with a consuming eagerness to "send him across." But invariably his trespasses had fallen just short of the laws defining felony.

Slaughter was classified by the police as a mild, mournful sort of knave, who, at gaining a livelihood without severe physical endeavor, exhibited a facility that was almost the equivalent of a fine art. It had been the observation that he held two dominant aversions—unusual hazard and honest toil. Often he had been seen teetering at the vital line, to cross which he would have been yielding himself up to his traditional enemy, and always some dispensation had intervened to save him.

The Chief was petulant that morning at sight of Slaughter. "Put him on the chain-gang; make him feed the concrete mixer till his tongue hangs out a foot," he decreed. "Prod him for a couple of days; after that don't watch him too closely, understand? Show the old chronic what our medicine is like; then any member of this department who prevents his escape will be given a beat so far out in the suburbs that he never will see the bright lights again."

The Chief's formula attained its object, for Slaughter could not endure the blistered palms, aching spine and cramped limbs that seized him before the close of his first day with a shovel. Watching his opportunity the second day, he eluded the guard and took to the hills back of the city, where for several hours he sought comfort and concealment in the chaparral. Then spurred on by a high-grade thirst, he made his way through the undergrowth, by a devious route as remote from the public thoroughfare as the topography of region would permit, to the Arroyo Tavern, on the Temple Canyon road, where the proprietor, Shot Flattery, a companion and partner of Slaughter's former years, grudgingly granted him sanctuary.

"If you're going to put up here you'll have to bring something into camp besides a hold-over," followed Flattery's salutation. It was plain that he was slightly embarrassed. "But don't pull off anything too near here—and keep that face of gloom in the background. If it ever got out in front it would put the jinx on the dump."

Slaughter, dejected, marveled inwardly at the changes that prosperity had wrought in the manner of his old friend. Then he inventoried the tavern and its environs—a place to eat and sleep and drink; steep slopes and sharp ravines overgrown with laurel, chaparral and manzanita, where a man desiring to avoid publicity could curl himself up in complacent security and tell the law's inquisitive minions to go hang. In the absence of a more promising alternative he accepted the programme, meanwhile considering the most effective plan of procedure against the convenient flocks and gardens, a mental operation that comprehended Martin Silent's poultry plant, which he had reconnoitered subconsciously from a distance on the outward journey that day.

A few nights later, Silent was stirred by a signal of manifest distress from the direction of his poultry-houses—a high-keyed staccato medley with an accompaniment of flapping wings. In his slippers and bathrobe he sprinted along the row of enclosures until he located the point of the alarm, forced the gate, threw open the door and flashed a light. He had a glimpse of two small furry creatures that almost brushed his unclad calves as they lumbered over the sill, slid under the fence and trotted leisurely up the slope into the chaparral.

The earthen floor of the shed was littered with feathers, and four of Silent's choicest broilers lay in one corner, in their last flutter. Fresh earth from a narrow excavation under the sill of the house and a similar trench under the surrounding wire-net fence explained how the animals had entered.

"The impertinent burrowing beggars were about as large as poodles, with black-and-white stripes and bushy tails," was the description that Sam Lurch received the next day from Silent, who wore a harried air.

"Foxes, chaparral foxes," Lurch pronounced. "Black with white stripes and plumy tails; usually come at night; partial to young chickens." Lurch, farm advisor for that portion of the county, was accustomed to hearing from Silent the tribulations of a man new to the problems of the poultry-raising industry, and occasionally the young expert was tempted to make entertainment of the occasion. "Good thing you didn't get rough with them, for a chaparral fox has a bad breath when he's mad or excited."

"Really? How is one to keep the blackguards away?"

"Put cans on them. No, I'm not chaffing. Open a few tomato cans, not by cutting in a circle around the top, but by gashing with a knife from the center of the top radially. Push the points of tin inward far enough to leave an opening almost large enough for the extended fingers of one hand. Bait the cans with bacon rinds and place them where the foxes come at night. They'll poke their noses in for the bacon and the sharp points will grip their necks. Naturally the harder they pull back the more firmly the points will plant themselves. Unable to see with the cans over their heads, your foxes will wander aimlessly away and get lost."

