

1905

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THE  
**ARGOSY**  
FOR AUGUST

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Fugitive”**

A story to make the heart beat with emotion; a tale of love and adventure and mystery told with vigor and snap

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# The Argosy for August

## One Complete Novel

- THE ELEVENTH RIDER. A story in fourteen chapters of war-time in Mexico and the mystery arising out of an inn-keeper's vow of vengeance.....F. K. SCRIBNER 1

## Six Serial Stories

- THE FUGITIVE. Part I. A modern romance in the Holy Land, involving the mystery of an American who seems to be a villain, and culminating in the massacre at Damascus.....ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE 70
- MAROONED IN 1492. Part I. A plan to serve the Past with the advantages of the Present, and the harrowing experiences that fell out to the participants.....WILLIAM WALLACE COOK 90
- THE HOODOO RANCH. Part II. An inheritance that was unexpectedly come by, miraculously reached, and which staggered its possessor when finally viewed.....SEWARD W. HOPKINS 112
- DOWNING THE KING-PIN. Part III. A conspiracy against a Wall Street manipulator which found itself astray and wrought fear and frenzy aboard an ocean liner.....MARCUS D. RICHTER 128
- WHO AND WHY? Part III. A story of college life with a tragic start and an atmosphere of solution-defying mystery.....BERTRAM LEBHAR 151
- THE BLACK SMUDGE. Part IV. Russia in the present, and the thrilling experiences of an American in a ducal conspiracy.....J. AUBREY TYSON 168

## Nine Short Stories

- THE SPACE BETWEEN.....ALICE GARLAND STEELE 62
- A SPECULATION IN SHIRTS.....L. H. BICKFORD..... 84
- THE MURDER OF EBEN CANNIFF.....W. BERT FOSTER..... 107
- DIXON'S VENETIAN DODGE.....MATTIEU WHITE, JR... 125
- THE RUN ON THE HERDSMAN'S.....EDGAR FRANKLIN..... 142
- PROFESSOR JONKIN'S CANNIBAL PLANT.....HOWARD R. GARIS..... 164
- THE TALE OF THE TRUTHFUL UNFORTUNATE.EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT 180
- HOW BLEVINS MADE GOOD.....CHARLES CAREY..... 185
- A PLURALITY OF BURGLARS.....EDWARD A. MOREE.... 189

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This is not a machine-like institution where all are put through identically the same course of study. Each student's qualifications, education and past experience are taken into account, and he is given the training he individually needs to make him a success in this business.

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You can do this work by correspondence, and never miss an hour from your regular business.

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J. W. FISK

Advertising manager for E. Erickson, general merchandise, of Escanaba, Mich. He was a window trimmer in Deadwood, S. D., when he began the study of advertising with the Page-Davis Co.

they enrolled, and others who rose through our training from the most ordinary positions to posts of responsibility with correspondingly large salaries. The school that has made men



F. M. HENRY

Advertising manager, the Jno. Tea Delahay Company, of New Orleans. When he enrolled in our course of study with Page-Davis Company he was a clerk in a tea store.



THE ARGOSY—ADVERTISING SECTION.

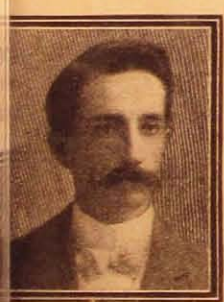
but time is not the important thing. We want our students to become qualified whether it takes a long or short time. What difference does it make to you in ten years from today whether it took a month or two months longer if the result is satisfactory. You are given all the time you require to make you proficient.

If you are at the bottom limb up. Don't stay where you are—you can do better and we will help you.

If you have reached the top in your own line, you have the ability to reach the top in advertising, and when you do your income will be far greater than it now is.

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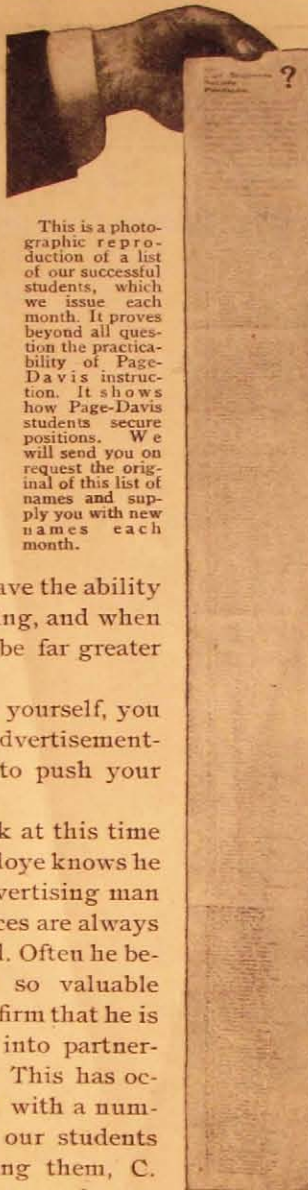
When business gets slack at this time of the year, every other employe knows he may be let out, but the advertising man has no such fear—his services are always



EDWIN HARRIS  
Advertising manager for S. Simmons, seed merchant and grower, of Toronto, Canada. He was in the flour and feed business before he prepared for advertisement writing in the Page-Davis School.

needed. Often he becomes so valuable to the firm that he is taken into partnership. This has occurred with a number of our students—among them, C. M. Thurmond, partner and director in a firm incorporated for \$75,000.00 at National Stock Yards, Ill.; M. B. Martin, partner and director in a firm incorporated for \$1,500,000.00 at St. Louis, Mo.; E. C. Smith, etc., given a fifth interest in one of the largest department stores in S. E. Missouri—and many others scattered here and there over the length and breadth of the United States.

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business or making your services of greater value in the position you are now in. It instils business judgment and understanding of conditions which prevail to-day. Many business men advanced in years take this course for a thorough brushing up in modern methods. If you are to keep to the front, you must have this necessary equipment.

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M. ANNIE POAGE  
Advertising manager for the Daily Independent, Ashland, Ky., was reporter on a newspaper before she prepared for advertisement writing with the Page-Davis Company.

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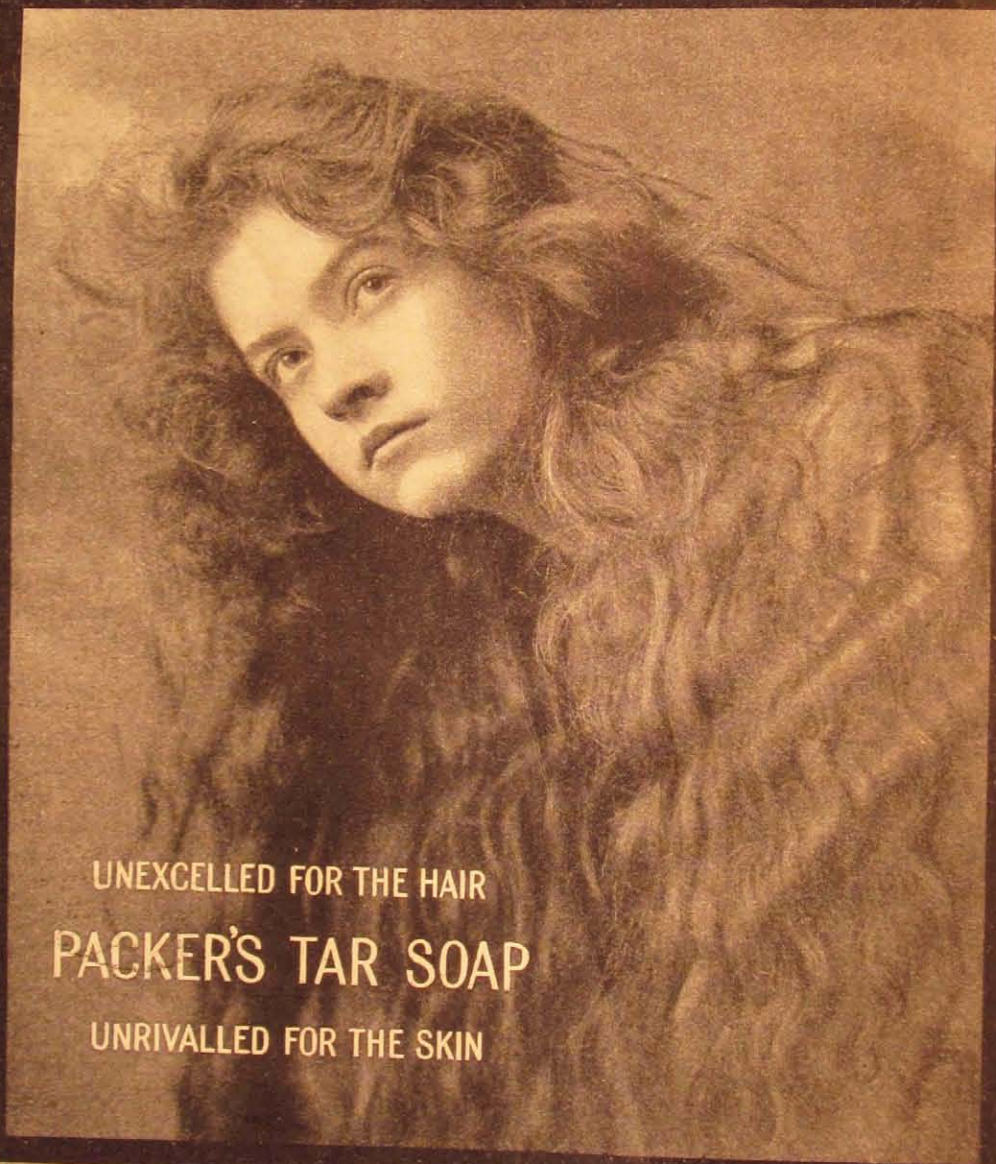
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Concerns desirous of engaging competent advertisement writers at a salary of \$25 to \$100 per week are requested to communicate with us. This service is gratis.

841  
Page-Davis Company  
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Address.....  
City.....State.....





"Faint murmurs from the pine trees reach my ear"—



UNEXCELLED FOR THE HAIR  
**PACKER'S TAR SOAP**  
UNRIVALLED FOR THE SKIN

BEAUTY PROBLEMS SOLVED BY THE USE OF  
**PACKER'S TAR SOAP**  
PURE AS THE PINES



# THE ARGOSY.

Vol. XLIX.

AUGUST, 1905.

No. 1

## THE ELEVENTH RIDER.

BY F. K. SCRIBNER.

A story of war-time in Mexico and the mystery arising out of an innkeeper's vow of vengeance.

*(Complete in This Issue.)*

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE COURIERS FROM THE NORTH.

THE sun behind the Sierra Madre was hanging a red ball in the west. Before the door of the gray stone inn Señor Perote stood shading his eyes with his hand, for the white, dusty road slanted toward the west, and from that direction came the sounds which had brought the innkeeper to the door.

The rays of the sun fell full upon his face and dazzled his eyes; he was unable to discern plainly what might be approaching over the main highway, but then his ears were keen.

Horses were nearing the tavern, and Perote, of the fifth generation of thrifty innkeepers, knew the approach of horses might mean a lodger, perhaps several, for the night.

Of late the señor had witnessed on many occasions a full house, but with each inroad of guests he had grown poorer. For several weeks scarcely a day passed but a shouting, swearing gang of cavalymen or a company of mounted infantry put up at the gray stone inn, cleaned the larder, consumed his fodder, and departed northwestward, bidding him thank God such opportunity was given to serve the state.

Señor Perote accepted the honor thrust upon him with a wry face, and thanked God—that they were gone, leaving a roof and four stout walls behind them.

The republic boasted no more zealous citizen than he, yet he wished the highway which joined the capital with the main road leading to the north had run anywhere in all Mexico except past his dwelling.

But, facing the west, with back to the capital, Perote breathed easier. No news had come of a great battle, a battle which was to scatter the Americans to the four winds; therefore no considerable force of troops could be returning—probably it was either a courier or a civilian who was approaching. If the former, he would not tarry for long, and the latter could be made to pay. Then Perote, being a zealous Mexican, wanted to hear news from the front. Why should he not be interested when he had helped to feed half the cavalymen who were going to drive the Yankees back across the Rio Grande?

The cloud of dust, arising like a puff of smoke from the highway, grew larger; from this cloud came into view two horsemen the red and green of whose uniform proclaimed them soldiers of Santa Anna, members of that peerless body of Mexican cavalry upon which the president depended to rout the invaders.

Señor Perote passed his hand across his chin—a sign that he was disappointed. The cavalymen drew up their horses before the door.

"God speed you, señor," said one soberly; "we are glad to be here."



Nothing has passed our lips since morning."

"You ride from the north, señors; can it be possible the invaders are already vanquished?" suggested Perote.

"Curses, no!" growled the elder of the horsemen. "On the contrary, three of our battalions have been cut in pieces; we are hastening to summon out the third reserve."

Perote crossed himself. It seemed incredible, what he heard.

The cavalrymen had dismounted and were stamping about, with an accompaniment of jingling spur and saber, to ease their cramped limbs.

"Then you are going to the capital?" asked Perote.

"No; to Chalco. There we will meet a courier who will carry the order the remaining distance. Oh, Santa Anna has thought of everything. He whom we are to meet will have a fresh horse, while ours are scarcely able to stand on four legs. We deliver the order, obtain a night's rest and return to the army. In the mean time the other is riding like the devil to the capital, and to-morrow the reserve will be on their way."

"It is wonderful!" cried Perote. "In Santa Anna the republic has found another Napoleon. He is but biding his time to cut the Americans to pieces."

One of the riders shrugged his shoulders. He had seen a regiment of the despised Americans put to rout five times its number of Mexicans, and behind this meager advance guard of eight hundred men was General Taylor and a horde of the invaders.

"It is three hours' ride to Chalco, and we cannot tarry here all night," broke in the second cavalryman, pausing in the act of rolling a cigarette.

Perote took the hint.

"I will hasten, señors, to put before you such as I have, but—there is no one here to look to the horses. My boys have run away to join the army."

The cavalryman with the cigarette lighted it, calmly blew a puff of smoke toward the setting sun and began to unbuckle his saddle girth.

"Go inside, my friend; we will attend to the horses," said he lightly, and, removing the heavy ornamented saddle, threw it on the ground.

Señor Perote entered the gray stone building, passed through one room and opened the door of another. A man who had apparently been sleeping upon a long bench started up, blinking through the semi-gloom.

Perote closed the door softly.

"There are without two cavalrymen, couriers from the north," said he shortly.

The man sat upright and pushed back the matted hair from his forehead.

"They are going to the capital?" he asked.

"To Chalco; but there is to be a courier from the capital awaiting them. He will carry forward an order to summon the third reserve."

"And why the third reserve? Has there been a battle?"

Señor Perote spread out his hands.

"So it would seem, and three battalions cut in pieces! Mother of God!"

The man rose from the bench, crossed the room, and looked out between the slats which covered the lower part of the window. He was swarthy, small, agile, and moved with the softness of a cat; his eyes were set close together, and his hair was straight like that of an Indian.

Looking between the slats, he studied the two soldiers outside until Perote became impatient.

"As you see, some one has come, Señor—Señor—Urrea. Have I not followed instructions and done your bidding? Two cavalrymen have ridden in from the north, and—I have awakened you."

"So you have said: two couriers riding to summon the third reserve," answered Señor Urrea without turning his head. Then he added: "And they will depart when they are satisfied."

Perote grumbled and shifted from one leg to the other. His companion turned from the window.

"Perhaps it were well that these fine cavalrymen, sent to call out the third reserve from the capital, are not easily satisfied. Perhaps it were better they remain here until morning," he said calmly.

Perote stopped, one hand upon the latch of the door.

"But do they not carry an order from Santa Anna himself? Are not the men



of the third reserve needed to supply the place of the battalions which were cut in pieces?" he muttered.

"That is as you understand it. To ride to the capital from this inn requires eight hours; from here to the headquarters of the general is the same, or more; to ride, then, for sixteen hours, and with horses that are weary.

"Now, if they should break down on the way, what then? It is better, my good Señor Perote, that these cavalymen wait until morning, when both men and horses can travel to better advantage."

"But they ride only to Chalco—three hours—where a courier from the capital awaits them," expostulated Perote.

"And you believe that? Last night I passed through Chalco. It was before midnight, yet no one was in the street, no lights shone from the windows. It was dark and silent there because—because Chalco is deserted. The men have gone northward to the frontier; the women close their doors and crouch hidden in the shadows, after dusk, because—they fear to hear the tramping feet of the American invaders."

"In Chalco? Mother of God!" Perote made the sign of the cross.

Señor Urrea continued calmly: "It is more than possible, and it is evident you do not understand this people from the north; but I, who have been many times among them, am not fooled so easily."

Perote's mouth was hanging open; he moistened his dry lips, swallowing as he did so. His companion continued with awful calmness:

"You may well fear, for, listen, my friend: I can tell you what others do not know. Men say the horde of the invaders is in the north and Santa Anna lies between it and the capital, but there are some who have penetrated into Mexico. It is not safe for one man or even a small number to ride forth at night."

Perote stared in blank terror at the speaker.

If it should happen he awake some night to find the house surrounded by a band of hostile horsemen! He shuddered.

The face of Señor Urrea was impassive, but when he spoke he seemed dreadfully in earnest.

"Listen," said he. "I rode from Chalco last night on business for the government; scarcely an hour on my journey and I perceived I was being followed. At the end of every rod I halted and looked back, for something seemed to be rustling the bushes. Each rock, a bunch of grass, a tree seemed to be the hiding-place of an unseen animal, of wolves, or the crouching figure of a man. Finally I slipped into a narrow path and waited. The night was dark and I saw no one, but voices came to me out of the blackness—voices whispering in the tongue of the invader."

Perote began to cross himself rapidly, completely terror-stricken at the other's sinister recital.

"You are a friend to the republic?" asked his companion suddenly—so suddenly that Perote started violently and clutched at the haft of the knife hidden in the breast of his jacket.

"Who does not know that?" he answered, and thought of the soldiers he had quartered without exacting payment.

"Then," said Señor Urrea quietly, "it is plainly your duty to detain these cavalymen until morning. If they are set upon and cut down, how about the third reserve which is to take the place of the battalions cut to pieces?"

He stepped close to the trembling innkeeper and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"And," said he impressively, "what might not happen if the third reserve failed to join Santa Anna? I will tell you. The Americans might cut through our lines and push on toward the capital by this road. And—your house is a good landmark, my friend."

Already Perote saw his inn in flames, his few remaining cattle driven off, himself a prisoner doomed to execution or a fugitive wandering among the mountains.

"Is it, then, as bad as that? Surely the good saints will protect us," he murmured in a weak voice.

"When it comes to cold steel and bullets the saints have business elsewhere," Señor Urrea replied calmly.



"I was saying what might happen were those sent by Santa Anna taken *en route* to Chalco."

"But to-morrow; if they travel by daylight?" inquired Perote anxiously.

"That is another matter. In open day those who lurk in the bushes will not venture upon the high road."

"They must remain until morning," muttered Perote; then, facing his companion: "But it will be no great difficulty for you to persuade them—you who are first among the secret agents of the government and close to Santa Anna himself."

Señor Urrea shook his head.

"If they are soldiers, persuasion will not stay them, nor is it likely I shall announce myself to those of whom I know nothing. As I have told you in confidence, I am accounted by Santa Anna as a man of some value to the republic; if I am known as such by every one, I lose that value. I cannot move in this matter, but it is given you to do a great work to-night—perhaps to save Mexico."

"In God's name, how?" demanded Perote excitedly.

"By detaining the two cavalymen here until morning."

"But you say they will not be persuaded."

"There are two ways to everything."

Perote rubbed his nose in perplexity.

"If you will tell me," he began.

"If it should happen," quoth Señor Urrea, "that they fall into such sound slumber that they do not awaken for some hours, it would be morning before they would sit again in the saddle."

"Ah!" said Perote excitedly, "you were saying——"

"That you will provide for them a bottle of wine, and——"

"A dish of beans and a loaf of black bread; it is all I have."

"What else you please, so long as you provide the wine, but first bring the latter to me," said Señor Urrea, and with great deliberation he began to roll a cigarette.

Filled with the thought that to save Mexico from the invader the two cavalymen must be detained at any cost, Perote hastened to prepare the refreshment.

The soldiers meantime were walking back and forth before the house, impatient to be on their way—the more so because they knew they should not have stopped at the inn, but pushed on straight to Chalco.

Having prepared the beans over a charcoal fire and set the dish with a loaf of bread upon the table, Perote, not without some misgiving, carried the bottle of wine to Señor Urrea. The latter received it gravely, measured the quantity with his eye, and took a small glass vial from an inner pocket.

With great deliberateness he uncorked the vial and allowed a given number of drops to pass from it into the mouth of the wine bottle, after which he handed the latter to the troubled innkeeper.

"It is neither too little nor too much. What are you staring at?" he demanded sharply.

"It frequently happens that a man dies easily; if one or both of the cavalymen should have a weak heart," stammered Perote.

"You are a fool!" ejaculated the other. "Do you imagine, being what I am, I would do injury to the cause of the republic?"

"It is not that; but sometimes one may make a mistake."

Señor Urrea made an impatient gesture, and at that moment the voice of one of the cavalymen was heard, asking why he was kept waiting.

Perote smelled at the mouth of the wine bottle, hesitated, and left the room muttering under his breath.

Being, as he was, an agent of the Mexican government and in the confidence of Santa Anna himself, why should Señor Urrea desire to harm soldiers of the republic?

He had measured the drops very carefully, and there was in the wine only a sufficient quantity of the drug to throw the drinkers into a profound sleep for some hours, and being asleep in the inn there would be no danger of their falling into the hands of a wandering band of the hated Americans.

This mental argument removed such scruples as Perote harbored in his mind. Setting the wine upon the table beside the bread and beans, he summoned the



impatient cavalymen to partake of the meager repast.

The soldiers attacked the food ravenously, but having eaten the more solid portion, seemed in no hurry to depart. The wine was extremely good, and, that they might the more fully enjoy it, each rolled himself a cigarette and amused himself between regular sips of the liquor by blowing rings of smoke toward the ceiling.

At the end of half an hour, Perote, who had remained without in a torment of doubt, ventured to glance into the room. It was very quiet except for the regular and heavy and clearly audible breathing.

The two cavalymen, their red-and-green jackets open at the neck, were leaning forward upon the table, their heads resting upon their arms. The innkeeper felt the pressure of a hand upon his shoulder.

"Go out and lead the horses into a shed where they can safely remain until morning," said the soft voice of Señor Urrea.

When Perote had left the room and a noise without proved he was following instructions, the man who was in the confidence of Santa Anna approached the sleeping cavalymen, felt rapidly through the clothing of each, and, taking a knife from the table, slit with a quick stroke the lining of one of the red-and-green jackets.

In another second he had transferred from the cut to a pocket of his own coat a carefully folded paper.

When Perote returned from caring for the horses he found the house deserted except for the two soundly sleeping soldiers. Señor Urrea had vanished.

Had the perplexed innkeeper returned at that moment to the shed within which he had fastened the horses, he might have been the greatly surprised eye-witness of a somewhat startling and unusual procedure.

Señor Urrea was carefully placing a saddle on the back of one of the horses. Having fastened the girth, he next produced a knife, bent down and deliberately hamstringed the remaining steed. The horse kicked and whinnied with pain.

Señor Urrea passed out of a rear door of the shed, leading by the bridle the animal he had saddled.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MARTYRDOM OF SENOR PEROTE.

It was well past midnight when the first of the Mexican cavalymen awoke from the stupor caused by the drugged wine. For several moments he stared stupidly around him, at a loss to comprehend where he was or the meaning of the heavy feeling in his head. He put out his hand and touched the empty bean-pot; a second later he knocked the wine bottle off the table, and the crash served to bring him more thoroughly to his senses.

Getting upon his feet, he began to swear lustily and call loudly for a light, and Perote, warned by the crash of the fallen bottle that he might expect something from his guests, appeared in the doorway holding a sputtering candle.

"In God's name!" cried he. "I thought you would sleep forever."

The soldier blinked stupidly; then, suddenly realizing something of what had taken place, the volume of his oaths redoubled.

Snatching a huge silver watch from his pocket, he consulted the dial by the flickering candle light. The hands marked a quarter to one o'clock.

"May the devil fly away with you and all that is yours!" he cried. "You have permitted us to sleep for six hours; we should have been in Chalco three hours ago."

He seized his companion by the shoulder and shook him violently. The second cavalryman opened his eyes and stretched himself slowly, whereupon the other shook him the harder.

"Get up, Valeno!" cried he fiercely. "It is long past midnight. Do you forget the courier waiting at Chalco?"

Valeno gave a tremendous yawn.

"What courier?" he muttered, then checked himself suddenly and stared at Perote.

"Ah," cried he, "now I remember; we were going to Chalco with an order from Santa Anna."



"To summon the third reserve," ventured the landlord.

"That was it. And why, then, are we here?" demanded the cavalryman.

Before Perote could reply a startled cry escaped the first soldier. He was examining the lining of his jacket, in which appeared a rent a foot long. He turned fiercely upon the amazed Perote.

"So it was you? Now I begin to understand—why we have been asleep. You are a spy in the pay of the Americans."

He stooped and picked up the wine bottle, at the mouth of which he smelled carefully.

"A thousand devils!" he cried, and yanked his short saber from its scabbard.

Señor Perote retreated toward the open door. The man whose jacket had been cut open would surely have attacked him with the saber had not the second cavalryman interfered.

"Wait!" cried he. "If he has hidden the paper and you kill him, we may not be able to find it."

Then, drawing a pistol, he covered the trembling landlord.

"The paper, señor," he said coldly.

Perote crossed himself so rapidly that he almost dropped the candle.

"I know nothing of a paper. God is my witness, señors, this is not my doing," he stammered.

"Do you deny we have been drugged in this accursed hole of an inn?"

The click of the pistol hammer so increased Perote's fright that he began to shake as one stricken by palsy.

"I am a patriot," was all he could murmur.

"So it seems," said the man holding the revolver; "and, being a friend to Mexico, you took the opportunity to drug our wine and steal a government document. If you do not return the paper, we will kill you *here*. If you do return the paper, you shall have the benefit of a trial before judges at the capital. It is all one to us which you choose."

The landlord fell upon his knees.

"It was only to save you from being taken and killed by the Americans I permitted Señor Urrea to drug the wine," he sobbed.

The cavalymen exchanged glances.

"Señor Urrea?" they repeated in a breath.

"It was Señor Urrea who told me of the danger you would run did you proceed to Chalco after nightfall. There are bands of Americans lurking beside the highway."

"But who the devil is this Señor Urrea? Was it he, then, who took the paper?" demanded the cavalymen.

The muzzle of the pistol no longer threatened Perote, so he became calmer.

"Señor Urrea is in the confidence of General Santa Anna, though under ordinary circumstances I would not mention it. Many times he has passed through the lines of the invader as water passes through a sieve. If he has taken a paper from you, I know nothing of it; God is my witness that I speak the truth. It was Señor Urrea himself who warned me that you would be seized on the road to Chalco, and in that case the third reserve would not receive the order to hasten to Santa Anna's assistance."

The trembling landlord jerked out the words piecemeal.

"And where is this Urrea?" demanded the cavalymen.

"God alone knows. He has vanished completely," replied the landlord weakly.

The elder of the two soldiers turned to his companion.

"It is plain this fellow is either a fool or is lying wonderfully," said he coldly. "In any case, it is through him we find ourselves ruined."

Then, with a terrible oath:

"For the contents of that paper the Americans would willingly give your weight in silver. If it falls into the hands of General Taylor, Santa Anna and our army will be cut in a thousand pieces."

"And we will be flogged to death in the public square at the capital," added his companion fiercely.

Perote's eyes rolled so that only the whites were visible.

"But it was to summon the third reserve you ride to Chalco; you yourself so told me, señor. Had you but said you carried a paper of such value to the republic, I would have defended you, even with my life," he cried.



"That is likely, and as you are going to die, I do not mind telling you, though you doubtless know it already. The paper which has been taken from us gave the strength and future movements of the army of the republic—each company, each regiment, each battalion.

"What is more, if the Americans obtain they will know of the expedition sent into the hills which was to fall upon them unawares. Oh, Santa Anna will be pleased to learn what has been lost—if he is not attacked and cut in pieces before the news reaches him! Did he not caution us to die rather than let that paper leave our possession? Were we not honored above all men in the army that he sent us to the capital with so important a message?"

The soldier struck his hands together in despair and rage, but the last of the sentence was lost upon the terror-stricken innkeeper.

"In the name of God, señors, of all this I know nothing; even of Señor Urrea——"

"You are either a fool or worse, and in either case to kill you will benefit the republic," retorted one of the cavalrymen savagely. "If you took the paper yourself or permitted another to rob Mexican officers in your house, it is all the same."

Perote began to beg piteously. Suddenly one of the cavalrymen struck the table a blow with his fist.

"There is one thing can be done, and every moment is precious. It is clear the paper is gone, but if word can be got to Santa Anna before the Americans make use of the knowledge it gives them, something may be saved. Watch this fellow. I will saddle my horse and ride north like the devil. To reach headquarters by daybreak is no great matter."

"And what will you tell Santa Anna? That we have permitted the paper to be stolen while we slept?" asked the other dryly.

"I have not thought what I shall tell him, but he must know what has fallen into the enemy's hands."

He rushed from the room. Perote began to pluck up hope, but the sudden return of the cavalryman threw him into deeper terror and despair. The

face of the Mexican was white with rage and for a moment he could only glare at the unfortunate innkeeper.

"What is it?" asked his companion in quick alarm.

"One of the horses is gone, and the other——" The cavalryman was almost choking with rage. "The other has been hamstrung and is utterly useless," he concluded.

To a Mexican a good horse is one of the first things in the world, and this one had found his mount cruelly slashed with a knife. He turned upon the quaking landlord and asked in a terrible voice:

"And was it this Señor Urrea who did that? I will answer 'yes,' for you and Urrea are one and the same. You shall give us the paper and afterward you shall suffer for what I saw out there."

"But one of the horses is gone. It was Señor Urrea who——"

A violent blow on the mouth checked the words. The next moment he was lying on his back with one of the cavalrymen kneeling on his chest.

"Go to the stable and fetch a rope," said the latter to his companion. "We will see whether this fellow will remember where he has hidden the paper."

When the rope was brought Perote was bound so securely that he could move only his head and the ends of his fingers.

"Where is the paper?" demanded the elder of his captors.

The unfortunate landlord, almost unconscious from terror, uttered an inarticulate reply.

"As I passed the door of the kitchen I saw a brazier of burning charcoal; get it," said the officer who had found his horse hamstrung.

His companion left the room to return with the glowing brazier, which he set upon the floor within plain sight of the hapless innkeeper.

Perote watched the burning charcoal as though the red glow fascinated him, and he could not close his eyes. He saw one of the cavalrymen thrust the end of the short ramrod of his pistol into the center of the glowing mass. Several minutes passed in silence; the end of the ramrod assumed a rosy color. The cav-



alryman gave it a turn, then stood up and said in a passionless voice:

"I will ask you again—where have you hidden the paper?"

Perote uttered a cry, and, being deprived of speech, shook his head violently.

"We shall see," said the Mexican coldly, and, with the table-cloth as a guard to protect his hand from the heat of the metal, he removed the ramrod from the bed of charcoal. The next instant Perote uttered a piercing shriek, for the red hot point of the iron was thrust in contact with his flesh.

"The paper!" demanded the cavalryman.

Suddenly the feeling of terror left Perote's body. The pain of the burn filled him only with rage. He closed his lips tightly, but his eyes continued to glare at his captors.

The cavalrymen looked at each other.

"If you will not tell!" cried one fiercely, and lifted the iron the second time.

Perote gritted his teeth together, but after a time all sense of pain seemed to be leaving him; his head swam violently, then he lost consciousness.

When he opened his eyes daylight was streaming through the window into the room. Things remained much as he remembered them, except the charcoal in the brazier no longer gave out a red glow.

For a time he could only move his head from side to side, for his body seemed to be seared with lines of fire and he remembered they had bound him securely.

Then he became aware that he could move one of his hands. The hot end of the ramrod had come in contact with the cord which held his right wrist and the hemp was severed.

Slowly Perote loosed, one after another, the bonds which held him. Carefully getting upon his feet, he leaned heavily against the table, his brain dizzy and every inch of his body smarting.

Then mechanically he began to count the burns which he had received at the hands of Santa Anna's officers. Three were upon his hands, but to these he

gave little heed—it was from his face came the greatest pain. In the kitchen hung a small mirror which he had grudgingly taken in payment for a night's lodging. Now he blessed the day when it had been forced upon him.

He passed slowly from the room and approached the glass, dreading to look into it, but urged by an uncontrollable impulse. A Mexican is proud of his good looks, and Perote was still a young man.

That which stared out at him from the dingy glass brought a groan to his white lips. The face, once passing comely, was frightfully disfigured by two deep burns extending from the middle of the chin upward to a point below each ear. These burns formed the letter X. It was as though the man was gazing out upon the world through two crossed bars.

In the first moment the luckless landlord gave way to a feeling of despair; it would have been more merciful had they killed him while his mind was blank.

Then the devilish cruelty of the thing came home to him. The smarting of the burns would cease, but the livid bars must always rest across his face. In all Mexico there was not a man so plainly marked for ridicule—and pity.

Perote remembered how a certain girl in the far-off capital had once clung to him when a beggar marked with the smallpox had brushed against her in the street.

Suddenly the hopes he had cherished, the goal toward which he had labored, crumpled to ashes before his mental vision; the victim of the dread disease was less disfigured than he.

For a few moments he leaned against the wall, his hands clenched until the nails bit into the palms, despair mastering him completely. Then a sudden transformation was apparent. In a single moment Perote, the timid landlord of the wayside inn, gave place to a man whose heart held only bitter hatred. From being a moral coward, fearful of suffering, he became imbued with a spirit which would stop at no danger or fear of God or man.

For some time the Mexican stood before the little mirror and the face that



## THE ELEVENTH RIDER.

looked out at him wore a dreadful smile; then deliberately he set about nursing his wounds with a preparation which he knew would lessen the pain and cause the burns to heal quickly. Having made himself more comfortable, he prepared his usual morning meal, ate it slowly, and sallied forth to make an examination of the premises.

As he expected, the body of a horse lay in the stable; the Mexican officer had shot his useless beast through the head, he and his companion departing on foot, but whether northward or toward the capital Perote did not trouble himself to decide just then.

It remained for him to bury the dead animal and set his house in order; there would doubtless be soldiers from the north or south passing over the highway, and they would stop at the inn.

But during that day and the next it seemed as though no other living soul was in Mexico, for not even a rancher called. But on the third day, near evening, Perote, leaning against the horse-post before the house, tossed away his cigarette, and, going to the little mirror, arranged the bandages which concealed his burns.

A party of horsemen were approaching from the north, riding so leisurely that the innkeeper knew they would not push on to Chalco and the capital, but would pass the night under his roof.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FIRST OF THE INVADERS.

THE newcomers proved to be a detachment from the army of Santa Anna. As they pulled up before the door Señor Perote counted nine horsemen, commanded by a captain of cavalry.

But what riveted his attention was the eleventh rider—a man whose hands were bound behind his back and who was securely fastened to the saddle by a rope passing around his waist. The ten Mexicans were escorting a prisoner southward, and this prisoner was one of the horde of invaders who had crossed the Rio Grande to lay waste the land.

The captive gazed down upon Señor

Perote out of a pair of cold blue eyes, and Perote returned the gaze with curious interest. The soldiers dismounted, and the officer clattered across the uneven strip of ground to the door of the hostelry.

He looked at Señor Perote in a puzzled manner.

"The good Señor Perote?" said he.

Perote had housed and fed this same Mexican not two weeks before, when he rode northward with a hundred swearing *guerrilleros* at his back. It was evident, however, the officer did not fully recognize to whom he was speaking.

The innkeeper smiled grimly.

"I am Señor Perote," said he quietly.

The officer began to roll a cigarette.

"You did not wear those decorations a week ago, my friend," said he.

Perote shook his head and touched the bandages.

"Surely you have not been with the army?" ventured the captain.

"No," Perote answered impassionately.

"Then it was an accident and not a saber cut."

"It was not an accident, señor," answered the innkeeper.

"Then what, in God's name——?"

"It was the Americans; it was lucky I escaped with my life," replied Perote calmly.

The officer looked incredulous.

"Within eight hours of the capital. Surely you do not mean it, señor."

The prisoner, tied to his saddle, was leaning forward, listening.

Suddenly Perote's face assumed an expression of dreadful anger. The next instant he had drawn a knife and sprang straight at the defenseless American.

One of the soldiers threw himself in the way, another seized the uplifted arm and a third took possession of the knife. The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah," said he, "I can believe it was the Americans! So they have spoiled your beauty, my friend. But surely it was not *that one*?"

"No," muttered Perote; "but he is an American. It is sufficient reason why I should kill him."

"In time," growled the officer; "only it happens he is wanted in the capital—"



where are those who ask questions. If it were not for that I would not have put myself to the trouble of guarding him so carefully across the country."

"Is he then a spy?" asked Perote, with sudden interest.

"That is as you will, but in any case he is to die; it is enough that he was caught on this side of the Rio Grande. The General Santa Anna is resolved to deal sternly with certain of these north-erners."

The prisoner nodded gravely and addressed Perote in excellent Spanish.

"You perceive, señor, what is to be done with me—to-morrow or the next day. But in the mean time one desires to be as comfortable as possible. I have eaten nothing for twenty hours and judge that you keep an inn."

The officer laughed.

"He is a bold one, evidently not fearing death; it is because of that we have bound him so carefully. I do not mind telling you that the poor devil has been traveling on an empty stomach. You see, we were short of rations."

Perote scowled darkly and looked up at the prisoner.

"It may chance I can spare half a loaf, but, not being a friend of the republic, payment will be required," growled he.

"Which you doubtless know I cannot make, since your friends have relieved me of the little money I possessed," replied the American.

"Then you must go to bed hungry. Already I have given away more than I can afford," said Perote coldly.

"And there are ten mouths to fill. I warrant we will clean the larder for you, my friend," interposed the officer dryly.

The inn, over which five generations of Perotes had held sway, boasted of two stories; it was in a small room under the roof that the Mexicans elected to confine their prisoner for the night. That all possibility of escape might be obliterated, care was taken to rebind his hands securely to his sides and his legs were fastened firmly at the ankles.

He was then thrown upon the rude bed and a third rope passed across his body and around the crude piece of furniture.

Perote also took the precaution to

nail a board over the window; the key of the door was in possession of the officer. Bound as he was, the American could have been left in the yard with no fear but that he would be there in the morning.

The Mexicans sat long at table, demanding much, and cursing among themselves that more variety was not forthcoming. As for Perote, he found his hands full until a late hour, for after the riders had been fed the horses must be attended to.

Thrice he stole up the ladder which led to the second story and listened at the door of the prisoner's room. Each time he heard nothing; the little room was still as death.

It was not without interest that he watched the preparations of the soldiers to retire. The man who was selected to guard the prisoner spread his blanket upon the floor outside the door with his feet against the panels.

The captive could not leave the apartment by way of the window; the opening of the door would arouse the Mexican; and to try his skill on either door or window the American must first untie the knots which it had required a quarter of an hour to secure.

The captain was the last to retire. Before doing so he accosted Señor Perote as the latter was bolting the front door.

"We must be away at sunrise. It might be wise, my friend, to give the American a cup of coffee in the morning; we cannot have him tumbling from the saddle through weakness."

Perote growled an inarticulate reply, put out the lights and retired into the kitchen, where, the house being full, he had spread his bed.

He shut the door carefully, placed a candle close to the little mirror and began to dress the half-healed burns. Having finished, he blew out the light and threw himself fully dressed upon the couch.

For a long time he lay gazing up into the blackness, but, after what might have been two hours, he rose, crossed the room noiselessly, opened the door leading into the larger part of the building, and listened intently.

The heavy breathing of exhausted



sleepers came from behind the partitions. Perote passed silently across the main room and paused at the foot of the ladder leading to the upper story.

For several moments he remained motionless, then the faint creaking of the ladder marked his cautious ascent. He had now merely to thrust his head through the opening to hear everything that was occurring in the narrow hall which ran the length of the building, where the soldier guarding the prisoner's door was sleeping.

After a time the listener appeared to be satisfied, for he withdrew his head from the opening and crept down the ladder.

Having reached the lower floor, he passed into the kitchen, took a bundle from the table, and, unbolting and opening the door leading into the yard, passed out into the night.

It was dark except for the light of countless stars. Perote crossed the yard to the stable, threw off the latch which fastened the door, and moving cautiously along in the rear of the horses, carefully counted the animals.

Upon reaching the sixth, he stopped, spoke soothingly to the beast, and untied the rope which passed through a ring in the wall above the manger. It was the animal which had been ridden by the Mexican cavalry officer that was thus separated from its fellows.

Having loosed the horse, Perote took from a peg a heavy saddle, laid it upon the beast's back and adjusted the girth firmly. Having done this, he picked up the bundle he had taken from the table in the kitchen and fastened it behind the saddle.

This task being completed, he led the horse to the door of the stable, attached the bridle to a ring in the wall, and, closing the door softly, stepped once more into the night.

Upon the ground in the rear of the inn lay a ladder, the same by which Perote had mounted when he nailed the board across the window of the room occupied by the prisoner.

Moving rapidly and silently in the darkness, he now raised this ladder, carried it around the house and placed it against the side of the building under the same window.

At the end of another minute a faint, rasping sound was heard. The nails which had been driven into the board were dropped one by one to the ground, and Perote, descending the ladder, laid the piece of plank upon the grass.

Then, with the noiselessness of a cat, he crept again upon the rounds, listened for a moment at the aperture, and stepped into the black void of the little room.

It required but a few steps to cross it, and Perote stood beside the bed on which lay the American. Had there been light, one might have seen the Mexican draw a knife from his belt, bend down and feel with his free hand for the body of the prisoner.