To Martin Silent, over from England less than two years, his new surroundings, and the poultry business in particular, presented many things mysterious and novel. Lurch's identification and recommendation in this emergency were no more extraordinary than they had been when the Silent fowls had shown symptoms of attacks successively by hawks, rats, bobcats, mites, roup, gapes and other units in that numerous host that preys upon the feathered family, and when later in the day he started upon his return to Temple Canyon, the poultry man had in his wagon an assorted lot of goods in tins and a can-opener. That night his lacerated fingers and a half-dozen open cans, baited and disposed about the yard, told of the diligence with which he had followed instructions, although the prowlers did not reappear that night, nor for many nights following.

"Always some ripping new pest to look out for," Silent complained to Lurch three months later, after finding where an unexpected toll had been taken from his White Leghorns. "A blooming chick appears to have more enemies than an infant, but fortunately, by this time, I know the worst of them." Which merely serves to illustrate the innocence of Mr. Silent, for Mug Slaughter, in the course of three months, had levied against the flourishing colonies in Temple Canyon more disastrously than all the hawks, bobcats, foxes and maladies combined, yet Silent was wholly and serenely unaware of Mug Slaughter's existence.

Wild creatures of the chaparral found the heavy undergrowth, where it terminated abruptly a few yards up the slope from Silent's plant, an ideal cover from which to train longing, furtive eyes across the narrow intervening strip of meadow-land upon the tempting fryers that were taking on plumpness in the woven-wire enclosures below. Similarly, Slaughter discovered in it a mask well calculated to render his operations safe and not too arduous. When the weather favored, he drowsed in a bower that he had chosen under a live oak, where, through a fringe of thicket, he could command a view of Silent's living-house and the various poultry-yards. He gathered early a working knowledge of the signs that would tell him what was going on, particularly those forecasting the temporary absences of the proprietor.

He preyed upon Silent's chickens with exceeding caution, and always with the consciousness that forcible entry of the poultry-houses constituted a felony. When Silent was away, the chickens he selected were snared by means of a wire loop and deftly removed from their enclosures. Sometimes for three or four days Silent did not leave the place, and Slaughter had recourse then to a deeper strategy that his sluggish brain had evolved.

Often the gates were opened and the chickens ran at large, feeding upon the plant and insect life. When they strayed to his side of the meadow, Slaughter was impressed by the possibilities. At last he had an inspiration—a fishing-hook and line.

He found diversion in the antics of the first chicken that gulped a hook, and under a force that it could not resist, as the line was gathered in, hand-over-hand, felt itself drawn forward with a rush, wings beating a futile protest, mandibles distended grotesquely, unable to issue an effectual outcry, and jerked at length into the concealment of the bushes.

About this performance, there was nothing to attract Silent's attention, so Slaughter was able to abstract the fowls of his choosing so adroitly that their owner did not notice their disappearance, or if he did miss them, he attributed their loss to other marauders.

From time to time, Slaughter also made incursions upon the gardens and orchards in the other direction, and always the fruits of his foraging were served up to motorists and other wayfarers who halted for refreshments at the Arroyo Tavern, whereby Shot Flattery became the chief beneficiary. The arrangement was altogether satisfactory to Slaughter, but it made Flattery uneasy to have his old associate about. Also, a measure of success in business had developed in him an attitude of intolerance towards Slaughter and his frailties, which the landlord of the tavern exhibited with increasing emphasis as the weeks wore on.

"You're making me take too many chances," he finally complained to Slaughter. "Some one will get suspicious, and my joint will be blamed for everything that has ever gone wrong out this way. Why don't you get out of the petty larceny class? Blow a safe or stick somebody up—put your time against something worth while."

"I might go over."

"That isn't what holds you back," Flattery bristled. "You'd rather crawl than work, but let me tell you something: from now on I'll not be your 'fence' for anything but the coin, and I'll give you twenty-four hours to kick in with the first instalment."

Flattery had meant to impose an insurmountable task as a means of getting rid of Slaughter, but at that instant an idea altered his plans. He adopted a conciliatory tone, at the same time producing a bottle and glasses; thus completely disarming the old inebriate, to whom resentment was an unknown and foreign quality.