The American stirred and strained at his bonds. Perhaps he felt the presence of the knife in the man's hand.

Perote uttered a sharp, low sentence.

"In the name of God, lie quiet, señor, and—listen!"

The strain upon the cords ceased; the prisoner, stretched upon his back, his eyes wide open, was vainly striving to pierce the blackness.

"Give heed, señor, for the time is short," whispered Perote. "You are of those who have come into the republic from across the Rio Grande, and they are taking you to the capital, that certain ones may ask questions and afterward kill you. Is it not so?"

"It would seem that you are correctly informed; but first they would starve me, as perhaps also you have observed," replied the prisoner shortly.

Then, in a burst of subdued passion:

"What they may do to me afterward falls through the fortune of war; but the last—kill that miserable wretch who denied me even a crust of black bread, and I will die satisfied."

The fingers which grasped the hilt of the knife tightened, but after a moment Perote answered calmly:

"I am that one—who denied you before the door. Now I have come, señor, to give you more than bread. Yet, first, you will listen to what I have to say."

The prisoner lay perfectly still, either from astonishment or because he did not know what to answer.

"I desire, first of all, to know your



name and how you were taken," continued Perote quietly.

"Ah!" muttered the prisoner. "It was while on a scout, beyond San Rafael, and I am a Virginian—Haddon, of Harney's Horse."

"You are perhaps an officer in the army of the Americans?"

"Yes; a lieutenant. But I can't see what that has to do with the present situation."

"Perhaps because it is very dark, señor, but outside it is a little lighter. It has come about that I desire in the army of the Americans to possess a friend—one, if it should so happen I appear before your General Taylor, who will vouch for my honesty. If it is permitted you to return to the ranks of the invaders, will it be as I desire, Señor Haddon?"

"I'll see to it that you dine with the President in Washington and be presented with a Congressional Medal, as a life-saver," answered the American lieutenant so heartily that Perote glanced anxiously toward the door.

"And you will know me by——" he began, then checked himself and drew his breath sharply.

"Yes, I'll know you," broke in the lieutenant; "but for God's sake get me out of here. We can do the talking afterward."

Perote bent down, felt for the cords, and with three deft strokes of the knife severed them each in turn.

The American tried to rise, then fell back, cursing softly.

"It is the weakness," muttered Perote. "Drink, señor; it will strengthen you."

He held the mouth of a flask to the other's lips, and Lieutenant Haddon swallowed a few gulps of a fiery liquor. It burned like molten metal and set his head reeling, but, as though by magic, renewed strength returned into his muscles.

He raised himself, caught Perote's arm for support, and got unsteadily upon his feet.

"Gently, señor," whispered the Mexican; "there is one sleeping outside the door. We must descend the ladder; a false step may awaken those who will form obstacles."

Just how he managed to cross the room, climb through the window, and descend the twelve feet of ladder to the ground, Haddon to his dying day could not explain.

His head was ringing like a kettledrum, his arms and legs were stiff and cramped for want of circulation, and the liquor, taken on an empty stomach, was playing sad havoc with his senses.

He felt the firm ground under his feet and was aware that his companion was supporting him. Then things became clearer, and he found himself standing beside the stable, the door of which Perote held open.

From out of the darkness came the smell of horses and the sound of their restless movements.

"You are about to mount the horse of señor, the captain; it is a strong beast, and will carry you many miles without a halt," said Perote quietly.

Haddon drew in long breaths of the invigorating night air. It cleared his head, and he began to realize more keenly the situation.

Yet this situation puzzled him. From being a helpless prisoner, tied to an uncomfortable bed of straw, he had been transported, almost in an instant, to the side of a horse which was to carry him to freedom.

He began a question, but his strange companion interrupted almost rudely.

"There is strapped behind the saddle sufficient food for two meals, and a flask of liquor. It were better, however, to dine upon the way, señor. At any moment some one within may awaken."

"Thank you, my friend; I shall not forget to-night," said Haddon heartily. Then, suddenly: "But why have you done this, knowing me to be an American? Have you not said it was certain of the Americans who gave you cause to wear those bandages?"

"I lied, señor lieutenant. It was not the Americans who tortured me," replied Perote briefly.

Haddon was in no humor to seek to gratify his curiosity further; what he most desired was to put as much space as possible between himself and the ten Mexicans asleep in the inn.

Perote had led the horse into the open.



"The señor will ride straight toward the north. Not until he reaches the vicinity of San Antonio will there be danger of meeting bands of *guerrilleros*," said he.

"Which I shall take care to avoid as I would the devil," answered Haddon with conviction.

"But if it should happen any one should desire to stop the señor, and to ask unpleasant questions, it would be well to know how to answer," continued Perote grimly.

He took from his belt the knife and a pistol and handed them to the American.

"Thanks, my friend," said Haddon.

He put one foot in the stirrup and swung himself into the saddle. As he was in the act of gathering up the reins, Perote laid his hand upon his knee.

"A moment, señor; you have forgotten something which should not be neglected," said he quietly.

Haddon checked the impulse to urge the horse forward.

"It is the sign by which you may know me afterward; there are other Perotes in Mexico, so a name signifies nothing. But a moment longer, señor," concluded the innkeeper grimly.

And at the same instant a light flared up between his fingers.

The young officer looked down in mute surprise. With a quick movement Perote slipped off the bandages, and held the light so that it shone full upon his face.

Haddon uttered a sharp exclamation. Across the man's countenance the disfiguring X showed hideously livid, framing his face, as it were, between two unsightly bars stamped upon the flesh.

At that instant the light went out.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### SEÑOR PEROTE LOSES SOME PROPERTY.

SEÑOR PEROTE stood several minutes in the gloom, listening to the rapidly receding sound of hoof beats upon the hard roadway. Then, as one who had carefully planned out all beforehand, he set about putting into action a deliberate move.

His first care was to take away the ladder and return it to its place behind the house. Having done so, he returned to the stable, reentered it, and opened the rear door; he then passed along the line of horses, untied the halter of each one, and drove the animals into the open air.

Returning for the fourth time that night into the shed, he gathered together a heap of straw, struck a light, and, bending down, deliberately applied the flame to the combustible material.

Having set the spark which would destroy a portion of his own property, Perote hastened back to the inn, bolted the rear door behind him, and, making certain by glancing out of the window that the blaze from the burning straw had communicated with the woodwork of the stable, he threw off his jacket.

Then, ruffling his hair, he rushed with loud cries into the main portion of the tavern, calling upon the sleeping cavalrymen to bestir themselves.

Aroused suddenly by so great a commotion, the Mexicans appeared, intense alarm written upon their faces. The captain seized Perote by the shoulder.

"In God's name, señor, have they then returned?" he shouted to the excited landlord.

Señor Perote shook himself free.

"How can I tell? But it is more than possible, for the barn is on fire," he cried.

At the same moment he threw open the front door.

The Mexican officer was as quick to throw himself upon the swinging portal and close it hastily.

"What would you do? If the house is surrounded by the Americans they will rush in and take us where we stand," cried he.

"Out!" shouted Perote, "and fall upon them. Do you not perceive your horses will be roasted alive?"

The captain seized himself by the hair.

"Mother of God! Yet we will be shot one by one as we rush forth; it is as light as day out there."

"And my barn, with a quantity of fodder and half a season's cutting of oats, is being destroyed," cried Perote excitedly.



Then, in a terrible voice:

"Alone I will defend my property; one had rather die than to stare ruin in the face."

The officer, assisted by one of the soldiers, threw himself upon the apparently frenzied man. Perote struggled, bit, tore with his nails, and bellowed like a bull.

At the end of several minutes the others succeeded in subduing him, but only at the cost of much skin and clothing. Perote, panting, glared savagely from one to the other.

"Cowards!" cried he. "The invaders quietly surround the house, set fire to the stable, and you remain safely behind bolted doors. You will not even allow me to sally forth and drive them away."

The officer began to calm him, at the same time wiping the blood from his own face, where the other's nails had left their marks.

"You are crazy, my friend. What can one man do against a company of the Americans?" he panted.

"But there are eleven of us," muttered Perote savagely.

"Behind these walls we may be able to do something, but out there——" The Mexican shrugged his shoulders.

Perote fell upon a chair, then sprang up suddenly.

"They will rescue the prisoner upstairs; at least allow me to put my knife between his ribs," cried he fiercely.

At that very instant the ladder creaked loudly, and the cavalryman who had been asleep before the door of the prisoner's room appeared before them.

"The American is gone!" cried he.

The captain seized him by the arm.

"It is not possible. Ten horses could not break those bonds," he began, but Perote interrupted.

"Do you not understand?" cried he. "The Americans have followed you for the purpose of rescuing the prisoner; some have crawled quietly through the window and untied him while you slept. Oh, should Santa Anna hear of this!"

The Mexican officer turned pale.

"But that is not likely," continued Perote with awful calmness, "for no one will leave this place alive to tell of it. It was an evil hour when you

stopped at the inn, else had I now been sleeping peacefully in my bed instead of waiting to be shot or hanged to one of yonder trees."

For several moments silence reigned in the room. Then, as no bullets came through the windows, the Mexicans began to pluck up courage.

"They are afraid," muttered one, "and dare not attack the house, for they know who is inside."

The captain rattled the scabbard of his saber.

"It will not be well for them to do so, for they would be cut in ten thousand pieces," said he fiercely. "Let but one of the dogs show his face and——"

There came a tramping of hoofs without, and several dark forms passed between the window and the roaring flames bursting from the stable.

A cavalryman raised his carbine and fired through the window. The tramping grew louder, then ceased suddenly.

For a time those within the house waited in breathless silence; finally Perote muttered:

"Is it possible that one shot has driven them away?"

"That shows what *you* know of fighting; they have only withdrawn out of gunshot," replied the officer knowingly.

"Just the same," returned Perote, "I will venture out and see if they are there. There is a rear door; I will open it softly and creep around the house. You can close it after me."

The captain thought deeply for several moments; finally he said:

"You are indeed a brave man and should leave this tavern business, in order that you may join the army and use your valor to advantage. I will permit you to go if you will be careful."

"It is my purpose to join the army, provided I can obtain something in return; my father was a great fighter," answered Perote modestly.

He passed through the building, followed by the captain, and unbolted the rear door. He was scarcely outside when the bolt was shot again in place.

Perote walked a dozen rods, sat down upon the ground with his back against a tree, and waited for half an hour. Then he arose, crept around the building, and scratched on the front door.



After a little a voice from within demanded who was there.

Perote made himself known, and bade them unbolt the door. After some considerable delay this was done.

"I have been all about the place, and there is nothing to be seen, except a dead horse lying between here and the ruins of the stable," said Perote calmly.

"Then the Americans have lost one of their horses, while we remain intact," answered the captain exultingly.

"Except that your horses were in the barn," suggested Perote.

"Oh, the devil!" muttered the captain. "I had not thought of that."

"And the prisoner is gone," added Perote.

The captain began to swear.

"To say nothing of my stable and a great mass of valuable fodder," Perote concluded sorrowfully.

The captain struck his hands together.

"Listen, my friend," said he soberly. "We have all lost something to-night, but the case with us is most serious. It is well if this affair does not reach the ears of Santa Anna, for he is a terrible man when his anger is aroused.

"You have lost part of your property, and keeping an inn is unsafe at such a time any way. You will go with us to the quarters of Santa Anna. I shall tell the general that you are the bravest man in Mexico, and the wounds on your face will back up the statement. In return you will also do us a favor."

"And what is that?" asked Perote.

"Hold your tongue about what has occurred here to-night, or, more properly, agree to what I shall say."

"That is easy enough, provided I am not compromised," Perote answered.

"How can you be? And I shall stick partly to the truth. It will be carried to Santa Anna's ears that, stopping for the night at this place, we were set upon by a force of the Americans, and defended the house valiantly.

"It happened, however, that certain shots from without entered the building, and one, striking the prisoner in the head, killed him. We can thus account for not taking him to the capital, for a dead man would be of no use to those who ask questions."

"But none of your men are wounded; if there was such a combat, how can that be accounted for?" asked Perote.

"The walls protected us, and it has been known where those engaged in battle escaped with their lives. Do you agree to assist us in this matter? In return I will obtain for you an audience with Santa Anna, which is not so easy a matter, you may be assured."

Señor Perote thought for several moments, then agreed to what the captain had requested. After that the ten Mexicans breathed easier, especially as they began to suspect that no great force of the enemy had approached the tavern.

It was probable that only a handful had been in the neighborhood; these had assisted the prisoner to escape, fired the stable, and made off, fearing capture by the inmates of the house.

During the remainder of the night no one slept, except Perote, and the officer awakened him at the first signs of daylight. The Mexicans had discovered that the dead horse in the yard was one of their own.

The other animals had also been found at no great distance from the inn; only the captain's horse was missing, having either wandered away or been carried off.

There appeared more reason than ever to carry a falsehood to headquarters, for, if Santa Anna knew the true state of affairs his anger would be terrible to witness.

Perote prepared the morning meal and set about closing the inn. This he accomplished by nailing boards across the doors and windows.

During the first hour of the journey northward, which was necessarily slow, for two of the horses were burdened with a pair of riders, the cavalcade rode in silence. Later in the morning, however, stopping to water the animals, Perote approached the captain.

"I would ask you, señor, if you happen to have heard of one called Valeno among the soldiers of the republic?" he asked.

"There is a Valeno at headquarters; he happens to be related to Santa Anna himself, but I do not know him personally," the captain answered.



"He is then something in the army of the republic?"

"That is as you will; he is frequently intrusted with important messages."

"I think," said Perote carelessly, "that he has honored my house on more than one occasion. The last time he traveled southward with a companion."

"Oh, that must have been Captain Amador, who also enjoys the general's confidence," replied the officer, and went on to describe the elder of the two men who had put Perote to the torture.

Perote rejoined the group of cavalrymen with a curious expression on his face; his lips moved frequently, repeating the words "Valeno" and "Amador," "Amador" and "Valeno."

Once he pressed his fingers lightly over the bandages which crossed his face.

Having watered the horses, the cavalcade proceeded upon the journey, riding northward toward the Rio Grande. It was well past the noon hour when it drew up near a small village, where the captain had expressed his determination to dine.

But as they approached the miserable tavern, the presence of a dozen horses in front of the door gave warning that others were before them. And that these were members of Santa Anna's army was evident, for the men who guarded the horses were in uniform.

The captain pulled in his mount.

"A thousand curses!" growled he. "There is to be found in such places scarcely sufficient food for three hungry men, and see who are before us. We shall get nothing here, that is certain."

Still he urged forward his horse, and, followed by his men and Perote, rode up to the door of the tavern.

"Where are you going?" he demanded of one of the men who were guarding the horses.

"To the capital, señor," replied the soldier. "Have you come from there?"

"Only part way. Are you acting as an escort, or what?"

"Yes and no; but we are hunting for certain ones, and one in particular, who is dangerous to the welfare of the republic."

"Of whom are you speaking—an American?"

"Who can tell that, señor, for scarcely any one has seen him. It is reported that he is more than half wolf, and avoids people easily. It is said that a certain innkeeper, between here and Chalco, has seen and talked with him."

"But surely *you* know something of the man for whom you are looking, else how will you tell when you come across him?"

"That may be known to our captain, but nothing has been explained to us, only that we are looking for a spy who is sharper than the devil himself."

"And who is your captain?"

"It is Señor Amador, who is at this moment dining within."

The cavalryman behind whom Perote was seated felt a sudden sharp movement. The ex-tavern keeper was slipping from the back of the horse to the ground.

The captain was speaking.

"I will join Señor Amador; we once served in the same regiment," said he, and, dismounting, bade his men await his return.

"This means an empty stomach until the next village is reached; he will eat, but we are allowed to go hungry," growled one of the troopers, making a wry face.

Then catching sight of Perote moving cautiously toward the rear of the tavern, he called:

"It is fortunate, my friend, that you are not yet a soldier, for you can go where you please. If you find anything, save half a loaf for me; I will not forget the favor."

But Perote did not seem to hear. He was thinking only of who was in the house, and that, did Captain Amador appear suddenly, it would be better were he not visible. The time to come face to face with the man who had tortured him had not yet arrived.

In the rear of the tavern was a window, and, as Perote approached this, voices fell upon his ear. A conversation was being carried on between the officer he had accompanied and Captain Amador.

"So you are going northward? Well, it were better that you accompany me, for I am commissioned to pick up any small command I chance to meet on the



road. This is the more necessary as no one knows the number of those for whom I am looking."

The speaker was Captain Amador.

"There are then more than one?" his companion inquired.

"God knows! But report has it that a dangerous band of the enemy has managed to get past our lines and is hovering between here and the capital; no one knows how this has happened, but it is so to a certainty. It is my business to overtake this pack of northern wolves and kill or make them prisoners.

"It is also my purpose to go to the capital, where I hear a prisoner has been lately taken. I desire to question him, for through him I hope to catch the others."

"But it is commonly reported that these Americans are not given to over-much talking."

Captain Amador uttered a short laugh.

"Never fear; I can find a way to open the lips of this one. In such matters I have had some experience."

The fumes of cigarette smoke floated through the window.

"It is only once I failed, and then it was because the fellow died too quickly," continued the other coolly.

Perote smiled horribly.

"We shall see," he muttered.

"Well, what do you decide?" demanded Captain Amador.

"I shall go with you, of course, though I am short of horses," replied the other.

"I can get you an extra horse or two. And by the way, having come from the south, did you see or hear anything of the party that was conducting the prisoner to the capital?"

"Nothing; I must have come by another way."

Perote breathed more easily. He had feared the officer would make known his presence with the detachment, but it was plainly his intention to avoid all mention of having stopped at an inn *en route*.

"We will push forward rapidly and pass the night at Chalco. There is an inn between here and there, but I wish to avoid such places after nightfall," said Captain Amador.

His companion was thinking he would have done better had he avoided a certain inn, and replied:

"Chalco will suit me as well as any place. When will you start?" he asked.

"As soon as possible; your men need not tarry here to dine, for there is nothing to eat in the house; I have assured myself of that."

Ten minutes later the two squads of Mexican cavalry were in the saddle. The officer whom Perote had accompanied looked about him.

"Where is our innkeeper?" he asked.

"I think he has gone, señor captain, for I saw him making for yonder clump of trees," answered the cavalryman.

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps he has changed his mind about entering the army, and I have no business to delay the journey in hunting for him. After all, it were better he did not accompany us. Captain Amador has a way of asking questions," said he.

It was late in the afternoon, or more properly early in the evening, when the cavalcade rode into Chalco. Señor Urrea had told Perote that the place was deserted after nightfall; it was not quite that, but nearly so.

But half a score of persons were met by the horsemen, and these skulked past as though their only thought was to seek a friendly shelter. But few of the houses were lighted; even the barking of dogs, so common to a Mexican town, was lacking.

The cavalymen drew up finally before a house somewhat larger than the rest. It was one of the three public inns which Chalco boasted.

The landlord opened the door gingerly, made a wry face at sight of the score of troopers, and then advanced to take the bridles of the officers' horses.

Captain Amador gave a few sharp orders, and, accompanied by his companion in arms, entered the tavern. The troopers dismounted, led their horses to the sheds in the rear of the main dwelling, and entered the house by a side door.

After a time one appeared with two plates containing food, which he handed to the men guarding the horses, after which he returned to the inn.



An hour or more passed. A watery moon began to climb the heavens, and a weird silence brooded over the town. The soldiers guarding the horses swore softly and looked at the somber outlines of the silent tavern and beyond to the darker line of lofty mountains.

They could imagine their comrades sleeping soundly, while they must cool their heels under the stars.

Several hours passed. The guards, grown drowsy, leaned against the wall of the stable. At the farther side of the inn, beyond their range of vision, a window on the ground floor had been left open to admit the night air.

Suddenly from out of this window issued a cry, which not only aroused the sentinels, but half the sleeping inhabitants of the town of Chalco. This cry was repeated; so piercing was it that many who heard it began to cross themselves. A great commotion in the tavern arose, and several lights flashed out.

The officer whom Perote had accompanied a half day's journey northward ran against the landlord in the hallway.

"In God's name, what was that?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"It is only God who knows, señor," answered the landlord in a frightened tone. "But it came from the room occupied by the señor who accompanied you."

Without waiting to ask further questions, the Mexican cavalry officer rushed to the door of Captain Amador's room.

It was locked, but groans sounded behind the panels. The officer waited a second, then put his knee against the door and burst it open.

While such things were occurring in the house, the figure of a man dropped lightly from the sill of the open window to the ground and glided away in the darkness.

Having gone a safe distance, the man stopped and began deliberately to clean a knife by thrusting the blade repeatedly into the ground.

When this was accomplished to his satisfaction and he had returned the weapon to his belt, he looked up, so the faint light of the moon fell upon his face. The face was crossed and re-crossed by white bandages, and below

the bandages the man's lips were smiling horribly.

It was Señor Perote.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MAN WITH THE DOUBLE SCAR.

THE general pushed aside the map he was studying, and, turning upon his camp-stool, nodded to the young officer behind whom the tent flap had just fallen.

What he saw was six feet of brawn and muscle, a pair of broad shoulders, surmounted by a sober, clean-cut face bronzed almost to the coppery hue of an Indian.

"A splendid type of the Virginian gentleman," commented the general mentally; then:

"I have called you, Lieutenant Haddon, on a case of identification: the identification of a Mexican who claims to possess your friendship."

A look of perplexity flashed across the young officer's face.

"I have had occasion to meet a good many Mexicans since coming south, sir, but as for friendship with any of them, that is another question," said he quietly.

"However, the man insists," answered the general, "and there was nothing to do but to confront him with you. A short time ago he walked deliberately into the lines, and when stopped by the guard demanded to be taken to Lieutenant Haddon, of Harney's Horse. A most unprepossessing rogue, I can assure you, sir, but the request being an unusual one, I have ordered him held in readiness to meet you here."

He struck sharply upon the table, and an orderly appeared in the tent opening, to whom the commander gave the order that the prisoner be brought again before him.

During the moments which followed, and during which he waited for the appearance of the man who had given his name to the guard, a clearer inkling of the matter came to the Virginian, the remembrance of that wild night's ride from the little Mexican inn on the high-road to Chalco.



He was not therefore surprised when he saw before him a face so horribly disfigured by two livid scars that he involuntarily shuddered.

The newcomer advanced boldly into the tent, hesitated for a moment, glanced from the elder officer at the table to the younger, and the light of recognition flashed into his deep-set eyes.

"It is the señor lieutenant. You have not forgotten?" said he rapidly in Spanish.

"No," answered Haddon. "I remember the—the——"

"The scars," the Mexican filled out the sentence. "The señor remembers what he saw that night in the light of the burning taper? I am Perote, who kept the inn on the Chaleo road."

Lieutenant Haddon turned to General Taylor.

"This man is indeed known to me, for it was by his aid I escaped from the squad of Mexican cavalry by whom I was taken six weeks ago."

And he explained rapidly just what had occurred on the night when Señor Perote had assisted him down a ladder, and afterward set fire to his own property.

When he had concluded, the general nodded gravely.

"I see," said he. "And now the man has come to claim your promise. If he can explain satisfactorily his presence in our lines, and for what purpose he came hither, he will no longer be held as a prisoner."

Haddon turned to the ex-innkeeper.

"The general wishes to know what has brought you here, señor; for what purpose you have entered our lines?" he asked.

A cold smile crossed the firm lips of the Mexican.

"It would take many words to explain all, señor, and it touches not the matter, but my purpose in coming here is to befriend the American invader. Is not that sufficient for your general?" said he quietly.

"And in what manner? You are a Mexican, and most Mexicans are loyal," replied the Virginian.

The smile which distorted Señor Perote's face was not a pleasant one.

"Let the señor rather say I was a Mexican, and none more loyal to the republic than I; but now—the señors can see what Mexico has done for me. It cannot be hidden."

The lieutenant glanced at the two livid scars forming the bars of a cross upon the man's visage. He turned once more to the American commander.

"It is plain, sir, that his disfigurement—not many weeks old, for the wounds were fresh when I saw them at the inn—has been given him by his own countrymen. It is hatred and desire for revenge which has brought him here."

"Two powerful motives, when possessed by a determined man. Tell him to speak out," Taylor replied.

Señor Perote came closer to the table, and his eyes rested upon the map of Mexico.

"It has pleased the señor general to push into many parts of my country, even as a spider throws out his web from a common center. Two days ago a force of two hundred mounted men were despatched to the pass of El Vidio. Unless rescued, their doom is certain. Three thousand of Santa Anna's soldiers are marching to surround them. It will be another Alamo."

Haddon translated rapidly; a look of alarm crossed the general's face.

"Major Smith and his party; they were to hold the pass until it was decided whether we should push forward that way or by a more direct route southward."

"It is fifty miles from the pass to Santa Anna's main line, and he is sending three thousand men a march of fifty miles across the mountains to capture two hundred? If such a force fall upon the detachment unawares it will indeed be the Alamo repeated."

He paused for a moment, then continued sharply:

"Ask him, lieutenant, why, if he desires to save the detachment from the Mexicans, he did not ride straight to the pass and warn them instead of coming here."

Señor Perote passed one hand softly across his chin.

"To cross the mountains, the shortest route to El Vidio, one must go on foot,



and I am not over fond of walking, señor.

"Then there is another reason. The Americans at the pass would not run from their position at the word of a Mexican. They would remain and fortify themselves, and the result would be the same, for Santa Anna is determined, and will send two small cannon."

"Then the soldiers have not yet started?" asked Haddon quickly.

"It was to be to-morrow morning, and they will travel slowly. You see, Santa Anna understands the method of the Americans; such ones are commanded to hold the pass; he can take a reasonable time. They will be there when his men arrive."

A grim smile crossed the general's lips.

"It is God's truth," said he. "Smith will not budge short of an order direct from headquarters. I fancied the *guerilleros* might trouble him considerably, but a force of three thousand men—he must vacate the pass, lieutenant."

Then, drawing the open map before him:

"Ask him how long will be required for the Mexicans to reach El Vidio, and the *shortest* direct route across the mountains from here thither."

"It will take the soldiers two days, perhaps a little more; in thirty-two hours one might reach the pass from this place—if he knew the way over the mountains," answered Perote.

The Virginian's eyes were dancing, but he spoke very quietly.

"Might I request to be detailed to carry your order to Major Smith, and perhaps this man will act as a guide across the mountains?"

General Taylor seemed to hesitate.

"Under ordinary conditions I would grant your request most willingly, but—I have already outlined another duty, an imperative errand, for you, lieutenant. But if this fellow will consent to guide a courier to the pass, tell him he will be amply rewarded."

"It was my purpose to ask you to accompany me across the mountains to El Vidio, señor, but other duties will hold me here. Would you, however, guide one who goes to warn my country-

men?" asked Haddon, turning to the Mexican.

Perote nodded grimly.

"Else I did so, my time has been wasted, for if any one went by the longer and known way he would arrive at El Vidio behind Santa Anna's soldiers."

"The fellow is terribly in earnest to injure Santa Anna, and we can do no less than trust him. See that he is provided for, and return in half an hour, lieutenant," said General Taylor when Haddon had translated the ex-innkeeper's answer.

The Virginian led Perote to his own quarters.

"You will eat and rest here until General Taylor demands your presence, señor. If there is anything you want, tell me," said he.

Perote rolled a cigarette.

"Nothing but a little sleep, for I have not closed my eyes for forty-eight hours; the señor has but to touch me and I will be ready." The man spoke quietly.

Twenty minutes later, stretched upon Haddon's cot, his scarred face hidden by his arm, he was sleeping soundly.

At the end of half an hour the lieutenant presented himself, for the second time that afternoon, at headquarters. General Taylor greeted him gravely.

"Lieutenant," said he, "I am informed by Colonel Harney that you are familiar with the country to the south, and I know you converse freely in the Spanish language. It has also come under my personal observation that you are a man of tried coolness and courage in the face of danger; this has been confirmed by your immediate superiors."

Haddon's face reddened under its coating of tan. The commander continued quietly.

"I have not, however, called you here to pass compliments, but for a more serious purpose. A vital movement is in contemplation and—we do not care to take a step in the dark.

"It is imperative that a man of known coolness and bravery be selected to dispel this darkness. Will you undertake to penetrate into the enemy's country in the character of a spy?"



Haddon fully comprehended the seriousness of the task he was asked to undertake. That the danger was in a degree lessened by his perfect familiarity with the language of the enemy only increased the chance of a safe return to the American lines.

At the best, this chance was one which few men would care to undertake, for the territory into which he must go was alive with keen-eyed Mexicans, rendered desperate and doubly blood-thirsty by the reverses of the past weeks.

Between the general's question and the answer, however, scarcely a second elapsed. The reply brought a nod of approval from the commander of the American forces of the Rio Grande.

He pointed to a stool on the opposite side of the table, and smoothed out the surface of the map before him.

For a number of minutes Lieutenant Haddon followed the faint tracings which marked the territory he was expected to explore; the blanks it was desired he should fill in with detailed information; the exact lay of the land, each valley and hill, the roads, bridges, old-fashioned stone forts and more modern earth-works, behind which the Mexicans might hope to oppose the advance upon their capital.

So much he had expected to accomplish, but General Taylor, folding the map, turned suddenly to him with an unexpected question.

"That will be your first duty, but there is a second, and one no less imperative. You have heard of the guerrilla, Mazatlan, lieutenant?"

Who in the American lines, or in all Mexico for that matter, had not? The most cold-blooded of the Mexican free lances, a human fiend, renowned for his cruelty, recklessness, and diabolical cunning.

General Taylor leaned forward across the table.

"We have reason to believe, lieutenant," said he gravely, "that this man does not confine himself to leading his followers against our forces. It has been reported that time and time again he has penetrated our lines, gathered information, and returned unmolested. By some it is believed that he is an

American in the service of Mexico, and has thus been enabled to move freely among us; I, however, believe him to be a native Mexican.

"The name *Mazatlan* tells us nothing, for it is that of a town lying between us and the capital, and has doubtless been assumed for campaign purposes. What this man is like, whether American or Mexican, is what we desire to know. If his identity can be established, the chance of detection when in our lines is highly favorable.

"At present such detection is practically impossible, because no one among us has knowingly met the man face to face. Those of our countrymen who have had this opportunity, through falling into his hands, have been hanged or shot within the hour. *Mazatlan takes no prisoners!*"

The general paused, and the lines upon his homely face grew stern.

"I want you to discover the identity of this man, Lieutenant Haddon. If possible, lure him away from his own lines, or follow him into ours. The method he employs is not warfare, but murder, pure and simple. I desire his capture, not only as a dangerous spy, but as the assassin of those of our countrymen who have been unfortunate enough to fall into his hands."

Haddon remained silent. General Taylor continued.

"The task which I would impose upon you is no easy one, possibly far more dangerous than the other: bringing in information of the enemy's forces. I want you to understand clearly that it will not appear as a desire to shirk danger if you do not volunteer to undertake the discovery of Mazatlan. But, above all, I want you to understand that if you do attempt to unearth this man, you will walk with a noose about your neck."

He paused. Haddon's face was grave, and his steel-blue eyes fixed upon the map spread out on the table. Suddenly he raised his head.

"I understand clearly, sir, and accept the service," said he quietly.

"Very good!" answered the general heartily. "You will start shortly after dark to-night, and I desire that you select one man to accompany you. I



leave this selection to you, though I should recommend a Texan. When you have reached a decision send the man to me."

When the flap of the tent dropped behind him, Haddon walked slowly to his own quarters, his mind busy with the first details of the task before him.

On two occasions he had entered the Mexican lines, but only a short distance, and the last attempt had resulted in his capture and subsequent rescue by Señor Perote.

He did not try to disguise from himself the desperate nature of the undertaking which now lay before him; not only was he called upon to enter the enemy's lines, but to go, if necessary, into the very capital of Mexico itself.

And to carry out the identification of the *guerrillero*, Mazatlan, he must mingle on familiar terms with the Mexicans themselves.

His safeguards lay in three things: his personal appearance, which resembled that of certain mountain inhabitants of the southern republic; his familiarity with the Spanish language; and his utter freedom from nerves when placed in a difficult position.

For several minutes after entering his tent he stood still, running over in his mind the men from whom he must choose one to act as his companion. This companion must share with him the requisites he himself possessed for the task in hand, and there were several such among the American forces.

He would have preferred to go alone, but the commander's expressed desire that he take a companion was tantamount to a command.

Doubtless the task of cornering Mazatlan would become easier with two determined men working together.

Suddenly his meditations were interrupted by the appearance of an orderly in the tent opening. The soldier bore a message from General Taylor that Señor Perote's presence was required at headquarters.

Haddon crossed over to the cot and touched the Mexican lightly on the shoulder. The ex-innkeeper started violently, his hand went to his belt, then he sat upright and got upon his feet.

"The señor lieutenant has awakened me?" said he quietly.

Haddon explained the general's order.

Perote smoothed down his matted hair and tightened the sash about his waist.

"I am ready, but it is a sorrow that another beside the señor is to follow me through the mountains. Perhaps it is because I know the señor to be a brave man," said he.

Haddon shrugged his shoulders.

"I remember when the cavalrymen rode up to the inn on the Chalco road, a detail of ten men, and another—the eleventh rider—weak from lack of food and with his hands bound behind his back. It was then I saw an opportunity to strike the first blow against those who have injured me."

"And this is to be the second—the journey to El Vidio?" replied Haddon, feeling he should say something.

"Not the second, for the opportunity came to me to settle the account with the worst of my enemies, and—I did not fail," replied Perote grimly.

The thought flashed through the lieutenant's mind that he should not like to have this man, with his terrible face and piercing eyes, for a bitter enemy. Señor Perote looked capable of drinking the cup of revenge to the very dregs.

The Mexican joined the orderly, waiting outside the tent.

"Adios, señor," said he quietly, and disappeared.

Five minutes later Haddon called to a soldier who was passing.

"You belong to the Third Texas?" he asked.

The soldier replied in the affirmative.

"Ask Sergeant Bradley to come here at once; official business," said Haddon shortly.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SHADOW OF A CHANCE.

ON the summit of a hill which overlooked the Acapulco road one of a pair of dust-begrimed horsemen straightened in his saddle and peered through the gloom which enshrouded the valley at his feet.

The faint glimmer of a thousand little



fires twinkled in the distance. The horseman turned to his companion.

"Yonder are the Mexicans—in front—and the Lord knows how many are in our rear," said he grimly.

Then, pointing to the south:

"If it were lighter you could see the range behind which lies Casa Mata and the line of forts stretching to Chapultepec itself. On our right, just down in the valley there, lies Chalco, the old Chalco, and you see the Mexicans are there straight enough. We are in the middle of a first-class hornet's nest."

The speaker peered through the gloom out of a pair of steel-blue eyes.

Save for their color, denoting Saxon origin, he might well have been taken for a descendant of the old race of the Montezumas, in whose veins flowed a tinge of Spanish blood.

His companion, a small, dark-featured man, with eyes of piercing blackness, shifted his posture in the saddle.

"I reckon it *would* be a hornet's nest, if they knew we were up here," said he dryly; "but now that we are *here*, what are we going to do next? If Chalco is filled with Mexican regulars and cut-throat *guerrilleros*, I can't see——"

"We're going down into Chalco—first; that's what we came for. The man we want won't come up here, that's certain," answered Haddon calmly.

Sergeant Bradley, of the Third Texas, wiped the dust from the pommel of his saddle.

"All right," said he grimly. "It's Chalco, or El Molino and Chapultepec itself, if you say so. The general warned me what to expect if I came with *you* into this God-forsaken country; but I confess I didn't figure on riding pell mell into a town filled with Mexicans."

Lieutenant Haddon smiled faintly. He knew that if he gave the word the little man at his side would spur his horse madly through the main street of Chalco itself, trusting to luck and pure dare-deviltry to come out safely on the farther side.

He gathered up the reins.

"We're from up there, near the American lines, scouting, you know," said he.

"I guess I've learned my lesson," answered his companion lightly. "After

a good ten days in this infernal country, cut loose from one's base of supplies and with a noose hanging ready from every tree, I'm not apt to be rash; not by a long sight, lieutenant."

"There!" said Haddon sharply. "Can't you remember, man, it isn't 'lieutenant' this side of the outposts? Such a break might cause us the devil of a row.

"These Mexicans are quick when it comes to suspecting every newcomer. They march slow, God knows, and take their time when it comes to fighting, else we wouldn't have so easy a time of it; but let them suspect that something is wrong, and they're on edge in a minute. Don't make that break when we get down there; we haven't come here to fight."

He touched his horse lightly with the spur and began the descent of the hill. For a quarter of an hour the two men rode in silence, for each minute was weighted with grave consequence. Suddenly Sergeant Bradley uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Look there, lieu—señor, over to the left and coming this way!"

Haddon pulled up his horse with a jerk.

"A detachment; ten to our one—probably a scouting party," he muttered.

"Looks like it, and coming straight for this road," replied Bradley. Then, glancing toward the bushes on the right:

"Shall we cut for it; there's time—or——?"

"No," said Haddon decidedly; "we'll meet them half-way."

He touched his horse sharply and rode straight toward the advancing horsemen, who, being on lower ground, had not as yet discovered the presence of the two riders in the narrow road.

Each party advancing at a gentle gallop narrowed the distance between them rapidly.

Suddenly the leaders of the Mexicans pulled up sharply.

Haddon threw a comprehensive glance at his companion.

"Put *that* up!" he whispered sharply. "Those devils can see like bats after dusk, and there would be a dozen car-



bines covering us in another second. Drop your hand and stop scowling your head off."

Bradley uttered a surly grunt, but the hand which grasped the pistol butt fell to his side. Allowing their mounts free rein, the two rode straight toward the waiting Mexicans.

It was not until scarcely a hundred feet separated them that Haddon drew rein.

"Good-evening, señors; the night promises finely," said he pleasantly.

The Mexicans scowled from under their heavily braided sombreros.

"Whence come you, señor?" asked one sharply.

"From the direction of the Rio Grande," answered Haddon carelessly.

"You will ride closer. We have orders to arrest all those who are riding alone after nightfall and cannot satisfactorily explain their business," said the Mexican tersely.

"Things were not so bad two weeks ago; at that time one might ride freely within the lines," ventured Haddon.

"But this is not two weeks ago. I demand to know who you are."

"We are of General Valencia's command, on special duty," replied Haddon promptly.

"Have you any papers? Last night a man, stopped two miles nearer Chalco, claimed to be straight from the Señor Colonel Moliero. He is now a prisoner and will die at sunrise."

During this short and sinister speech Haddon was fumbling in the breast of his loose Mexican jacket. After a few seconds he produced a folded paper and extended his hand.

The Mexican advanced a few paces and took the document, holding it close to his eyes in the fading light.

After a time he looked up.

"This seems regular. I see you are special scouts, señor. You are going to Chalco?"

He spoke in a changed tone.

"For to-night only, after which we must push on to the capital. In truth, we need some rest, having ridden for twenty hours."

"Then you must have been close to the enemy's lines. Did you learn anything?"

"Among other things, that the Americans are undecided. They would push forward, but are uncertain as to which road to take."

Haddon began to roll idly a cigarette. Then he added carelessly:

"They are sending out scouting parties. We narrowly escaped capture by one of them."

"So?" said the Mexican dryly. "Well, such ones will be gobbled up before they have ridden far this way. Mazatlan will see to that."

"Then Mazatlan is in the north?" Haddon asked the question with well-assumed carelessness.

"He was five miles south of Chalco this morning, but while the Americans are riding one mile he will go five and strike quickly. You can depend on Mazatlan, señor; those scouting parties will be eaten, one by one."

"Let us trust so, for the Americans are dreadfully in earnest. Perhaps we shall even meet Mazatlan as he rides northward?"

The Mexican officer shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can tell?" said he. "But if you do, best stick that paper on a lance with Valencia's name uppermost. Mazatlan kills first and examines into things afterward. Now, if he had taken the man of whom I spoke, we should not have the pleasure of seeing him die at sunrise at the edge of a half-circle."

Haddon hesitated for the briefest second, then asked:

"The man of whom you were speaking—I had quite forgotten about him; is he, then, a spy?"

The Mexican was tightening his rein.

"It would appear so, though he cannot be made to open his mouth. It is sufficient he was taken riding through our army, and—a little scrubbing made his face whiter. Those who stain their skin do so for a purpose, señor."

"We will tarry at Chalco until after sunrise, for such a sight is worth seeing. The fellow is confined securely?" ventured Haddon.

"Have no fear of that. The old stone house in the center of the town is strong enough to make a good fortress."

Haddon saluted gravely and pulled his horse to one side. The Mexican



touched his own upon the flank and, with a jingling of spurs and sabers, the detachment of a score of men resumed their course northward.

They were well out of earshot when Haddon turned and looked at his companion.

"A close shave," said he tersely.

Sergeant Bradley shifted his position.

"So close I have been fingering the trigger for the past ten minutes. When we knocked that yellow-belly on the head last night and relieved him of his papers, I didn't figure just how and when we were going to use them; and—and—by God, sir, you've got nerve."

A faint smile touched the lieutenant's lips; then they suddenly set in a hard line.

"The possession of the paper was triply fortunate," said he gravely.

"In getting us out of the devil of a scrape, and——" His companion paused.

"In locating Mazatlan, and—in furnishing us with the information that a spy from our lines is confined in Chalco and is to die to-morrow morning," finished Haddon.

A bitter look crossed his companion's face.

"I have been thinking of that. God grant there were more of us, or the Mexicans were fewer. If it were possible——"

"All things are possible," interrupted Haddon soberly. "One cannot tell until he tries."

His companion looked at him sharply.

"Surely you do not mean—in the midst of twenty thousand Mexicans—you are not thinking of——" he demanded in amazement.

"Of saving that man from death? Yes; it is of just that I am thinking. You have been in tight places, Bradley. You were in the Alamo, and—you are here," answered Haddon soberly.

The veteran soldier shook his head.

"Yes," said he fiercely. "I was with those who defended the Alamo against Santa Anna and his cut-throats. I was there when Crockett and every mother's son fell fighting—when the Mexicans wiped us out with a rain of bullets.

"But this is different. Desperately

wounded, I tumbled to the bottom of a dry well, and if they saw me there they thought me dead and left me to rot in an open grave. That was one thing; but to take a man from the hands of twenty thousand Mexican soldiers?"

Lieutenant Haddon looked sharply into the swarthy face near his own.

"I have never known you to hesitate—you who hate the Mexicans——" he began.

Sergeant Bradley flushed hotly.

"Nor do I now, sir. If there was the shadow of a chance I would ride straight into that town, through those howling devils, and get that man or die with him. But it's the *chance* I can't see. Show me the *chance* and I'll ride into hell behind you and take him out."

Haddon laid his hand upon the speaker's shoulder.

"So I thought," said he calmly; "and *I'm going to find that chance*. It is our duty to obey General Taylor's orders and obtain the information he desires, but our first duty is to attempt the rescue of our countryman who is to be shot at sunrise. If we fail, so much the worse, but—we're going to try, Bradley."

A flash of admiration crossed the Texan's face.

"Very good, sir," said he curtly, and, following Haddon's example, drew taut the reins.

The way into Chalco lay over one of the many broad roads which traversed Mexico in that section of the country. Except for meeting bands of wandering horsemen such as they had just parted from, there was little or no danger of the two Americans being held up and examined.

So far had they penetrated into Mexican territory and into the midst of the army of Santa Anna.

The lines of this army stretched for miles east and west; a goodly number lay farther to the north, and had been safely passed. The larger body was encamped farther south, covering the strong forts at El Molino, Chapultepec and the massive stone entrenchments of Casa Mata.

General Santa Anna had arranged his forces in three parallels. It was the second which Haddon and his compan-



ion were approaching in order to enter Chalco, the pivot of the second parallel.

Presently they passed a group of campfires around which a brawling company of infantry were eating supper. No one paid the slightest attention to them. Horsemen were constantly passing over the road, and the soldiers had become used to the sound of hoof-beats.

As the town grew nearer these groups of campfires increased—some quite close to the road, but the majority a little distance back in the fields. Once there was a clatter of hoofs to the right, and the Americans' hearts beat more rapidly, for they expected nothing less than to be surrounded by another detachment of cavalry.

It was only, however, a bunch of riderless horses being driven to water at a creek on the farther side of the road. The half-dozen soldiers who were fulfilling this duty were smoking and laughing boisterously. One swore roundly as the first of the horses shied at the two riders, but nothing more serious happened.

Perhaps two miles from Chalco the highroad swept in a great curve between two ranges of low hills. This part of the way, for three hundred yards or so, was quite deserted, and, moreover, gloomy by reason of the failing light.

Not a sound except the noise made by the horses' feet upon the roadbed, and such tumult as came from the distant campfires, broke the silence of the early night.

Haddon aroused himself from the lethargy into which he had fallen since his last words with his companion. All his mental energies had been concentrated in seeking for some plan which promised even a chance of success in liberating the condemned prisoner.

"If I am not mistaken, we shall reach the town presently, and from this point on the groups of fires and soldiers will become more numerous."

As he was speaking something gaunt and black loomed up suddenly beside the highway. It was a gigantic cross, such as are frequently found along the public roads in Catholic countries.

Haddon pulled up his horse so sud-

denly that the animal almost rose upon its haunches. At the foot of the cross a dark shape was stretched upon the ground.

The Virginian bent down and examined more closely what this thing might be. When he straightened himself in the saddle he made a quick and comprehensive gesture to his companion.

The silent form upon the ground at the base of the cross was the body of a Mexican priest, clad in the loose brown robe of his order.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TO DIE AT SUNRISE.

FOR several moments Lieutenant Haddon and the Texan gazed down upon the man at the foot of the cross. Then the former slid gently from his saddle.

Approaching noiselessly the figure of the priest, he bent over him, remained motionless for several seconds, then returned quietly to his companion.

"The man is not dead, but sleeping soundly," said he in a whisper.

The Texan nodded. He was waiting for Haddon to resume the saddle.

"Dismount quietly," whispered the lieutenant.

Sergeant Bradley obeyed without hesitation, though it was plain he felt surprise.

Haddon led him a little way across the road.

"Fortune is certainly kind to us tonight, but we must work carefully and take no risks. I think I can see a way," said he gravely.

"To rescue the prisoner?" asked Bradley bluntly.

"Yes; it is a desperate chance at the best, but one must take desperate chances under such conditions. Our first care must be to prevent the priest from making an outcry when he awakes."

"The priest? Are you going to question him?"

"No; but through him it may be possible to rescue the prisoner, or at least to effect his escape from the stone house in Chalco.

"It is an old trick, but frequently old tricks are the best," explained Haddon.



"If we hope to assist the man imprisoned over yonder, the first essential is to gain access to him. He must understand that friends are at work in Chalco."

"You propose to send the priest in to him with a message—— But the fellow is a Mexican."

"The priest over there will not enter Chalco to-night, yet he may be the means of furthering our purpose. We are going to borrow that brown cassock for a few hours, Bradley."

A look of comprehension filled the Texan's face. He understood what his companion proposed doing: to enter the stone house in Chalco in the guise of a priest and thus obtain an interview with the condemned prisoner. It was indeed an old trick, and a risky one. Haddon continued quietly:

"It will be necessary to bind the man and leave him hidden among the hills; there is no time to be lost, for he may awake at any moment."

Sergeant Bradley nodded silently and turned toward the cross. As he recrossed the road he removed from about his neck the big Mexican handkerchief which formed a part of his costume.

"Watch the horses, sir; they may take fright easily," he said briefly.

Haddon, standing at the steeds' heads, saw him approach the cross cautiously. He had folded the handkerchief into the form of a bandage, the ends of which he held in either hand. For a moment he stood above the form of the sleeping man, then his slight figure, silhouetted against the leaden sky, disappeared.

Perhaps ten seconds passed. Then the voice of the Texan came from the ground at the foot of the cross.

"I've closed his mouth, sir, and he's waking up."

Haddon crossed quickly over to the spot where Bradley, kneeling on the ground, was holding down the robed figure which was struggling desperately to rise.

Over the man's mouth was drawn tightly the handkerchief, effectively gagging him, but it was only too evident he still retained the free use of his arms and legs.

The Texan, with his hands pressed

tightly against the captive's chest, looked up.

"Thrashing like a windmill, sir, but he can't make a noise worth speaking of. Shall I strip him?"

He spoke in Spanish, and the priest understood. His struggles increased. Bradley muttered a short oath and pressed him harder against the ground.

"I might choke him into——" he jerked out.

"No," said Haddon; "a little argument may do as well."

He addressed the priest in Spanish.

"Keep quiet and no harm will happen to you. In any case, you see it is useless to struggle."

The captive made a final effort, then a string of incoherent words forced themselves from under the tightly bound handkerchief.

"We will let you up, but don't attempt to run away, you understand," said Haddon sternly.

The Texan released his hold of the priest, and the latter clambered slowly to his feet. He was a small man, with a lean, hungry face and piercing eyes.

For a moment, standing with his back to the cross, he looked from one to the other of his captors, but except for their general appearance he could discern little.

The darkness had increased, and the Americans had taken the precaution to pull their wide-brimmed hats well over their eyes. It was plain, however, the man was trying to examine their features.

"You would ask who we are, and why we have shown you, a priest, violence," said Haddon gruffly. "To the first I might answer that we are *guerrilleros*, as you doubtless surmise. Secondly, we desire to borrow something from you."

The man made an expressive gesture denoting that he carried nothing of value upon his person.

"You will remove your cassock," ordered Haddon sternly.

The priest stood motionless.

The Virginian plunged his hands into the folds of his sash and drew out a short-bladed knife. The priest looked at the keen weapon and shivered. Then by a sudden quick motion he divested



himself of the brown robe and permitted it to fall upon the ground at his feet.

Haddon controlled an emotion of surprise.

Under the brown cassock the man wore about his waist a sash, and from the latter protruded the handle of a pistol. He glanced at the Texan.

"Even the priests go armed," said he.

Bradley shrugged his shoulder, reached forward and took the pistol from the sash.

"What now, sir?" he asked.

"It is necessary we bind him, else he would make straight for Chalco," answered Haddon. He was thinking: "This man may prove more dangerous than we had reason to suppose; a war-like churchman is worse than an ordinary soldier."

It was evident that the priest was beginning to become more frightened as each moment passed. He looked wildly to the right and left.

"Give me the pistol, then remove the sash and bind his hands," said Haddon to the Texan.

The latter obeyed quickly. His movements resembled nothing so much as those of a cat as he worked rapidly and silently. Before one could count thirty the captive's hands were firmly secured behind his back.

Having tied the knots to his satisfaction, the Texan did not wait for further orders, but went quickly to one of the horses and removed a stout rope which dangled from the pommel of the saddle. This rope he cut into two pieces and returned to the already helpless prisoner.

With every appearance of the keenest satisfaction, he secured the priest's ankles with one of the sections of rope; the other he wound about his body, beginning at the knees and ending around the man's neck.

It seemed an impossibility that the prisoner could struggle even a little, but should he be able to do so, each movement would so tighten the second rope that he would be in danger of strangling himself.

Having completed his task, Sergeant Bradley arose with a grunt of satisfaction and glanced sharply about him.

The gloom which had settled over the surrounding hills rendered all objects indistinct, but presently he seemed satisfied with his observation.

"Yonder, some sixty paces from where we stand, there is a hollow between two ridges of ground. He will be safe there for some hours, sir," said he briefly.

The priest, who could now use only his eyes with freedom, tried desperately to speak. The Texan stepped closer and peered into his face.

"Listen," said he gravely. "It so happens that I was with those who perished in the Alamo. It was there I saw several priests who did not hesitate to fire on the handful of defenders. It was then I made a resolve:

"First, to kill Santa Anna, if ever the opportunity was afforded me; and, secondly, that a Mexican should die—a Mexican for every hour I passed at the bottom of the well into which I had fallen.

"If, when we return in the morning, you have not stirred from the spot where we shall leave you, you may be spared, but if you have moved so much as a yard I will stick this knife between your ribs."

For a moment it seemed as if the man, standing bound and gagged at the foot of the cross, would faint. He closed his eyes and swayed so perceptibly that Haddon made a movement to catch him in his arms.

Then the eyes opened slowly and fixed themselves upon the face of the scowling Texan, or, rather, on so much of his face as was visible. There was that in these eyes which bordered on fear, unbelief, and hatred.

The Texan shrugged his shoulders.

"Let us put him where he may lie safely until morning, for it is time we were gone, sir," said he quietly. For the moment he had taken the leadership into his hands. With this brief speech he surrendered it again to the Virginian.

Five minutes later the Americans stood once more beside their horses; the space at the foot of the cross was vacant, and the brown cassock was hidden beneath Haddon's saddle.

Sergeant Bradley swung himself upon



the back of his horse. As Haddon resumed his own mount he touched him upon the arm.

"The cassock which we have taken has not covered the body of a priest to-night, for—that man is not a priest, though he would pretend to be one. At some time or place I have seen his face before, though when or how I cannot recall. For the present it is enough to know that he lay beneath that cross for a purpose—feigning sleep," said he soberly.

"In speaking of the Alamo you told him what you are," answered Haddon somewhat impatiently.

The Texan shrugged his shoulders.

"Is it not time we ride into Chalco, sir?" said he shortly.

As they had reason to hope, no one interposed an objection to their progress during the remainder of the journey to the environs of the town. Having passed the outlying buildings, the Americans found themselves surrounded by a motley collection composed of foot soldiers and cavalry, non-combatants, women, children, and dogs.

The latter snapped viciously at the hoofs of the horses, but by all others they were apparently unnoticed. Having taken possession of the town, the army of Santa Anna moved hither and thither without discipline. Certain guards were posted, it is true, but these guards used their authority in browbeating the citizens to obtain food and drink and even money. Any one who wore even the semblance of a uniform was free to go and come as he pleased.

Having ridden half the length of one of the streets, Haddon pulled up his horse. A citizen, bareheaded and walking slowly, was approaching. When he was abreast of the horses the Virginian turned in the saddle.

"My friend," said he, "we have just ridden in from the north. Can you direct us to an inn where we may fodder our horses and obtain lodging?"

The Mexican raised his hands.

"Mother of God, and you ask that! Five days ago I was the keeper of an inn, one of the best in Chalco; now I am looking for a place to sleep. My rooms have been seized, my goods taken, and when I protested I received a buffet in

payment. The invaders could do no worse, unless they hanged me, and in that case I should be put out of misery," said he dully.

"Is it so bad as that? We would be willing to pay for what we received. Not much, it is true, but something."

The Mexican brightened wonderfully and came closer to the horses.

"While I have been robbed, my brother has been more fortunate. They have left him a corner of the cellar—doubtless because the rats refuse to give up possession."

"And where may your brother be found? Is it far from here?"

"Scarcely a thousand paces, and the place has its advantages. From it one can almost look into the window of the room in which is confined the prisoner who will die at sunrise.

"For a commission, my brother has even been permitted to place a box against a wall of the prison, and for a few coppers any one who chooses to pay may mount the box and look at the condemned spy."

"So the prisoner is on exhibition during the night at the end of which he is to die?" Haddon spoke bitterly.

"And why not?" retorted the Mexican. "Has he not, among other things, refused the holy offices of a priest? For such a one death is too easy a punishment."

"You are speaking wisely. I should like to look at such a fellow," said Haddon heartily.

"Oh, that is easy enough. There are many around the stone house, each waiting a turn to mount the box. A word in my brother's ear will, however, give you a preference, provided I am paid something."

The Virginian took a dozen coppers from his pocket and dropped them into the man's eager palm.

"Lead the way," said he.

For a hundred rods, then down a narrow, ill-smelling lane, and again into a broader thoroughfare the Americans followed their guide.

Looking some distance ahead, they perceived that the way was blocked by a varied crowd whose faces were turned toward a low two-storied building of massive gray stone.



On the outskirts of this crowd the Mexican halted.

"Wait," said he, "I will first find my brother, after which I will return and hold your horses—for a few extra coppers."

He pushed his way through the crowd, but after the lapse of five minutes returned, accompanied by a small man who was even dirtier than he. The newcomer regarded the horsemen critically.

"These are the señors who are willing to pay something," explained the first Mexican.

"It is a difficult matter, but——" The other hesitated.

Haddon produced a silver piece.

"Perhaps this will make it easier, my friend," he said.

The Mexican clutched the money, bit it, and dropped it into his sash. Then, by a gesture, he denoted that the horsemen should dismount and follow him.

Haddon and his companion reached the ground at the same moment. The former turned to the first Mexican, who had laid hold of the bridles.

"We will go one at a time," said he gruffly, and followed the man who had taken the silver piece, leaving the Texan to guard the horses.

Had he not done so, every inch of the saddles and what was concealed beneath one of them would have been examined as soon as his back was turned.

That part of the street which ran past the side of the old stone building was somewhat brilliantly illuminated by a number of torches. Following his guide through the crowd, Haddon finally arrived opposite the house and within a dozen feet of it.

Then he saw that a large box had been placed directly beneath one of the windows. An opening was cut through the thick stone wall about eight feet from the ground, across which were stretched numerous rusty bars, the ends firmly embedded in the masonry.

The Mexican whom he had followed darted forward and seized by the coat a man who, from the top of the box, was peering between the window guards.

"Come," said he sharply, "you have already exceeded the limit, and others are waiting."

He pulled the fellow roughly from

his perch and motioned to Haddon to climb upon the box. The Virginian mounted and peeped between the bars.

What he saw was a room of considerable size, the four sides of which were of stone. Against the wall opposite the window a bench had been placed, and upon this bench was seated a solitary figure—the prisoner who was to die at sunrise.

Why the wretched man faced the opening, through which so many curious and mocking ones were constantly gazing, was explained at a single glance. An iron ring, which passed around his neck, was riveted into the wall behind, and so tight was this metal band that the wearer must face constantly in one direction.

That the guards were concerned in the public exhibition of their prisoner was evinced by a pair of candles set in sockets in the wall so the light would fall directly upon the face of the condemned.

A spasm of rage flashed through the body of the Virginian, and his hand which grasped one of the iron bars tightened until particles of rust were ground into the palm.

Though he did not recognize the prisoner, it was plain to see he was an American—a mere youth, it appeared, who had trusted himself among a pack of bloodthirsty wolves.

For several moments Haddon gazed silently upon the white face and closed eyes of the man before him. Behind, the tumult made by the impatient crowd drowned all other noise.

The Virginian pressed his face closer against the bars.

"Count to yourself five thousand. At the end of that time tell the guard that you desire to see a native priest."

The words, uttered in a hoarse whisper, and in English, drifted across the cell and reached the ears of the prisoner. He opened his eyes slowly and a slight convulsion crossed his face. It was evident he imagined himself to be dreaming, though he knew he had not been asleep.

Haddon made a slight movement with his hand across the space between the bars, and repeated the words he had before uttered. This time the man



before him comprehended, for his eyes opened to their full extent and he nodded ever so little.

"*Five thousand!*" repeated the Virginian for the third time.

It was necessary that time be given in which to make his preparations, and except by counting the prisoner had no means of reckoning time. Five minutes would seem to him an hour. Did he ask too soon that a priest be sent to him, Haddon would not be at the stone house to respond, and the only opportunity would have been thrown away.

The impatient voice of the Mexican sounded behind the Virginian.

"Come, señor, others are waiting."

Haddon stepped to the ground, pushed those nearest roughly aside, and elbowed his way through the crowd. On its outskirts Sergeant Bradley and the horses were waiting. Beside the latter the first Mexican was standing.

"The señor is satisfied?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Haddon coldly; "I have seen sufficient."

"And the señores desire to occupy my brother's cellar?"

"Begone, you fool!" said Haddon angrily. "Do you then imagine Mexican officers desire to sleep in a cellar?"

He made a significant gesture. The citizen of Chalco cast a frightened glance at the frowning face above him, turned and disappeared.

"We have got rid of that fellow; now it is time to act," said Haddon sharply, and turned his horse's head away from the direction of the stone house.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE IRON COLLAR.

THE old stone house near the center of Chalco, the old Chalco, was divided into two sections by a narrow hall which ran completely through the building. On either side of this passageway opened the rooms on the lower floor of the building. For generations the place had been used as a prison, or something worse, and the condition of the rooms left much to be desired.

When Santa Anna's army moved down and occupied Chalco, certain of the officers examined the stone building

with the idea of turning it into a habitation.

The examination made them decide otherwise. It was one thing to fight the hated invaders from across the Río Grande, but quite another to begin hostilities with the rats and vermin which held the ancient prison with a strong hand.

So it happened that, except for a few slovenly recruits, the house was uninhabited. These recruits spent their time wandering about the town, robbing and browbeating the citizens. Only the guard and the man who was condemned to die at sunrise occupied the gray stone building. The former passed his time lolling on the doorstep, consuming innumerable cigarettes. There was no fear the prisoner would walk out and make off; the iron ring in the wall had done its office too long to yield to the struggles of one miserable American.

Sufficient it was that, once each hour, the Mexican soldier opened the door of the prisoner's room and looked in. The man inside was always in the same position—his back to the wall, his eyes closed, his white, strained face turned toward the barred window.

It was during one of these hourly visits to his charge that the guard found the man looking toward the door. Heretofore, for hours, he had failed to exhibit any signs of life or interest. The soldier stood upon the threshold and stared. He removed the cigarette from between his lips and blew a cloud of smoke into the ill-smelling room.

"Perhaps the—the señor desires some water?"

The soldier was from the south, beyond the city of Mexico. He was mountain bred, and there was in his heart a spark of pity. Yet he spoke almost in a whisper, for it would not do for the leering crowd outside to know he had offered the prisoner anything.

The American motioned the man to come nearer.

"I desire only that a priest be sent to me," said he in a faint voice and in broken Spanish.

The Mexican stared in amazement.

"Mother of God!" muttered he. "And I have sent four away already."



because this same heretic refused consolation of the church."

He produced another cigarette and lighted it.

"You desire a priest?" said he doubtfully.

"It is so; in a few hours the sun will rise," answered the prisoner.

The soldier backed out of the chamber, closing the door behind him.

"The devil!" he muttered. "And can such a one be found in the neighborhood at this hour, especially as I have made it clearly understood the fellow in there has refused to make his peace with Heaven? It would be only just that he die with his sins upon his soul."

Yet he resolved to find a priest, even if he had to send one of those without in search of one. Coming to the door, he was about to call to a passing citizen when his eyes fell upon a brown cassock approaching slowly the foot of the steps.

The churchman's cowl was drawn well over his eyes and he seemed to be in deep meditation, but upon reaching the steps he stopped and looked up. It was no other than Lieutenant Haddon, who, for perhaps a quarter of an hour, had been hovering in the vicinity of the stone house.

The guard removed the cigarette from his mouth.

"Holy father," said he, "a miracle has happened. The man who is confined within and who is to die at sunrise requests spiritual consolation. Hitherto he has refused to open his lips."

Haddon bent his head gravely.

"Even at the eleventh hour. I will go to him, my son," said he quietly, and mounted the steps until he stood beside the soldier.

The latter lost no time in leading him through the hall to the door of the prisoner's chamber. When it was opened and the supposed priest stepped across the threshold, his eyes fell upon the open window, directly opposite the man fastened to the wall.

"It is not fitting that vulgar eyes gaze upon the confession of a dying man. Pin a cloth across the opening," said he sternly.

The guard hurried away and returned with a ragged blanket, which he fast-

ened over the window. Haddon walked across the room and deliberately blew out one of the candles. The place was plunged in semi-darkness.

The Mexican slipped quietly out of the chamber, closing the door behind him. Haddon waited for a few moments, and having satisfied himself that the man was not listening, approached the prisoner.

"What is to be done must be accomplished quickly. Are you in any way crippled?" he asked in a low voice.

A strange noise escaped the lips of the man fastened to the wall—a sound between a laugh and a groan.

"Except that I fear my neck is broken, I have escaped injury," answered he in a hard voice.

"Then you will be able to leave this hole?" answered Haddon.

"If you are strong enough to tear this cursed ring from the wall." The prisoner's voice expressed anything but hope of liberation.

Haddon bent down and examined the iron collar. A glance showed him it would be impossible for even the strongest man to break it.

"I have not neglected to provide myself with what is needed," said he quietly, and from under the brown cassock he produced a file.

"It so happened that, after leaving the window, I ran across the shop of a blacksmith. Hold your head quiet and press to the left; I am going to cut through this iron," he explained.

He tested the ring carefully and an expression of satisfaction crossed his face. The iron was old and rusty, and might, with patience, be severed. Had it been of steel, the task would have presented more difficulties.

Suddenly the sound of a low voice, chanting solemnly, filled the chamber. Those without who heard knew it was the priest repeating the prayers for a man about to die.

To Haddon and the prisoner the chant had another meaning: to drown the noise made by the rasping of a file.

The Virginian worked desperately, yet carefully. The blacksmith from whose shop he had stolen the file possessed excellent implements; the iron yielded beyond expectation.



After a time Haddon stopped, replaced the file under his cassock, and seized the collar in both hands. A sharp snap, accompanied by a stifled groan, sounded in the room.

The prisoner raised his hand quickly to his neck, and when he withdrew it his fingers were stained with blood, but the iron collar was broken.

Haddon placed his hand under his companion's arm, but the prisoner arose without much effort. He swayed slightly and his head remained rigid, but there seemed to be no cause to fear he would collapse.

"God knows, my friend——" he began, but Haddon checked him.

"Words are unnecessary. I do not even ask how you came here. It is enough for the present that you tell me your name. I am Haddon, of Harney's Horse."

"And I am Anderson, of Duncan's Battery. They caught me within four miles of——"

"I know," interrupted Haddon sharply. "On the Acapulco road. We will talk this thing over when we get out of this hornet's nest. The thing now is to get out."

He stepped to the door and listened, then returned to his companion.

"The guard is standing outside the entrance. When I knock he will let me into the passage. Listen to what I have to say carefully.

"This building is situated at the angle of two streets. The one on which your window opens is lighted and filled with people, but the other is much narrower, dark, and practically deserted. When you leave this room, turn to the right and pass straight through the hall. It will bring you to the door opening into the narrow street. It should be an easy matter for you to slip out and lose yourself in the darkness, for these Mexicans are under wretched discipline and the streets are not patrolled. We will not leave the house together, for I shall pass out by the front door; neither will it be wise for us to see each other anywhere in Chalco. Having left this place, you must shift for yourself and escape from this town as quickly as possible."

"Then when shall I see you again?"

You surely do not intend to remain for long in Chalco? They may do to you as they have done to me, and my disguise was well-nigh perfect."

Haddon thought for a moment.

"The country between here and our lines is alive with Mexicans, and to pass through them may be difficult unless you understand the roads. There is, some four hours' ride from here, a deserted inn on the Acapulco road; you may know the place by three gigantic boulders which rise to the height of twenty feet or more on the opposite side of the road.

"As I have said, this inn is deserted. Make your way thither, and if you so choose, remain there for forty-eight hours. If by that time I do not appear, it will be impossible for me to come by that road, and you can continue on alone."

"I know the inn, for I slept between the boulders one night," answered Anderson.

"Then you need no further directions. I am going to knock on the door. Stand a little behind me, and when I leave the room, follow quickly and turn to the right," said Haddon briefly.

He laid in his companion's hand a pistol and short-bladed knife. Then he turned and walked to the door.

Several moments elapsed between the tapping upon the panel and the sound of approaching footsteps in the hall without. Then the noise of a bolt being drawn was heard and the door swung open.

The guard peered into the darkened chamber.

"Well, father," said he, "are you ready to depart?"

Haddon advanced across the threshold; it was only a step—sufficient to permit him to gaze up and down the hall.

"A word, my son," said he softly.

The Mexican stepped through the open door. Suddenly he saw something behind the supposed priest—the figure of a man whose face was in the shadow.

A startled exclamation sprang to his lips, but before it found utterance a grip which seemed to be that of steel closed upon his throat. So sudden it was that the breath was driven into his



body. He raised his hands to loosen the dreadful pressure upon his windpipe, when a stunning blow on the temple almost deprived him of consciousness.

He struggled feebly; the blow was repeated, a quiver passed through his body, and, freed from the grasp upon his throat, he sank limply to the floor.

Haddon stepped carefully over the body and stopped in the dimly lighted hall.

"To the right," he whispered, and the artilleryman obeyed silently.

The Virginian turned, closed the door and bolted it. Then, drawing the cowl well down over his face, he walked to the front door and passed through it. The greater portion of the crowd in the street had disappeared, for, the window of the prisoner's chamber having been covered, no further interest attached to the neighborhood.

Haddon passed down the steps and walked slowly away from the few who remained gathered under the window. When he had gone some distance his steps quickened. He turned into another street, traversed it rapidly, almost ran through a short alley, and came once more into a broader and dimly lighted thoroughfare.

He no longer wore the brown cassock, but appeared to be a *guerrillero* wandering aimlessly about the town.

For a thousand paces or more he sauntered over the uneven stones, looking straight into the faces of those he met, and once uttering a round Spanish oath as a citizen jostled him. After a time he came opposite a building from the door and windows of which lights were shining.

This place he entered without ceremony and glanced about the low-ceilinged room. This room contained a number of tables, at several of which men were seated.

Haddon crossed over to one of the tables and sat down opposite the man who occupied it. This man was Sergeant Bradley, who was passing his time in blowing rings of tobacco smoke toward the ceiling.

The Texan looked keenly into his companion's face. What he read there told him the plan had been successful—that the prisoner no longer sat facing

the barred window in the stone house of Chalco.

In the mean time Haddon was examining the other occupants of the room. Only one was a soldier, already more than half drunk; the others were swarthy-skinned civilians, each intent upon his own business.

The Virginian turned to his companion.

"Well," said he, "has anything occurred?"

"Only that I have nearly fallen asleep," answered the Texan wearily.

"And the horses?"

"Oh, they are in a shed yonder, where we may sleep if we desire."

"Perhaps later, but now there is something to do."

"I was beginning to fear I should take root here," responded the Texan dryly. "Even that soldier over there is too drunk to enter into an argument."

Haddon arose and was turning toward the door when there was the clatter of hoofs without, the rattle of a saber, and a Mexican cavalryman almost hurled himself through the doorway. He glanced quickly about the room, saw what it contained, and addressed Haddon.

"I am seeking Captain Valeno, señor; have you seen him to-night?" he demanded.

"No, señor," replied Haddon; "if he is here, I have not——"

The Mexican cavalryman uttered an oath.

"I have searched for him in twenty places, for his presence is imperative. There is the devil to pay at headquarters."

"And how is that?" Haddon ventured.

The Mexican shrugged his shoulders.

"And you ask me? If you had been there you would understand well enough. It was only half an hour ago a detachment returned to the town and in its midst was his excellency, the General Santa Anna.

"As God is my witness, it is rumored they found him bound with ropes and lying helpless near the Acapulco road. As to that I do not know clearly, but the commander is in a dreadful passion.



"He has summoned Mazatlan before him, and it is rumored that those who did the thing were *guerrilleros* of his command."

"And Captain Valeno?" Haddon could think of nothing else to say.

"Oh, he is wanted, too. You know what the general thinks of him. If he should come in here, tell him what I have told you."

In another moment he was through the door and in the saddle. Every one in the room except the drunken soldier was upon his feet.

Haddon turned to his companion, but paused at the expression upon the Texan's face.

"You heard him?" whispered Sergeant Bradley hoarsely. "There can be no mistake?"

"You heard what he said," answered Haddon, making a gesture of caution. "Come, we must get out of here to headquarters."

He was thinking that Mazatlan would be there.

Sergeant Bradley followed him across the room and through the door.

"What ails you, man?" asked Haddon sharply. "It appears that it was Santa Anna whom we relieved of his disguise on the road out yonder, but what of that? He answered as well as another."

The Texan seemed struggling to speak.

"You ask me that?" he finally blurted out. "It was Santa Anna himself I held under the point of my knife, and—I did not stick it between his ribs. Mother of God!"

Haddon began to quiet him.

"We are not murderers," said he, "and to kill a defenseless man except for an imperative reason is murder."

"But it is not murder to kill a reptile. *You* were not at the Alamo," groaned the Texan bitterly.

Haddon laid his hand on his arm.

"Come," said he, "it is too late to cry over such matters; our business is at headquarters. It is Mazatlan we are after, not Santa Anna."

"Pardon, sir," said the other quietly; "but I was thinking—well, you see, my father and two brothers were at the Alamo. Let us do as you say, and go to

headquarters to get a look at this Mazatlan."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MAN IN THE BRAIDED JACKET.

To find the headquarters of General Santa Anna was not difficult. The house in which the dictator of Mexico had established himself stood on the southern outskirts of Chalco in the middle of a small plaza.

The building was of stone, two-storied, and was surrounded on all sides by a wide veranda. Any one walking along this veranda could look into a number of narrow windows opening into the chambers on the first floor.

Haddon and his companion reached the outskirts of the plaza without being stopped or questioned. In fact, they were but a part of a considerable crowd of soldiers and civilians who, attracted by the rumor that something unusual had occurred, desired to be as near headquarters as possible.

Most of the curious ones stopped at the edge of the plaza, content to gaze across the open space at the lighted windows, but the two Americans had no intention of watching from a distance the forms of the numerous persons who constantly appeared and disappeared between the lights and the inner fringe of the crowd.

The question was to be solved, however, of how they could safely get nearer the house. The plaza was guarded; any one attempting to cross it must give a good reason for so doing before being permitted to proceed.

The solution of this riddle proved to be not so difficult as at first appeared.

Couriers had been despatched throughout the town to summon to headquarters certain officers of the Mexican army. From time to time one or another of these officers appeared and in most cases was accompanied by several aides or followers.

These groups pushed their way through the crowd of curious ones, and the guards, recognizing the officers, permitted them to pass. The course adopted by Haddon and Sergeant Bradley was extremely simple. The plaza was plunged in semi-darkness, lighted



only by the myriad stars which shone in the heavens.

Watching their opportunity, they waited until an officer appeared accompanied by a considerable following, and when these passed through the crowd and out on the plaza the two Americans simply made themselves a part of the escort.

As such the guards permitted them to pass. This lack of discipline was to be found throughout the entire Mexican army.

A startling example was given to the world by an act of General Valencia himself. Against the explicit orders of Santa Anna, he had attacked the American forces at the outset of a great battle, and through this piece of disobedience the battle had been lost to the Mexicans forthwith.

Having passed the soldiers who guarded the plaza, to approach the house was an easy matter. The sentinels, who were supposed to patrol the veranda on all sides of the building, contented themselves with pacing up and down the front and around the side corners, while the rear was innocent of scrutiny.

In fact, some curious soldiers, anxious to see what was occurring inside, were looking through the windows. After a careful survey of prevailing conditions Haddon and the Texan lost no time in mounting the veranda and placing themselves at a vacant opening. There, unmolested, they were enabled to get an excellent view of what was going on within the headquarters of the commanding general.

The room into which they looked was a spacious chamber, lighted by a dozen candles, which revealed the figures of two men—the one standing with his back toward the windows, the other pacing restlessly to and fro.

This second man was of small stature and limped as he walked. It was General Santa Anna, dictator of Mexico, and the Americans had no difficulty in recognizing in him the supposed priest they had robbed of his cassock at the foot of the cross on the Acapulco road.

Santa Anna's dark face was convulsed with passion. His words, snapped out with a peculiar hissing noise, were

plainly audible to the watchers at the window.

"And for what reason do you tell me it was none of your precious gang of cut-throats who did that thing? Do you pretend to say that you keep track of the movements of each after night-fall?"

He put the question to his companion in a voice in which a sneer was predominant.

The other, who stood in a strained attitude, with one hand resting upon the hilt of his sheathed saber, shook his head emphatically.

"I have not said it was impossible, your excellency, but I maintain the thing is improbable. My men are devoted to the cause and to the person of your excellency. *Why* should they do violence to——?"

"Have I not told you I was disguised; that I wore the garb of a monk? *You* know I frequently find it necessary to adopt such a method, for in that manner certain things are discovered which would not otherwise come to my ears.

"To-night it happened that I thought it necessary to visit an outpost on the Acapulco road—because I suspected certain things in connection with the officer who commanded it. It was while I was returning that I was set upon, gagged, bound, and threatened.

"Do you understand? *My* life threatened by two Mexican *guerrilleros*."

Santa Anna's face was white with passion.

The man whose back was toward the window moved uneasily.

"But if you saw them plainly, surely it is possible again to recognize——" he began.

The general broke in savagely.

"Have I not told you I could not distinguish their faces? The fools were too smart for that. Had I done so, every soldier in this army should pass before me one at a time, and when I came to those two—— Mother of God! All Mexico should see what would happen!"

"Yet to discover them may be quite possible. You tell me one was large, the other small. Perhaps you might even recognize their voices did you again hear them."



"It is hardly possible, but——" Santa Anna stopped and ground his heel into the matting which covered the floor and then continued in a terrible voice:

"I might even let the thing pass, in order that it did not become public, but—I was found by some of my own soldiers—I, their general, was found bound and gagged, lying like a log of wood on the bare ground! Ten thousand devils! The whole army will know it by morning!"

He seemed to breathe with difficulty. The Texan pressed Haddon's hand.

"Something at least was accomplished," he whispered in a voice of the keenest satisfaction. "There is not a prouder man in all Mexico than Santa Anna. You see how he takes it."

The Mexican commander began to roll a cigarette, then tore it to pieces and threw the pieces upon the floor.

"You do not say anything," cried he sharply.

"What can I say, your excellency? If there is anything——"

"Mother of God! And you are accounted the smartest officer in all my army. Even those dogs of *Americanos* tremble when your name is mentioned. I tell you, those devils were *guerrilleros*, and you are the leader of my *guerrilleros*. When you return to your men, listen; listen day and night; creep upon them at all hours. These two will talk together—some time—then you can strike, as you strike against the *Americanos* from beyond the Rio Grande."

What the officer thought of this proposition was a problem, but he replied quietly.

"I will follow your excellency's instructions. If any among my men were guilty of that thing, I will do my best to find them. I will——"

There came a sudden interruption from the other side of the room. A low knock sounded upon the panel of the door leading into the hall. Santa Anna turned sharply, walked to the door and opened it.

The figure of an orderly appeared in the aperture.

"Well?" cried the general angrily.

"Why are we interrupted?"

"I have been commanded to report to your excellency without losing a mo-

ment—to report to your excellency that the prisoner confined in the stone house has made his escape!"

A momentary silence filled the room. Santa Anna glared at the messenger like a wild beast of prey.

"Were my orders not obeyed?" he asked in a voice of awful calmness.

"That the prisoner be fastened by the neck to the ring in the wall? It was done, your excellency," answered the orderly.

"Then it is impossible that he should have escaped, unless——" Santa Anna paused and glared at the officer.

"The ring was filed quite through, and broke," said the latter in a trembling voice.

"You would tell me that this miserable prisoner has filed through a band of iron so easily? Who has been admitted to his cell—since sundown?"

"None save a priest who desired to administer consolation to a man condemned," explained the orderly.

"A priest? Who admitted him?"

"The guard over the prisoner. It was not commanded a priest should not visit the chamber."

"And this priest—what was he like?"

The general's face was now impassive as a mask.

"I do not know, your excellency. The guard is——"

"There are several orders of churchmen in Chalco, but even in the dark each may be known by his habit. How was this one dressed?" demanded Santa Anna fiercely.

The orderly hesitated.

"The guard has but just recovered consciousness, but he murmured something about a brown cassock," he replied.

Santa Anna stood as though rooted to the floor. A look of comprehension sprang into his face.

"Mother of God!" he cried with sudden fierceness. "And the cassock which they took was brown. I am surrounded by traitors even in Chalco!"

The officer who had been standing with his back to the window, and who had listened silently to the conversation between the commander and the orderly, spoke for the first time.



"It may be possible that your excellency is mistaken. It may be possible that this spy had companions who came with him to Chalco. Would they not attempt to rescue their countryman, your excellency?"

A silence followed this startling suggestion. An expression of rage and fear overspread the face of the dictator of Mexico.

It seemed as though he preferred to think there were traitors in his own army rather than that certain daring Americans had penetrated his lines and were at large in Chalco. With a powerful effort he calmed himself.

"That we will discover. I place the matter in your hands, Señor Mazatlan. Despatch couriers to every outpost within ten miles of the town. Search every house and cellar in Chalco."

The famous guerrilla leader straightened himself and began to hook up his saber. Santa Anna turned to the waiting orderly.

"And the guard who permitted the liberation of the prisoner—where is he?" he asked in a hard voice.

"In the care of the surgeons. His head was nearly broken when he opened the door of the chamber to allow the priest to depart," answered the Mexican.

"But he is conscious?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Then," said Santa Anna in a cold voice, "do not countermand the orders to the firing squad which is to be at the public plaza at sunrise."

He crossed over to the table, sat down, and wrote an order hurriedly.

"Take this and give it to the officer who was to have seen to the execution of the spy in the morning," said he, handing the paper to the orderly. "The guard who allowed the prisoner to be taken from his cell shall be executed in that prisoner's place at sunrise."

Haddon and the Texan looked at each other.

"And you think it would be murder to kill such a reptile?" muttered the latter.

Suddenly the Virginian smothered an exclamation of startled surprise, and his companion saw him lean eagerly forward. The Texan turned his eyes again to the window quickly.

The officer who was in the room with Santa Anna and who wore the richly braided jacket of a Mexican cavalryman had turned so his face could be seen by those on the veranda.

The Texan drew a sharp breath at sight of this face, for it presented a horrible appearance. It was the face of what had once been a handsome man, but all former comeliness had been destroyed forever.

Two livid scars, beginning at the middle of the chin and extending upward almost to the bottom of the man's ears, framed his countenance as behind two unsightly red bars.

"God in heaven! It is Señor Perote!" muttered Haddon hoarsely.

But the Texan did not understand.

He saw in the man before him only Mazatlan, the famous leader of Santa Anna's *guerrilleros*.

## CHAPTER X.

### AN UNEXPECTED INTERVIEW.

THE shock of discovering that the man whom General Santa Anna called Mazatlan, the man he had entered Chalco to see, was none other than the ex-innkeeper, Señor Perote, drove from Haddon's mind for the moment all thought of the peril in which he and his companion stood.

It is true the guerrilla leader had turned his face toward the window for but a few seconds, but this brief interval had been sufficient to reveal the unusual scars which disfigured it.

It was Perote, the man who had voluntarily entered the American lines for the purpose of thwarting Santa Anna's plans, who was the famous leader wanted by General Taylor.

A dozen conflicting emotions filled the Virginian's mind. A riddle presented itself the solving of which was doubly difficult. Who was the man before him?

A Mexican whose heart and soul were given to the cause of Mexico, whose zeal for the welfare of the southern republic led him ruthlessly to slay the invaders from beyond the Rio Grande; or the Mexican who, smarting under the injuries inflicted upon him by certain



of his countrymen, elected to betray his country into the hands of a victorious enemy?

Was Mazatlan, as Perote, acting the spy in the American lines; or Perote, as Mazatlan, following the same rôle in the army of Santa Anna? This was the question which Haddon felt himself called upon to decide, for upon the true solution hung the course he must pursue.

He felt a pressure upon his arm. It was the Texan recalling him from his reverie.

"You have heard all that was said in there, sir. Chalco is to be searched from top to bottom. We must act with extreme caution."

The words aroused Haddon to a sense of the danger which threatened. To walk freely about the streets, trusting that the general confusion would prevent detection, was becoming altogether too risky.

Santa Anna suspected there were Americans in Chalco, and he would verify this suspicion if possible.

"We have seen Mazatlan, and I fancy it will not be difficult to describe him," continued Sergeant Bradley dryly. "His entering our lines without detection is simply impossible."