"Understand how it is, Mug," Flattery purred. "If I don't keep up a certain front here, I'll lose my best trade; besides, I have a couple of partners who make me account for every two-bit piece, so you see I can't run the place the way I'd like to. But I'll tell you how we'll get around that so you can stay on here, keeping out of sight, with a good bed and plenty to eat and drink. Go after the chicken man's coin—he keeps a wad of it in his shanty." And with persuasive eloquence, Flattery outlined a campaign.

While they talked, Lorry Mills was napping at a table in an adjoining room, with only a muslin partition intervening.

An hour later he slipped out at the rear of the tavern and bent impatient steps across the hills toward the central police station in the city, where, by virtue of an inquisitive disposition and a desire to be on terms of amity with the powers, he frequently regaled the Chief with bits of information about the universe.

Reluctantly the Chief adopted the suggestion. "A dozen times in the last year we've been just at the point of catching Mug with the goods," he objected. "I expect he'll find an out at the last minute this time; but we'll give him another run."

That night there were unusual proceedings in the vicinity of Silent's poultry ranch. As the proprietor was eating his late evening meal, his absorption with his table fare kept him from seeing four men on horseback as they crossed the clearing a few hundred yards above the house and pushed their way into the undergrowth back of the hen-houses.

About the same time, five or six small animals, marked from their ears to the tips of their broad tails with parallel bars of black and white, were poking curious noses out of the chaparral, their nostrils contracting and dilating busily under jet beads of eyes. They were in quest of supper, and had picked up the scent of live poultry. When Silent later stepped out in the gathering dusk to close and fasten the chicken-house doors for the night, he discovered one of the animals, which had ventured almost up to one of the sheds and was scampering back. The discovery prompted the poultry man to look about for the cans which he had prepared months before; also to readjust their points and apply fresh bait.

As darkness settled, Mug Slaughter at the Arroyo Tavern bar was shuddering and displaying symptoms of a failing resolution. "This is going to be poor business, breaking into a man's house and robbing him at night; besides, I can't very well do a trick of this kind by myself," he deprecated. And he conjured a score of other arguments against the enterprise, which Flattery answered with more drinks, cajolery, praise, denunciation, and at last a threat of bodily violence.

"Let me put it off till tomorrow night, when I'm sober," Slaughter pleaded.

"You're never sober. You'll get busy tonight. Get his coin. Don't do anything worse than that unless you have to, but if he wakes up mean and starts anything you know what to do."

"Shot, you come along. I'll do the work, but I want you with me."

"And leave this place alone? What are you talking about! Say, if there's any more debate about this, I'm going to heave you out of here on your neck."

Adequately subdued, Slaughter reeled out of the barroom and started for the Silent domicile, taking his position by the sentinel eucalyptus trees against the sky and groping mechanically for the somber trail. As he stumbled along, his eyes more and more adapting themselves to the meager light and making out objects about him, he gained courage. His senses were swimming in an alcoholic fog that blinded him to everything but the task ahead. Abandoned were the fear and dread of penal servitude acquired in the years of living by his wits. For the time he was entirely within the control of Flattery's stronger will, and moved in accord with the latter's sinister suggestions, which were reverberating incessantly in his ears.

Disregarding all the rules of prudence, Slaughter emerged noisily from the underbrush directly back of Silent's poultry enclosure, pausing at the edge of the clearing only long enough to tie a handkerchief about the lower part of his face and to observe that there was no light in the bungalow. He halted again at one of the poultry-houses and rocked for a brief interval in its shadow. An open space lay between him and the bungalow. At one hand stood Silent's wagon, near a corral where horses were munching hay. Reassured, he careened across the yard to the house, fumbled at a window, found the sash lifted, the opening screened. He passed around to the front of the house, trying the door, and along the other side. The windows there were all fastened down.

He meditated briefly. In his pocket was a short, blunt instrument with which he could force any ordinary window or door; also with a knife-blade he could easily cleave his way through the screen, but instinctively, and in spite of his whiskey, he considered the danger of exposing himself before a window. A door would be preferable.