Haddon was thinking how he had entered the lines and in what manner he had succeeded in walking out again.

Then a horrible fear seized him.

Had this Mexican, the man who had freed him from the upper chamber in the inn, led General Taylor's messenger safely across the mountains by the shortest route to El Vidio pass? Had he done this, and saved the handful of Americans from making a hopeless resistance, or had he murdered the messenger *en route* and let the defenders of the pass meet their fate?

An impulse seized him to learn from this man himself whether he served Mexico or the enemies of the republic—an impulse which he put away from him as too reckless for serious contemplation.

If Mazatlan was Perote, there would be no danger; but if Perote was Mazatlan—to meet him face to face, to be recognized—would mean certain death.

Sergeant Bradley, troubled by none

of these perplexing questions, saw only immediate need of action in the face of grave danger. To him Mazatlan was the merciless Mexican *guerrillero* ordered by Santa Anna to search Chalco for suspected spies.

No doubt as to his course of action perplexed him. He would avoid this guerrilla chief as he would the devil, but if necessity compelled a meeting he would not hesitate to kill the man with as little compunction as he would exhibit in grinding under his heel the head of a rattlesnake.

"We have seen Mazatlan, and now, sir?" he asked in a low voice.

"First, to get away from the vicinity of this place, in which Mazatlan will not remain. Secondly, to follow him," answered Haddon quietly.

"In order that it may become possible to meet him *alone*?" There was a sinister note in the Texan's question.

"We shall see," Haddon replied. "Come, there is no time to be lost, for he may leave headquarters at any moment."

They were indeed not a moment too soon, for, reaching a point where a view of the front of the house could be obtained, the figure of the guerrilla leader was the first object which met their eyes.

Mazatlan, standing in the flood of light which issued from the open door, was giving certain directions to a Mexican sub-officer who stood at attention on the veranda.

Having apparently concluded these directions, the guerrilla descended the steps and without pausing for an instant walked rapidly across the plaza toward the crowd which lined the side of the square nearest the town.

It was the signal for the Americans to follow.

The crowd parted to permit the dreaded Mazatlan to pass, and it had scarcely closed again before Haddon and the Texan began to elbow their way through the fringe of spectators. The man whom Santa Anna had ordered to institute a search into every house and corner of Chalco proceeded by the shortest route toward the center of the town.

After a time his objective point be-



came plain to the Americans. He proposed to visit the old stone prison.

The streets about the old building were practically deserted. A soldier stood guard upon the steps of the prison, for the order written by Santa Anna had been delivered by the orderly, and the luckless Mexican who had admitted the supposed priest to the prisoner's chamber lay in one of the rooms. Mazatlan spoke sharply to this guard and passed into the building. Haddon and the Texan stationed themselves in the shadow of a house on the opposite side of the street.

They proposed to be on hand when the guerrilla leader concluded his visit of inspection.

A quarter of an hour passed. It was well past midnight, and the effect of their day's ride and the strenuous hours in Chalco were beginning to tell upon the Americans. A few hours' sleep would have refreshed them wonderfully, but sleep was out of the question even for a moment.

Suddenly an interruption to their inactivity came from an unexpected quarter. The quiet of the gloomy street was broken by the sound of approaching horses.

From the direction of General Santa Anna's headquarters appeared the forms of several riders who, approaching the stone house at a slow trot, pulled up before the door. The first, evidently an officer, addressed the guard sharply.

"Is Señor Mazatlan in there?" he demanded.

The soldier answered in the affirmative. The Mexican officer dismounted and entered the building hurriedly. In a few minutes he reappeared, accompanied by the guerrilla leader. The latter glanced at the horsemen sitting motionless in their saddles.

"We might ride to my quarters, where we should be in private, but that would take time, and you say the message is important. There is no one on the farther side of the street; let us go there," said he sharply.

It was too late for the Americans to leave their hiding-place without being seen distinctly by the two Mexicans and the mounted soldiers. If they endeavored to escape in either direction, the

movement would be followed by a command to halt, and serious consequences might ensue.

If, on the other hand, they remained where they were, Mazatlan and his companion would see them crouching in the shadow.

It was just here that the quick wit and coolness of Lieutenant Haddon came to the rescue. Within a few feet of the spot where he and the Texan were standing was a depression in the wall. This depression extended a couple of feet below the surface of the street, and would afford a possible hiding-place for a person of small stature. The Virginian knew that to attempt to conceal himself in this place would be out of the question, but Sergeant Bradley was a small man.

To meet Mazatlan face to face was what he least desired, but to meet him alone was preferable to having the Mexicans come suddenly upon two men hiding in the shadow.

He remembered Santa Anna had told the guerrilla that one of the men who had waylaid him upon the Acapulco road was tall, while his companion was much smaller. Coming suddenly upon such a combination, and under such circumstances, the guerrilla leader's conclusion would be obvious.

Mazatlan and his companion were already descending the steps of the old stone house, and what was to be done must be accomplished quickly. Haddon seized the Texan by the arm and pointed to the depression in the wall. Sergeant Bradley understood and obeyed without a moment's hesitation. He dropped below the surface of the street into the shallow hollow, where, lying flat upon his back, he was effectually hidden by the darkness.

Could any one have pierced this darkness, it would have been observed that the occupant of this shallow grave held a cocked pistol in his hand.

Mazatlan and the Mexican officer were half-way across the street, when there appeared suddenly before them a man who stretched himself vigorously, rubbed his eyes, and yawned. It was evident that this fellow had been sleeping on the doorstep of the darkened building opposite.



The officer who accompanied Mazatlan uttered an exclamation, but the guerrilla chief expressed no surprise. He fixed his eyes searchingly upon the figure which had so unexpectedly arisen before him.

Haddon advanced a step toward the men who might the next moment become his captors.

"Pardon, señors," said he in a stupid voice. "I fear I have been sleeping."

"So it would appear, but now that you are awake it may be possible for you to answer a few questions," answered Mazatlan coldly.

He turned and called sharply to the guard standing on the steps of the stone house. The soldier disappeared into the building and returned carrying a lighted candle in his hand. Mazatlan took the taper and held it so the light fell full upon Haddon's face.

The American's heart was beating rapidly. To any one in Chalco he would pass for a Mexican, or to any one who had not seen him closely under other circumstances.

But the man who held the candle—the man he recognized by the disfiguring scars—*had* seen him under other circumstances, a prisoner in the hands of Mexican cavalymen and as an officer in the tent of General Taylor.

While one might count a score the guerrilla leader held the candle on a level with the Virginian's face. His own was in shadow and Haddon could not read its expression.

Mazatlan lowered the light and returned it to the waiting guard. Haddon braced himself to hear the words which might solve the riddle over which he had pondered on the veranda of Santa Anna's headquarters.

If the order was given for his arrest, the man whom he had known as Señor Perote would prove his true character beyond peradventure.

Only—and even in that desperate moment the thought flashed through the lieutenant's mind—*he* would not be able to warn General Taylor that the Mexican for whom he had vouched was a cunning spy.

*Mazatlan took no prisoners!*

The guerrilla leader turned to his companion.

"Have you ever seen this fine fellow before?" he asked calmly.

The Mexican officer shook his head.

"A company, enlisted from the mountain district south of the capital, reached Chalco this morning, and he is evidently a mountaineer," he ventured.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Mazatlan sharply.

It was evident he accepted his companion's suggestion.

"I was wandering about the town. Our quarters are in a deserted stable, which is overcrowded. One place is as good to sleep in as another, señor," answered Haddon.

Mazatlan shrugged his shoulders.

"And that is the discipline we find throughout the army, Valeno. This fellow should receive a dozen lashes as a reminder that he belongs with his company, not here in the street," he said harshly.

Then, turning upon Haddon:

"Go back to your stable. The next time you may not get off so easily. Do you hear me?"

The Virginian did not wait to hear the order repeated. But having disappeared around the nearest corner, he halted abruptly in the shadow of a wall, at which point he could await the departure of the Mexicans, when Sergeant Bradley might rejoin him.

That to follow the movements of Mazatlan was necessary he no longer believed. Never doubting for an instant that he had been recognized, the subsequent action of the guerrilla leader seemed conclusive proof of his true sentiments.

The man was friendly to the Americans, else why had he liberated an American prisoner from the inn, visited the headquarters of General Taylor, and permitted one whom he knew to be a spy to roam at large through the army of Santa Anna?

Haddon was, however, still puzzled. Conclusive proof, so it seemed to him, had been given that Señor Perote was disloyal to Mexico; but, on the other hand, this same Perote, as the guerrilla Mazatlan, had established a reputation which would scarcely fit his sentiments of friendliness toward the northern invaders.



As Perote he betrayed the cause of Mexico; as Mazatlan he waged relentless war against the enemies of Mexico. This mystery was still unsolved. Try as he might, Haddon could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. One thing only was certain: he had met this strange man face to face, and the Mexican had not betrayed by word or look his recognition.

While the Virginian was puzzling his brain over the affair, the Texan was hugging the bottom of the shallow depression not five hundred paces away.

He had heard the conversation between Haddon and the Mexican, and understood that the former had been permitted to walk out of the trap. In his own case, however, there was much to be desired. Lying upon his back in the uncertain hiding-place, no more than a dozen feet separated him from the two men standing in the street. The least movement might betray his presence.

He could shoot one of the Mexicans, but the other and the half-dozen men on horseback would be upon him before the echo of the shot had died away. His only hope of safety was to lie perfectly still, trusting that the enemy would depart without having discovered him.

A minute passed after Haddon had left, then Mazatlan opened the conversation abruptly.

"We are wasting time. Why have you ridden so hurriedly from headquarters to find me?"

"I was so ordered by Santa Anna. There is business for you in the north," replied his companion.

"And the order I received not an hour ago—to look for these American spies?"

"Oh, you know Santa Anna is fond of changing orders. We have seen that before. But in this case it is really something better than digging around Chalco, hunting for one or two miserable spies. You may take a dozen or even twenty of the Americans."

"Is it so? But I fancied being the means of having these spies meet death on the public plaza. Still, there is, as you say, something in killing twenty instead of two. It is a raid toward the Rio Grande?"

"Perhaps not so far, but it may lead you there," answered Mazatlan's companion. "You remember that there is an inn on the Acapulco road?"

A protracted silence followed.

When Mazatlan answered it was in a hard voice.

"There are several inns such as you mention. But what of that?"

"You know this particular one well enough."

There was another pause, broken only by the rattle of a saber. Then Mazatlan asked in an impatient voice:

"Tell me what you have to say. I am to take my men northward. What has that inn to do with it?"

"I was coming to that. A messenger has just reached headquarters and reported that certain of the Americans may be found in the vicinity of this inn. A detachment——"

"But our lines extend much farther northward, and you would tell me the Americans have ventured within a few hours' ride of Chalco? Those are daring fellows, but they cannot do everything." Mazatlan spoke in a sneering tone.

His companion uttered a low oath.

"It would seem," he answered, "that it is possible for these northern devils to ride where and when they will. It is true many of our men are between this inn and the American outposts, but to avoid them seems not over difficult.

"That, however, is the business of Santa Anna. He has sent me to command you to return at once to headquarters, when he will himself tell you what is to be done. I shall accompany you northward."

Mazatlan laughed harshly.

"In that case I may be able to show you something, for not one of those Americans will return. It has been a week since my men tasted blood, and you will see how they conduct themselves when we have the enemy surrounded.

"I can tell you one thing: Santa Anna is afraid; his temper grows worse each day, and his whims are without number. You heard what happened to him on the Acapulco road?"

"Who in Chalco has not? And, to tell the truth, I am not sorry."



"That is because you hate him, and you are related."

The Mexican officer shrugged his shoulders so violently that his saber rattled.

"You know what he is and what, in a moment of passion, he is liable to do. To-night he calls upon you to rid him of these troublesome Americans; to-morrow or the next day he may order that you be thrust into prison. You hate him as much as I do, and for the same reason."

"That will be seen at the proper time," answered Mazatlan; "but at present it is our business to fight these Americans. When I strike a blow I think of Mexico, not Santa Anna. Come, we must go to headquarters immediately, for I propose to be in the saddle by sunrise. It is three hours of hard riding to the place of which you speak."

"Then you will attack them if you find them there?" asked his companion.

"It may be possible, or I may permit them to walk into a trap. We shall see."

The voices ceased, and Sergeant Bradley heard receding footsteps. He raised his head cautiously above the edge of the shallow depression. One of the cavalymen who had accompanied the Mexican officer was dismounting. Mazatlan vaulted into the empty saddle.

In another moment the little detachment trotted slowly down the street, the soldier who had given up his horse following leisurely. Only the guard on the steps of the stone house remained.

The Texan crawled cautiously out of the hole and looked up and down the deserted street. Then, keeping close to the wall, he followed the direction which Haddon had taken and which would bring him to the inn where he had left the horses.

He had scarcely turned the nearest corner when he felt a pressure on his arm. It was the Virginian, who had stepped out from his hiding-place.

"Well," asked he, "what has happened?"

"I could have shot this Mazatlan and did not do so," answered the Texan dryly. "But I shall, to-morrow or the next day."

Haddon saw the man had something to tell him, but, knowing the Texan's peculiarities, waited.

"The prisoner you liberated from the stone house will await us at the deserted inn on the Acapulco road—was not that the understanding?" asked Sergeant Bradley.

"For forty-eight hours," Haddon answered.

"Then," said the Texan quietly, "no time is to be lost if we would save him and perhaps a scouting party from falling into the hands of this Mazatlan."

As briefly as possible he repeated the conversation which had taken place between the two Mexicans.

When he had finished, a look of determination was visible on Haddon's face.

"Come," said he grimly; "if we start at once we will reach the inn several hours in advance of these Mexicans."

The town of Chalco had become quiet, for it was long past midnight and nearly every one had retired. In certain streets might be found sleepy guards, but except near the headquarters of the dictator they manifested little vigilance.

Haddon and the Texan reached the inn where they had quartered their horses without being molested. The shed in which the animals stood was on the opposite side of the street from the hostelry. Without troubling themselves to arouse the landlord, the Americans unfastened the door of the shed and led out the horses. Even had the landlord been awake, he would probably not have dared to question the actions of two members of Santa Anna's army.

Near the outskirts of the town a soldier stepped into the middle of the road, barring the way, and demanded in a sleepy voice who rode forth at such an hour.

"And you ask such a question?" answered Haddon sternly. "Señor Mazatlan is a little way behind. You know how he deals with those who bar his progress."

The Mexican sentinel growled something under his breath and moved sullenly out of the path. It was plain he did not desire to incur the anger of the



dreaded guerrilla leader by interfering with what he believed to be his advance guard.

A quarter of an hour later Haddon and the Texan were clear of Chalco and making toward the north. On each side of the highway were the smoldering campfires and silent forms of hundreds of Santa Anna's soldiers.

Those who stood guard over their sleeping comrades heard the sound of horses' hoofs upon the road, but such noises, by night and day, were common in the neighborhood of Chalco.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE CONQUERING OF A DICTATOR.

ALMOST at the very moment when the two Americans, riding northward over the Acapulco road, were passing the last group of campfires, a startling incident was taking place some miles in their rear.

Could Lieutenant Haddon have witnessed what was occurring in a certain room of a house on the outskirts of Chalco, the problem with which he was struggling would have seemed more intricate and difficult of satisfactory solution.

In the opinion of the guard stationed at the door opening between the veranda and the building itself in which General Santa Anna had taken up his residence an unusual thing had taken place.

This was the third visit within half a dozen hours of the same officer. It was well understood throughout the army that between certain officers and Santa Anna no love was wasted, and one of these officers was the guerrilla leader, Mazatlan.

It had even been rumored that these two cordially hated each other, but that the general, understanding the value of the daring cavalryman in annoying the Americans, hesitated to deprive himself of so important an assistant. Except upon a direct order, however, Mazatlan was never seen at headquarters, and on such occasions his visits were as brief as possible.

The guard detailed to watch the entrance which led into Santa Anna's

presence knew that Mazatlan had been summoned after the general's return from his trying experience on the Acapulco road.

It was also known that he had again visited headquarters in company with Captain Valeno an hour later. What was the Mexican's surprise, therefore, when some time after midnight he was confronted by the disfigured face of the guerrilla?

He felt sure that a third order had not summoned Mazatlan to an interview, yet for the third time he passed through the door which would admit him into Santa Anna's private apartment.

Having passed the sentinel, the visitor walked straight to the foot of the stairs which led up to the second story of the building and mounted there quietly.

The sleeping chamber of Santa Anna was on the second story, and after his second interview with Mazatlan the general had retired to his room. He was already partially undressed when a low knocking upon the door brought an impatient expression to his lips. Judging the person without to be an orderly come with a message of importance, he gave the sharp command to enter.

The door opened to admit the form of the unwelcome visitor. By the dim light of the single candle which burned in the chamber Santa Anna caught a glimpse of the scarred face of the intruder, and a look of surprise crossed his countenance.

This surprise gave place to blank astonishment and something more when, having entered the room, his visitor closed the door softly, and, coolly turning the key in the lock, dropped it into the folds of his sash.

Then for the first time he turned and looked full in the face of the dictator of Mexico.

Santa Anna started and took a step toward the table upon which lay his pistols, but a stern command uttered in a cold voice by the man who confronted him checked the movement abruptly.

"Stand where you are. I have come to ask a few questions. Do not lay your hand upon those firearms."



The dictator of Mexico was naturally a coward at heart, and there was something in the expression written on the disfigured face before him which paralyzed all volition. His visitor understood, and a horrible smile distorted his lips.

"You will be seated, for I would not keep you standing during our interview," said he quietly.

Santa Anna partially recovered himself.

"How dare you?" he began in a fierce voice. "What is the meaning of this outrage, sir? I have but to raise my voice, and——"

The words died in his throat and he shuddered, for he found himself gazing into the muzzle of a pistol.

"You can cry out, but you will not do so, for those who might answer that call would find only your dead body," said the other in a cold voice. With his left hand he motioned toward an empty chair.

Santa Anna sank into it. His legs were trembling and a cold perspiration covered his forehead.

"Would you murder me—the savior of Mexico?" he stammered in a frightened voice.

The other laughed. The appearance of his face as he did so, marked as it was by the two terrible red scars, was horrible to look upon.

"That depends upon yourself. Do you know why I am here?" he asked in a hard voice.

Santa Anna felt himself grow hot and cold by turns, but when the pistol was lowered he regained a little courage.

"You have said it was to ask certain questions. If I consent to answer——"

"Which you will. Do you know who I am?" interrupted the other in a calm voice.

Santa Anna hesitated.

"At first I thought—for the light is poor—I thought—— In the name of all the saints in paradise, what——?"

The other interrupted coldly.

"It is evident that you are becoming bewildered. It is also possible you may have forgotten certain things no longer of moment to the man who is being driven back upon the capital by

the American invaders. One of these things was only a little incident—to you, señor—but—it gave me this."

He touched with the tips of his fingers the two scars which, beginning near the center of his chin, extended upward to the bottom of his ears.

A look of bewilderment came into Santa Anna's face.

"In the name of God! And what had I to do with such a thing? Do you think that I——?"

"Gave me the wounds which produced these scars? We are coming to that presently. It is evident the little incident has escaped your memory.

"Perhaps you have even forgotten a certain Perote who kept an inn on the Acapulco road. Well, señor, I am that Perote, and—I have sworn upon the cross to kill three men."

A look of terror came into Santa Anna's face and a visible quiver passed through his body.

"The inn on the Acapulco road? As God is my witness, I do not understand what you are saying," he stammered.

Señor Perote's lips twitched nervously. It seemed as though a terrific struggle was going on in his breast.

"Do not lie to me again, señor, as you did on that day, else I may forget that the man I have sworn to kill—the man who called himself Señor Urrea and tricked me into serving drugged wine to two cavalymen—is the General Santa Anna, dictator of Mexico," said he in an awful voice.

Santa Anna opened his mouth to reply, but his tongue seemed paralyzed. Señor Perote mastered himself by a powerful effort.

"You remember," said he coldly. "It was an easy matter to deceive a simple innkeeper whose heart was loyal to Mexico. I permitted you to drug the wine so the cavalymen slept for hours, but when they awoke they demanded of me the papers which *you* had stolen, and they gave me this—because you had disappeared."

The dictator of Mexico passed his tongue over his parched lips.

"As God is my witness, I knew nothing of that, señor! Why should you blame me because *they* tortured you?" he cried hoarsely.



"Had you not lied to me and thus found opportunity to rob them of certain papers they would have departed as they came. I found myself lying on the floor, where they left me for dead. Do you know what happened then, señor—when I discovered what had been done to me? I swore to have revenge on the man who called himself Señor Urrea, on the fiends Amador and Valeno who pressed the burning iron into my flesh.

"That oath I have in part fulfilled—perhaps you know how; but something yet remains."

As he uttered these words the face of Señor Perote became livid.

Santa Anna caught the sides of the chair for support. His eyes were fixed upon the pistol which this dreadful man held in his hand. He moistened his lips repeatedly, then murmured in a faint voice:

"Surely, señor, you have not come here to kill me—I, who am leading the soldiers of Mexico to victory?"

Señor Perote laughed harshly.

"Even you do not believe that, for the Americans are advancing upon the capital. But"—he paused for a moment—"when I swore to kill the man who called himself Señor Urrea I did not know what position he held in Mexico. It may be possible, señor, that a way can be found to spare the person of General Santa Anna."

The dictator swallowed nervously.

"It is in my power to reward you richly. Every man has his price. Tell me yours, Señor Perote."

The ex-innkeeper shrugged his shoulders.

"You would promise much to-night and forget to-morrow. You will permit me to leave your presence because you can not do otherwise. But at the first opportunity you would have me tortured. Still, being what you are, I may allow you to live."

A little of the ghastly color left the dictator's face, but he still trembled violently.

"I would ask you why it was you lied to me. For what purpose did Santa Anna, ruler of Mexico, drug and rob two of his officers?" asked Perote coldly.

Santa Anna pressed his lips close together.

"And why do you demand to know that? Perhaps it was a personal matter," he answered harshly.

Believing he should be spared, something of his self-assurance was returning.

"I am awaiting an answer," said Perote quietly.

Santa Anna glanced at the stern set face above him, and he saw something there which warned him the danger was not yet passed. Perote's lips were trembling and his deep-set eyes gleamed fiercely.

He resembled some terrible monster from the mountain fastness more than a human being.

"You would ask me why I desired the papers? How can that knowledge benefit you?" asked the dictator in a hesitating voice.

"I am waiting," replied Señor Perote once more.

"Why I took the papers from Amador and Valeno?"

"From Amador and Valeno, who tortured me."

"It was because I wished to have them in my power—to force them to serve me faithfully," answered Santa Anna in a hoarse voice.

Señor Perote smiled grimly.

"And you took that way? It is easy to see what occurred. An officer entrusted with important despatches merits death if he permits those despatches to be taken from him. You stole the papers from these men while they slept, therefore they merited death, having lost the papers.

"It lay with you, their superior, and you spared them—so long as they agreed to serve you in all things. It was for that I was tortured in the inn on the Acapulco road. Because General Santa Anna desired to rule through fear those who would not otherwise do his bidding."

Several minutes of silence followed. To the man cringing in the chair they seemed an hour. Finally Perote spoke, in a voice filled with bitterness.

"It was something to become a marked man—an object of loathing and pity to every one in the world. That is what has happened to me; but there is something more. I will tell you in



order that you may better understand the bitterness which consumes me."

He drew his hand across his forehead, on which large drops of perspiration had gathered, then continued in a dull tone:

"It so happened that a certain one dwelling in the capital had promised to marry me. There was no one in all Mexico to compare with her. After this thing happened I went southward and appeared before her.

"You should be able to judge what took place. A woman loves manly beauty, and she is a woman. I have lost more than life itself. I desire only to die—after I have drained the cup of revenge."

Santa Anna made no reply. For the first time he understood how terrible might be the vengeance of the man before him.

Señor Perote replaced the pistol in his sash.

"I fear neither your anger nor the hate of any man," said he fiercely. "I was a Mexican, but you see what Mexico has done for me. I am resolved to drink the cup of revenge to the very dregs, and in doing so it is necessary that Mexico suffer.

"The soldiers sent to capture the handful of Americans in the pass of El Vidio returned with the news that their victims had flown. It was I who warned General Taylor and conducted his messenger across the mountains. It is believed by many that I am loyal to Mexico, but from this hour *you* will know otherwise; and yet this knowledge will profit you nothing."

His eyes while he was speaking wandered around the room and rested upon a crucifix hanging above a small table between the windows. He looked down at the man cowering in the chair. Santa Anna's lips moved spasmodically. The heavy lids of his black eyes were half closed, but under them shone a gleam of cunning.

He glanced up at the avenging figure towering above him.

"You will kill Captain Valeno, perhaps—as you did the other?" he asked in a strained voice.

"At the proper time. Opportunity has been given me, but I choose my own methods," answered Perote coldly.

The dictator of Mexico shuddered. "Some things are worse than death," he muttered.

Señor Perote pointed to the crucifix. "Remove it from the wall. Do you hear me, señor?" said he sternly.

Santa Anna hesitated, then arose from the chair, crossed the room and took down the crucifix. An expression of fear and perplexity was upon his face.

"I know that to you a promise is nothing, for your whole life is made up of acts of treachery," continued Perote quietly.

He pointed to the crucifix.

"Any man who accepts your word is more than a fool, but an oath taken upon the bleeding body of Christ is not so easily broken. Swear to me, upon that sacred emblem, that neither to-night nor at any time will you seek to destroy me; that, having departed from this room, you will not seek to follow or have me followed. Swear it, señor!"

A look of baffled rage crossed the dictator's face. He remained silent.

"Swear!" ordered Perote; "swear, señor, or by that sacred token I will——"

He drew from his sash a long-bladed knife and poised it in his right hand.

The fingers which clasped the crucifix trembled. A ghastly smile distorted the lips of the ruler of Mexico. At the last moment he was to be cheated of his revenge.

The face of Perote was something terrible to look upon. The livid outlines of the double scar seemed to deepen as each second passed. He ran his fingers gently along the keen edges of the knife and took a step forward.

It appeared as though the knees of Santa Anna would give way under him.

"I swear it; on the cross I swear it!" he murmured in a hoarse voice.

Señor Perote replaced the knife in his sash.

"I will bid you *adios*, señor," said he coldly, and deliberately turning his back upon the man who hated him but whose fangs he had drawn, he unlocked the door, passed through it, and closed the portal softly.

For a moment Santa Anna stood as though rooted to the floor. His face was



white with passion and a thin froth appeared upon his lips. It seemed as though he would rush to the door and call loudly to the guard below. His fingers clutched convulsively upon the ivory image in his hand. They relaxed and the crucifix dropped to the floor.

With a hoarse cry—the cry of a savage beast cheated of its prey—the dictator of Mexico threw himself upon the bed and tore the sheets into ribbons.

Even he respected an oath taken on the cross.

Señor Perote descended the stairs and walked out upon the veranda. The guard saluted stiffly.

“The señor captain’s command have but just passed. I wish the señor success at the inn on the Acapulco road,” said he in a deferential voice.

“I thank you, señor,” answered Perote coldly. “I am generally successful in what I undertake.”

He descended the steps leading to the ground and walked toward the town.

The guard shrugged his shoulders and muttered under his breath: “It is as he says. Truly this Mazatlan is a terrible man. I would rather meet the devil than encounter him in anger.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### A GAP IN THE CIRCLE.

THE inn over which Señor Perote had once officiated presented a gloomy and forbidding appearance. The windows were boarded over, the door loose upon its hinges, and a heap of half-burned embers and ashes marked the spot where had once stood a likely stable.

Some little distance back of this deserted hostelry was a low hill, the summit of which was covered with bushes and rank vegetation. At the base of the hill, on the side farthest from the inn, a deep depression extended for perhaps half a mile toward the north.

At certain seasons of the year the bottom of this ditch was covered with water, but in the summer time was dry, affording a comfortable shelter for any one desirous of concealing himself.

Late in the afternoon of the day which had witnessed their departure from Chalco two men occupied this natural hiding-place. They were Lieutenant Haddon and the Texan. The latter, who had been examining the landscape from the summit of the hill, had just returned to his companion.

“Either he has gone astray or has decided not to follow your suggestion, for I take it for granted he has not fallen again into the hands of the Mexicans,” said he.

“Any of the three is possible, for had he come straight from Chalco he could have reached this place shortly after daybreak,” answered the Virginian in an anxious voice.

“As matters now stand, it would be better that he avoid this neighborhood as he would the devil’s hunting-ground. There he would meet only one fiend of hell, while somewhere out yonder are twoscore or more, led by that wolf Mazatlan.”

Sergeant Bradley uttered this blunt speech with an embellishment of choice Texan oaths. No less anxious than his companion, he had a different way of showing his disquietude.

The Americans had grave cause for apprehension. Anderson, the artilleryman whom Haddon had liberated from the stone house in Chalco, had not appeared at the rendezvous.

Had he decided to push straight for the American lines without waiting for the Virginian to join him, as had been agreed upon, all might be well, but if he had lost his way or been forced to make a wide *détour* to avoid the Mexicans scattered over the country, his delayed arrival at the inn might prove his destruction.

Somewhere behind the hills which dotted the landscape lay Mazatlan and his *guerrilleros*. To appear, pushing forward in fancied security, would be to walk into a trap which meant a speedy, perhaps painful, death.

Concerning the rumored approach of a detachment of American cavalry, Haddon and his companion felt less concern.

Mazatlan’s plan was to permit the northerners to ride farther into the country, where they would be ambuscaded, or if they elected to take possession of



the deserted tavern for a night, to surround the place and fall upon them in the darkness.

Either of these plans could be frustrated by a timely warning.

That Mazatlan should lead an expedition whose object was to wipe out the expected party of Americans was another mystery added to those with which the Virginian was grappling. He had, however, come to a conclusion, though one far from satisfactory. The Mexican was conducting his method of vengeance in his own peculiar way; secretly he aided the cause of the invaders of his country, but openly before the eyes of his followers he was proving a stern foe to the Americans.

In reaching this perplexing conclusion Haddon had come to a definite decision. It was his duty to capture this guerrilla leader and put an end to his depredations.

As Mazatlan he would meet a merited punishment at the hands of the Americans, but as Perote, who had twice saved him from death as a spy, the man's life might be spared, though he would be held a prisoner.

Another phase of the mystery Haddon had considered carefully, and the true answer baffled him. Might it not be possible that the Mexican was at heart an enemy, but by professing friendship and in twice saving him, Haddon, he had hit upon a cunning plan whereby he could obtain admittance to the very headquarters of General Taylor himself.

As Perote he could learn the plans of the hostile forces; as Mazatlan he could convey these plans to Santa Anna. Such was the uncertainty under which Haddon labored. The only true solution of the difficulty was to capture Mazatlan.

For the twentieth time within an hour the American crawled to the summit of the hill. The Texan, who by lifelong practice possessed the keener vision under such conditions, shaded his eyes with his hand. Suddenly he turned sharply and caught Haddon by the shoulder.

"Look there, sir," said he with considerable excitement; "over there, where the highway dips behind the hills. It is a horseman."

Haddon followed the direction of the outstretched finger. Far away a dark blot on the landscape, a moving object, was discernible. It was, as the Texan had stated, a horseman, and he was riding toward the deserted inn.

The minutes dragged slowly. The sun, approaching the summit of the western hills, threw a yellow glare over the uneven landscape. To the Americans, waiting impatiently, it seemed that never before had a traveler ridden so leisurely.

Each was thinking of the same thing. Was the distant horseman a Mexican or the man who had been saved from death in Chalco?

Regardless of all attempt at concealment, the Texan climbed to the top of a rock and stood motionless, his eyes focused on the moving figure. Ten minutes passed, a quarter of an hour, a half, then the Texan made an excited movement.

Some distance beyond the straight stretch of road which ran past the front of the inn the highway disappeared in a hollow of the plain. Sergeant Bradley had watched the horseman ride into this depression. For perhaps three minutes he was lost to view, and then something happened.

The rider had entered the hollow leisurely; when he reappeared on the side nearest the inn his horse was galloping furiously. A cloud of dust, arising like a puff of yellow smoke, surrounded him.

The Texan and Haddon could see that the man was urging the horse forward by every means in his power. At intervals he turned and looked behind him.

A dozen, fifty, a hundred rods nearer, and the reason for the metamorphosis became apparent. Behind, from out the hollow, a second and a third horseman issued, striving to overtake the first. The pursuing riders were Mexican *guerrilleros*.

Sergeant Bradley dropped from the rock into the shelter of the bushes beside Haddon.

"It is the man we have been waiting for. He has obtained a horse somewhere, but he cannot outride those devils who are chasing him," he burst out excitedly.



Haddon did not answer. His attention was riveted upon the race toward the deserted inn.

To reach this goal of temporary safety was the object of the fugitive; to overtake him on the highway the purpose of the Mexicans.

Suddenly a puff of smoke arose above the neck of the first of the pursuing horsemen; the dull crack of a carbine shot echoed among the hills.

Sergeant Bradley made a fierce gesture.

"My God, sir, he has no chance!" cried he bitterly.

But it appeared the Mexican's aim had been bad, for the first horseman dashed on with unabated speed, lashing his mount madly with his clenched hands.

A fourth, a fifth, a dozen horsemen arose as though by magic from the hollow, stringing out along the highway in the rear of the first two Mexicans. There was a second puff of smoke and a second report. A sharp exclamation simultaneously escaped the two Americans.

The horse ridden by the fugitive wavered, swayed unsteadily, yet kept on, but with speed visibly lessened. A hoarse shout, a cry of triumph, arose from the pursuing *guerrilleros*. The flash of a drawn saber glittered in the yellow sunlight.

Sergeant Bradley was trembling in every limb.

"God, sir!" he cried. "And we lie here while they butcher him before our eyes!"

He was upon his feet, his pistol in his right hand. The reckless bravery of the man was asserting itself, and he saw only the wounded horse and its luckless rider. That the pursuing Mexicans numbered a dozen was of secondary consideration.

Haddon seized him by the arm.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded sharply.

The Texan jerked himself loose, took a step forward, and then stopped suddenly.

"Look," he cried; "look at that, sir!"

A wonderful thing had happened. It seemed as if the angel of fate had inter-

posed an invisible barrier between the victim and the bloodthirsty devils who pursued him.

The wounded horse had come to a dead stop in the center of the highway. At that moment the desperate artilleryman leaped from the saddle and dashed on foot toward the door of the inn, not twenty rods away.

Scarcely had his feet touched the ground when the stricken horse collapsed, tumbling in a shapeless heap in the middle of the road. The foremost *guerrillero*, galloping madly forward, could not check his mount in time. The knees of his own beast struck the prostrate body of the dying horse. It was as though a thunderbolt had descended from heaven and palsied the hand which was preparing to wield the fatal saber.

The shock of the contact hurled the Mexican from his saddle; he shot forward through space, turned a half-somersault in midair, and struck the ground with terrific force twenty feet from the spot where his horse had fallen.

A shout of rage arose from the other *guerrilleros*; the second pursuer checked his horse just in time to avoid the fate of his companion. In the middle of the road lay the Mexican, his neck broken, and two struggling animals.

It is probable that the man who so narrowly escaped a saber stroke did not realize what had occurred, for without looking back he ran at top speed over the distance which separated him from the inn, dashed through the door, and slammed the latter behind him.

From their point of observation Haddon and his companion saw the Mexicans ride up one by one and dismount beside the dead *guerrillero* and stiffening horses.

They were too far away to permit of their words being audible, but gestures are frequently as potent as words, and it was evident that a fate even worse than death would overtake the man in the inn should he fall into the power of such captors.

The first body of Mexicans numbered ten or a dozen, but now others appeared riding out of the hollow. Two rode side by side in advance.



A dark look settled over the face of the Texan.

"If I am not mistaken, yonder is Mazatlan and the fellow he called Valeno. Those Greasers will not remain for long staring stupidly at a dead man," said he.

The surmise was correct. Upon the approach of the two horsemen the Mexicans standing in the road drew back.

One of the riders rode close to the dead *guerrillero*, appeared to put a question, then turned with a sharp gesture.

At the same moment the horsemen who had dismounted climbed hastily into their saddles.

"Mazatlan is giving orders," muttered the Texan; "now we shall see what will happen."

"They are going to attack the inn," answered Haddon.

The Texan uttered a sharp oath.

"If they go about it in the right way, it is all up with that daring fellow inside; he can't hold out five minutes," muttered he.

"Wait," said the Virginian; "they will not rush the house, as we might do. It is not the Mexican *guerrillero's* method of fighting. They know the man inside is an American and that an American can shoot straight when necessary. They do not propose to risk losing a man or two when they can accomplish their purpose in another way."

The Texan gave vent to a fiery oath, which seemed to partially relieve his feelings.

"If it were possible to get down there, who knows what would happen? With three of us behind the walls, this Mazatlan might receive a lesson he would not forget in a hurry."

Haddon shook his head.

"It would be useless, and we should only walk into a trap. Even if we could hold the house for a few hours, it would end the same way, for our ammunition would soon be exhausted and we should be overpowered or roasted alive," said he soberly.

Sergeant Bradley made an impatient gesture.

"That is excellent reasoning, sir, but I will agree to kill half a dozen of those fellows before they take me. Mazatlan

will be the first to get a bullet through the head. That is something."

Haddon smiled faintly. The little man at his side was terribly in earnest, and the contempt which he felt for the Mexicans was visible in every word and action.

Left alone, he would have dashed down the hill into the inn and died fighting like a demon. The paramount desire of a Texan ranger was to kill as many Mexicans as possible. The Virginian remained silent for several moments, then nodded in the direction of the western hills.

"Daylight is passing, and the moon does not rise till close on midnight," said he. "What these Mexicans intend to do will be done after nightfall, but of one thing we may be assured. They will not attack the inn directly, for by doing so a certain number of firearms will be discharged, and that is just what Mazatlan wishes to avoid. He did not come here to capture a single prisoner, but to ambush the detachment of cavalry which he believes may pass through this neighborhood.

"If he attacks the inn and shots are exchanged, the noise would warn whoever was in the vicinity that an enemy was near. I do not doubt the Mexicans will try to capture the man who has taken possession of the house yonder, but it will not be by a direct attack.

"What we must do is to wait until darkness, and it may then be possible to take some action. In the mean time, all that we can do is to remain under cover and warn our cavalry of the presence of the *guerrilleros* under Mazatlan, provided any of our cavalry are in this neighborhood."

Sergeant Bradley glanced at the horsemen on the highway.

"It is as you say, sir; Mazatlan will be careful about making too much noise, and—see there: they are up to something."

Haddon looked through the bushes. Several of the Mexicans had again dismounted and were dragging the fallen horses from the highway. A couple lifted their dead comrade and laid him across one of the saddles. Mazatlan appeared to be giving directions. The horsemen spread out to the left and



right and a single Mexican turned his mount and galloped back toward the hollow.

"It is as I thought," said Haddon quietly. "It is their purpose to place guards on every side of the inn, so that the man in there will have no opportunity of making his escape. It is plain that this guerrilla leader is no bungler."

Several of the Mexican horsemen were already crossing the fields on either side of the inn, their purpose being to form a circle of men completely around the building.

"It appears," said the Texan dryly, "that we are to be surrounded."

"Which proves it fortunate that we left our horses a mile or more from this spot. Let us see what these fellows are going to do," replied the Virginian.

The Mexicans who had separated themselves from the main body were following the arc of a great circle. At certain points in this circle a horseman pulled up and retired to the shelter of a clump of bushes or behind a rise of ground.

The inn was now surrounded on three sides; a single *guerrillero* continued on his course. He was the man detailed to take his position directly in the rear of the deserted hostelry.

The Virginian and his companion looked at each other and a grim expression of satisfaction came into the face of the Texan.

The lone *guerrillero* had completed half of the arc of the circle, and on his left and right his companions had stationed themselves, perhaps a quarter of a mile separating the watchers. The Mexican pulled up his horse and looked carefully around him; he had been ordered by Mazatlan to take a position directly to the north of the inn, and he was examining the ground to discover the most likely hiding-place. His eyes fell upon the low hill crowned by the thick fringe of bushes and rank vegetation; it commanded every rod of ground in the rear of the house and afforded an excellent view in all directions.

The *guerrillero* gathered up his reins and began slowly to approach the base of the hill. Reaching the ascent, he led his horse up the incline.

At the top he halted and again examined his surroundings; the dry ditch appealed to him as an excellent hiding-place for a horse. He descended the farther side of the hill and entered the hollow, still leading his steed by the bridle.

A soft step sounded behind him. It might have been the noise made by a rabbit scurrying away in fright. The Mexican turned his head quickly, but what he saw was only a fleeting vision.

A hand closed like a steel vise about his throat, and something flashed in the fading sunlight.

A sharp pain darted through the *guerrillero's* body—a pang of agony which ceased almost as soon as it began. The inert body of a man dropped noiselessly to the ground and lay without motion.

Sergeant Bradley bent down and wiped the blade of his knife upon the dead man's embroidered jacket. Turning, he faced Haddon.

"I fancy, sir," he said grimly, "that when the time comes Mazatlan will find a gap in the circle which he has drawn about the inn down there."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### WHAT THE MOON SAW.

THE moon, balancing in a cloudless sky, bathed the landscape in a light of weird silver. Somewhere among the distant hills a lone wolf howled dismally. Sergeant Bradley swore softly.

Since the sun had set, a yellow ball in the west, he had watched from the summit of the hill behind the inn of Señor Perote. It was well toward midnight, and nothing had happened.

Looking down upon the roof of the tavern and beyond across the uncultivated fields, he saw only desolation—not a living object stirring, not a sound except those incident to the night. Yet he knew that in the silent hostelry the prisoner who had escaped from the stone house of Chalco kept vigilant guard; that among the hills which bordered on the deserted fields Mazatlan's *guerrilleros* were patiently waiting for the handful of unsuspecting riders from the north.



The presence of the dead man lying in the ditch near by held no terror for him, but the Texan chafed at inactivity. A pistol shot, the sound of hoof-beats, the voices of men riding in the moonlight would bring twoscore yelling devils from cover, but none of these things came.

Only silence and the play of the weird shadows upon the hills.

He knew that Haddon was somewhere in his rear, watching the highway from the north. Did they come at all, that was the road over which the detachment of American scouts would approach the inn.

For want of better occupation, he drew his knife and began to hack at the roots of the bush behind which he lay.

Suddenly he paused, the blade suspended in the air.

Somewhere on his right, some distance off, the sound of approaching feet broke the stillness of the night. He sat upright and listened.

The sound grew clearer—the crunch, crunch of feet upon the flinty soil. Sergeant Bradley transferred the knife to his left hand and with his right drew from his sash a pistol. Acute of hearing, he knew that not more than one or two persons were approaching.

Was it Haddon or an enemy?

The crunching upon the stones drew nearer, and peeping through the bushes the Texan could make out the forms of two men silhouetted in the moonlight. The grasp of his fingers upon his weapons tightened. The men were Mexicans.

A voice broke the silence with a few words uttered in Spanish, but they told Sergeant Bradley what he wished to know—why the soldiers of Santa Anna had appeared suddenly before him. It was an officer with his escort making the rounds of the guards who formed the circle enclosing the inn. It was Mazatlan's desire to see that none of these guards was sleeping.

A wild hope found birth in the Texan's breast, and he leaned eagerly forward. What if the officer should be Mazatlan himself! He had sworn to shoot Mazatlan.

The Mexicans were standing motionless a dozen rods away—so far that Ser-

geant Bradley could not distinguish faces. The one who had before spoken turned toward his companion.

"He is stationed somewhere on this hill. It will be bad for him if we find him asleep among the bushes," said he roughly.

"With Señor Valeno's permission I will go forward and look for him," answered the second Mexican.

Sergeant Bradley experienced a pang of disappointment. It was not, then, Mazatlan—only a miserable Mexican officer, the man who had talked with Mazatlan opposite the stone house in Chalco.

The soldier evidently obtained silent consent to follow his suggestion, for he walked across the slope of the hill, passing some distance to the right of the crouching American. Captain Valeno remained alone, leaning carelessly on his saber.

Several minutes passed. The silence became oppressive. Sergeant Bradley, lurking behind his bush, began to wonder what had become of the absent soldier.

The thought even came to him to crawl noiselessly upon the waiting officer and strike before he could cry out. But he only smiled grimly. It would be time enough for action if the second Mexican discovered the guard was missing or that his body lay at the bottom of the dry ditch.

Impatient as he was to throw himself upon a hated enemy, the Texan knew a false move might be fatal to the instructions Haddon had given him. It was his duty to watch, not to engage in a combat on the hilltop, with a dozen of Mazatlan's *guerrilleros* within hearing distance. He would fight only if it became necessary.

The time lengthened. Captain Valeno moved impatiently and began to look carefully about him. He advanced a few yards nearer to the silent Texan, stopped, and swore fiercely.

"Where are you, Sartillo? Why in the devil's name are you loitering; is the guard not here?" he called in an angry voice.

Sergeant Bradley expected to hear a reply, but only silence answered the impatient demand. Captain Valeno swore



for the second time and his saber rattled.

"Sartillo, you devil, where are you? Am I to stand here all night?" he demanded fiercely.

Suddenly a figure appeared, advancing through the moonlight toward the angry Mexican. Sergeant Bradley thought it was the tardy Sartillo come to report that the guard was nowhere to be found.

Captain Valeno heard the footsteps approaching him and turned sharply, a torrent of abuse upon his lips. But it was not forthcoming. The Texan saw him start violently, peer forward, and a question took the place of the oaths he would have uttered.

"It is you, Señor—Mazatlan? I am waiting for——"

A look of the keenest satisfaction leaped into the eyes of the American. He half-raised the muzzle of his pistol, his finger toying with the trigger. Then a strange thing happened.

The man whom Captain Valeno had addressed as Mazatlan, whom he had plainly recognized by the livid double scar, sprang like a wild beast toward the throat of his own officer.

Captain Valeno uttered the single cry "*Oh, God!*" and went down with a crash which sent the stones rattling down the hillside.

Then before the eyes of the astonished Texan a terrific struggle took place. A shriek of agony echoed across the hills, the glitter of steel flashed thrice in the moonlight, and one of the combatants arose to his feet.

All thought of using the pistol he held vanished from the Texan's mind. He sat motionless, staring at the figure of the man standing above his groaning victim.

Suddenly this man bent down and peered into the face of the form upon the ground. A hoarse laugh reached the Texan's ears—a laugh which made him shudder, though he had faced death a hundred times. And close upon this sound, more demoniacal than human, a voice rang out across the hill.

"It is thus Perote repays those who injure him, señor. A hundred times have I held my hand when opportunity was given me to strike because I chose to

find you near the inn where you tortured me. You have ventured near that inn to-night, Señor Valeno."

The Mexican upon the ground struggled to a half-sitting posture. Sergeant Bradley could not see his face, but he knew that he was desperately wounded.

Valeno raised one hand toward the man who gloated over him.

"Mercy, señor! In the name of God, spare me!" he cried in a trembling voice.

"And you ask that—you who blew upon the charcoal that the iron might heat more quickly? Did you spare me then, Señor Valeno?"

"In the name of Heaven, as you hope for forgiveness! It was a mistake. We believed you had taken the paper, and, the paper missing, death stared us in the face. And that Urrea—it was he who caused it—I can direct you to him, that you may strike——"

"Then you think I do not know. Perhaps Santa Anna, dictator of Mexico, might tell you differently. It was in truth that Urrea who lied to me in order to obtain the paper; he lied, but—he did not torture," answered Señor Perote coldly.

The wounded man, overcome by weakness, fell back upon the ground, yet he continued to cry out feebly, begging for mercy. Señor Perote laughed for the second time.

"You expect that, and I have killed an innocent man in order to reach you? I struck down the soldier who accompanied you to this place, and he had never injured me. Do you think, then, I will spare you—who took the iron from the fire?"

He uttered the words with awful calmness, and his disfigured face in the white light was the pitiless face of a demon.

Captain Valeno threw up his arms and shrieked in terror. Through the mist of blood which covered his eyes he could only vaguely distinguish the form of his enemy.

In the weird light the form of the ex-keeper seemed to be floating in a wave of crimson which surged backward and forward like the surface of the sea.

Suddenly Perote bent down and said in a cold voice:



"Yes, señor, I will grant you mercy—the mercy you denied me when I lay bound upon the floor of my own house. Had you killed me then you would have been merciful—that mercy I will grant you, Captain Valeno."

He raised the knife and struck downward. At the first blow the man upon the ground shrieked wildly. After the second he lay perfectly still.

The spell was broken. Sergeant Bradley sprang to his feet and raised his pistol. Its muzzle covered the man who was wiping the blade of his knife upon the jacket of the victim. The Texan's finger pressed the trigger, but no flash or report answered the falling of the hammer. The weapon refused to be discharged.

Sergeant Bradley uttered a sharp oath and hurled the useless weapon into the bushes, but if it was his intention to attack the man before him with his knife it was too late.

Señor Perote darted away with the swiftness of a mountain wildcat and was at the foot of the hill before the Texan realized he was gone.

Leaning forward, he watched the hazy figure hastening across the level ground which lay between the elevation and the silent inn. A slight noise sounded behind him; he turned quickly, the knife held ready for defense, but there was no need to use it.

Two men were pushing through the undergrowth, and the first was Lieutenant Haddon.

"In God's name," demanded the Virginian breathlessly, "what has taken place? Have you been attacked?"

"No; but I have seen the devil, dressed like a Mexican. You will find two dead men lying over there," answered the Texan dryly.

He seized Haddon by the arm.

"I have seen many strange things and have gone through some myself, but to see a Mexican officer murder in cold blood two of his own followers startles one a little. That is what has just occurred. Do you know who has been here? Mazatlan! If it were not for that corpse yonder I should believe I had been dreaming."

He glanced curiously at the man who was standing behind the Virginian.

"You have found some one?" said he.

"It is Anderson, and over yonder the road is black with our own cavalymen," was Haddon's unexpected answer.

For a moment Sergeant Bradley remained perfectly quiet, an expression of bewilderment on his face.

"God knows, sir, there has never been weak-minded ones in my family, but I have seen *that* over there, and now I am to believe a miracle has happened. I have scarcely taken my eyes from that inn for four hours, and during that time no one has left it, yet you tell me this is the man who barricaded himself behind its walls."

"Which is the truth. And who do you think led him so unexpectedly out of that trap? It was Mazatlan!" replied the Virginian.

The Texan passed his fingers through his hair.

"Tell me that our army is already in the capital of Mexico. It only requires that to convince me that the moonlight has turned my brain. A moment ago I saw this *guerrillero* leader slay his own officer, and now you tell me it was he who took the man he wished to kill out of that house."

"You are not mad, for that is just what has happened. You know that this inn was a very old one and that many of the old houses in Mexico are provided with secret entrances and exits. Anderson was in there watching the doors and windows when a step sounded in the room next to the one he occupied. The next moment a man appeared in the doorway—a man whose face was disfigured by dreadful scars.

"It was Mazatlan?" muttered the Texan.

"Who else? Anderson would have shot him, when the fellow spoke.

"Lower your pistol, señor, for I have come to take you out of this place. Behind the house are waiting those who will save you from the *guerrilleros*. One is the Señor Haddon?"

"In God's name! Mazatlan knows that we are here?" broke in the Texan.

"It would appear so, else he could not have told Anderson. At any rate, our countryman decided to trust this



strange creature, determining to shoot him at the first sign of treachery. But the Mexican did exactly as he promised.

"Going on in front, he led Anderson to the mouth of a trap door which gave into a passage running beneath the ground. Reaching the end of this passage, our comrade found himself in a dense covering of bushes. His mysterious guide turned and pointed to the left.

"Go, señor. That way will bring you to the highroad, beyond the circle of the *guerrilleros*," said he quietly, and disappeared."

"It is God's truth," broke in the artilleryman; "it happened just as Lieutenant Haddon has stated. I followed the direction and came out upon the highway. Not fifty feet away a body of horsemen were sitting silently in their saddles, and Lieutenant Haddon was talking to one of them."

"It was the cavalry we have been expecting, which the Mexicans proposed to ambush," added the Virginian. Then, with a grim smile: "But something else will happen. It is not a single detachment of our scouts who are waiting back there, but—the advance guard of our army. General Taylor has scattered the Mexicans in the north and is *advancing upon Chalco*."

"And Mazatlan?" Sergeant Bradley put the question as one who did not clearly comprehend whether he was awake or dreaming.

"We may learn more of Mazatlan later," answered Haddon gravely. He was wondering what the next few hours would bring forth—what would happen when the moment arrived for which the twoscore *guerrilleros* from Chalco were waiting.

He left the Texan's side and walked across the intervening space which separated him from the still figure lying on the ground.

Captain Valeno lay upon his back, his face turned toward the cloudless sky. Looking down, Haddon thought to meet only the stony gaze of one who had died a violent death, but what he saw caused him to turn quickly away.

The face of the dead Mexican was slashed so horribly as to be unrecognizable even by his closest friend, and—

these terrible wounds had been inflicted before the fatal knife thrust pierced his heart.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE REVENGE OF SENOR PEROTE.

THE plan which Lieutenant Haddon and the commander of the regiment of American cavalry had formulated was extremely simple, but it gave promise of bringing about a desired result—that of drawing an attack from the Mexican *guerrilleros*.

The force of northern horsemen outnumbered Mazatlan's followers ten to one, and from these five hundred odd troopers a detail of twenty-five were selected.

These, under the command of Haddon and one of their own sub-officers, separated themselves from the main body, which had halted two miles to the north of the inn.

The horses were put into a gallop and advanced with considerable noise along the highway to the door of the hostelry. The Mexicans, watching from their hiding-places, saw these apparently unsuspecting invaders dismount and prepare to bivouac for the remainder of the night. Some entered the inn, from whose chimney smoke presently appeared; others led the horses behind the building and began to search about for fodder.

Not many moments after the Americans had begun such preparations a messenger entered the main camp of the *guerrilleros*, which was situated in a depression half a mile south of the inn.

He reported what had taken place—that within an hour the enemy, whom Mazatlan had ridden northward from Chalco to crush at a single blow, would be sleeping the sleep of exhausted men. Then would come the opportunity for which he waited.

Mazatlan, his back propped against a tree, a cigarette between his lips, heard the report and smiled grimly. Could Lieutenant Haddon have seen that smile he might have doubted the surmise at which he had arrived—that the guerrilla leader would in some manner sacrifice his command. The Virginian had become firmly convinced that Señor



Perote was in truth a traitor to Mexico, and that he had led the *guerrilleros* northward to give them over to the Americans.

How this would be accomplished remained a mystery, but in any case, whether or no his surmise should prove to be correct, the result must be the same. What chance would forty-odd Mexicans stand against a regiment of General Taylor's picked cavalry?

Mazatlan tossed aside the cigarette and gave a few sharp orders. The first was that the sentinels should be called in from their stations upon the hills; the second, that his men should prepare for combat—a combat in which no quarter should be given.

A sub-officer, a mere boy from the district of Cerro Gordo, approached his commander.

"The Señor Valeno is still absent, señor," said he; "it is reported by one of the sentinels that strange cries were heard upon the hills. Can it be possible—?"

Mazatlan was rolling another cigarette. He paused and looked into the face of the young *guerrillero*.

"It was the wolves the fool heard, Molino. Doubtless Señor Valeno is watching these *Americanos*. He will turn up at the right time," said he, not unkindly.

The lad was the brother of the man who lay dead upon the hill back of the inn.

Mazatlan lighted the cigarette and blew a puff of smoke toward the waning moon. A swarthy sergeant stepped before him and saluted.

"Two of the men are still absent, señor," he reported.

"Remind me of that *afterward*—when we have wiped out these *Americanos*. I know how to deal with those who are absent at such a time," said he gruffly.

An hour passed. Mazatlan called the young *guerrillero* to him.

"Order the men into their saddles, Molino. The fools are sleeping soundly by this time. And remember—there is to be no quarter. If one of these *Americanos* is alive at sunrise, I shall know the reason," said he sharply.

The expression which settled over the

disfigured face was not pleasing to look upon. It boded ill for the enemies of Mexico.

Molino had seen it frequently before, and each time luckless *Americanos* had been slaughtered without mercy.

The Mexican horsemen moved in a straggling line across the fields toward the inn, stretching out until they formed a circle broken only at one point.

Mazatlan had drawn his saber, and the twoscore men on either side of him unslung their carbines. The trained cavalry horses broke into a brisk trot as the circle of evil faces and shining steel closed in upon a common center.

The solitary sentinel standing before the door of the inn looked across the fields and saw the rapidly approaching line of horsemen. He had received his instructions, and waited coolly—the approaching riders were not yet within carbine shot.

The sound of galloping horses became distinctly audible. Suddenly the sentinel raised his carbine and fired, turned quickly, and sprang through the open door of the inn.

It was what Mazatlan expected. The shot would awaken the sleeping *Americanos*, but before they could seize their arms and defend the house his *guerrilleros* would be upon them.

A fierce Spanish yell echoed across the fields. A tumult of horses and swarthy-faced riders swept like a whirlwind upon the inn from three sides, a dozen carbines flashed, the bullets shattering the boards over the windows.

The foremost of the *guerrilleros* hurled his horse against the door, beating upon it with his saber.

Had the men within been suddenly awakened from sleep, nothing could have withstood so sudden and unexpected an attack. As it was, a score of Mexicans had thrown themselves from their saddles and were rushing forward, forcing an entrance through the doorway.

It seemed as though those within the house must be stricken motionless with terror and surprise. No one opposed the mad onrush of the yelling *guerrilleros*—not a shot answered the discharge of the hostile carbines.



A dozen Mexicans had forced their way through the doorway with ready pistols and uplifted saber, but no one fired and not a single blade descended.

Because only blackness and utter silence greeted those who were prepared to engage in mortal combat. Had the Mexicans discharged their pistols, had they struck—the bullets and the saber blades would have been wasted on the empty air.

*The interior of the inn contained not a single American!*

The *guerrilleros* who had forced their way through the door stood motionless; those who pressed behind paused in amazement.

A horseman forced his way to the threshold. It was Mazatlan.

"In the fiend's name," he shouted fiercely, "what is this? If they will not fight, kill them where they kneel."

A voice from within the inn answered hoarsely:

"We cannot, señor, for—there is no one here to kill!"

The *guerrillero* leader threw himself from his saddle and rushed over the threshold.

"What devil's trick is this? Where are the *Americanos*?" he shouted.

The *guerrilleros* gave way before him; a number began to cross themselves. Mazatlan glared into the darkened room.

"A light! What are you waiting for?" He struck the Mexican nearest him with the hilt of his sword. One of the men tore off his jacket, rolled it together and set fire to the cloth. The flame flared up and showed the room—empty.

"Fire the house!" shouted Mazatlan; "if they are in the cellar——"

One of the *guerrilleros* touched him on the arm.

"Pardon, señor, but now I remember: I have heard that upon the Acapulco road was an inn which was provided with a secret passage. It may be possible——"

"A thousand devils! Why did you not think of that before? They have escaped that way, but we will catch them in the hills," shrieked Mazatlan.

He rushed through the door and out into the moonlight. The *guerrilleros*

who were in the house poured after him and half had regained their saddles. Mazatlan had gathered up his reins, when above the tumult of shouting, cursing men arose a sound familiar to every cavalryman—the regular muffled thunder of innumerable horses' hoofs, pounding, pounding upon a hard roadbed. A frenzied yell came from the *guerrilleros* on the outskirts of the crowd which pressed about the door of the inn. These, looking up the highway, saw an avalanche of dark forms advancing in the moonlight.

As it approached, the front of this swiftly moving mass spread out into the fields on either side of the road. A sheet of flame burst from the advancing line, the air was filled with leaden rain which buzzed like a swarm of angry bees, and a dozen Mexicans tumbled from their saddles.

On the instant Mazatlan comprehended what had happened. He, not the Americans, had been ambuscaded. He would have given no mercy, and—he asked for none.

Shouting a sharp order, he wheeled his horse and spurred toward the advancing horde of northern cavalymen with a score of his *guerrilleros* following him, and in a moment Mexicans and Americans were mingled in a struggling mêlée.

Haddon, riding in the front rank of the attacking lines, saw a number of swarthy, passionate faces confronting him. He warded off a saber stroke and cut down the Mexican who was pushing his horse against his own.

As the man fell, another pressed forward from behind him. This second *guerrillero* was clad in a gold-embroidered jacket and fought like a demon; his face, dark with passion, was disfigured by two livid scars.

The press of horsemen before and behind forced these two so closely together that they gazed into each other's eyes, but in those of the Mexican came no look of recognition.

For an instant Haddon saw the wild ferocity which doubly distorted the hideous features, then his horse swerved to the right. It was all that saved him from a fatal saber stroke.

In the brief instant given him for



thought, what he believed to be the true solution of this mysterious man's actions flashed through his brain. He had been trying to fathom the motives of a madman. This Mexican, who one day betrayed Santa Anna and the next turned with brutal ferocity against the Americans, had been rendered insane by his sufferings.

Señor Perote, or Mazatlan, as one chose, was a maniac whose acts were prompted by the workings of a diseased brain.

Now thoroughly upon his guard, the Virginian parried a second stroke of the flashing saber, and even though he knew the Mexican was trying desperately to cut him down, he resolved if possible to spare him.

He struck back fiercely, but each time twisted his saber so that did his adversary receive the blow upon the head it would be from the blunt side of the weapon.

A thin froth appeared upon the lips of the Mexican. Angered beyond measure that he could neither cut down his enemy nor pass him, he warded a blow skilfully with his right hand and at the same instant, with his left, snatched a pistol from his sash. Haddon saw the move and jerked his horse back upon his haunches. The ball from the pistol buried itself in the animal's shoulder. Mazatlan hurled his own beast forward and lunged fiercely with his sword, but the point did not reach his adversary.

At the very instant when the steel was within an inch of Haddon's breast and he powerless to parry, a second saber struck aside that of the guerrilla leader. Before Mazatlan could recover himself, this second saber darted forward and the point caught the Mexican squarely in the throat.

The horseman who had saved Haddon from death or a serious wound turned his head sharply.

"It was a close call, sir. When you fight the devil, do not try to spare him."

Having given utterance to this blunt speech, Sergeant Bradley turned and hurled himself into the thickest of the mêlée.

So unequal a combat could not last

forever. The Americans, pressing forward at every side, speedily cut the handful of *guerrilleros* in pieces.

At the end of ten minutes half of Mazatlan's followers were dead, a few wounded and prisoners, while a paltry dozen fled panic-stricken across the fields in the direction of Chalco.

After a little while lights were gleaming in the inn opposite the triple boulders. Upon the floor of the main room lay the body of the guerrilla leader, Mazatlan. The wound he had received from the Texan's saber had not killed him instantly, and under Haddon's directions he was lifted from the spot where he had fallen and carried into the house.

The surgeon of the cavalry regiment bent over him and examined the wound. In the room were gathered Haddon, Sergeant Bradley and a dozen American officers. Some of them had seen the man when, as Señor Perote, he had entered the lines; others knew of the famous guerrilla chief only by reputation.

The surgeon arose and shook his head.

"The man cannot live a quarter of an hour. With such a wound it is a miracle he has lasted so long," said he gravely.

Haddon looked upon the disfigured face, and an expression of regret came into his eyes. He could not forget that this man had freed him from his bonds in that very inn; that on three other occasions he had rendered service to the flag he served.

Mazatlan stirred feebly and his eyes opened. Haddon leaned forward, for it was possible he wished to say something. The lips of the Mexican parted, but no sound passed them.

He was staring straight ahead, past Haddon—at the door.

The voice of Sergeant Bradley, hoarse with amazement, broke the silence.

"My God, lieutenant, look there!"

The Virginian turned quickly.

Never to his dying day could he forget the sensation which passed over him—a feeling of amazement, unbelief, and terror.

In the open doorway stood the figure of a man. This man was a Mexican, clad in the uniform of Santa Anna's



cavalry; but it was not that which had brought the exclamation to the Texan's lips and stricken Haddon dumb.

*The face of the newcomer was turned toward the light, and that face was frightfully disfigured by two livid scars, beginning at a point near the center of the chin and extending upward to the bottom of the ears.*

So intense a silence reigned in the room that the faint breathing of the dying man upon the floor could be distinctly heard. Then, with an almost imperceptible gesture, the figure in the doorway advanced a few feet within the threshold.

His gaze traveled from the face of the man upon the floor to that of Lieutenant Haddon.

"Surely the señor has not forgotten—I am Perote," said he quietly.

Haddon stared mutely at the speaker. A faint smile touched the disfigured lips of Señor Perote.

"I see—I understand why the señor is amazed. Is it not so—the scars?" said he.

Haddon recovered himself, but his face was wet with perspiration.

"You are Perote," said he, and there was a hollow ring in his voice. "Who, then, is this man?"

Perote looked down upon the figure on the floor.

"You should know, señor, for you have been in Chalco. Who but Mazatlan would Santa Anna send to ambush the Americans? It is Mazatlan, but before *that happened* he was Señor Amador."

Suddenly something of the truth dawned upon the Virginian. He remembered the face of the man whom he had seen that night lying dead on the hill behind the inn. He knew that more than one must have been concerned in the disfigurement of Señor Perote, and the face of the man upon the hill gave him an inkling of the manner in which Perote had worked out his revenge.

Now that the two faces, each with the livid double scar, were before his eyes, he noted that these scars were the result of different kinds of wounds. Those upon the face of the real Perote were

broader, as though made by some dull instrument, but except for this slight difference each disfigurement was strikingly similar.

He knew how the guerrilla leader, Mazatlan, had come by the scars which made him a marked man, yet he put the question which hovered on his tongue.

Señor Perote nodded grimly.

"It is even so, señor, for it was in that manner I might make this man share my suffering, and some suffering is worse than death."

He paused, then continued quietly:

"There were two: this Amador, and the other—Valeno. It so happened that I permitted a certain paper to be taken from them. The robber fled and they accused me of being an enemy to Mexico.

"Had they killed me, nothing more would have been heard about the matter, for to kill a man in Mexico is no great thing. They chose to torture me. Under my own roof they burned me with hot irons and laughed at my suffering.

"From that hour a demon took possession of me. Sleeping or waking, I desired but one thing—to find these men and kill them.

"It was one night that that one slept in an inn in Chalco; I watched his light go out and waited until the inn was quiet. I crept through the open window to the bed and looked down upon him.

"It was in my mind to kill him as he lay, but the demon of revenge showed me a better way. It was done quickly; no light was necessary. I cut deeply, even as he had burned me with the iron.

"I knew that when the wounds healed there would be in Mexico two who would carry to their graves a livid cross, a disfigurement which could only be hidden in the tomb."

He paused and looked from one face to another, then continued with awful calmness:

"You know what occurred afterward. The demon which possessed me entered Captain Amador. He became Mazatlan, who slew men for the love of killing. I hated Mexico—because the officers of Santa Anna had tortured me. I resolved to aid the invaders of Mexico, that Santa Anna might be humbled. Even to-night, señors, I have done some-



thing, for it was I who carried to Chalco the report which sent Mazatlan northward. And I knew that not a handful of your cavalymen, but whole regiments, were pushing toward the capital."

Haddon turned to the others in the room.

"It is as he says. Señor Perote has aided us in many ways. Already General Taylor has trusted him."

He turned to the Mexican.

"And now, señor, surely you will remain with us? To-night's work will tell Santa Anna what's in your heart."

Señor Perote smiled grimly.

"I do not fear Santa Anna, señor. Perhaps I alone of all Mexico do not fear him. Your army is marching on the capital. It may be permitted that I serve you further."

The man upon the floor had remained motionless for some minutes, though his eyes were fixed in a dreadful stare upon the face of Señor Perote.

The surgeon bent over him and thrust his hand beneath the braided jacket, over the heart. For a moment he remained in this attitude listening.

"He is dead," said he gravely.

A strange expression crossed the face of Señor Perote. He advanced a step and stood gazing down upon the livid double scar which crossed the features of the dead guerrilla leader. His lips quivered; he turned silently and retraced his steps to the door. Upon the threshold he stopped.

"Is it not as I said, señors?" said he in a quiet voice. "Such scars accom-

pany him who bears them even to the grave."

He passed out into the moonlight and none in the room followed. It seemed almost that the man who had been speaking lay dead upon the floor.

\* \* \* \*

For many years after the capital had fallen and the northern invaders recrossed the Rio Grande strangers who visited a certain part of Mexico heard a curious tale.

It was said that in the mountain fastness, beyond the lonely pass of Cerro Gordo, there dwelt in a rude hut hidden in the chaparral a terrible old man. This strange hermit never came into a town or near a place of habitation.

It was held by some that he was a holy man who was working out a penance by a life of solitude, and that the blessed privilege was permitted him to wear upon his person the figure of an indelible cross.

Others asserted, however, that the lone hermit had been guilty of an unpardonable wickedness, and that God had punished him by marking him forever, so that all men might see and know.

These conflicting opinions had doubtless found their source in the report brought from the mountains by a hunter who had met the man in a desolate ravine of Resaca de la Palma.

He had seen his face—a face horribly disfigured by two livid scars, beginning near the center of the chin and extending upward to a point a little below the lobe of each ear.

THE END.

#### PANSIES.

SOFT as silk or satin  
And lovelier to behold  
In their blended beauty  
Of purple and of gold!

'Mid the gentle moonlight  
With no mortal near,  
They may be the dresses  
That the fairies wear!

*William H. Hayne.*



# THE SPACE BETWEEN.

BY ALICE GARLAND STEELE.

How opportunity broke its rule, knocked twice at the same gate, and what came of it.

THE room was losing itself in twilight: there was a somber touch of shadow lighted by old gold; a melancholy shaft of sun fell in a narrow line of pale yellow across the hardwood floor. It was a time for memories and for dreams.

Elinor, lying back in the shadowy recess of an easy-chair, felt it as she spread open with caressing fingers the letter in her lap. Her throat was contracting, her eyes were wells of tears, the years of her waiting slipped from her as a garment, and with it she threw off the cramping, clinging fetters of the past.

The thin, foreign paper, with its closely written lines, spelled only one sentence to her sharpened fancy: Lloyd was coming back—free!

"Lloyd"—her lips framed his name with whimsical tenderness. For the first time since his marriage she could call him that without feeling the ghost of their love rising before her threateningly, to close it with the terrible dearth of outlawed possession. The little futile figure of his wife, with all her immature affection and unreasoning jealousy, had been swept forever from the horizon. She was dust!

For the first time Elinor thought of her with pity. She seemed to be at the beginning of things—to see, with eyes that had hitherto been accustomed only to darkness, the broad, beautiful way of a future remade. In the light of it the past grew less a thing of bitterness. She could look back upon it as one looks on a grave grown green.

And it had all come right after all! There had been no dim hope to lure her on; she had never thought of him except as of some one irretrievably lost; she had even kept down the sin of wishing it different, till into the bare loneliness of her quiescent life had fallen this letter.

It said very little. His wife had died at Nice in December—it was now April—and he was coming home to her free. If she had waited, it might be as if their parting had never been—and they could marry at once, and forget.

In a sudden passion of joy she crushed the paper in her fingers, bruising it with the strength of her remembrance. She got up, carrying it to the light that she might read it again with a more complete interpretation.

And between the lines she read his love—that was to make up for all—all—*all!* The whole gray tragedy of her uncrowned maidenhood was vindicated!

"Elinor?"

She turned quickly.

"Oh, Martin—is it you? Come in!"

Her voice held a vibrant note quite new to him—he was keenly alive to it, as he was to every change in her. He came in quietly, as one accustomed to the threshold, and, laying aside his hat and cane, seated himself by the window. The light of it fell in unflattering clearness across his large-featured face.

Elinor, glancing at him, smiled to herself—it was so palpably the face of a friend—there was so little about him of the lover. She went over to a center-table, where a crystal lamp stood.

"Shall I light it?" she asked. "Or will you wait till the tea comes in?"

He watched her white hand playing with the globe against a background of shadow.

"Don't," he said. "This light is perfect, and any way I've only a minute to stay. I just dropped in on my way from the club to see—well"—he laughed a trifle nervously—"to see you, you know—and all that."

She crossed over to the easy-chair, throwing herself back in it with a low sigh.

"I wish," she said, "you'd leave out the 'all that,' Martin."



He smiled deprecatingly.

"I can't, Elinor—honestly. And why should I?"

She failed to answer him. He laughed again—a laugh that lacked assurance.

"My dear," he said gently, "you don't know what they mean to me—these daily glimpses of you. Seeing you in your own home is next to having you—in mine. Since you won't come to me, well—Mohammed must go to the mountain, that's all!"

She tapped with one hand on the arm of her chair and her face was slightly troubled.

"Martin, you mustn't talk that way—any longer."

He looked at her quickly.

"Why not any longer, Elinor?"

But she felt the pressure of a constrained silence. He rose and went over to her chair, bending his tall figure and accentuating the slight stoop of his shoulders.

"Elinor," he said, "let's have it out!"

His voice faltered, then he went on more steadily.

"We've been years beating about the bush, you and I—we've almost knocked all the blooms off; we've been like children playing a game, and after all it isn't wise, dear, to play games with hearts. I've tried my best to win out, but you haven't exactly been square—you haven't let me know whether I had any show. I'm a stupid old chap, but I've loved you for a long time. Doesn't that count for something?"

His hand sought hers where it lay on her lap, but she drew it suddenly away.

"No, no, Martin—not that!"

Instinctively he straightened up, folding his arms in pained silence. With a feeling of compunction she touched his sleeve.

"Martin—oh, Martin—*can't* you just be my friend?"

He shook his head sadly.

"I've been trying to all my life," he said; "since we were children together, but, Elinor, it's hardly fair—to me."

She bit her lips.

"I know," she said uncertainly, "but you knew the truth—you knew I loved somebody once; so that I couldn't ever

again, in that way. I've tried"—she raised her head—"I have, Martin; tried my best, but I can't."

Her last word was barely whispered, but he flinched as if from a blow.

"Is that final, Elinor?"

She nodded. She could not trust herself to speak. He drew a long breath, then put out his hand.

"Will you seal the bond," he said slowly, "of our—friendship?"

She put her hand in his with the knowledge that tears were in her voice.

"Martin," she said; "good old Martin!"

He sat down again, crossing his hands on his knees and shaking off with visible effort the burden of his depression.

"Oh," he said, "I've grown gray in the service, Elinor."

"And I've given you—starvation wages, Martin. It hasn't paid, has it?"

She tried to speak lightly, but over the glow of her joy had crept a shade. She cared for Martin in a very real way.

He nodded, smiling his broad, unbeautiful smile.

"Yes, it has—just this moment would pay, if there had been nothing else! To be sure of a good woman's friendship—well, it's next to the—other thing."

A sudden realization of all the generous years of his self-imposed servitude came to her, and in the light of it she felt she could keep no secret hid. She leaned over, her hand fingering the letter in her dress.

"Martin," she said slowly, "Lloyd is coming home."

He started.

"Lloyd Derevan?"

"Yes," she said; "Lloyd Derevan."

Something in the way she lingered over the name made him turn a shade paler.

"And Mrs. Derevan?" he asked.

There was a moment of silence.

"Mrs. Derevan is dead."

A strange hush fell between them. She was only conscious of her letter, as he was only conscious of her. His eyes, searching her face, read enough to make him steady the expression of his own.

"Will it make—any difference to you, Elinor?"



She smiled, but her lips were trembling.

"All the difference in the world!"

He felt almost as if he had been in the confessional. He looked at her a moment without speaking, then he rose, taking up his hat and cane.

His eyes were a trifle strained, and there were lines about his mouth, but he spoke indifferently.

"There's going to be a meet at Med-wood Tuesday. Would you care to go?"

She hesitated. Her voice softened.

"Tuesday," she said, "Lloyd comes." She went on hurriedly: "The steamer gets in at noon, and——" she stopped constrainedly.

He held out his hand.

"I know," he said. "Don't trouble to explain. I'll drop in, if I may, to-morrow—just to indorse the bond." And he smiled.

She was leaning back against the doorway, looking away from him.

"Martin," she said, "I want you to keep coming, just the same—always."

His face flushed.

"I'll come to-morrow," he said evasively; "after that—the deluge."

He moved out into the hallway, where he paused.

"Elinor, are you quite sure of—yourself?"

She looked up.

"Quite sure."

"And of him—I mean of what he is?"

She smiled.

"Big men are only boys grown up, Martin; to know Lloyd once would be to know him forever. There—don't let's talk about it any more. I can't ask you to be glad, but I ask you not to be sorry about my gladness."

He pressed her hand reassuringly.

"No," he said, "I can't quite be 'glad,' can I? The under dog, you know—but if *you* are, I can be—well, let's call it content. There, good-by; I must hurry along."

She turned to him impulsively.

"Martin, there'll be somebody better than I, some day."

The ghost of a smile curved his lips.

"Will there?" he said. "You were always hopeful, Elinor. Well, we'll see."

But as he left her she knew that to the end of his home would be desolate unless she filled it.

She went back into the empty room. The darkness had fallen quickly, yet she lit the lamp lingeringly—she had dwelt so long in shadows.

She drew up a low chair and sat with her arms across the table, thinking.

Perhaps not thinking so much as remembering. She remembered those early days of Lloyd's devotion and the future that was to be all mist and moonshine; and then she had gone abroad for two years with her invalid mother, and come back alone to find him bound to another.

He had accused her of forgetting, and told her that because of it he hadn't cared much what might happen, and so he had married a girl from the West.

That first interview afterward had been painful—she closed her eyes even now. She remembered that she had had the strength to cut short his protestations, to keep her eyes dry, and her heart in the iron grasp of reason; but somehow he had left her with the impression that he still cared—desperately—and that things must go on so till the end.

She had felt quite limp and nerveless afterward—there had been several unavoidable meetings, once at a dinner, once during a week-end visit, and two simple notes from her, requesting the return of her letters.

Then came the blind jealousy of his wife, and after that a long gap—a blank of six years—if years could be blank that were filled with such conscious suffering of remembrance!

Through it all, Martin, who knew, had been the one calming influence. He had helped her to catch up the broken threads of her torn existence, but the warp and woof of her fabric had still been gray—always gray. A friend can move mountains, but not dry up a dead sea!

And so the years had slipped by.

As she counted them now, she felt a sudden unreasoning fear—had they changed her too terribly? Had she lost the light of her eyes, the color from her hair? Would she be less dear to him now that he could claim her?



She got up and went with lagging steps to a mirror, lighting a bracketed candle as one who dreads to see and yet must look.

The reflection calmed her. She was still young—the old edition of herself in a larger reprint; that was all.

She stepped back with visible relief. A sound of cab wheels rolling over the asphalt drew her to the window. Parting the curtains, she looked out. The night was marshaling its host of stars; the warm moisture of spring lay on the pavements.

The cab had stopped at her door.

She turned inquiringly as a maid entered bearing a card on a silver tray. Before she had fully mastered the meaning of the name she heard a man's quick step in the corridor.

As the maid retreated, her expectancy grew almost to be physical pain. With straining eyes she watched the doorway. It was here at last—this meeting of the bridged-over years.

The next moment they stood facing each other.

"Lloyd!"

"My dear Elinor!"

She felt as Mary did confronted by Lazarus, the grave-clothes still about his head; then her voice left her—her lips, hot and dry, could form no greeting. Only her eyes gave him the welcome he craved.

As his hand found hers, she sank on a divan, trembling. He explained in broken sentences.

"I took an earlier steamer—it was beastly over there. I lost at Monte Carlo—and like a small boy I wanted to get home, away from it—I came straight to you."

She hardly heard what he was saying—the tumult of her joy seemed to be killing her.

He leaned over and kissed her on the lips, passing his fingers across her forehead. The caress left her weak—she was like a sensitive lily alive to the touch of the first despoiling hand. At last she sat up, smiling tearfully.

"Oh," she said, "I know what Heaven is—it's a meeting-place for parted souls! Lloyd! Oh, Lloyd—to have you back again!"

He laughed shortly.

"You always were strong on sentiment, Elinor. So you've missed me? That's pleasant! I think I want you now as I never did in those old days. You are like good wine—age has improved you."

She flushed with pleasure. To be weighed in the balances and not found wanting!

"Lloyd," she whispered; "Lloyd."

"Oh," he said lightly, "I was sure of you, Elinor—that's why I wrote. I heard from the Badgelys you were still in the same place. I met them at Pisa—after Ethel died I roamed around a good deal, getting used to my freedom. It was sudden, you know—she always did things that way. We were at a hole of a place in Nice when it happened. I did all I could—I tried to make up at the end; but it doesn't matter now whether I did or not—I'm back with you."

She was looking at him intently. He gave her a sensation of strangeness. His words she hardly heard—she was so alive to the tones of his voice—listening for familiar cadences.

He leaned back, watching her.

"The Badgelys told me that you had dropped out of society. That was foolish, Elinor; you owe it to me to be somebody. They said your long-legged lawyer friend still looked after you—he was a clever fellow. It was a wonder you didn't marry him—I was out of the way."

She looked up at him.

"Lloyd, it was all I could do to be true in the one way left to me."

He patted her hand.

"What a dear little fool you were. Of course I knew you were true, even if I——"

He stopped abruptly.

"Oh," she said, "how the years have cheated us!"

He nodded.

"In more ways than one. But we'll pay them back, Elinor; we'll live the rest of our lives to the limit, and we'll cheat them in another way—by forgetting."

She stroked his hand.

"Dear," she said, "can one ever forget? It seems as if my life has been spent in remembering!"



He laughed.

"That's the woman of it. To forget is a man's creed—he has to, he lives so intensely; there are some things it doesn't do to remember. So he smokes a cigar or plays a game, and the ghost is gone. It's as easy as that, Elinor! I'll teach you lots of things."

She watched his eyes, his lips, as a mother might watch a son grown up and come home after many years. They were familiar, and yet new. He had the same trick of smiling, the same nervous gesture of pushing back the waves of his hair; but the boyish look she remembered was gone. His chin had grown harder, his eyes more restless.

As he looked back at her he drew her suddenly to her feet.

"Let me see you from all points," he said. "You're not pretty any longer, Elinor—you are beautiful; only your mouth is too sad. That's right, smile. Do you know, I've a queer feeling with you—as if I were giving my recording angel an account of my sins. You wouldn't know if I skipped any, would you?"

She shook her head.

"Oh, you've been good, Lloyd—you have—I've always wanted you to be. It was the one prayer I could pray—I couldn't ask to have you back. I could only——"

She paused, her eyes moist at the remembrance of those nightly vigils, those tearless petitions coupled with his unspoken name.

His expression changed slightly; his eyes looked away from her.

"Would it have made any difference," he said carelessly, "if I hadn't been good?"

She sent him a startled smile.

"Why, Lloyd——" she began.

Suddenly he faced her.

"Elinor, if I didn't want you so much I'd make a clean breast of it all—not that there is so much to tell; one or two dark spots, besetting sins and so forth."

He rose, walking nervously up and down the room. She sat watching him with parted lips, her eyes troubled.

Her silence brought him back to her side.

"You haven't asked me to dinner," he said. "Aren't you going to?"

The intensity of her gaze softened.

"Oh," she said, "how careless of me." Her voice was a trifle constrained. "We dine at seven—it must be nearly that now. Father is away; there's nobody but me—we can have it together."

It was with a feeling of relief she led the way into the dining-room. The hour had been so vital to them both.

She seated herself opposite him at the round table.

Under the light of the chandelier his face looked older, with darkened lines under the eyes. In spite of herself, she felt that she was watching him—watching for something she missed. There was an intangible difference that threatened to level their love down to mere acquaintanceship. One cannot love the unknown.