Turning the corner, he lurched aside unsteadily, startled by the scraping sound of metal against the earth. In the darkness he could dimly make out the movement of a small, shadowy object that was executing odd figures about the yard, so near his feet that Slaughter had come within a few inches of treading it down. As he hesitated, a similar rattle of metal reached him from another direction. He peered about uneasily. Twenty or thirty feet farther out in the yard, more plainly to be seen, another creature was moving. An instant later, he discovered a third. He swung about and faced a fourth by the side of the house, near where he had passed. They were on all sides of him; all of them going through fantastic evolutions, alternately advancing and retreating, changing directions abruptly or wheeling in narrow circles, plunging their noses into the turf with a metallic clink at each movement.

Slaughter swayed in his tracks. To his excited vision, the yard was alive with black-and-white creatures. One of them charged him. He kicked out at it desperately. His toe came in clattering contact with a quart-size fruit-can with a driving force that sent the creature spinning like a black-and-white pin-wheel. Instantly the atmosphere was charged with a pestilential affluvium, soul-searching in its penetration, staggering in its offensive potency.

"Wow-hoo!" Slaughter started a succession of shrill echoes. Gasping, flinging his arms before him, he bounded through the riot of evil fumes to the wagon, and skidded over the side, grovelling in the bottom of the bed on his stomach.

Hatless, the handkerchief that had been intended for a disguise stripped away and hanging about his throat, blinking violently, his face distorted and working with terror, he was on his knees, clutching the seat of the vehicle, when four men slipped out of the undergrowth and closed in upon him, two of them flashing pocket lamps as they ran.

"What's all this bally noise?" Martin Silent in pajamas emerged from the bungalow and shuffled across the yard.

"S-s-skunks! Hu-hu-hundreds of s-s-skunks! Di-di-digging with ti-tin-horns!" Slaughter chattered. Delirium tremens was gripping him and his voice broke to a piercing falsetto as he wailed: "Keep 'em away! Keep 'em away!"

"Stop that yap and come out of there." A man in a drab suit was climbing into the wagon. In the flash of a pocket-lamp, Slaughter beheld the Chief reaching for him. He straightened himself up with a sudden movement that projected him out of his retreat. He struck across the wagon-tongue, caught one toe in the whiffletrees, the other on the neckyoke, and continued his flight on all fours until he could gather himself.

"Let him go," chanted the Chief, as two of the men moved to head him off. And Slaughter rounded the poultry-sheds at prodigious strides, crashing into the chaparral a moment later.

"I say," Martin Silent began, "we have the beggars canned sure enough."

"What do you mean, canned?" some one asked.

"Don't you see? They tried for the bait, and they can't disengage the cans."

"It's plain you're not aware of all that's been going on around here tonight," a man in drab growled.

"It was Mug, all right, and we almost had him," Lorry Mills volunteered weakly.

The Chief was clinging at a discreet elevation to the side of the wagon, one foot on the brake-beam, grimly observing the diminutive, eery figures of black and white as they waltzed and capered. For an instant he glared ominously across the wagon at Mills, then shook his head.

"Come to think of it, you haven't the head to frame up a thing of this sort. I guess my original surmise holds good—the devil's wardens are still on watch over that old pirate, even out here in the chaparral."

RAM SINGH AND ENGEL SAHIB

BY WILL KENYON

Here are two inseparable truths: A keeper should be judged by the animals he keeps. A man should know better than to poke eternally with a stick at caged beasts that have never known the bromidic influence of peanuts or other narcotics.

THE Lascars were butchering a sheep in the forepeak galley, and the warm scent of fresh blood stirred up pandemonium among the jungle folk in the cages lashed to the deck by the fore-hatches. The sea was a lake of oil and barren of a ripple, save where the big twin screws threw astern a long lane of swirling, bubbling phosphorescent flame. It was stifling hot—the decks were like hot plates—and there was scarcely enough breeze to blow out a match as I joined Max Schlieman in the bows.

It was Schlieman's business to ransack creation, poking into and out of more out-of-the-way corners of the earth than civilization dreams exist, gathering wild beasts, unheard-of birds known only to Audubon societies, and weird, uncanny "freaks" for American dealers. He was a strange man, a German, with odd tricks of speech and many surprising customs borrowed from Hindoo and Mussulman and the savage of remote hill countries. He was altogether impossible from a civilized standpoint, but his rich and varied experiences dimmed the Arabian Nights for me.