Afterward, when they were back again in the lamp-lighted room, she knew. It was the space between, unaccounted for—a shadow that stretched over that backward way, covering a great void.

Her hands on the cushioned arm of her chair trembled. He seemed suddenly a thing apart, clothed with a terrible strangeness—the strangeness of change—of subtraction, of multiplication, of addition.

With a sudden fear she turned gropingly to the past to drag from it some familiar sign, some bit of common sod on which their feet could rest together.

She leaned toward him appealingly.

"Lloyd, do you remember that day at Medwood, years ago, when you were jealous of old Mr. Olliver? He died last month!"

He lit a cigar, casting the burned-out match carelessly away from him.

"You seem mightily concerned," he said; "perhaps I was right in being jealous. But I shouldn't be *now*."

"Wouldn't you?" she asked.

He laughed.

"Not a bit! Not after the look of your eyes when I came to-night. It made you mine forever—you gave yourself up!"

She drew back.

"One never gives oneself quite up; one reserves a part for—for friends," she finished weakly.



A vision of Martin's seriously kind face confronted her. She felt as if she were smiting him between the eyes!

"No," she said; "Lloyd, I make one reservation—I owe it to—others who filled the years you left empty."

There was a silence between them. He sent blue rings of smoke upward, his lips curving deliberately. Her eyes were downcast, but she felt his presence in the room.

With a sudden rush of tenderness she went over to him, leaning on the arm of his chair.

"Lloyd," she said tremulously, "it all seems—so strange. I—hardly seem to know you."

He half turned.

"Well," he said, "I've changed; that's all. The trouble is, you haven't, Elinor. A man goes through a mill—he comes out different. Over there the pace is rapid."

She felt a weighing sense of depression. It was as if the yeast had been left out of the bread of her joy. She looked wide-eyed at the tantalizing vision of an imperfect happiness. She put one hand on his hair.

"Lloyd," she said, "tell me about those years between."

He laughed a trifle harshly.

"It wouldn't be pleasant hearing, Elinor. You see, Ethel comes into it—and a few others. I guess we had better let it go as a blank."

"But we *can't*," she breathed. "There are shapes crowding into it. I can't tell you how, but I feel almost as if some of them were flesh and blood. They are separating you from me, Lloyd!"

He stared into the shadow.

"You are romantic," he said, "and imaginative. To such a woman as you things would sound even worse. No, no—we'll let sleeping dogs lie; we'll forget it!"

"It's a man's creed," she murmured; "never a woman's."

He got up slowly.

"Well," he said lightly, "I advise you to make it yours, at any rate. There—kiss me, Elinor!"

At the touch of his lips the old love for him came back. She threw her arms about his neck.

"Lloyd, Lloyd," she sighed; "it's the beginning and end of my dreams!"

He loosened her clasp.

"Not the end, Elinor—leave that out—an ending is a synonym for death, and I'm afraid of death!"

His words cast a shadow over her. She shuddered. He walked across the room, nervously puffing at his cigar.

"When Ethel died," he said, "I felt as if she were only going on ahead to tell on me—to let them know that I had cheated her to the last."

She sat down weakly.

"Cheated her, Lloyd?" she asked faintly.

He nodded.

"I never loved her, exactly, but I pretended I did—you have to with some women. After she found out she made me keep it up—the pretense—to the end; but I knew she was scorning me all the time."

Elinor shivered.

"Poor little thing!" she whispered. "Poor little thing!"

"For pity's sake," he cried, "don't deal in cheap sentiment. You did your share toward it!"

She stood up, her face pale.

"I?" she said. "Lloyd, what do you mean?"

"Just that," he answered shortly. "You were as guilty as I—you were in love with me—and I was her husband."

Something in Elinor's throat seemed to be choking her. It was with an effort she kept her burning eyes on his face.

"For shame," she cried; "Lloyd, for shame!"

She stopped suddenly, with a revulsion of feeling. Could it matter *now* what he said or what he thought? She turned away, her lips trembling.

He came swiftly to her side.

"Elinor, forget it—all I said. Somehow it made me feel less in the wrong if it seemed that you were in it, too!"

He tried to put one arm about her waist, but she drew away slowly. She went over to the window, looking out half-blindly. The dark spaces of the sky were set with stars, but she did not see—she was only conscious that she had eaten of the tree of knowledge and that the fruit was bitter!



She pressed one hand against her forehead and closed her eyes, thinking. The tumult of her thoughts hurried her on to one inevitable conclusion. It had been there from the first, but only now did she realize it—that there was a painful way, which she must walk in alone!

She turned with no haste. Her eyes, seeking his, held him.

"Lloyd," she said faintly, "there is no bridge."

He stood in the center of the room, looking at her. He was like a prisoner at the bar of her judgment. His face under the lamp-light took on weaker lines.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he said stiffly. "You deal in riddles, Elinor."

She crushed the window curtain in one white hand.

"There is no bridge," she repeated hurriedly. "I cannot come to you—you can never come to me—there must always be the space between!"

The spell of a pregnant silence held them both. His eyes shifted. Then he looked over at her boldly.

"What are you trying to get at?" he said sharply. "Do you mean that you have ceased to love me?"

She shook her head.

"I still love you, Lloyd—that part of you that is dead and buried in a grave. The part that lives still belongs to Ethel and those others."

He laughed harshly.

"You talk wildly, Elinor. The dead have no claim. Ethel—God! Am I never to be rid of her?"

She passed her hand wearily across her eyes.

"Lloyd," she said shiveringly, "we must be plain—we must understand. As you cheated Ethel you have cheated me! I have clung all these years to a wraith, a memory—to something that had ceased to exist—and to find it out is the bitterest thing I have ever known."

He stepped uncertainly toward her. His mouth had taken on cruel lines.

"And what of me—what of me? Must I cross the world to you for nothing? Tell me that!"

She put out one hand.

"There is a sea between us still," she

sobbed. "Oh, Lloyd, *can't* you see it? We are so far apart—so far apart!"

He caught her wrist, holding it firmly.

"Are you sending me away?" he asked. "Do you mean that? Don't be afraid—I'm not sure that I even wish to stay! You send too big a flashlight over my soul!"

She didn't answer him. Her eyes were drinking in every detail of the once-loved face for the last time.

At length she leaned over.

"Lloyd," she said very gently, "do you mind—going now?"

He dropped her hand. In the gesture was final relinquishment; it was like letting a curtain fall between them. When he spoke it was from the other side.

"Perhaps," he said, "it is as well so. Good-night, Elinor!—and good-by!"

She stood in the daze of a broken dream as his footsteps sounded down the length of the hall.

When the door closed, she shuddered, and awoke.

There were no tears in her eyes. She felt only a sense of desolation—of loneliness—as one feels when the dead have been taken away. Then with dragging feet she left the room.

A little later, as she tossed on a sleepless bed, she heard her father come in. The sound of his key in the latch brought her the homely comfort of a familiar thing—she realized at the moment that flowers grow on graves. With the thought she tried to curtain the painful vision of the evening. As he passed her door he called to her.

"Elinor, are you awake? They kept me late at the Davisons'. Martin was there; and I heard news—Lloyd Derevan is coming back!"

"Yes," she said; "I know. Good-night!"

She pillowed her head on her arm, staring into the darkness.

"Martin," she sobbed; "Martin will understand!"

The morning found her calm and heavy-eyed. Her grief had worn itself out, but she felt like a thing left desolate by the sweep of some storm—she must begin all over again—everything!

It was difficult. The trivialities of the household irritated her. The shrill voices of the maids broke in upon the



silence of her endurance with rasping insistency. She turned instinctively to the end of the day for the opportunity for rest.

When at last it came it brought Martin. She was sitting dully and listlessly in a window-seat piled high with languidly luxurious cushions. The candles had been lit, and in the cheerful halo that they cast no ghost could venture—there was no ghost for her.

Lloyd's image was receding far into the dark and impenetrable background—she only felt the soreness of her own hurt—the consciousness of all that she had missed.

As Martin entered she motioned him to his favorite easy-chair. His face was slightly graver, his eyes preoccupied. As he put away his hat and cane he looked over.

"It's good-by to-night, Elinor. I'm going away."

"Going away?" she faltered. "Why, Martin—where?"

He drew off his gloves, smoothing out the barely perceptible creases. He was a methodic man.

"Well," he said, "I'm not exactly sure where I shall go. It's partly business—partly because I think it will be for the best. I thought of going out to Seattle—there are interests there somebody else might manage, but it's as well to go oneself."

She sat in a strained silence, holding herself in check, not daring to think of what his absence would mean to her—for she knew now.

Suddenly her nerves gave way—she leaned her head back, weak tears filling her eyes. In a moment he was at her side.

"Why, Elinor—why, my dear—what is it?"

She caught one of his hands impulsively in both of hers.

"Martin," she sobbed; "oh, Martin, are you failing me, too?"

He stood in a torture of absolute embarrassment, stroking her hand uncertainly.

"You're nervous, little woman," he said; "but you mustn't say that—I'm too stupid to fail any one, least of all

you. I only know how to be loyal in a jog-trot way!"

She held to him tightly as to a long-lost hope.

"Don't go," she said faintly. "Don't go—it's so terribly sad to be—alone."

He stood over her, his face falling into shadow.

"My dear," he said gently, "there will be—others to fill my place—it's such an unimportant one!"

Something in his voice sank into her heart. She sat up, looking away from him.

"Martin," she said brokenly, "Lloyd came last night—and I sent him—away."

In the hush that followed their eyes met.

"Sent him away?" he asked stupidly. "I don't—quite understand, Elinor."

She stood up, still clinging to his hand.

"I don't myself," she said wearily.

"It was all wrong, somehow—he was different—we both were. There was that space between—I only realized it then—that one can never go back; one must go on forever!"

He looked at her steadily.

"You told him to go?" he asked. "Loving him, you told him that he should go?"

"Loving his memory," she whispered. "I wanted to keep it sacred—because he was dead—that was why."

Suddenly he understood. A light swept over his face. He trembled with a strange hope.

"Thank God," he said quietly; "thank God you found it out—in time!"

She eyed him wistfully.

"And you won't go, Martin—now?"

"Not if you want me to stay, Elinor."

Her lips crept into a faint smile—she wore the look of a child who had dried its tears.

"Martin, I think I shall want you—always."

"Elinor!"

"Yes," she said slowly, "I mean just that."

In the silence that followed he bent down and kissed her.



# THE FUGITIVE.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE.

A modern romance in the Holy Land, involving the mystery of an American who seems to be a villain, and culminating in the massacre at Damascus.

## CHAPTER I.

IN PERIL BY THE JORDAN.

A LONG, tortuous stream—a creek rather than a river—mud-colored, swift, turbulent; and in a cleared space along the western bank a group of three white tents. In front of the largest tent lounged an elderly woman and a man.

"And this is the Jordan!" the woman was saying as she eyed the turgid yellow river with disappointment. "I had pictured it as so different."

"You and most of the rest of us Americans, Mrs. Sharpe, get your ideas of Holy Land scenes from pictures painted by people who were never nearer Syria than Sandy Hook," rejoined the florid, stout old gentleman who sprawled on the grass at her feet.

"It is only a few of us who are lucky enough to see the real thing," he went on, "and even then we are apt to feel disappointed until we grasp the subtler side of it all. Personally, I'm glad I came. I enjoy every hour of my stay."

"You aren't the only member of the party who is extracting wholesale enjoyment," replied Mrs. Sharpe, lowering her voice and nodding significantly toward two men and a girl who were coming up the path from the river bank toward the tents. "Your niece, Miss Farrar, ought to be happy with all the attention she is receiving. Look at her, dividing her favors impartially between young Mr. Mohun and Sir Arthur. I confess to a lively interest in that triangular love affair."

"'Love affair' is hardly the word for it, I hope!" retorted the major testily. "May has a good, level head on her shoulders, and she's not foolish enough to take too seriously the attentions of chance traveling acquaintances.

"But," he added under his breath, "if she *does* fall in love with either of them, I hope it won't be with that young human beanpole with a title tied to it. Mohun is a hundred per cent the better man of the two."

The trio of young people had drawn too near to permit Mrs. Sharpe to answer. The kind old lady smiled up at the flushed, eager face of the tall girl who stood before her, and her gaze passed on with scarcely less friendliness to a stalwart, bronzed youth of medium height who stood on May's left hand and who appeared to have been arguing hotly with her on some topic.

The third member of the trio, a long, lank youth with a perpetual smile, colorless hair, and a nose three sizes too large for the rest of the small, sallow face, almost justified at first glance the major's unkind description, "A human beanpole with a title tied to it."

Yet Sir Arthur Cole, Baronet, was regarded by many as a decidedly desirable *parti*, and he himself thoroughly concurred in this opinion. It was evident he had been an onlooker rather than a participant in the discussion between Mohun and May Farrar, as he looked uncomfortably from one to the other and seemed anxious to lead the talk into some other channel.

"Uncle Jack," cried the girl, partly in fun, partly in vexation, "will you kindly explain to Mr. Mohun that if I need any advice as to my conduct I can come to you for it without troubling him?"

Mohun reddened under his bronzed skin as the major and Mrs. Sharpe looked at him in quizzical inquiry.

"If I've interfered with Miss Farrar's wishes," he began, "it was merely for her sake. Not for my own amusement. There is an old raft down at the shore. Miss Farrar wants to take my groom,



Imbarak, and cross to the other side of the river."

"Well, why shouldn't she?" asked the major. "If the raft will hold them both?"

"That's just what I said!" exclaimed May.

"Because," replied Mohun gravely, "Imbarak tells me the other side is unsafe; that boars have occasionally been found in the thickets there; that the footing is treacherous; and that snakes are not unheard of in the patches of marshy ground. But if Miss Farrar really wants to cross, and if you think it safe, sir, I shall be glad to cross with her."

"So shall I," broke in Sir Arthur. "I'd be jolly glad to escort her anywhere. But if there's really danger, hadn't she better——"

"I don't want the escort of either of you, thanks!" retorted May with pretty wilfulness. "I mean to be the first of my party to explore the east bank of the Jordan. Imbarak doesn't count. He says he understands rafts, and he can shoo away any boars. Besides, I've got this"—and she drew a small revolver from her pocket—"in case of snakes or——"

"If the snakes would only stand behind you they'd fall ready victims to your skill as a marksman," laughed the major; "but of course you can go if you choose to. I've no patience with this talk of peril in the Orient."

"Syria is as safe as Jersey City. Every traveler knows that. Robbers, dangerous wild animals, and fanatics were all cleared out years ago. But Americans who come to the Holy Land like to pretend they are in an atmosphere of peril."

"It disgusts me, this continual harping on danger, danger, danger! Cross the Jordan if you want to, May; if you're sure Imbarak understands handling a raft. The worst danger you'll incur will be a spill into the water. And I think there are enough men here to rescue you if you do upset."

"But," protested Sir Arthur, "it would be beastly cold to tumble into the Jordan in winter. Do be careful, Miss Farrar."

There was a laugh at the baronet's

serious tone, and a second laugh at the blank stare of surprise. Then, with a triumphant glance at Mohun, May Farrar left the group and beckoned up a small, wiry man in native garb.

"Imbarak," she called loudly enough for Mohun to hear, "get the raft ready and we will cross now."

"*I-o-a, sit*" (Yes, madam), responded the little brown man with alacrity, "but Mr. Mohun? Does he say I can go? I am *his* groom."

May turned impatiently toward Mohun, too proud to ask his leave. But he saved her the trouble by nodding curtly at Imbarak and then turning his back on them both.

"You spoke a few minutes ago, sir," he said to the major, "about the absence of danger in Syria. You were partly right, of course. But in all Eastern countries, so I have read, nothing is certain except uncertainty. And Syria is no exception."

"Of course the Bedouins no longer as a rule commit robberies openly in the more settled districts here, nor do Moslem fanatics openly kill Christians just to prove their piety. But Bedouins are still thieves at heart, and fanatics only await the chance to kill every Christian within reach. All that either Bedouins or fanatics need to make them as dangerous as of old is a word of encouragement from high quarters."

"But that word shall never be spoken. The Sultan of Turkey is——"

"The Sultan is a solitary, isolated man, struggling vainly to reform and build up a nation which ought to be the richest on earth and which is the poorest. The pashas grind down the peasantry and townfolk and send lying reports to their masters of the country's condition. The Christians in Syria, especially in Damascus, where we are planning to go next week, have prospered under the just laws of the present Sultan, and the local Mohammedans are discontented."

"There's a fairly well-defined rumor that the authorities at Damascus are scared at the growing hatred against the Christians, and that a clique of nobles there are almost openly advocating a massacre and a general looting of Christians' property. The nobles have



their eyes on the 'Unbelievers' wealth, and also want to make themselves popular with the rabble. The authorities fear the influence of the nobles with the Sultan, and therefore they dare not crush the threatened revolt with an iron hand. Things are getting serious up there, I hear. Perhaps it might be wiser to postpone——"

"Postpone our trip there?" cried the major, who had listened with incredulous impatience. "My boy, you're talking arrant nonsense! We're living in the latter half of the nineteenth century and under the protection of the American flag. Massacre? Rot!"

"But it's true that fanatics from all parts of Islam are flocking to Damascus; and Bedouins from the Syrian Desert, and——"

"If you're afraid to risk your life there, Ralph," said the major disgustedly, "stay in the safer neighborhood of Jerusalem. We should be sorry to lose your society, of course, but we don't want you to die of fright."

"Why, man alive, do you suppose I'd take my niece to Damascus if there was an atom of danger? Or that I'd advise the rest of our party to go there with us if it were not perfectly safe? Absurd!"

"I think you know that I don't fear for myself," said Mohun, rising from the deck chair into which he had thrown himself, "but as to safety—well, as Sir Richard Burton once said, 'There can be no real security in the lands darkened by the Shadow of the Prophet.'"

He strolled away toward the river bank, where he stood watching Imbarak deftly guiding the raft through the swirl of yellow waters toward a wide strip of white sand on the opposite bank.

"I'm sorry I spoke so harshly to the boy," said the major, looking after him, "I shouldn't have pretended to doubt his courage, for if I'm any judge of men he's as plucky and as square a chap as ever I saw. But his talk of danger riled me. I trust, madam," he went on, turning to Mrs. Sharpe, "that you are not alarmed at the prospect of going to Damascus with us?"

"Why, to be frank with you, I am," replied the old lady. "I'm a little timid by nature, I suppose, and all this talk

of fanatics and Bedouins and the 'Shadow of the Prophet' frightens me. But," she added brightly, "I'm going all the same. It will be my only chance, for I must return to Boston next month."

"So soon? I thought you were to stay on this side of the Atlantic until summer."

"I was. But my mail, that M. Gelat sent on from Jerusalem to-day, has altered my plans."

"No bad news, I hope?"

"Very bad, I fear. But it's a longish story, and I won't bore you with it."

"Nothing you tell me, madam, could possibly bore me," and there was a note of real feeling in the pompous tones that brought a faint flush to her withered cheek. "I beg that you will let me know if I can be of assistance in any way."

"Thank you, major. I appreciate your words more than I can say. My news, in brief, is that the great banking house of Warren & Co., of Boston, is in grave danger."

"You don't say so! I thought it was one of the most solidly established houses in America. Mark Warren, the president of the bank, was a chum of mine in Yale. I haven't seen him for ten years, but up to that time we were like brothers. Poor old Mark!"

"You are wasting your sympathy on him if the reports in my letter are true. It is thought that he or some member of his firm has squandered in speculation a large sum of money entrusted to the bank's keeping. All my little fortune is involved, and if the bank fails I—— But don't let us think of that. I only mention it to explain why I must cut short my visit to the East. My letter was from a lawyer whom I know. It was delayed three weeks by the cholera quarantine at Port Said. I should have received it nearly a month ago. At the time it was written the story of the defalcation was still hushed up. But it is probably public by now, and the bank may have gone to pieces for all I know. Oh, if there were only some means of getting news! I——"

A cry from the farther bank, an answering shout, and the sound of a plunge into the water, brought them



both to their feet. Sir Arthur Cole, who had strolled farther up the clearing, also turned, and all three ran toward the bank.

There one glance explained the entire situation to the major's eyes, sharpened as they were by many campaigns and surprises.

May Farrar and Imbarak had beached their raft on the east bank and had started across the wide strip of white, moist sand toward the higher ground. They had not taken a dozen steps when both had sunk to the knees in the treacherous footing.

The groom had at once recognized the nature of the danger and had tried to throw himself face downward on the sand, but his feet were already too deeply embedded. May, not comprehending, had struggled to free herself, with the inevitable result that she sank at once to the waist in the white, shifting sands.

Imbarak's agonized face and his gasp of "Quicksands!" told her the full story of her peril, and she cried wildly for aid.

Ralph Mohun, on the opposite bank, had for the moment turned his eyes from the newly-landed explorers and was watching a gnarled tree floating down-stream, but May's cry had scarcely reached his ears when his coat, waistcoat and shoes were tossed off and he had leaped into the icy waters of the Jordan.

With long, overhand racing-stroke he battled his way across the swift stream, aiming for a point higher up in order to counterbalance the effect of the current. Each stroke carried the upper half of his body out of the muddy torrent.

Logs, branches and other floating débris buffeted him cruelly, but he managed to keep his head clear of any of these obstacles, and each cleaving stroke carried his muscular body nearer the quicksands.

The major, Sir Arthur and the servants, meantime, were rushing aimlessly along the western bank in the vain search for a boat, and bellowing foolish advice to the imperiled girl.

Imbarak had ceased to struggle, and his brown face took on a stoical, dull look, the intense fatalism of the East

having laid hold upon his brain and nerves.

May, however, her straining eyes fixed on the alternately rising and sinking face of the swimmer, continued to struggle fiercely as she felt the quicksands drawing her deeper and deeper into its grip.

The Jordan, at no point wide, is barely two hundred feet from bank to bank at the spot where tourists usually camp. It was thus but the work of a minute for so expert a swimmer as Ralph Mohun to reach the place where the raft was beached. Scrambling on it, he bent his full strength to the task of ripping off the broad boards that formed its deck.

The raft was old, the nails rusty, and in a moment he had torn four of the boards free. Throwing them, two by two, upon the sands he sprang across them to where May, buried almost to the shoulders, awaited him. The wide surface of the planks withstood the suction of the treacherous sand.

Luckily, in quicksand it is almost as easy to draw forth an object embedded as it is for that object to sink in. Therefore a single tremendous pull of Ralph's powerful arms sufficed to lift May from the moist, quaking grave into which she had so nearly lost her life, and to place her, trembling and exhausted, on the planks beside him.

His arm still encircled her, and for one brief, pregnant instant rescuer and rescued looked into each other's eyes.

In that look a knowledge, a wonderful certainty, passed from one to the other.

Through her exhaustion the girl felt a wave of color surge to her face. The man's eyes glowed and darkened. Neither spoke.

A cheer from the little group on the opposite bank and the spell was broken. Picking her up lightly in his arms, Ralph Mohun carried May to the wreck of the raft, set her down there, and bounded back to where Imbarak waited.

Wresting the luckless Syrian from the clinging sands less gently than he had lifted May from them, Mohun deposited the limp, nerveless body on the planks.

"Come!" he said sharply. "Brace



up! Help me move these planks back to the raft. Step on the next one and then lift this one you're on now. We'll need them."

Dully the native obeyed. He had been too near death to realize clearly his unexpected deliverance.

Working mechanically under Mohun's orders, he gained the strip of safer sand where the raft lay and set to work at his task of repairing the rude vessel.

Five minutes later the three were on the west bank again, May crying quietly in Mrs. Sharpe's arms, and Mohun looking very foolish as he received the thanks of the much-flustered major.

"You showed pluck, my boy!" the older man was vociferating, "and what is better, you showed presence of mind. It was a proof that——"

"That there may still be a few dangers even in Syria?" queried Ralph innocently, and the major's mingled resentment and gratitude strangled the reply in his throat.

But a diversion occurred to end the embarrassing situation. Imbarak, the groom, who had stood stupidly staring across at the quicksands, suddenly turned and walked up to the tourists.

Slowly unwinding his dirty white turban, the Syrian laid it at Mohun's feet. Ignorant of Eastern customs, Ralph did not realize that this is the world-old oriental form of vowing eternal allegiance—not until the groom's words enlightened him.

"*Howaji*," said Imbarak simply, "I am your dog. By the tombs of my fathers, by the sword of the Prophet, I lay my life forever at your feet. When the hand of death was on me, you lifted me to life again. Another would have saved the *sit* and would have forgotten the servant. My life is yours. I say it—I, Imbarak Abou-Najib."

The quiet simplicity with which he spoke robbed the words of much of their melodramatic effect, yet, with the Anglo-Saxon hatred of demonstrativeness, Mohun looked and felt supremely uncomfortable as he answered lamely.

"Oh, that's all right. Glad to have been able to do you a good turn. Let the matter drop there!"

He walked away, leaving the native to

pick up and resume his turban and to mutter guttural prayers of gratitude in his own dissonant Arabic tongue.

## CHAPTER II.

### A SURPRISE.

FOR two days longer the party remained encamped beside the Jordan, making little horseback trips to the near-by ruins of ancient Jericho; to the salt plains at the northern end of the Dead Sea; to that weird, uncanny body of water, the Dead Sea itself; and to the sites of the Cities of the Plain.

The whole valley of the Jordan is full of wonders of nature and of historical and religious interest. The Americans, with the exception of two of their party, enjoyed the experience to the full.

These two exceptions were Ralph Mohun and May Farrar. And the reason for their lack of interest in outside environment was easy to understand.

When Ralph Mohun had chanced to meet Miss Farrar and the major, through having a seat at their table at Shephard's Hotel in Cairo a month before, both uncle and niece had taken an instant liking to him. On hearing that he was on his way to the Holy Land they begged him to join their party. Hesitatingly he consented.

A frank friendship of rapid growth had sprung up between the young fellow and May, and had, unconsciously on both sides, ripened into a deeper feeling of whose nature and comprehensiveness both had for the first time become aware in that one moment of rescue on the quicksands.

But since then, to May's surprise and chagrin, the man appeared to avoid her. He seldom addressed her directly, and evaded all chances of a tête-à-tête.

At first May fancied this attitude on his part might be accidental, and she was secretly grateful for the respite wherein she might adjust her mind and heart to this new and wonderful emotion which, springing into life in one moment, now filled and swayed her whole being.

But before the party turned their faces toward Jerusalem on the morning



of the third day, May Farrar could no longer doubt that Mohun's new coldness of manner and actual avoidance of her were intentional.

That he was unhappy she could plainly see. That his disquiet had to do with her she readily guessed.

Woman-like, and conscious of freedom from offense, she was too proud to seek an explanation or to try to force her society on a man who was obviously seeking to avoid it.

Thus it was that with unseeing eyes the two young people gazed on scenes fraught with the world's most marvelous history and most sacred religious associations.

It is a day's journey by fairly easy stages from the Valley of the Jordan to Jerusalem. Part of the route lies over a rough road laid in the days of Roman rule, and little improved in the past nineteen centuries, and part lies over a mere narrow, rock-girt path where carriages cannot pass and where horsemen must ride single file.

The first portion of the journey is through shaded orchards of olive, orange and lemon trees laden with fruit and flower. The latter part is over a mountainous, barren, desolate tract where dull-gray rock and duller brown earth blend into a monochrome of dreariness.

"It is like a Land of the Dead," commented Mrs. Sharpe to the major, who rode beside her palanquin.

"It is a land of the dead," he answered gravely. "A land whose glory is departed. But there are more holy memories roused by the outlines of these barren hills and by the very dust of these roads than by all the beauties of the rest of the world."

"This land is the cradle of our faith. I feel that with every step I take I am treading on holy ground. I only wish," he added with a sigh, "that I could instil a little feeling of the sort into our young people here."

He indicated with his head Sir Arthur and May, who were riding together a hundred yards in advance of their elders, laughing and chatting gaily.

"Youth is youth!" responded Mrs. Sharpe oracularly, "but evidently the 'triangular love affair' is no longer tri-

angular. Where is Mr. Mohun? Have he and May had a tiff?"

"I hope not," said the major, turning in his saddle to locate the missing swain, "for I like the boy. I'd be sorry if May had trifled with his heart to any serious extent. He's too good a chap for her to torture. There he is now, riding with Imbarak nearly half a mile behind us. What ails the lad? On the journey from Jerusalem to the Jordan he never left May's side."

"I wouldn't worry. Probably some silly misunderstanding such as young people enjoy. You seem fond of Mr. Mohun. Are you prepared to welcome him as a nephew-in-law?"

"Well, I'd hardly say that. You see I know so little of him. We met him accidentally in Cairo and liked him and insisted on his joining us. He is from Boston, is recently out of Harvard, and is spending a year in travel before settling down to business. That is all he has told me about himself. He seems to have plenty of spending money and plenty of leisure, and from his manner I can see he is a gentleman by birth and breeding.

"That's all I really *know* of him. If he and May come to an understanding it will of course be my duty as her uncle and guardian to make strict inquiries as to his family, finances, antecedents, etc. But it has struck me that for the past day or so he and May don't seem as fond of each other's society as of old—ever since he helped her out of the quicksands, in fact. Queer, isn't it? But young Cole is getting his innings on account of it."

"I've lived in and around Boston all my life," said Mrs. Sharpe reflectively, "and I know, by name or personally, nearly every family of any account in the whole city. But I recall no name such as Mohun. Nor, though I've questioned him once or twice, can I make him speak of any acquaintances in Boston. Besides, I've noticed that though we have all been together for more than a month he has never received any mail. Not a single letter.

"Nor have I ever seen him writing so much as a postcard in the hotel writing-rooms on steamer-days. It is none of my business, and I suppose I am a pry-



ing, spying old woman, but all this strikes me as odd. May I advise you, in case affairs do come to a head, to make very strict inquiries before trusting that dear little girl's life and happiness into his care?"

"You may count on me," said the major stiffly, "but I believe and earnestly hope that you are mistaken—if I am any judge of faces. And yet all you say of his peculiarities strikes me as odd now that I think it over. Well, let's hope it will turn out all right. But I'm sorry to have a doubt of Ralph planted in my mind. For, as I said, I'm fond of the boy. Let us talk of something else, please."

Meantime Mohun had some time before made a pretext of dismounting and examining his saddle-girth, with Imbarak's assistance, and had thus allowed himself to drop behind the rest of the little cavalcade.

"Well," he said to the groom as he remounted, "you asked me to drop back. What did you want?"

"To speak to you in private, *howaji*. I may not get a chance at the hotel."

"If it is any more of that nonsense about your gratitude——"

"It is not, *howaji*. But it is because of that gratitude that I speak. May I proceed?"

The groom, like many another Moslem in impoverished circumstances, had as a boy taken advantage of the universal opportunity which the American college at Beirut offers to natives to secure an occidental education. He therefore spoke English with an almost imperceptible accent, and while clinging to Moslem faith and Islam conditions had acquired as much occidental learning as the average American grammar school graduate.

"Go on," assented Mohun. "What is it you wanted to tell me?"

"What I say I must ask you to regard as secret, sir. Have I your promise?"

Mohun nodded carelessly, his mind and eyes on a trim, slender figure in close-fitting riding-habit half a mile ahead.

"I wish to warn you, *howaji*, not to go to Damascus, and to beg you to prevent your friends from going."

"Then you believe this rumor of an

uprising against the Christians?" asked Ralph with new interest.

"Believe it? I know it is true. The *Ukh-ul-Rasoul* (Brotherhood of the Prophet), of which I am a member, has sent word to Damascenes in every part of Syria to 'come home to the feast.' I am of Damascus. My mother lives there in the Street of the Mehdan."

"And you mean to say that this fraternal crew of cut-throats is actually sending out invitations to its members to come and cut Christians' throats? It is the most——"

"Do not judge, *howaji*! You are of the West, we of the East. You cannot understand. The *Ukh-ul-Rasoul* is but one of many guilds in Damascus that have suffered from the Sultan's weak toleration of the Christians. The nobles are behind us. The *serail* (local government) knows but cannot prevent. There will be killing and plundering and burning. I, whose life is yours, warn you to stay south here where there is safety."

"And you actually intend to join in this slaughter?"

"I? No, *howaji*. I have learned the education of the Christian; I have seen that he is a good man and not a sorcerer, as my brethren believe. While I do not embrace his creed, I honor and revere it. I shall take no part in the 'feast.'"

"Yet you will keep silence and let innocent men—perhaps even women and children—be murdered?"

"It is kismet, *howaji*. It is fate. Their lives are in the hollow of Allah's hand. It is not for me to speak. Besides," he added, a practical note creeping into his apathetic voice, "my brethren would kill me with most unpleasant tortures if I betrayed them."

"We will not go to Damascus. I can answer for that. I suppose I ought to thank you, but——"

"The major is calling, *howaji*. Shall we catch up with the rest?"

Putting their wiry Syrian ponies to a gallop, they swept past the baggage mules laden with tents and chests, breasted the rise of the hill, and joined the tourists who were awaiting them.

Mohun tried to laugh off the major's remonstrances at his long absence, but his mind was busy with plans for pre-



venting the proposed visit to ancient Damascus.

They rode into Jerusalem, tired, dusty and hungry, at nightfall. Mohun lingered for a word with Imbarak as the party dismounted in front of the Grand Hotel. The others passed on into the terrace reception-room.

"Any new arrivals since we left, landlord?" asked Sir Arthur as the portly host greeted them on the threshold.

"Only one, sir," replied the boniface; "an American gentleman—Mr. Zenas Shattuck, of Boston, U. S. A."

"Another fellow-citizen of yours, Mrs. Sharpe," the major was beginning gaily, when a man who had been standing in the center of the wide room slouched forward toward them.

He was long rather than tall, lean to emaciation, with enormous hands, feet and ears, and a wrinkled, grayish face, in whose narrow eyes and thin-lipped mouth a half-humorous shrewdness and a tremendous fund of latent energy seemed to dwell.

His keen glance swept the group and there was a suppressed look of disappointment on his leathery face as he ended the scrutiny.

"Heard my name mentioned," he said in an unmistakable "Down-East" drawl. "Let me make myself acquainted. I'm Zenas Shattuck, of——"

He paused and, turning suddenly, walked up to Ralph Mohun, who was just entering the room.

"I want you, young man," he said, laying his hand on the newcomer's shoulder.

Ralph spun around as though galvanized by the touch. His eyes rested on Shattuck with a sort of horrified fascination as the latter opened his thin lips to speak again.

But the words never left them. For, shaking off the momentary apathy of amazement, Mohun drove his left fist full into the other's face.

The long, lean man reeled backward with the velocity of a catapult, caromed against a table and tumbled heavily to the floor, upsetting a chair and a bric-à-brac-covered taboret in his fall. Before the prostrate victim could make a move to rise, before the amazed spectators could move or speak, Ralph Mohun with

a single bound had reached the long French window leading out into the hotel gardens.

He tugged fiercely at the knob, then, putting his shoulders to the sash, burst the stout fastenings and leaped out into the darkness, a shower of glass clattering to the polished floor behind him.

Zenas Shattuck, revolver in hand, sprang through the wrecked window in hot pursuit.

### CHAPTER III.

#### IN THE GARDEN OF SORROWS.

IN speechless astonishment the four tourists looked from one to another of their number, each seeing reflected in the nearest face the blank amazement of his own.

Cole was the first to break silence.

"Our friend Mohun seems to be—er—*wanted*, as the London bobbies say," he remarked dazedly. "What the deuce do you suppose he's done? That chap was a detective, I'll bet a fiver."

No one answered. Old Mrs. Sharpe, with feminine intuition, came closer to Miss Farrar and slipped an arm about the trembling girl's waist. She felt May's heart beating tumultuously and knew what that moment of suspense and shock must mean to her.

The embarrassing interval was broken by the return of Zenas Shattuck. He reappeared in the broken window-frame, muddy and bruised from several tumbles in the dark garden, his forehead bleeding slightly from Ralph Mohun's blow, and his whole aspect the picture of rough usage and disorder.

But the white blaze of rage in his little blue eyes, the wrath and pallor of his sallow, leathery face drew attention from mere details of costume.

"Did you catch him?" asked Sir Arthur with cheerful fatuity.

"Yes," snarled Shattuck savagely. "Of course I've got him. Here in my pocket. Any fool could see that."

"I—I suppose you're a detective?" faltered Sir Arthur, his Anglican mind groping for a hidden meaning in Shattuck's words.

"And I s'pose you're an Englishman," snapped Zenas; "and that shows how all-fired smart we both are."



"My friend Sir Arthur Cole did not intend to annoy you, Mr. Shattuck," said the major conciliatingly. "May I introduce myself? I am Major Crawford, of New York. You must pardon us for seeming inquisitive. You see, the man who has just escaped—through no fault of yours, I am sure—was a friend of ours. We have traveled for some time with Mr. Mohun, and——"

"Mr. *who?*" broke in the detective.

"Mr. Mohun—Mr. Ralph Mohun—the man——"

"So *that's* the name, is it?" growled Zenas.

"Why, what other? Do you mean he was traveling under an alias?"

"What I mean or what I don't mean is no concern of anybody's but mine and his. He's the man I'm after, all right. I've seen him often enough in Boston to know him. And I'll get him, too, even if he has given me the slip for the minute in that measly black garden out there. Oh, I'll *get* him right enough!"

"Won't you tell us with what crime he is charged, constable?" asked Cole eagerly.

"No, I won't. Is that plain enough? It's none of your business. I've got a warrant for him and I'll get *him*. That's enough for you to know. If I'd had sense enough to communicate first with the chief of police here, instead of trying to be a smart Alec and play a lone hand, I'd never have let him slip."

"Do you know," babbled Cole, his monocle sweeping the group with benevolent triumph, "I've always had my suspicions of that Mohun. Always said to myself he was a queer Johnny. He'd never talk about himself, you know. Always distrust a chap that won't talk about himself. Now, I am *always* glad to talk about myself. I——"

"I'm afraid you were right, Mrs. Sharpe, in the suspicions you voiced today," said the major sadly. "I blame myself bitterly for being taken in by the fellow. And yet he seemed so straightforward, so gentlemanly!"

"Oh, don't talk of my wretched suspicions!" cried the poor old lady, casting a frightened glance at May, who, at her uncle's words, drew quietly away from the elder woman's protecting arm. "Don't talk of my wretched suspicions.

I'm a bad-hearted old creature ever to have had such thoughts or to have spoken them. No doubt I was utterly mistaken. He may clear himself yet."

"Not he!" retorted the major with sorrowful conviction. "An honest man doesn't take to his heels when accused of crime or when accosted by a detective."

"But he may have lost his head."

"The man who had coolness and presence of mind enough to plan and carry out the rescue of May and the groom from the quicksand isn't likely to lose his head under a lesser emergency. No, no. I'm the last man who would have believed in his guilt if he hadn't given ample proof of it by running away."

"Always suspected him. Queer Johnny!" supplemented Sir Arthur, chuckling.

"If you'll excuse me, uncle," said May, "I think I'll go to my room. I'm very tired."

Zenas Shattuck looked keenly after the departing girl, noting the drooping lines of her figure and the set, hopeless look on her white face.

"The only one of the whole crowd that hadn't something to say against him," he muttered under his breath. "She'll bear watching."

\* \* \* \*

Early the following morning May Farrar came down into the terrace-room. The hotel was silent and the lower floors deserted in the gray of the Syrian dawn.

The girl had passed a sleepless, miserable night. The indoor air suffocated her.

She dreaded meeting her friends at the breakfast table, to hear their comments on her pallid complexion and black-ringed eyes. She felt that she must get out of doors—anywhere—by herself, to think matters over and to get a fresh grip on her shattered nerves.

Throwing a wrap about her shoulders—for the morning was as chill as the noon would be hot—she passed the sleeping porter and let herself out into the narrow street.

The thoroughfare was empty. On the roof of the gray Tower of David, directly opposite, a drowsy Turkish sentinel paced. Turning to the right, May walked rapidly toward the Jaffa Gate.



Even the walled confines of the Holy City seemed to oppress her. She wanted to be in the open country. Of Jerusalem's six modern entrances, the Jaffa Gate lies nearest to the Grand Hotel. The warder had just opened it for the day as May appeared.

The stolid Syrian stared open-mouthed at the unprecedented spectacle of a woman walking abroad alone and at dawn. Grumbling something to himself about the "madness of all *feringhi*" (foreigners), he watched her as she struck out with the free, graceful stride of the Anglo-Saxon pedestrian along the by-road that skirts the city's walls to the north.

Jerusalem long ago outgrew its walls, and the overflow has spilled in disorderly fashion to the west and south of the city, in the shape of all sorts of irregular, untidy structures from packing-box shanties to mud and stucco community buildings. To the north and the east the Holy City cannot spread.

The deep and precipitate sides of the valley, in whose center lies the Brook of Kedron and whose farther slope culminates in the Mount of Olives, cut off further building on the east, while a Mohammedan cemetery and irregularities of ground render growth almost equally impracticable on the north.

With this conformation vaguely in mind, yet half-unconscious as to her direction, May Farrar rounded the northwestern buttresses of the gray old walls and turned east toward Kedron.

Scavenger dogs prowled in the ditch at the base of the wall. An occasional peasant leading a donkey laden with wares for the morning's market passed May in the narrow road and eyed her in stupid wonder. But her self-possession and the absence of all furtiveness from her manner served almost as effectively as did the dumb misery in her face to avert insult.

She moved on unmolested, this slender, sad-eyed American girl, where a woman of any race save the Anglo-Saxon would have been subjected to a thousand perils.

Only once she paused. She was opposite the Damascus Gate and stopped to gaze for an instant at a low, skull-shaped hillock just north of the ditch-road.

The little hill was dotted by a number of graves and in its sides were the scars of abandoned quarries. The summit presented the one green spot in all that dreary, grayish landscape.