"Good!" said Max, pointing with his pipe to the cages below. "Dose fellows are yelling fine down dere; raw blood brings back dreams of liberty, when they chase and make the kill themselves. Yell and scream, unhappy ones."

As if in answer, the deep-throated roars of Bengal tigers rose in unison with the cat-like shrieks of leopards from the far-off Himalayas; half a thousand of the little monkeys that die of homesickness gibbered obscenely, while a fiendish ou-rang-outang rattled the grating of his cage and yelled like a soul in torment, until the mighty elephants rocked against their chains and trumpeted in fear. A loathsome hyena laughed as a maniac.

It was a bizarre ensemble we looked down upon in the thick tropical dusk. The lithe, dark-skinned Lascars, naked save for a breech-cloth, grimy with coal dust or glistening with oil from the engines; the huge elephants swaying to and fro in the gloom, the serpent-like trunks ceaselessly winnowing wisps of hay over their broad backs; and the unseen children of forest and jungle voicing their unrest. It was hot beyond belief, and the pace of the ship fouled the air with reek of wild beasts and the smell of the East from the Lascars' foul kennel in the fore-peak.

"Lascars!" grunted Schlieman, gazing enviously at the half-dozen naked forms sprawled in the bows and sleeping peacefully through heat and uproar; "I belief a Lascar could sleep in hell and haf sweet dreams. Ram Singh! Ram Singh *ho!*" he shouted above the din to his native helper, "turn a hose on the *hathis*—elephants—to make them cool. So!"

Gradually the uproar subsided and gave place to the orderly, accustomed noises of the night—the swish of the oily sea on the forefoot, the muffled tramp of the engines, the clanging half hourly note of the ship's bell, and the monotonous foreign chatter of the Lascar crew. I lay watching the heat-lightning play all around the horizon, and must have been drowsing, for Schlieman's voice startled me.

"Last time I bring along some specimens to New York," he said, "our flag was flying at half-mast. You see?—somebody haf died. Is it too hot to listen why that soul flew away, or will I tell you a tale which only we two know, Ram Singh and I? Listen, then, my friend.

"When I was collecting that time I travel like the Wandering Jew. Got im Himmel! I freeze in the Himalayas, and nearly lose my life falling from the Roof of the World, to get some snow leopards; later I was roast alive in jungles. All in the day's work. For a year I barely existed—I was a pariah dog—and it was good to come to Calcutta again, where I picked up little Ram Singh. Like it? My friend, so soon as I leave the smell of the East behind me at Port Said, I do not live until it is in my nostrils again. Yes; I come back always to answer the call. Europe and America are too sanitary—too clean.

"I loaded my cages and elephants on a German freighter at Calcutta. She looked like Noah's Ark—if you belief that extraordinary cruise—and you would not suspect there was a million dollars in burlap, jute, hides and precious woods under the hatches. I tear my hair when I think of such a trip. It was so hot the decks were like stove-lids; and I sit still and see four tigers, two leopards, a white elephant—a giant tusker—die en route, to say noddings of a hundred monkeys. Monkeys, liddle monkeys, drive me crazy. As ryots die of cholera, so die liddle monkeys of what books call nostalgia; but it is what we know as heimweh—homesickness. It is as deadly as a cobra poison, only slower.

"Der second officer, Engel, was a man with a pig's head. Lombroso would haf called him a mattoid; certainly his brow, chin and ear were unlovely. He was a cruel man; and before I know him three days I see he will make trouble for me and the poor helpless beasts. For hours he loafed by the cages, day and night, poking sticks and laughing, until my beasts get wild, insane rage and yell like demons. Den he would go away laughing—this great black devil, with his enormous misshapen ears of a degenerate. I haf seen him throw his head back and laugh when he succeeds to make a liddle monkey cry like a baby. He was not a man; he was a devil, and I hate him for the black heart in his breast. We haf words, hot, ugly words, when he will not keep away from my beasts.