It was in a cave at the base of this hill that Gordon discovered the tomb and other evidences which led him and a large portion of the Christian world to identify the spot as the real Mount Calvary. The presence of Moslem graves on the sacred hill have prevented its demolition before the encroachment of building enterprises.

The sun, rising over the Mount of Olives, gilded the green crest of Calvary as the girl gazed reverently. She bowed her head and stood thus a moment in silence before hurrying on.

A long string of mangy, mouse-colored camels, laden with bales and led by a furry little gray donkey, was toiling up the steep hill leading from Kedron as May began her descent, and she stood aside to let the ugly brutes and their grinning, shouting drivers pass.

Then she picked her way along the stone-strewn dusty highway to the valley below. Later in the day the dried bed of Kedron Brook at this point would be alive with traffic, discordant with the yells of vendors, and infested by loathsome lepers and other more or less unsightly mendicants.

But now over the whole scene brooded the solemn peace and hush of the dawn. The Mount of Olives loomed up before her, somber and beautiful. About its lower slopes clustered olive orchards and the white walls of monasteries.

Breasting the slope, May checked herself to look in through the wide-open gates of a walled garden. Winding natural paths intersected the neglected, flower-sprinkled turf, and enormous gnarled ancient olive trees cast a soft shade along the reaches of swaying grass.

The whole enclosure breathed of peace, repose, silence.

Passing through the gateway, May Farrar entered the garden. Here for the first time her restlessness vanished. A mystic sense of calm crept over her.

The tension of the past twelve hours



relaxed. Throwing herself face downward in the long, soft grass, the girl fell to sobbing softly. And with the tears came peace.

Above, in the gray-green foliage of the olives, birds were twittering. Far in the distance the voice of a *muezzin* (priest) calling the faithful to morning prayer came faintly to her ears. Voice after voice from the distant city caught up the call as from minaret to minaret the *muezzins* sent forth their sonorous, chanting summons:

"Allah-hu-Akbar! La Illah Illah Allah!  
Mahmoud Siadnah Rasoul Allah!"

A light step on the gravel path near by broke in on the girl's grief and she sprang hastily to her feet.

Before her, his face swathed in the folds of a brown silk *kafieh* (native head-dress), stood a Syrian. Some distance behind him, in the gateway of the garden, a second native was waiting. May at a glance recognized the farther man as Imbarak, the groom.

Despite the *kafieh* which shrouded the face and the long-striped *abbieh* and *kumbaz* which muffled the figure of the nearer native, there seemed something familiar about his bearing.

"What—what do you want?" she faltered in English.

Then, as he did not answer her at once, she repeated still more nervously in French:

"*Que voulez-vous?*"

A shake of the head and the *kafieh's* folds fell away from the man's face.

"Ralph Mohun!" cried May incredulously.

Mohun, his bronzed face dyed to an even deeper shade of brown, his dark mustache shaved, his muscular figure disguised in the shapeless costume of a native Syrian of the better *fellaheen* class, might have walked unrecognized through a double line of his closest friends. But the eyes of love are keen, and at a glance May Farrar knew him.

Surprise was her first emotion, then followed a feeling of anger against the man who, all unworthy, had won her love and had caused her such suffering.

It was Mohun who spoke first.

"Imbarak supplied me with this

dress," he began lamely enough, "and he got me the dye for my face. There are so few Americans in Syria that I would have been captured in a day if I hadn't disguised myself."

"Why do you tell me this?" she asked coldly, finding her voice at last. "It can be of no interest to me."

"I did not venture to hope it would interest you," he answered. "I only spoke of it to explain my odd appearance."

"It needed no explanation. But something else does. And that is your motive in addressing me after—after—"

"After last night's scene?" he supplemented. "You are right, Miss Farrar. My venturing to address you at all or to claim acquaintanceship with you under such circumstances surely requires an explanation. Believe me, it was not from an idle whim that I followed you here."

"On second thought, Mr. Mohun, I do not care to hear any explanation you may offer. Please don't detain me any longer. I must get back to the hotel."

But he barred the path. She looked at him in astonishment.

"I shall only detain you a moment," he pleaded, "and I must ask you to hear me out. I should not trouble you with any affairs of my own. Please believe that. But this concerns your own safety."

She stood still without replying, and he continued:

"The major intends to take you to Damascus in a day or two. He must not do so. This is imperative. Had I remained with your party, I should have found a means to prevent it. As it is, I can only appeal to you, for your own sake, not to go. There is the gravest sort of danger awaiting all Christians—native and foreign alike—at Damascus.

"I tried to make your uncle understand this, but he would not. He may believe *you*. If he does not, you must feign sickness or resort to *any* subterfuge to avert the trip. Your life and the lives of the whole party may hang on this.

"Oh, can't you see I would not have risked detection and capture by lingering near Jerusalem until this morning



if it had not been necessary to give you this warning and if the warning had not concerned your very life?"

He spoke with an earnestness that for the moment carried conviction. Whether or not his warning was justified, May felt that he had indeed imperiled his liberty by remaining to deliver it. And a quick revulsion of feeling seized her as she looked up into his troubled, eager eyes.

"Mr. Mohun—Ralph," she exclaimed, laying her hand impulsively on the coarse sleeve of his *kumbaz*, "forgive me if I judged you too harshly. I was wrong to condemn you without a hearing. Tell me the truth about yourself. Perhaps I can help you."

A spasm as of pain twisted his brown, dyed face and a light sprang into his haggard eyes as he listened. He opened his lips to speak, then checked himself as if by a tremendous effort. The perspiration stood out on his forehead.

A terrible struggle seemed waging within him. But when he spoke again his tone was dull and hopeless, and his eyes were averted from the pleading, beautiful face upraised to his.

"I can tell you nothing," he said.

"But you don't understand!" she insisted. "I am ashamed of myself that I ever doubted you even for a moment. If you had stood your ground last night, *none* of us would have believed that wretched Yankee detective. Oh, *why* did you run away? It was so—so unlike you."

"I—I can tell you nothing," he repeated dully.

"You *must!*" she cried, stamping her foot with pretty insistence. "Can't you see I'll believe whatever you say—that I'll *know* you're speaking the truth—that I *trust* you? All you have to say is 'I am innocent,' and——"

"I cannot say it."

The words were spoken so low that she scarcely caught their import. But the droop of the man's head, the utter misery and despair of his countenance went straight to May's tender heart.

She could not—would not—believe him the guilty wretch that his face, his bearing, his words implied. She made one final effort to break down his reserve.

"Ralph Mohun," she said more quietly, "I know little of the world as men see it—little of the temptations and pitfalls that beset a man. So it is not for me to judge you. But this I *do* know: if you have been led into any folly or lawless act—I will not believe you capable of *crime*—the only honest and manly course open to you is to go back and bravely face the consequences of that act; not to hide from its results. Do that, and whatever your punishment I for one will be proud to call you my friend and to help you by every means in my power."

She checked herself, for as she had spoken his face had gone ghastly white under its coat of tan.

With inarticulate murmur, his parched throat sought to form words of reply.

"You are suffering!" she went on with a thrill of quick sympathy in her hurried words. "It would make it easier for you to tell me everything. I might help you. The mouse set the lion free from the net, you know, and——"

The man had regained control of himself. His face was calm, his voice expressionless as he broke in:

"I need not tell you, Miss Farrar, that it would be sweet beyond words to me if I might confide in you—if, in other words, I might be cur enough to roll my own load of responsibilities upon your shoulders.

"But there are reasons which I cannot explain that forbid my taking advantage of such a chance, even could I bring myself to do so. I repeat I can tell you nothing, and unfortunately I cannot even act on your advice to give myself up. You will of course attribute this latter determination on my part to cowardice."

The cold, studied brutality of his tone struck the girl like a blow in the face, dampening her ardor, chilling her zeal in his behalf.

"Then," she said slowly, "am I to believe——?"

"You are to believe what you will," he replied, the same forced coldness and brutality in his voice. "I can neither confirm nor deny your belief. I have delivered the warning; now I will in-



trude on you no longer. I can only thank you for all your kindness to me, for the faith you have tried to have in me, for the only words of hope and kindness that I shall perhaps ever hear."

"You avoided me after you saved my life at the Jordan. Why?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Had I offended you in any way?"

"You? No! You could never offend me."

"Oh, why make a mystery of all this? Why not be honest with me? Isn't there enough suffering, enough sorrow in the world without needlessly causing more?"

"Enough sorrow and suffering?" echoed Mohun, with a mirthless laugh. "Oh, there's enough of both. If you came here to forget them, you chose a strange place for the purpose."

"Do you know," he added, his cynical tone changing to one of reverence, "do you know what garden this is?"

"No."

"It is Gethsemane!"

"Gethsemane?"

"The Garden of Sorrows. Was it by chance you came here?"

"Yes." She spoke with a certain awe, recalling the mystic feeling of surcease from pain that had stolen upon her the moment her feet had crossed the threshold of the enclosure.

"And now," resumed Ralph, after a pause, "I must go. I shall probably never see you again. There is much I would say to you if I had the right. But I cannot even ask you to think gently of me. So let us say good-by. I suppose you don't care to shake hands with me?"

The appeal in his tone, strangely enough, awakened her slumbering indignation.

"How can you ask it?" she said bitterly. "You imposed yourself on us, accepted our friendship and became a member of our party without stopping to consider the disgrace and mortification that might accrue to us when the exposure came and when we should be known as the dupes and associates of a felon."

"I have appealed to you this morning—lowering myself to plead with you as I never thought I could with any living

person; I have begged you to be honest with me. You owed *that*, at least, to me and to all of us. You refuse.

"I have implored you to return and face the consequences of your act as any man with a spark of honesty and courage should. You refuse. I have no alternative but to believe the worst of you. Don't you know yourself that an honest man *could* not act as you are doing?"

"Yes," assented Mohun heavily, "I suppose he couldn't. And now, if you have quite finished, may I go?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### FROM PITY TO CONTEMPT.

THE reaction from May Farrar's burst of righteous anger had set in. She was half-inclined to beg his forgiveness for the harshness of her judgment. Yet had he not even now, by his reply, acknowledged the justice of that judgment?

The memory of his face as he had looked into her eyes when his strong arms snatched her from death in the quicksands recurred to her with vivid distinctness.

"I spoke cruelly," she said with impetuous haste. "I forgot for the moment that I owe you my life. I ask your forgiveness."

"There is nothing to forgive," he returned; "and if you feel you owe me anything for what happened at the Jordan you can at once cancel the debt and make me happier by forgetting the whole occurrence."

"I can never forget it," she faltered, instinct and logic warring within her, and with the usual result.

She sank on her knees in the deep grass, buried her face in her hands and broke into a passion of weeping.

"Don't! For God's sake, don't!" he implored brokenly. "I'm not worth it! I'm not worth it, I tell you!"

He bent with outstretched arms as though to gather her to his heart, but by a mighty effort at self-control forbore.

A strand of her gold-brown hair had become loosened and fell across her heaving shoulders, glinting and shim-



mering as the morning sunbeams danced through it.

Ralph Mohun dropped on one knee, lifted the stray lock reverently, unobserved by the weeping girl, and pressed it once, twice, thrice in silence to his lips.

Then he rose and said once more, in a voice that he strove in vain to render conventional:

"Good-by, Miss Farrar."

A quick patter of slippers along the gravel behind them caused Mohun to turn nervously and brought May to her feet.

Imbarak came hurrying toward them.

"*Howaji!*" he cried, breathless with fear. "Hide yourself! It is too late to go out by the gate, and there is no other exit."

"What's the matter?" asked Ralph.

"That tall man! The detective you told me had crossed the seas to find you! He is coming. Hide!"

"Shattuck!" gasped Mohun in alarm.

"Yes. I saw a man in *feringhi* clothes standing in the valley. He seemed to be waiting for the *sit*. He was too far away for me to see his face, but he started this way just now as if he was tired of waiting, and then I recognized him. Hide, *howaji!* Ah, it is too late!"

A long shadow fell across the gateway, and Zenas Shattuck, looking even more emaciated and gray of face than on the previous night, slouched into the garden.

May Farrar glanced keenly at Mohun and read in his face a panic-fear that changed her grief to a quick contempt. That one human being should thus shrink in dread of another filled her with disgust and robbed her of her one remaining vestige of pity for the cowering man before her.

Meantime Shattuck, after one comprehensive look among the shadows of the garden, strolled forward to where May and the two men stood. He noted her attitude of repulsion toward the nearer of the two supposed natives.

"These heathens botherin' you, Miss Farrar?" he drawled as he came up.

Mohun cowered at the voice, raising

his hands to his face as if expecting a blow.

But May, her eyes still fixed on him, noted that the gesture was made for the purpose of drawing one of the long silken ends of the *kafieh* across his face.

But Ralph's next move struck her dumb with astonished disgust.

Extending his lean brown hand humbly toward her, Mohun whined cringingly:

"*Baksheesh, sit! Baksheesh!*" in the true Syrian beggar accent.

"Gee!" vociferated Shattuck. "It does beat all how these dirty Eastern beggars can pester one! I s'pose he saw you come in here alone and thought he could scare you into giving him money.

"Here, you!" turning threateningly on the cringing Mohun. "Get out o' here! Git, before I break this umbrella over yer heathen head! What's he got his face all bundled up for, I wonder?" he added curiously, taking a step toward the supposed beggar.

May gasped. But Ralph, desisting from his plea to her, addressed himself to Shattuck, never faltering for a second before the other's shrewd scrutiny:

"*Baksheesh, howaji!*" he whined in raucous, coughing accents; "*Baksheesh! Abras! Abras!*" ("Alms! I am a leper! A leper!")

"What's he jabbering about now?" snorted Shattuck.

"If please," volunteered Imbarak in very broken English as he came forward; "if please, he say——"

"Who the deuce are you? Another beggar?" demanded Shattuck, eyeing the wiry groom with scant favor.

"I custodian of garden. Spik Inglese same as 'Mer'can. Dis man ask alms. He say he leper."

"Leper!" yelled Zenas in horror, startled out of his usual profound self-control. "I want to know! A real leper, eh? I've read a lot about 'em in books. Don't let him come near me. It may be contagious. Why does he cover up his face, though?"

"That the law, *howaji*. Leper cannot show face. Law. He a——"

"He's coming up to me again!" snorted Zenas angrily. "Tell him to go away! Run him out o' here or I'll report you."



"*Imsli, Abras!*" ("Be off, leper!") shouted Imbarak obediently, and Mohun began to shuffle away, followed by the indignant custodian.

"Wait!" commanded May Farrar.

She had been doing some quick thinking. Mohun's deception had increased her contempt for him and had added fuel to her wrath.

That she should thus connive at a

malefactor's escape seemed unfair, dishonest. If, on the other hand, there were any palliating circumstances in Mohun's mysterious guilt, further flight would but make his position worse. In a flash she resolved to expose him.

"Wait!" she repeated, speaking quickly before her just intention could weaken. "Mr. Shattuck, you have been deceived!"

(*To be continued.*)

## A SPECULATION IN SHIRTS.

BY L. H. BICKFORD.

What the difference between the Lucky and the Only Dollar meant to Sowders, and how he contrived to turn a foolish investment into a bonanza.

AS to whether Sowders was a fool of luck or a great financier there has long been a division of opinion in Tontic. It is, however, certain that he impressed himself on the community.

The circumstances of his arrival are obscure, for he was merely an addition of one to the changing population. We first hear of him in the chronicles of the time—and they are now more or less legendary—on a night in January, when the Crystal Palace was filled with the light and life of the mining camp.

He entered it—according to report—like a breeze from the snow hills. In one hand he held an assay certificate, and in the other a large sum of money. He was but a head taller than the bar, and when all there had been summoned about him, he stepped upon the seat of a look-out chair, that he might not be lost in the crowd gathered to accept his invitation of cheer.

There he stood a while. The crowd constantly augmented, and anon he lifted his glass, toasted the Lucky Dollar Mine, and called on all to witness that an assay ticket did not lie. Many toasts followed, until, in the end, Sowders rolled down from his perch and stumbled out into the street to leave those that hung on the fringes of Tontic night life in other hospitable hands.

Crystal Palace diversions were varied, and when Sowders was gone he was presently forgotten in the excitement offered by the arrival of a man from Bull

Siding who had come to shoot the under sheriff.

Sowders passed up Tontic Avenue in the best of humor. A man who had a mission to kill did not then interest him. Why ugly death as an amusement when there was gold to be had in the Lucky Dollar, and a place to put the gold into circulation—many places, for that matter, since the Crystal Palace was duplicated everywhere up and down the street?

He entered the maze of them, and there were more toasts. Then out, then in, and so on until—and here our story begins—he was come to the shining front of the Levi Brothers' "Gents Furnishing" store, the rendezvous of male fashion in Tontic, the mart of neckties and other fripperies.

The lures of the Levi Brothers were in two large windows. In one was a stiff gentleman of faultless form, who wore a pepper-and-salt suit of clothes, a derby hat, and patent leather shoes—an effect that might be reproduced in toto for the inconsiderable sum of thirty dollars and seventy-five cents. This glass of fashion was accompanied by a woodeny child, whose seven-dollar sailor suit was the bargain blazoned upon the sign in the window.

These figures did not comprise all the enticements. A glass jar, containing beans, sat on a field of pink-and-blue silk handkerchiefs. This was a game. He who came nearest to guessing the num-



ber of beans in the jar—provided he had previously purchased one dollar's worth of goods—received, at a stated time, and after the beans had been counted, the large gold watch that lay in a velvet case at the feet of the gentleman in the pepper-and-salt suit. And here, also, were colored ties, jeweled scarf-pins, glittering studs and buttons, and checked hose.

Sowers, leaning for support against a watch-maker's post, contemplated the glories in the Levi windows for some minutes. His eyes traveled from the pepper-and-salt suit to the bean jar, from the sailor boy to the golden buttons.

They lingered for a time on the velvet case. And finally they fell to the least of these things—so far as their vogue in Tontic went—a box of shirts whose stiff, white bosoms glittered under the gaslight. Sowers moved forward.

In all his life this prospector-tramp, wearily going by trail from camp to camp, delving now here, now there, now winning, now losing, had never owned a white shirt with a stiff, shiny bosom. Until that moment he had never considered white shirts desirable. But with that assay certificate clutched in his left hand, the white shirts opened a new life to him.

He saw himself sitting in the rotunda of the Windsor Hotel in Denver, his shirt bosom shining as it rose from a waistcoat of scarlet, at his collar a string-tie of solemn black.

The vision was not impossible of realization. The assay certificate told him that.

Sowers opened the door and went in. He was not, at this time, entirely articulate, but young Mr. Abram Levi, the younger member of the firm, had keen understanding.

In a trice he surrounded his customer with a mountain of shirts. They overflowed from blue boxes, with their tissue paper surroundings. Their bosoms gleamed and shone, and it seemed that their white arms reached up in supplication.

Sowers was bewildered. He had wanted one white shirt. Young Mr. Levi had tempted him with all there were in stock.

Sowers wavered. The pity of it, to take one lone shirt from its fellows when all seemed eager to become the property of the discoverer of the Lucky Dollar! The injustice of it, to leave these brother shirts to their eventual fate as part of the apparel on the regardless form of a faro dealer or the man in the look-out chair!

Sowers made a sudden resolution.

"I want 'em all," said he to young Mr. Levi, "all—each an' several. You call a 'spress wagon."

Within ten minutes the store of the Levi Brothers was destitute of white shirts. And within a half-hour Sowers was sitting on the seat of an express wagon, rolling happily along toward the Lucky Dollar Mine.

The driver turned now and then to glance back at the boxes, after which he would crack his whip and whistle. It was odd, but a fare was a fare and a job was a job. And all sorts of people came to Tontic.

For two days the world was a mist to Sowers. On the third day he was awakened to a sense of the gauntness of life and of the uncertainties of the future.

Luck deserted him and without seeming reason. The cup of dreams was snatched from him. There had been a hideous mistake at the assay office. The certificate he held was that of another, the owner of the Only, not the Lucky Dollar.

When he had obtained his own card it told nothing of stored riches. There was, to be sure, a trace of lead in the samples he had left, but—

The hollowness of the error caused him to hasten from the assay office before the chemist had concluded his apology for the blunder. No apology could reconcile Sowers to the situation of not being a prospective millionaire, and, more than this, he had squandered in premature celebration the cash stake he had been so long accumulating against his Tontic venture.

He went back to his fireless, grubless, and necessarily cheerless cabin, piled high with white, stiff-bosomed shirts, and as he contemplated the symbols of his extravagance, as the picture of himself in the lobby of the Windsor Hotel



faded, he sat on the side of his bunk and groaned aloud.

And it was then, as if the snow king was moved to pity for the spendthrift, that the heavens shook great white flakes from lowering clouds and covered the earth. The snow fell for days until Tontic, eighty miles from a railway station, ten thousand feet above sea-level, approachable only by winding roads up the mountainsides, found itself cut off from the great world without.

A year before, when the camp was in the first bloom of its youth, a similar incident had not concerned any one. Tontic had been snowbound for twenty days and had survived. It would doubtless survive now, even if its supply of fresh meat was not forthcoming. The tin can of civilization was here, for the tin can ever accompanies the advance to the frontier.

The Tontic commissary—stocked against just such an emergency with the all-seasonable things that come in tins square and circular, tins oblong and flat, tins gaily covered or merely stamped—would serve an army.

Tontic sank back complacently after the first week of the snow blockade, blessing the tin can. But it sat bolt upright directly when it appeared that there was a famine in something to which the community had never before given a thought.

And as this famine, strangely enough, had to do with the folly of Sowders, mention must be made at once of a most important person—the most important person—in Tontic society, Mrs. Senator B. V. L. Judson, wife of the representative of the Tontic and Eldora districts in the upper house of the State legislature.

Coincident with the beginning of the storm, Mrs. Judson had announced a function at the Tontic Grand Hotel, to which all that was socially possible in the town had been bidden.

It is not too extravagant to say that, in this function, the camp faced its first great social event. It had been whispered that Mrs. Judson had contracted for the entire second floor of the caravansary; and as for expense, Senator Judson had himself consigned the question to a place remote.

And it was further reported that among the items to grace the banquet were the rare and succulent provisions of the oyster beds to be transported directly from the sea-shore, thousands of miles away. These provisions had, indeed, providentially arrived with the last loads of freight that came into camp before traffic was interrupted and had since been on ice awaiting the eventful night.

Therefore let the storm king rage. Mrs. Judson was not to be denied.

And thus, on the eve of the great function, when the five hundred elect of Tontic—and they were, at this period, mostly masculine—quivered with anticipation of the morrow, a short, hoarse cry rang out into the night. It was a cry for a white shirt with a stiff bosom.

The cry went far and was echoed. Tontic made no great exactions in the matter of dress. In general it worried along in blue flannel and corduroy.

But here was more serious matter. Respect for Mrs. Senator Judson, respect for a "parlor affair," demanded of all male comers at least a white shirt and a string tie. And it was the discovery that white shirts were not on the market that caused strong men to utter the language that comes only with great emotions.

In vain the Levi Brothers affected to explain. In vain they realized too late that Mr. Abram Levi had made the financial mistake of his life when he sold, for two dollars each, shirts that would now bring almost any amount.

And vainer still was the pleading of the Levis after they had gone down the long street to Sowders' cabin and there offered him double and thrice his money. For Sowders, sitting in the midst of ruin, cowering under remorse, had at once grasped the situation, and sent his callers forth with a stern and firm voice.

When, therefore, a committee of earnest citizens, representing nearly all who had been favored with an invitation to Mrs. Judson's epoch-making party, waited upon Sowders, after Levi's negotiations had failed, they found a calm, supremely-poised individual, basking in the sunlight of self-confidence.

He listened unmoved to entreaties.



The offers of five dollars a shirt were scorned. Not until the gentle art of sarcasm came into play did he show a trace of color.

"You won't lend 'em to us," complained an exasperated committeeman, "and you won't take a reasonable offer for 'em. So what we'd like to know is what you reckon you're goin' to do with 'em?"

"It has occurred to me," said Sowders suavely, "that I might wear 'em. It has happened to occur to my dense intellect that way."

"So you might," scorned the committeeman, "although I present this argument to these here: that it's strange a man wants three hundred shirts when he ain't changed the one he's got on for what appears to be a spell of about two months."

Sowders looked pained but not surprised. Ignoring the speaker, he glanced into the crowd that accompanied him, and in stately self-respect spoke these words:

"It is one of my precepts that any man has got a right to say right out anything he may have on his mind in a general way, so long as he don't break through any side walls into the claim of another man's feelin's. Now, my shirt goes to the sluice every Tuesday afternoon whether I've one or fifty. It don't take no assay to see that the gentlemen assembled here beneath my roof have a matter of wearin' apparel they desire to air.

"If this meetin' has a spokesman who is familiar with the fundamental rules of etiquette to be observed when one respectable citizen is addressin' another, it's his turn to get into the bucket and give the signal to proceed to the top."

Thus Sowders, proud, injured, innocent. The man who had spoken fell back, and the crowd gathered to itself.

Tact, it was plain, was needed here. As was meet, the task fell to the justice of the peace.

"The esteemed fellow-citizen who has just spoke," said the justice in a tone of conciliation, "voiced his sentiments in a spirit of what we may call shirt-less exasperation, and his condition of mind is to be taken into account.

"I need not remind the Hon. Mr. Sowders here that the situation which confronts many of the people of this camp is in many respects peculiar. We take a survey. We find that we are, each and generally, committed to a social duty it would be ungallant for any gentleman to shirk.

"We find that there are ah—certain necessities of the sartorial art inseparable with carrying out this duty—accessories, I may say, that are indispensable in the presence of ladies. And it further appears that the principal accessory is, to wit, a white boiled shirt. So far as I am concerned, gentlemen——"

Here the justice turned to the listening committee, while his bosom swelled.

"So far as I am concerned, rather than appear at Mrs. Senator Judson's function without the proper embellishment of a white boiled shirt, rather than insult that lady by appearing without it, rather than flout in her face a blue flannel turn-me-down or a calico made-easy, I would go forth into the night of social oblivion.

"We know what is demanded of us, gentlemen. We cannot plead ignorance of social custom. We either go in the manner somewhere described as *aw fay*, or we don't go at all, and if we don't go at all we deliberately cut the feelings of a lady."

There could be no dissent to this presentation of facts and conditions. The committee solemnly declared its truth.

"Bein' so," continued the justice, "we confront the Hon. Mr. Sowders and the question of his shirts. We cannot deny three things, gentlemen. They are, that Mr. Sowders has the shirts, that it is desirable that we obtain them, and that it rests with Mr. Sowders to point the way to the—ah, gratification of our desires.

"And we must not act in haste nor with temper. It is not to be denied that Mr. Sowders is honorably possessed of these shirts, the same as if they were wheat or corn or any of the commodities of the market that are likely to be in demand. They are his, paid for with his cash, and for him to have and to hold until he sees fit to part with 'em—which brings us to the point of our mission.



"We are given to understand, Mr. Sowders, that you refused the Messrs. Levi their offer of six dollars each for these shirts."

Sowders, still standing beside the table, waved one hand to the justice in appreciative cordiality. At the same time his face did not relax its severity.

"The understandin' you have," he said, "is unanimously correct."

"Then may I ask," resumed the justice, "if you have fixed any particular price on the precious articles that are now in your possession?"

The committee made a movement that suggested the keenest interest.

"Replyin' to your perfectly respectful question," said Sowders, "I will say that I have fixed a price. And further replyin', I will say that I do not propose to dispose of these shirts in no common way. I've been revolvin' the situation in my mind, Mr. Justice and gentlemen of the committee.

"I am not mercenary—in fact, my nature is calculated to respond to them that's in distress or that has struck bottom with nothin' to show for it. If you were poor, gentlemen, and came to me empty of pocket, distressed, demandin' of my white shirts, I would give freely. But as I take it, this is no ten-cent community lookin' for alms."

A murmur of assent told Sowders that he was not in a ten-cent community. In fact, the faces of several of the citizens of Tontic reflected resentment.

"We are quite able," here ventured the justice of the peace, "to pay any price you may ask."

"I will ask you to remember them words," said Sowders, "when I have related to you the fable of the King of Egypt."

The crowd stared curiously. Sowders placed one hand on the table for support, and gazed serenely toward his visitors.

"I am actin' under historical precedent," he said. "As my fellow-citizen, the justice, may recall from his studies of the land of the Pharaohs—and I am not speaking of a lay-out, gentlemen—there was once a king who ruled over a good acreage of land, but who had trouble findin' producers.

"His treasury was empty at about the time the gods called on him to build a temple, and as he owed the Affiliated Orders of Egypt Pyramid Masons and Brick Layers pretty heavy for some old jobs, things begun to look black.

"Just here the court philosopher, who usually had a vein he could tap, even if it was only in his head, hove on the scene as radiant as the dews of the morn. 'What you want, O mighty king,' said this here philosopher, 'is a special assessment tax.'

"'It won't work,' says the king. 'I've got only about five hundred thousand people, and if I make the ordinary average equality tax there won't be enough to build a side wall, let alone a whole temple.

"'We've been taxin' the poor until they've got nothin' left to take; and as for the rich, they've got their assessment cases up before the supreme court now on the basis that the last levy was too high.

"'I've got about two thousand millionaires, it is true, but I don't seem to be able to get at 'em.' Goin' to show, gentlemen, that times hasn't changed so all-fired much.

"And now comes the court philosopher with his scheme. 'What you want, O king,' says he 'is to excite these millionaires into a game of chance. You just announce a Royal Nile lottery, of which half the proceeds go to buildin' this temple an' the other half to the man who draws the lucky number, and you issue just two thousand tickets for this same game of chance.

"'You don't want any ordinary lottery. The stakes must be high. It occurs to me, O king, that the loyal subject who draws number one should pay therefore one piece of gold. The second pays two pieces, the third three, and so on to the end, when you've got your capital prize—to be cut in half—amountin' to the sum total of two thousand pieces of gold added down to one.'

"The moral of these remarks, gentleman, was that the king was struck mightily, the Royal Nile lottery went into operation, and the result was one of the monuments to architecture the ruins of which we see in Egypt to-day if we happen to travel those trails.



"And now, my fellow citizens, I've no wish to prolong or to adorn this parable. History is a great thing. It has come to my rescue in this crisis. My proposition is this:

"In a proper receptacle will be placed three hundred pieces of paper numbered consecutively. The fortunate individual drawin' number one gets his shirt for the inconsiderable sum of one dollar, one half what I paid for the same. The second pays two dollars, the third three, as was the way in Egypt, and each figure thereafter represents a similar advance. In this way we may dispose of the problem that confronts us. Any other way, I regret to state, an' I keep the shirts."

The auditors of Sowders did not at once break their silence when he had concluded. They were confused, partly by this plunge into history—or fable—and partly by the mathematics presented.

Understanding first dawned on the individual who had offended Sowders by his reference to laundry shortcomings.

"This means," he said slowly, addressing the happy owner of the shirt mine, "that one of us pays three hundred dollars for the privilege of appearin' at Mrs. Senator Judson's soirée in one of these genteel furnishin's—am I right?"

"The idea," assented Sowders, "seems to have percolated."

"An' somebody else pays two hundred and ninety-nine——"

"An' then the scale drops," assented the shirt man.

He who had grasped the situation turned on the others.

"Don't you see," he exclaimed, "the way he figures it out is better 'n if he'd busted up Faro Charlie? Don't you see that he's smeltin' free-millin' ore? He'll get a pile out of these shirts. It's geometry—I can't figure it out, but it's geometry—an' it's like the frog what jumps two feet up the well an' falls back three."

His companions stared. Some attempted to count on their fingers. Others made hopeless mental calculations. Sowders broke in on their bewilderment by another statement of facts.

"It ain't geometry," he said calmly,

"it's plain addition an' some division. It means just forty-one thousand five hundred dollars to me or it means nothin'. I may remark, in this connection, that I ain't sojournin' here for the benefits afforded by the climate or to rebuild a racked and wasted constitution. But"—sadly—"I had calculated there was some sportin' instincts in this population."

The justice spoke again.

"Of course we can all send our regrets to Mrs. Judson——"

He got no further. There was a babel of protest. It welled up vigorously from a large person who longed for oysters, and it was shrilled by a thin citizen who reminded every one within ear-shot that whatever he was he was not cheap.

The objections were so general and pointed that the justice recalled his remark. He had made the suggestion purely at random, he said, in a thoughtless moment, and in the interest of economy. But he would be the last, he averred, to criticize the unique proposition made by Mr. Sowders, which was perfectly legal as well as worth attention from its historical inception.

And the truth was that the element of speculation appealed directly to the majority of Sowders' hearers. Theirs was a life of chance. Chance sent them into the rock-fast hills by day; chance brought them together in the halls of Tontic by night.

Chance was a game, now lost, now won. The pursuit of chance made the blood tingle.

Chance was life, and he who brought chance in a new form was to be considered. He offered something to the sport of luck.

Sowders smiled faintly as the men before him were swept by the wave of chance, that drowned the minor voices of protest. He knew his market and those who would come to purchase.

\* \* \* \*

At the Crystal Palace, an hour later, a pyramid of shirt boxes rose picturesquely from the center of the room, guarded by Sowders. On a near-by table Faro Charlie sorted little bits of paper and placed them in a jar. And when he had concluded his task a line



of three hundred men formed in a circle about the room and began a procession past this given point of interest.

As each man reached the jar his hand shot into the opening, and his fingers closed on a piece of paper. A ridiculously simple transaction, yet offering moments of suspense that were highly dramatic.

For as the number was high or low, the possessor was correspondingly depressed or elated, and his luck deplored or approved by his interested friends.

He was followed from the jar to the pyramid, where, in exchange for the cash equivalent of the number he had drawn, Sowders gave him a box containing one white, stiff-bosomed shirt.

There never was such a night. It reached its height when the disclosure was made that to the justice of the peace fell the pleasure of paying for the three-hundred-dollar shirt, which remains to this day the highest price ever paid for an article of this sort within the borders of Colorado.

## MAROONED IN 1492

BY WILLIAM WALLACE COOK,

*Author of "A Round Trip to the Year 2000," "Adrift in the Unknown," etc.*

A plan to serve the Past with the advantages of the Present, and the harrowing experiences that fell out to the participants.

### CHAPTER I.

TIME & CO., LIMITED.

TRENWYCK'S forte was the extraordinary, and it seemed natural for the unusual things of life to come his way. So it can scarcely be called an accident that brought that peculiar "ad" to his attention. The paragraph lurked obscurely in the Want Column of his morning paper, blowing across his path with all the outré freshness of a discovery that might lead to startling results.

WANTED—A party of courageous men, experts in the various trades, to accompany a philanthropic gentleman on a mission of enlightenment to the Middle Ages. Single men only. References exchanged. An opportunity offers to construct anew the history of several benighted nations. If interested, call or write.

PERCIVAL TAPSCOTT,  
No. 198 Forty-Third Street.

Trenwyck read it aloud to Blinkers. Blinkers, it may be explained in passing, was a Texas product whom, through earnest solicitation, Trenwyck had undertaken to exploit through the many abnormal phases of his own career.

Blinkers was always at high pressure.

To suit his taste, life had to be piquant with the unexpected. Thrills were his stock in trade, and he was never so much at home as when tending shop.

"If I could understand that," said Blinkers, referring to the "ad," "I don't know but it would make a hit with me. What does it mean, Tren?"

"I give it up," Trenwyck admitted.

"Suppose we take a whirl over on Forty-Third Street and look into the thing?"

Trenwyck agreed, and in twenty minutes a cab set them down in front of Tapscott's lodgings. A maid opened the door and ushered them up one flight to the philanthropic gentleman's apartments.

She was not a nice-looking maid. Her hair was fuzzy with curl papers and her apron should have been at the laundry.

When she left the two callers she shrugged her shoulders, put her tongue in her cheek and squinted her eyes.

"What do you mean by that, young lady?" Blinkers asked, looking over the banister as she slouched downward.

"You're a couple o' nice ones to be callin' on the likes of *him*—I don't think," she answered with refreshing candor.



"What's the matter with him?"

She drummed her knuckles against her forehead.

"Dippy," she gurgled, and went on down.

"This grows interestin'," murmured Blinkers, turning away from the banisters as Trenwyck knocked on Tapscott's door.

The door was opened by the philanthropic gentleman himself. He was well advanced in years, wore an old dressing-gown and a pair of carpet-slippers, and was holding a test-tube in his hand.

On a table off to one side streamed the bluish flame of an alcohol lamp. Over the table was a shelf containing a glass retort, two or three parting-flasks and many bottles.

A dank, unhealthy odor, caused by a combination of plant-life and a superheated atmosphere, manifested itself in the room. There were three windows, and each was filled with potted plants—strange plants such as Trenwyck had never seen before.

"Reporters?" asked Tapscott, looking his visitors over.

"No," Trenwyck answered.

"Certainly not police officers—in disguise?" he went on, holding the tube between his eye and the light and searching its contents.

"Certainly not!"

Tapscott heaved a long breath, evidently of relief. Placing the test-tube in a rack on the table, he capped the spirit lamp, waved his callers to chairs, and took a seat opposite.

"Would you believe it," said he, "you are the first ones to call on me in a spirit of legitimate inquiry? Are you prepared to take hold of my project?"

"You mean to finance it?" Trenwyck returned.

He tossed his hands in petulant depreciation.

"No money is needed. What I want is brains—nineteenth-century brains, to grapple with the barbarism of the Dark Ages."

Blinkers rolled a cigarette and settled down to a quiet enjoyment of the interview. Trenwyck, having secured the keynote of Tapscott's mania, played it to draw him out.

"Wouldn't that be a trifle difficult?" he suggested. "Providing a man could get back to the era you suggest, its history is already made and could not be warped one way or the other."

Color rushed into Tapscott's sallow cheeks, his eyes lit up, and his whole form grew animated.

"Time," he pursued dogmatically, "even when following his ordinary forward course and registering his prosy stages on a clock dial, is the producer of many riddles that vex the understanding; yet when, as I can make manifest, he reverses his course and covers centuries at a backward bound, our respectable Gregorian calendar staggers with the weight of its mysteries."

Blinkers was over his head. So was Trenwyck, for that matter, although he was thoroughly determined to persist until he had come closer to Tapscott's hobby.

"We are dealing in general terms," Trenwyck observed. "Suppose we come at once to the crux of the matter, Mr. Tapscott. Just what sort of a proposition have you to make?"

"We cannot get away from these general terms until we are done with the very bone and marrow of the proposition," he answered. "Time, gentlemen, is merely a personal matter. It is as much a man's property as the clothes on his back or the dollar in his pocket. Time is the inheritance of life, which in itself is but a manifestation of time; time begins at birth, ceases at death, and for him that was time is and can be no more.

"Sir, I am on intimate terms with Time. The old gentleman has grown fond of me, and from a simple desire to please he will take me by the hand, turn squarely about and retreat along his ancient path.

"I might state that we have formed a partnership, known as Time & Company, Limited. In this scheme for the regeneration of the Middle Ages we work together with an eye single to the main purpose.

"What I desire," cried Tapscott, warming to his theme, "is to plant a colony of skilled artisans somewhere in the feudal period—in short, giving our



benighted brothers the glorious civilization of our own progressive times. I would present them with the telegraph, the telephone, the electric light, the printing press, the steamboat, and the thousand and one other nineteenth-century wonders."

The essence of the plan was beginning to dawn upon Trenwyck. Truly it was a colossal idea, and most attractive.

"It is your intention, then," said Trenwyck, "to assemble a number of master workmen, representatives of various trades, and take them and their paraphernalia backward through the ages?"

"Not their paraphernalia, Mr. Trenwyck. It is possible to take with us only such material as we can carry in our hands. Once we arrive on the scene of our labors, we will fall to on the raw product and build out of that the various vehicles of latter-day progress. Do you follow me?"

Blinkers sat as though stunned. The cigarette had burned itself out between his fingers, and his wide eyes were fastened blankly on the face of Tapscott.

Trenwyck was only a degree less impressed. During the silence that followed Tapscott's query as to whether they grasped the amazing terms of his proposition, a rough hand was laid on the hall door and threw it open. Two police officers entered.

Tapscott was on his feet in a flash.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" he demanded.

"Your name is Tapscott?" inquired one of the officers.

"Yes."

"Then you'll have to go with us. Don't get excited now," the officer added in his most soothing tones; "we're not going to do anything to hurt you."

"I have done nothing to warrant my arrest," faltered Tapscott, looking helplessly toward Trenwyck and Blinkers. "I am a law-abiding citizen, officer."

"Of course you are," acquiesced the officer cheerfully.

"Then what is this all about?"

"Well, a complaint has been entered against you."

"What kind of a complaint?"

"You'll have to appear in court, Mr. Tapscott, and convince the judges that you are mentally competent and that you will not endanger the peace of the community if left at large."

A look of horror overspread Tapscott's face. Suddenly a choking cry escaped him and he whirled and dashed for a rear room.

One of the policemen caught the flying skirts of his dressing-gown and brought him to so abrupt a halt that he fell to his knees.

"We'd better pull out, Tren," said Blinkers, starting up.

Trenwyck likewise arose. Before they gained the hall Tapscott called to them.

"Wait, gentlemen! Just a few moments, I beg of you!"

"Humor him," one of the officers whispered in Trenwyck's ear. "The old chap means well enough, but he's dotty—there's no kind of doubt about that."

"Is Byngs back of this?" inquired Tapscott of his captors; "T. Orcival Byngs?"

"Professor Byngs made the complaint," was the answer.

"Ah!" A glint came into Tapscott's eyes as he got up from his knees. "I thought as much."

Trenwyck and Blinkers returned to their chairs. Trenwyck had an ill-defined feeling that something remarkable was going to happen, and awaited developments with profound curiosity.

## CHAPTER II.

### TAPSCOTT TAKES FRENCH LEAVE.

"GENTLEMEN," observed Tapscott, "this is a plot against me, engineered by my rival, Byngs, emeritus professor of Polynesian Flora in the University of Hoboken. He resents my success in acquiring a unique plant from Borneo, and his small mind suggests retaliation in this despicable manner."