"One day Ram Singh was cleaning out cages with a great iron poker eight feet long, and he dropped it. Engel was standing behind—Ram Singh could not know—and the poker smashed Engel's great toe. He went white as a bone from pain and anger, and he smote poor Ram Singh to the deck like a bullock under a pole-ax. Herr Gott! I saw that man-beast grin like a great ape and limp away.

"Yet anoder time Engel strike Ram Singh—in front of Rajah's cage. Rajah was a glorious Bengal tiger taken in the Ganges delta; fifteen feet from tip to tip, if you will belief me. Engel was standing there poking, poking, always poking with a long stick. If it was accident, I cannot say for true, but Ram Singh staggered past and spill filthy slops over Engel's fresh white suit; and he look up at him, grinning. Then Engel struck a second time, full on the mouth, and liddle Ram Singh went down like a stone in a well. He lay so close to Rajah's cage the carrion breath was hot in his face, and the big beast roared just like those fellows tonight when they smell sheep's blood, for Ram Singh was all bloody.

"Ram Singh lay there looking death out of his hazel eyes at Engel, who laughs and turns away on his heel before I could kill him. Gott! How mad was I! But Ram Singh spat out t'ree teet', and with the taste of his own blood in his mouth, and the tiger snarling in his ear, he cursed the going of Engel Sahib, who haf done him such a great wrong and made him a laughing-stock among his fellows. Ram Singh called him a swine, a jackal, a dog; he defiled Engel's ancestors and cursed all his womankind for handmaidens of sin. And then, quite slowly, but not speaking clearly for want of his teet', he swore by the Bull, and by God, and even by the Prophet whom he borrowed, that when the tale should be written in full and the scroll rolled up, he, Ram Singh, would smile through the gap in his teet' with his honor whole again.

"So swore Ram Singh. But Engel Sahib was a German pig, and he could not understand; he only laughed. But I—I who know the native as myself—I was afraid for him. And again he only laughed and would not listen. So, like Pilate, I washed my hands and waited.

"One week later, a night like tonight, only darker and hotter, it came. Nobody was moving except that mad Engel, who was teasing my poor Rajah with his long stick, and laughing like the fiend he was. I could hear the big tiger roar and snarl and fight the stick; I say in my heart a prayer for him to come a liddle nearer the cage, just a liddle bit. Did my soul reach out and whisper to Ram Singh? I do not know. Was it a sending? I do not know. But I belief as much as I belief anything, though no man saw, that Ram Singh crept up behind and shoved Engel Sahib against the cage grating. It was done so quick no man could see, no man could help, and Engel went out to his God with a woman's shriek on his coward's lips. Gott! It was terrible. The beasts roared as a thousand jungles, the Lascars whimpered like gibbering baboons, and the officers turned pale and sick at what they saw lying there by Rajah's cage when the lanterns were brought. It was not nice even to see mineself, and I haf looked on death in a thousand shocking forms. You haf seen an orange squeezed dry? Dot was Engel Sahib. And Rajah raged in his cage with the light in his eye that comes from killing, licking his paws and muzzle white again. Ach!

"Next day Engel was sewed up in a piece of sail-cloth, and the *Aurochs* stopped. When her tramping engines ceased running the silence was so great, so impressive, I felt all alone in the vast world; it was as still as the Rest-House of Death. Did you efer feel you was the Last Man? It is not nice. The captain stood by the grating to read a prayer of commitment, and the tears ran down his face. Soon a splash comes in the water, the ship gets under way again, and my world is peopled with sweet noise."

"And Ram Singh? What of him?" I asked.

"My friend, as you know, I did not see—no man saw; wherefore Ram Singh would lie. But I looked deep down in his eyes and said: 'Ram Singh, what happened to Engel Sahib?' And he smiled through the gap in his teeth, for his honor was whole again. 'Heaven born,' said he, 'he was crushed by the tiger and died; the rest is with God.' Which was true—so far as it goes. All the same, it was a big price for Engel Sahib to pay for t'ree teet'."

NEXT month: THE KNAVE OF SPADES *by Frederick J. Jackson,* which relates how the original bad man leads a searching party of one, organized to locate the three knaves missing from the deck.

(*Continued from page* 2)

the story. The delicate irony of the last two paragraphs is very good, as are other similar touches throughout the story.

God's Half Acre is a more ambitious effort than *The Smile of Joss*, but it is not so good technically as that story because of the constantly shifting viewpoint. It is a story in which the reader's sympathy is curiously divided between the two leading characters. The opening plot incident is admirably handled and introduces these two characters in their proper juxtaposition. The hardy manliness of the soldier at work and the careless childishness of the soldier at play, are well contrasted; and the far-reaching influence of the little personal differences is used to good advantage. There is just enough swish of skirts to make one feel the feminine appeal. The story has proportion, atmosphere, easy flowing style, and strong characterization and finally it imparts to the reader a feeling of pathos which alone vindicates the author of any minor faults.

Horror for horror's sake, seems to be the purpose of the story, *The Inevitable.* If art consists in making an unhappy ending, Russian style, because it happens so in life, this story is artistic, but there seems to be no excuse for the implied tragedy at the end. Women have changed their minds ere this, and it is not inevitable for Clare to marry Curly. There is a delicate thread of sympathy woven throughout that makes this a compelling story. The style is direct and sincere, and the characters are more normal if less picturesque than those in some of the other stories. Here, as in the *The Prod*, the writer shows that he knows the value of repression and suggestion rather than overt narrative.

The Strike at Nealy's is chiefly noteworthy for its plot. It is the plot, which is really new or as new as plot can be, that is the sustaining feature of the story. There is no characterization. If there is any moral, it is that of retribution. Nobody deserved anything and nobody got anything.

Without the Law gives the reader a comfortable feeling of the triumph of primitive justice, but the story is marred by the lapsing back from a direct beginning to the reversionary "Almost two years before this little seance." Here is where the omniscient critic feels that he could have done better than the author in respect to preserving one of the sacred "unities," for the thrown-in explanation is too much a part of the tale to be thus used as a sandwich.

The Tenth Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (September); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before October 1st. Prizes will be awarded October 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the December BLACK CAT, issued November 15th.

A PRIZE of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES of $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

CUT OUT THIS COUPON AND ATTACH TO YOUR ANSWER

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB,
Salem, Mass.

Please enroll me as / *I am* } *a member of The Black Cat Club.*

I have read the September Black Cat and enclose herewith a list of the stories arranged in the order that they appeal to me, with a criticism of each. I am also enclosing twenty-five cents, in return for which please send me one of the club buttons with a.................back.

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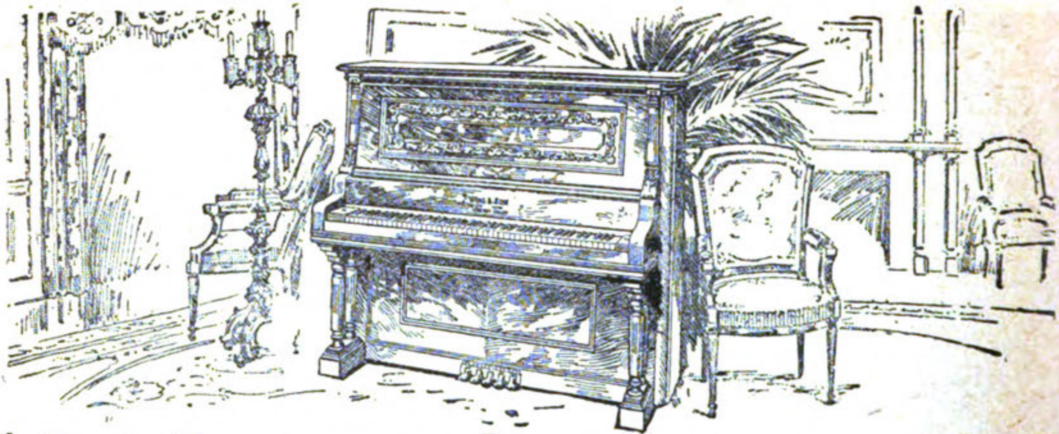

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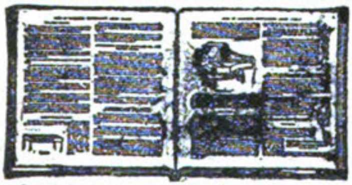

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