He turned to his captors.

"I will make you no trouble, but, if you will allow me, I should like to write a letter."

"Go ahead, Mr. Tapscott," was the



answer. "We don't want to be hard on you."

Watched vigilantly by the bluecoats, Tapscott pulled a chair to the table and brushed aside the scientific clap-trap to make place for his epistolary labors.

From the shelf above he took a bottle of ink and a pen, and from the table drawer a pad of paper.

His slightest movement claimed the closest attention of four pairs of eyes. The officers were on the alert to forestall a deed of violence, while Blinkers and Trenwyck were under thrall of a suspense that grew sharper by swift degrees.

Tapscott, now calm and unruffled, pulled a sheet from the pad, folded it carefully and divided it in half. Then he reached for the test tube and emptied its contents—a heap of brownish grains—upon one of the scraps of paper.

With muttered exclamations, the officers darted forward. Tapscott smiled at them.

"Do not be unduly exercised, gentlemen," said he. "This is merely the fruit of one of my crazy experiments, and hence not of sufficient importance to cause alarm."

The officers drew back abashed and Tapscott proceeded with his work. With the pen point he counted out a number of the grains and slipped them to the other scrap of paper, after which he folded both papers into neat little packets.

"Now for the letter," said he, and set himself to writing.

A few minutes completed the task. Addressing an envelope, he placed the folded letter inside, together with one or both of the packets.

Trenwyck was under the impression at the time that both packets went into the envelope and was sure the officers were of like opinion. Tapscott manipulated the matter so deftly that what happened was all the more surprising.

"There," said he, handing the sealed envelope to Trenwyck. "Will you have the kindness to deliver that for me, Mr. Trenwyck?"

The letter bore the memorandum "For you, to be opened some time after you leave here."

Trenwyck gave him a nod and put the letter in his pocket.

"Thank you."

Tapscott removed another packet, wrapped in green paper, from the table drawer, and got up.

"Of course," he said to the officers, "I cannot go out on the street in a dressing-gown and slippers. Will you allow me to go into my bedroom and make ready to accompany you?"

"You go with him, Pringle," said one of the policemen to his companion.

Trenwyck thought a shade of annoyance crossed Tapscott's face, but it was only momentary. His vision cleared, and he started for the door of the rear room, followed by Pringle.

Hand on the knob, he paused and looked back at Trenwyck. It was a long look and a strange one, pregnant with deep meaning.

Trenwyck was mystified. Only in the light of later events did the significance of that last look become clear.

"Here's a layout!" muttered Blinkers, drawing a long breath. "Talk about your mysteries, Tren—this is the clear quill, and no mistake."

"Not much of a mystery here," struck in the officer. "The old gent is off his trolley, and has been for a year or more. Did you see that 'ad' he put in the paper this morning?"

"That's what brought us here," said Trenwyck. "Curiosity, you know," he hastened to add.

"Byngs is the best friend Tapscott ever had, if he did but know it," continued the officer, "but Tapscott thinks Byngs is jealous of him. When one of these scientific codgers gets an idea like that in his head he's——"

A wild yell burst from the other room. Trenwyck, Blinkers and the officer sprang up in consternation and rushed at the door, the officer leading.

Pringle, his face ashen and distorted with fear and wonder, was leaning against the wall. Tightly clutched in his hands was Tapscott's dressing-gown. Tapscott himself was not in evidence.

"Where is he?" cried the officer who had led the rush into the bedroom. "Wake up, man!" he added, grabbing Pringle by the shoulders and shaking him roughly. "Where's Tapscott?"



Pringle lifted a hand to his head. With the other hand he raised the old dressing-gown and shook it feebly, apparently with some notion that Tapscott might drop out of it.

"Good Heavens!" gasped Pringle, then cast the dressing-gown from him and sank limply on the bed, his eyes roving about the narrow chamber.

The other bluecoat had impatiently rummaged through a closet, looked behind a dresser, peered under the bed, and was now examining the fastenings of the window.

"Speak, can't you?" he demanded, turning to Pringle.

"Did—did he get out through the other room?" inquired Pringle, in halting tones.

"Of course he didn't."

"Then you search me, Hickman. It beats the devil! Just after I closed the door Tapscott went to the washbowl and drew a glass of water. Quick as a wink he emptied something into the glass and took it down at a gulp just as I jumped at him."

"Then what happened?" queried Hickman.

"That's too many for me," replied Pringle, shaking his head. "All I know is that I stood there, holding the dressing-gown. Tapscott was gone."

"He dodged out somehow," declared Hickman; "it ain't possible for a man to make a get-away like that without having things fixed. You look around here while I go and search the rest of the house."

During the excitement that followed, Trenwyck and Blinkers slipped away. In the hall outside they encountered the skulking figure of a man standing close to the door.

He might have been a lodger, attracted by the disturbance in Tapscott's rooms. Be that as it may, he was a low-browed, questionable-looking fellow, and Trenwyck and Blinkers eyed him suspiciously as they passed.

The cab that had brought them stood in front, on waiting orders, and during the ride back to their hotel the two friends smoked and wrestled with the situation.

At last Trenwyck's thoughts drifted to the letter. On opening it, he found

that only one of the packets was enclosed—the larger of the two.

"What does the letter have to say?" asked Blinkers, and forthwith Trenwyck read it to him:

DEAR SIR:

As you have seen, circumstances over which I have no control make necessary my abrupt departure for the Past. I have long known this storm was brewing, but hoped I could make port in the Middle Ages with my colony of artisans before it burst upon me. Now I alone must be the evangel of civilization and progress to those Benighted Peoples.

Although I enclose you the means, I do not ask you to follow me. It is a step no man would dare consider unless impelled by convictions as strong as my own.

The packet given you herewith contains a supply of seeds of the wonderful plant developed by me after years of painstaking culture. This hybrid I have dubbed the *tempus fugitarius*; it is a cross between the Indian poppy and a rare plant of unknown species found in Borneo.

To become effective as a means for bridging the Present and the Past, the seeds must be treated chemically—which, while rounding out their tremendous powers, at the same time renders them instantly soluble in water. I had just finished treating the seeds enclosed when you called on me this morning. Besides these and those I have with me, there are no more in existence, and the mother-plant has been destroyed.

Every one of these time seeds will set a man back half a century. I shall make my journey by easy stages, covering fifty years at first and proceeding to the scene of my labors in Darkest Europe; then on and on as fancy takes me. My one regret is that untoward events make necessary an ill-timed departure.

Should you have recourse to the seeds in your quest after ancient times, fail not to take them on the very spot where you would cast your fortunes. And remember, you can take nothing with you apart from what can be carried in the hands or stored about the person.

Across the years I give you greeting. Half a century separates us, and yet the ink is scarcely dry on this letter which I have written.

PERCIVAL TAPSCOTT.

"What do you think, Blinkers?" Trenwyck asked, replacing the letter and the packet of seeds in his pocket.



"Cleopatra and the Nile," said Blinkers musingly. "Hank Billings, of San Antone, lent me a book once that told a lot of yarns about Cleopatra. Do you think there are enough seeds to take us that far?"

"It would be a waste of good material even if there were," answered Trenwyck sharply. "We'll try Tapscott's prescription, however."

"Dark Ages?" Blinkers asked lugubriously.

"Not so far. Spain—Bonaparte—Peninsular Campaign. I'll write a sequel to the 'Mistakes,' from the viewpoint of an eye-witness."

Blinkers brightened perceptibly, but Trenwyck could see that his fancy was still hovering around the Pyramids.

"You're the doctor, Tren," said Blinkers, clasping his friend's hand. "Just pick out your century and we'll emigrate. No one ever did anything like this before, do you think?"

"No one but Tapscott."

"It's a comforting thought," Blinkers observed as they descended from the cab in front of their hotel.

Had Trenwyck considered wisely, he would have left Blinkers behind when taking that headlong plunge into the past. Blinkers had a weird propensity for giving rein to his own sweet will, utterly reckless of consequences—a characteristic as dangerous for his friends as deplorable for himself.

With Trenwyck, however, Blinkers was a habit, acquired to an extent which rendered the expedition impossible without him.

So they were to "emigrate" in company.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A FRUSTRATED ROBBERY.

JASON TRENWYCK came of a good old family noted for its self-sufficiency. In fact, that honest, one-legged despot who was the last Dutch governor of New York was numbered among his forbears.

This scion of the Trenwycks was born into poverty and its attendant privations. Early in youth he availed himself of Horace Greeley's advice and trekked for the setting sun.

Years later, when he returned to his native city, he brought with him a vast fund of experience, much wealth, that hatred of the commonplace which formed his most distinguishing trait—and Blinkers.

Trenwyck had taken his turn at ranching, mining, politics, and a dozen other pursuits the West had to offer. As his mind expanded he developed a taste for literature, which, coming arm in arm with a saving sense of humor, fell just short of a dangerous stage.

It may be remembered that he found a "cypher" in the so-called Shakespeare plays which laid their authorship as unquestionably at the door of the lamented Bill Nye as others have laid it at the door of Francis Bacon.

He also wrote a volume on "The Mistakes of Napoleon, with Especial Reference to the Peninsular Campaign." The MS. of this work was returned by one publisher with a personal letter to the effect that "they were sorry to return his paper, but he had written on it." Trenwyck immediately published the book himself.

Late in the evening of the day that witnessed their adventure in Forty-Third Street, Trenwyck and Blinkers were in the sitting-room of their suite, discussing ways and means. Trenwyck was lounging in an easy-chair by a table, a cigar between his lips, a mug of his favorite shandygaff at his elbow, and the seeds of the *tempus fugitarius* heaped up on a piece of paper on the table-top.

There were ninety-three of the seeds, as they had found by actual count, each about the size of a grain of millet. The entire supply could easily have been placed on the blade of a pocket-knife.

"Just how many years, Tren," said Blinkers, blowing thoughtful whiffs from his cigarette, "are locked up in that thimbleful of seeds?"

"Four thousand six hundred and fifty," answered Trenwyck.

"Great Christopher! What a heap of traveling we could do if we used all those seeds for transportation—providing, of course, Tapscott hasn't rung in a bluff on us."

"You haven't any doubts about Tapscott, have you? It seems to me he has proved his case."



"The idea sort of staggers me," returned Blinkers. "I'd like a little more proof."

"We'll test the seeds ourselves, and that will be the very best kind of proof."

"Then we're off for Spain?"

"By first boat. I have already engaged passage to Liverpool."

A summons fell on the door at that moment. Blinkers answered it, and a thin little man in rusty black, topped with a high hat that might have been the vogue in the '60s, stepped across the threshold.

"Pardon me for coming right up, gentlemen," said the caller, removing his hat. "My business is very important, so you will excuse the lateness of the hour."

His hair was white and he wore large glasses, through which he looked penetratingly from Trenwyck to Blinkers and back again to Trenwyck.

"My name is Byngs," he proceeded, "and I hold the chair of Polynesian Flora, University of Hoboken. I understand that you"—he was now addressing Trenwyck—"were handed a letter this morning by Mr. Tapscott. May I inquire, sir, if that letter was for me?"

Trenwyck's face hardened. Here was the rival scientist whose attempt to hale Tapscott before the insanity court had sent that gentleman into the past before he was ready to go.

"The letter was not for you, Professor Byngs," said Trenwyck coldly.

"No?" The little man evinced considerable disappointment. "Was it for the institution with which I have the honor to be affiliated?"

"It was for myself," replied Trenwyck.

The professor's eyes fell on the table and a cry escaped from his lips.

"There they are—the seeds of the hybrid!"

He flung himself forward, but Blinkers grabbed him about the middle and deposited him in a chair.

"Take it easy, professor," said Blinkers. "Those are the seeds, all right, but we can't allow you to tamper with them."

Byngs writhed in the chair until he was able to fish a red handkerchief from the tail of his coat.

"You gentlemen do not understand this matter," said he, mopping his brow.

"I believe we understand it quite thoroughly," answered Trenwyck, folding up the seeds and depositing them in a drawer of the table. "Your designs upon Mr. Tapscott's liberty have led to deplorable results, Professor Byngs."

"I still insist that you are not acquainted with the ulterior aspects of the proposition," persisted Byngs. "The department of which I am the honorary head was left a bequest of several thousand dollars for research among the flora of Borneo and Tahati.

"A yacht was chartered and I went to Polynesia, where I secured a single specimen of a unique plant quite unknown to the botany of the Pacific islands or any other part of the world. That plant, gentlemen, had an affinity for the passing hours, telling each one of the twenty-four accurately through color changes in the petals of the blossom.

"Had I been allowed to make further study of this rare specimen—which I called the *tempus byngiensis*—I am sure that the name of Byngs would have leaped into fame among scientists everywhere. But this renown was basely filched away from me."

"Stolen!" exclaimed Trenwyck.

"Aye, stolen! Tapscott heard of the plant and bribed the skipper of the yacht to smuggle it ashore and give it into his hands. The theft was safely consummated and the fruits of my labor were lost to me.

"Tapscott, as is very well known, is not mentally responsible. I am told he has destroyed the specimen of the *tempus byngiensis*, but that some seeds still remain. Likewise I was told that he had written a letter and enclosed therein a packet of the seeds, entrusting same to your care."

"I had hoped that repentance had urged him to rectify the great wrong he had done me and that the letter and the packet were for myself. Inasmuch as this is not the case, I consider that I am well within my rights when I demand that you turn the seeds over to me."

"That is your story, Professor Byngs," said Trenwyck, "but you cannot



suppose that I would give up the seeds until I had heard Tapscott's side of it—which is now impossible."

"Where is Tapscott?"

"I cannot tell you, for to do so would betray his confidence."

The professor's eyes gleamed angrily as he got out of the chair.

"Will you give me part of the packet, then?" asked he.

"No."

Byngs walked to the door, his slight form shaking with the wrath that convulsed him.

"We shall see, we shall see," he muttered. "There are ways to compel an adjustment of the wrong I have suffered and I shall lose no time in setting about it."

With that the little man flung out of the room and slammed the door.

"Whew!" exclaimed Blinkers as he shoved the bolt behind him. "These scientists are warm fellows when they think they have a grievance."

"Byngs made Tapscott a lot of trouble," said Trenwyck, "and possibly he will annoy us with his schemes unless we take time by the forelock and get out of the country. Fortunately, we sail in the morning."

Trenwyck got up, laid aside the remains of his cigar, finished the last of his shandygaff, and went off to bed. Blinkers soon followed him.

Two bedrooms opened off the larger room, one at each end. In his own chamber Blinkers wrestled with his thoughts for a long time at the expense of his rest.

When he finally lost himself it was in an uneasy slumber from which he was abruptly awakened. Some one, it seemed to him, was moving stealthily about the sitting-room.

Getting softly out of bed, he stole to the chamber door and peered through.

A gas-jet was burning dimly above the table; in its light he saw that the table-drawer was open, that the paper containing the seeds had been removed and unfolded, and that a questionable-looking man stood close by and was gazing down at them.

The intruder wore a cap and a mask. A dark lantern with the shutter closed

stood on the table near a decanter of wine, and a revolver lay near the seeds.

Trenwyck's suite of rooms was in the third story at the back of the hotel. A fire-escape ran past the window of the larger room, and Blinkers observed that this window was open.

A robbery was being consummated! As Blinkers watched, the thief pushed back his cap and shifted the mask to brush one sleeve across his forehead.

He was the very man who had been in the hall outside Tapscott's lodgings when Blinkers and Trenwyck had taken their departure for the Forty-Third Street house!

After replacing his cap and mask, the robber poured himself a drink out of the decanter and tossed it off at a swallow; then he took a hasty look around, picked up his lantern and revolver and started softly into Trenwyck's chamber.

Blinkers had plenty of courage, and part of the equipment he had brought from Texas included a brace of six-shooters. With cat-like softness he moved to his trunk, took out one of the revolvers, and then stole from the chamber.

The robber was still moving around in Trenwyck's room. At the table, an idea came to Blinkers—rather a vague expedient, but he thought it well worth the trying.

Lifting one of the millet-like grains on the point of a steel paper-knife, he dropped it into the glass by the decanter. His next move was to hide behind the curtains at the open window.

He had not long to wait. The robber presently emerged from Trenwyck's room and returned to the table. There he put down the lantern again, thrust his revolver into his hip-pocket and began folding up the packet of seeds. What Blinkers had hoped for came to pass.

The intruder's thirst once more manifested itself, and he poured a drink from the decanter into the glass. He quaffed it, and then—the tumbler crashed to fragments on the table.

Aroused by the sound, Trenwyck leaped from his bed and rushed into the sitting-room. Blinkers, a strange expression on his face, stood by the table and gave his friend a dazed look as he ran toward him.



"What's the matter, Blinkers?" asked Trenwyck.

"R-r-robbery," stammered Blinkers.

Trenwyck turned up the light. The dark-lantern engaged his attention and then the packet.

"Where is the thief?" cried Trenwyck.

"He—he got away," answered Blinkers, with a shiver. "He was after those seeds, I reckon, Tren, but I interrupted his work before he could make off with them."

"Did he make off with anything else?"

"I don't know. You'd better look through your clothes and find out."

Trenwyck found that his pocketbook was missing. The night clerk was summoned and the house policeman was put on the trail.

The loss of a few dollars was nothing to Trenwyck, who was more than thankful that the packet had been saved. When he again sought his bed, after the excitement, he had the packet under his pillow.

Blinkers, awed at his own temerity and bewildered by the result of it, thought best to keep his own counsel.

"If Trenwyck ever counts up and finds that one seed is missing," thought Blinkers, "he'll think the thief got away with it. Well, he did—but, by Christopher, it was sudden! I reckon Tapscott wasn't so crazy as Byngs is trying to make out."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### SAD BUSINESS AT BURGOS.

TRENWYCK and Blinkers came into Spain by easy stages, lingering in the various capitals for a last taste of that "glorious civilization" which Tapscott was seeking to carry to the Middle Ages.

The delights of London and Paris almost wooed Blinkers from their settled purpose, but Trenwyck's persuasions, fortified by an important telegram that reached him in the French metropolis, were sufficient, and Trenwyck brought Blinkers away to Bayonne and thence into the Basque Provinces.

The telegram was from an old friend, Major Wickers, who represented his

country at one of the Spanish ports. "Meet me Fonda del Norte, Burgos, Wednesday. Imperative." So ran the message.

The major was a bachelor, upward of fifty, and in his native Alabama was known as a successful iron founder. What imperative business he could have with Trenwyck was more than the latter could imagine.

This was not the only thing that bothered Trenwyck. During the voyage across to Liverpool he had counted the time seeds and had found that there were but sixty-eight, leaving twenty-five unaccounted for.

What had become of the missing twenty-five? He questioned Blinkers, and Blinkers had evinced surprise, but nothing akin to guilt.

He suggested that, as the seeds were small, they might have sifted out of the packet. Trenwyck did not think this possible, but immediately he took steps to keep the rest of the seeds secure beyond all possibility of loss.

Professor Byngs was on the boat with them. During the first day or two of the voyage he had importuned Trenwyck to divide the packet with him, asserting that he had taken passage for the sole purpose of securing some of the seeds and that he would persist at all hazards until he gained his end.

After two days of ineffective threats and entreaties, Byngs apparently yielded to the inevitable and frequented the card-room, where Blinkers was passing most of his time. In Liverpool the professor succeeded in effacing himself.

The contrast between Byngs' behavior at the beginning of the trip and at the end of it was so remarkable that Trenwyck might have suspected that he had accomplished his purpose had not the difficulties in the way of it been so great. As it was, he merely wondered and refrained from pressing any inquiries.

At Irun, just over the Spanish boundary, the customs officials fell on Blinkers' luggage and confiscated two dozen decks of playing-cards, a box of chips, a roulette wheel and a faro layout.

They would have gone further and confiscated Blinkers himself, no doubt, if Trenwyck had not made judicious use of a few *pesetas*.



"What in the world were you going to do with all that plunder?" Trenwyck demanded.

"Just in case we ran out of funds, Tren," Blinkers explained. "If we're to carry our civilization into the Napoleonic era, it struck me I'd look after that end of it."

"This comes of that gambling you did on the way over," said Trenwyck severely, "and it isn't the sort of missionary work we're going to engage in. Our business in making a jump back to the beginning of the century, Blinkers, is to look up a few points of history and to benefit the people as much as we can in our feeble way—not to coax *louis d'or* from the French camp through the medium of games of chance."

They reached Burgos at ten in the evening, and were hauled to the major's *fonda* by a row of three mules attached to a rickety 'bus. The whole force of the establishment came out to receive them, and they had a chance to try the Greaser Spanish they had picked up in Arizona.

It proved adequate, and they were conducted to a dingy *salon* with two bedrooms adjoining. The omnibus mules were stabled directly under them—but they were in Spain, and not disposed to be fastidious.

They had a late dinner sent up to their rooms. While they were discussing the soup the major stormed in.

"I knew you'd come, by gad!" he shouted, shaking Trenwyck's hands effusively. "And Blinkers, too! Well, well. You're good to me, boys. By gad! This comes of having friends when you need 'em!"

The major was short, but ponderous. The red of his pudgy face was relieved by the white of his large mustaches.

His face was a little redder, his mustache a little whiter and his hair a little thinner than when Trenwyck had seen him last.

But otherwise he was the same tempestuous old major.

"How did you know I was in Paris, major?" Trenwyck asked while his friend floundered into a seat and squirmed to get at his cigar-case.

"Met Dave Gillum at Barcelona—big Dave, right from the States. He's

thinking of taking a bunch of Basques or Moors—I don't remember just which—to the Chicago Fair. Dave said he had met up with you and Blinkers in London, and that you were to stop in Paris and then come on this way. Sorry if I hurried you, Tren, but I need you to-morrow afternoon."

"What for?"

The old fire-eater leaned back in his chair and lighted his cigar.

"Duel," he answered tersely.

Trenwyck dropped knife and fork and straightened up with a gasp. Blinkers also showed a profound interest.

"You don't mean to say that you're going to fight a duel!" exclaimed Trenwyck.

"Who else?" the major returned complacently. "Don't be in such a taking, Tren. It's not the first time. By gad, no Dutchman can jump on the Stars and Stripes and make faces at the Monroe Doctrine while Wickers is around!"

"Is that what happened?" Trenwyck inquired.

"Is it?" the major wheezed. "Is it? The Barcelona papers are full of it. This Baron von Lauderbach aired his views at a little dinner given to the foreign representatives. What he said—but I won't repeat what he said, by gad! It was enough. I threw wine in his face, and would have followed the wine with the tumbler if they hadn't stopped me.

"We exchanged cards. If Dave hadn't been in a rush to get to Madrid I'd have had him for a second. But when he told me about you, why, I shot that telegram into Paris.

"Preliminaries are all arranged. I named place and weapons, and selected Burgos and six-shooters—Burgos, because it's on your route and I didn't want to put you to any more inconvenience than I had to."

"Good Heavens!" Trenwyck muttered. "Are you mad, major? If you go ahead with this piece of folly you're liable to involve three governments."

"I don't care a hang if I involve a dozen!" Wickers bristled. "No foreigner is going to shake his fist at the American eagle in my presence without hearing from me."



"Where is the duel to take place?"

"In a quiet little courtyard just long enough for twenty paces. Don't try to stop me, Tren. I'm all worked up about this business, and I'll have it out with that baron if it's the last thing I ever do."

He was as fixed as Gibraltar, and when he went away about midnight Trenwyck was in no enviable frame of mind.

Baron von Lauderbach, the other principal, the major had told them, was an attaché of the German embassy at Madrid.

"The old boy is on the warpath, Tren," chuckled Blinkers, dropping the stump of his cigarette into one of the empty dishes and getting up with a yawn.

"We've got to stop this duel in some way," said Trenwyck.

"I can stop it," said Blinkers.

"How?"

"Leave that to me, Tren."

"No foolishness, Blinkers!" Trenwyck warned him.

"Sure not!" returned the irresponsible Blinkers. "Do you want me to go ahead and try my hand?"

"Well, you might," Trenwyck answered, yielding weakly to the gravity of the situation, "if you really think you can accomplish anything."

Blinkers went blithely to bed and in a few minutes Trenwick followed his example. Trenwyck heard the call of the night-watch two or three times before dozing off to sleep, and when he did sleep he dreamed of duels and international complications and other things that had burdened his waking hours.

It was late when he woke up and gave his attention to the bread and chocolate a waiter brought to the door. Blinkers had dressed and gone out, presumably to execute his plan for putting a quietus on the duel.

Trenwyck hadn't much faith in Blinkers' ability to have the affair called off. He had no acquaintance with the baron, but if that gentleman had come all the way to Burgos to fight it was hardly possible he could be made to apologize.

For Trenwyck to go to the alcalde with the matter would be to affront the

major most direfully, yet that is precisely what Trenwyck was determined to do before he should allow the foolish affray to take place.

By the time Trenwyck was dressed, Wickers dropped in to consult with him upon personal affairs, as a provision against fatalities. Blinkers returned during the course of their conversation and vouchsafed Trenwyck a reassuring wink.

Had he really accomplished anything? If so, what—and how? Trenwyck turned this phase of the matter over in his mind as the three of them went up-stairs and had their *almuerzo* together.

Trenwyck found no opportunity for a quiet word with Blinkers and hoped Wickers would leave them for a short time after the meal. But he did not. He had some tinkering to do with his revolvers, and followed them back to their rooms to do it.

Blinkers continued complacent and reassuring, the major smoked and chaffed as he worked, just to show how cool he was, and Trenwyck fidgeted and fretted.

While they were thus occupied, their host came to announce a caller, and the caller proved so impatient that he ran excitedly into the room at the host's heels.

The major looked up and a stern expression overspread his red face.

"Zimmerman, the baron's second," said he, shooting a glance in Trenwyck's direction and nodding toward the caller after the landlord had retreated. Zimmerman was tremendously wrought up about something.

Without any preliminaries whatever, he leaped into a torrent of German, striving to keep his frenzied gestures abreast of the oral flood.

So far as Trenwyck was concerned, the German language was an unknown quantity. Blinkers, apparently under the spell of a pleasant excitement, was manufacturing a cigarette and smiling to himself.

Wickers, whether he drew any sense from the harangue or not, preserved a studied indifference.

Presently Trenwyck stepped forward and interrupted Herr Zimmerman. He



assured him, in English, that what he was saying was Greek to them; also, that he was Major Wickers' second, and that whatever he—Zimmerman—had to say must be put in terms they could understand.

The perturbed Teuton poured a glass of water from a pitcher on the table and while drinking it seemed to get better control of himself. When he spoke again he was a little more lucid. His friend Baron von Lauderbach, it appeared, had mysteriously vanished. He had risen early that morning and had begun writing letters.

On a desk in his chamber was a letter half-written—broken abruptly off in the midst of a sentence. His hat and cane were in the chamber and there was every evidence that he had not intended taking his departure.

Yet he *had* departed, and a search of several hours had failed to reveal his whereabouts.

The major gave a sarcastic laugh. It was a laugh that turned Zimmerman pale with vexation and chagrin, for it reflected upon the courage of his principal.

"So!" exclaimed the major. "Not daring to stand before me and give me satisfaction, this valiant baron takes to the woods! I'll make this known throughout the length and breadth of Spain, by gad! And if the poltroon ever shows his face in my vicinity, I'll—I'll pull his nose for him!"

"Vat you speak iss nod true!" cried Zimmerman. "Der baron has nod taken by der voods, no. He has nod run away; he vould haf a scorn for such as dot. *Himmelblitzen!*"

"Produce him! Produce him!" returned the major. "If you don't produce this friend of yours, Zimmerman, the public will draw its own conclusions."

"How can I produce him ven I don't know vere he iss gone?" said Zimmerman helplessly. "Some accident has happened mit him, jah, it must be. You vill be patient, Herr Major, und gif us a leetle more time, hey?"

"Not another hour," said Trenwyck.

Zimmerman shrugged his shoulders and walked to the door. Pausing there, he turned to add:

"If der baron iss nod foundt, it vill afford me g-r-reat pleasure to take his place," said he. "I vould nod haf der Herr Major disappointed."

"Never!" declared Trenwyck. "My friend fights with the baron or no one."

Zimmerman bowed humbly and left. He seemed a nice, soldierly fellow, and Trenwyck was sorry for him.

The moment Zimmerman was gone the attention of Trenwyck and the major was drawn to Blinkers, who was choking with mirth in his chair.

"Look here, Blinkers," said Trenwyck, "do you know what has happened to the baron?"

"My, but this is rich!" gasped Blinkers. "Of course I know what's happened to the baron, Tren. If Zimmerman finds him he'll have to go back some four hundred years!"

"Gad!" muttered Wickers, rising to his feet and peering at Trenwyck across the table. "Is the fellow mad?"

"What crazy thing have you done?" hissed Trenwyck in Blinkers' ear, bending over him and gripping his arm convulsively.

"I gave him eight of 'em," admitted Blinkers. "We had a glass together in his room and I smuggled the——"

A slow horror ran through Trenwyck's veins.

Blinkers, reading the trepidation of his soul in the lines of his face, subsided weakly.

"I may have been a little hasty, Tren," Blinkers quavered, "but——"

"Hasty!" echoed Trenwyck in a hollow voice, and turned away.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CAP SHEAF.

A DEEP silence fell over the three in the room. The only sound that was heard was caused by the restless tramping of the mules in the stable below.

"Tren," pursued Blinkers desperately, "there wasn't anything else for it, on my word. That baron was as cold-blooded as a channel catfish. He'd have made a vacancy in the diplomatic service just as sure as you're a foot high!"

"Where did you get the seeds?" asked Trenwyck.



Blinkers grew suddenly mute.

Events were trending toward a revelation that dismayed him.

"Come, out with it," went on Trenwyck with cutting firmness. "Where did you get the seeds?"

"On the boat, when we came over."

"Ah! Then you have abused my confidence, have you? Why didn't you tell me you had rifled the packet when I spoke to you about the loss I had discovered?"

"Well," temporized Blinkers, "I did not care to have you know those sharpers were getting the best of me at one-call-two."

"What has your gambling on the boat got to do with the missing seeds?"

"Pretty nearly everything. Oh, hang it, Tren! I'm not going to keep this on my mind any longer. I took those twenty-four seeds out of the packet while you were sound asleep in your bunk."

"Twenty-four?" came caustically from Trenwyck. "There are twenty-five gone. Where's the other?"

"I got rid of that burglar in New York with the other."

"That's where the burglar went, is it?"

"Yes; I gave him fifty years. Byngs got four hundred, same as the baron."

"I'm beginning to understand. What sort of a deal did you make with Byngs?"

"I gave 'em to him reasonable, Tren—fifty dollars per seed. He got eight at that figure and I sailed in with the proceeds and tried to win back what I'd lost. But the tin horns had the cards marked."

"Did you tell Byngs anything about the mysterious properties of the seeds?"

"I did, and he said I was crazy. I told him I wasn't as big a fool as I looked, and he said I couldn't be."

"Byngs had it about right, Blinkers. You wasted one on the thief, eight on Byngs and eight on the baron. That leaves you with eight, and I guess you better turn them over to me. I am very much put out with you, Blinkers."

The major had listened to this conversation with falling jaw and distended eyes.

"Have you fellows gone daft entirely?" he spoke up. "You talk like a couple of madmen."

He turned to Blinkers.

"Blinkers," he went on sternly, "if you have been meddling in my affair of honor, it is high time I knew something about it, by gad!"

"He did his meddling by my request, major," said Trenwyck.

Wickers stared at Trenwyck.

"Let me understand this matter," said the major, with painful deliberation. "You sent Blinkers to the baron to see if our differences could not be patched up without a resort to arms?"

"You do not appreciate the gravity of the situation, major, or——"

"I appreciate, sir," thundered the major, "that the Wickers' honor is at stake! I appreciate, sir, that this titled nincompoop, this Baron Nobody, has slurred that glorious banner that waves above my home and my iron works, and that I am to be denied retaliation. And finally, Mr. Trenwyck, I appreciate that one whom I supposed to be my best friend has had the audacity to restrain me from the defense of my honor! I have the pleasure, sir, of wishing you a very good morning!"

More in sorrow than in anger, the major gathered up his revolvers and stalked toward the exit. He found Trenwyck barring his way.

"Go back and sit down!" ordered Trenwyck.

"When the bands of friendship," began the major morosely, "have been weakened to breaking by the misguided officiousness of—er—er—of an injudicious gentleman who——"

"The injudicious gentleman means what he says, Major Wickers," interrupted Trenwyck sternly. "Go back and take your chair. Blinkers was too zealous; he exceeded his instructions. You must give me the opportunity to explain."

The major returned gloomily to his seat, laid his revolvers on the table, and passively awaited the explanation. Trenwyck took up the subject of the seeds, described the manner in which they came into his possession, and told what he intended doing with them.

Major Wickers' injured dignity was



lost in a sudden and absorbing fear for Trenwyck's sanity.

"Merciful Heavens!" whispered the major hoarsely. "Is it possible that in this year of grace 1892 there is one sensible man who will put any faith in such a lot of rubbish?"

"Blinkers and I believe in it," answered Trenwyck steadily.

"Then you and Blinkers are entitled to a couple of guardians."

"I cannot shut my eyes to the proof. Tapscott was snuffed out, the thief vanished, and now the baron has followed both of them into the past."

"Bosh!" wheezed the major. "The baron lost his nerve and ran away, in spite of you and Blinkers. You're daft, Trenwyck; clean daft. Let me have a look at those wonderful seeds."

Blinkers, in response to Trenwyck's request, had removed from his vest pocket the paper containing the eight seeds he had left. He was holding the packet in his hand, and Trenwyck motioned him to show them to the major.

The major, wearing a smile half-pitying and wholly incredulous, poured himself a drink, started to raise the glass to his lips, and suddenly set it down again.

"There they are, major," said Blinkers, unfolding the packet and stepping closer so that Major Wickers could see the seeds. "They look harmless enough, but there's a hocus-pocus of fifty years wrapped up in every one of those little grains."

The major took the paper, eyed the seeds cynically, then quickly slipped them into the glass of water. A presentiment of further trouble darted through Trenwyck's brain and he darted forward with outstretched hand.

"Major!" he cried in consternation. "What are you about to do?"

"Stand right where you are, Trenwyck!" commanded the major, waving him back. "You, too, Blinkers! I'm going to prove that the baron ran away of his own accord—and, incidentally, that you gentlemen are victims of your own disordered imagination."

He lifted the glass, a quick sparkle of determination showing in his eyes.

"Stop, Wickers!" shouted Trenwyck frantically, leaping toward him.

The glass was already at the major's lips. Trenwyck caught it away, but too late. A choppy, defiant laugh echoed through the room.

Another moment and Trenwyck and Blinkers were alone, staring dumbly at each other across the spot where the major had just stood. A groan escaped Trenwyck's lips, the glass fell crashing from his hand, and he dropped limply across the table.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A DOUBLE DEPARTURE FOR THE PAST.

THE baron was gone and the major had followed him. Both had been projected four hundred years into the past. What was to happen when they met in those old times afforded Trenwyck much material for gruesome speculation.

He was glad the major had left his revolvers and ammunition behind. If the duel was fought in that other age, it would have to be with crossbows, two-handed swords, or blunderbusses; and there was the chance that these unfamiliar weapons would make the combat less sanguinary.

From worrying about the major and the baron, Trenwyck fell to worrying about Blinkers and himself. Mysterious disappearances, even in Spain, are not allowed to pass without investigation.

In the present instance there were two powerful governments to force the hands of the authorities. Trenwyck and Blinkers could hardly avoid becoming entangled if they tarried in Burgos, so they deemed it expedient to get away as quickly as possible.

Trenwyck appropriated the major's guns. They were beautiful weapons, silver chased, and had the initials "H. W."—Horace Wickers—wrought into the stocks.

Trenwyck settled their reckoning at the *fonda*, marched along the row of waiters, scullions and stable boys, and tipped impartially, after which he and Blinkers climbed into the old bus and were rattled away to the station. Blinkers had suggested that it was a propitious moment to take their own



leap into the dark, but his friend was not in the mood for it.

They were to have a night ride to Madrid, and thought luck was with them when they chanced upon a vacant compartment. Before the train left the Burgos station, however, Zimmerman's square-jawed face appeared in the door and he crawled over them into the carriage.

If he recognized them in the dim light he gave no sign. After stowing his luggage in the racks he settled into a distant corner and presumably went to sleep.

His presence gave Trenwyck a feeling of decided discomfort. Could he, by any possible chance, be following Trenwyck and Blinkers and keeping them under surveillance?

Zimmerman could hardly have failed to discover that Blinkers had called on the baron not far from the hour of his disappearance. What inference would Zimmerman draw from this, if any?

When they were fairly off on their journey Trenwyck drew the silk curtain across the hole in the top of the carriage and shut off the rays of the dimly burning lamp.

Blinkers slept like a log and snored resonantly. Trenwyck passed the time in fitful cat-naps, peering at intervals at the blot of shadow which was all he could see of Zimmerman.

No morning ever dawned that was more welcome to Trenwyck than the one that followed the dreary, apprehensive night. At a station, where the train lingered for a period out of all proportion to the size of the place, he bought a couple of jugs of goat's milk.

Quietly rousing Blinkers, Trenwyck gave him one. As he took it, Blinkers looked significantly toward the sleeping Zimmerman, and Trenwyck shook his head to signify that nothing of importance had happened.

An hour or two before they reached Madrid, Zimmerman sat up, yawned, and shook himself together. He and the other two in the compartment, however, might have been total strangers for all the attention they gave each other.

When the capital was finally reached, the three traveled in the same omnibus

to the Hotel de la Paix. Wherever Trenwyck turned he was sure to see the German, not watching him, apparently, but merely loitering in his vicinity.

He got more and more upon Trenwyck's nerves, until it grew so serious that Trenwyck could not look at an *alguazil* without a shudder of apprehension. They took lunch at the Hotel de la Paix, and then Trenwyck hurried poor Blinkers away to Seville and Cadiz.

They paused for breath in Cadiz, for although Zimmerman had bobbed up serenely in Seville, they missed him at the seaport. But when they had been rowed to the steamer that was to take them through the straits to Malaga, the first person they saw on gaining the deck was their Nemesis—as studiously indifferent as ever.

"I could plant a few more of those seeds where they would do us a lot of good, Tren," muttered Blinkers darkly.

"No you don't!" said Trenwyck in a tone there was no mistaking.

"But that fellow is camped on our trail! Are we going to let him chase us all over Spain?"

"I'm trying to figure out what sort of a game he's up to," Trenwyck answered.

"And while you're doing your figuring, like as not he'll land us in one of these Spanish lock-ups!"

"No. If he should try that, we'll fall back on the seeds ourselves and connect with that Peninsular Campaign. Mix us a shandygaff, Blinkers, and bring it out on deck."

Trenwyck made it a point to travel with all materials necessary for the beverage—excepting the cracked ice. According to his notion, it was the most harmless and satisfying of all the concoctions invented by man.

The Zimmerman riddle was not solved on the voyage to Malaga, nor in Malaga itself. Proceeding on to Granada, the travelers quartered themselves in the Siete Suelos, overlooking the red walls of the Alhambra.

Once more they experienced a feeling of relief—Zimmerman had not been in evidence since they left Malaga. The time had come when Trenwyck could no longer dilly-dally with the set purpose that had brought him to Spain. If he



was ever to look in on that Peninsular Campaign, it was advisable to be about it.

Trenwyck could be brave enough in a pinch, but there was something so uncanny in the way a person slipped the leash, under the spell of those little seeds, that the very thought of it gave him pause.

As for Blinkers, he was in no wise perturbed by the bizarre workings of Tapscott's prescription. Nothing in the nature of the unaccountable ever aroused his concern; only the humdrum and the ordinary could do that.

He would as cheerfully have accompanied Trenwyck to the Stone Age as to the Napoleonic era, despite his secret longings for the Nile and the times of Cleopatra. There was a mild excitement in being dogged by Zimmerman; whenever Zimmerman failed him, he fell back upon veiled hints cunningly calculated to keep their main object fresh in Trenwyck's mind.

In the afternoon of the day of their arrival at the Siete Suelos, therefore, Blinkers received with much delight Trenwyck's announcement that the long-expected moment was at hand. With tingling nerves they set about their small preparations.

A hamper, with materials for a hundred glasses of shandygaff, was not the least important part of Trenwyck's personal equipment; then there were a dozen note-books, a fountain pen and a quart bottle of ink; six 100-size boxes of Colorado Maduros, and a supply of matches, and a small bag of money in gold pieces of fifty *pesetas*. These were all compactly packed for hand carriage.

Upon Trenwyck's person were various articles, necessary and otherwise, including the major's brace of six-shooters.

Trenwyck did not inquire too searchingly into the character of Blinkers' odds and ends. He knew he had a brace of revolvers—42's, like the major's—with cartridges to fit, ample materials for cigarettes, a rawhide *riata*—relic of his Texas days—a water flask with two collapsible cups, and other things.

At the last moment Trenwyck thought best to allow Blinkers con-

siderable latitude; then, if he landed at the beginning of the century unprovided for in any essential particular, he would have no one but himself to blame for it.

A muleteer, an Asturian in a wonderful red *pañuela* and answering to the name of Anselmo, was hired for what purported to be an ordinary ramble through the hills, and the paraphernalia was loaded upon the panniers of his patient beast. The hotel bill was not settled, the residue of luggage being left in lieu of the money.

The muleteer desired to know their pleasure as to the course they should take.

"Anywhere in the hills, Anselmo," Trenwyck answered, and the little caravan got under way.

Skirting the beautiful gardens of the Generaliffe, they struck into a lonely mule path that wound upward through bleak hills along the bottom of a narrow *barranco* or ravine.

It was a wild and rugged country, bare, desolate, and suggestive of Dante's *Inferno*. Anselmo, a picturesque object in his bright *pañuela*, brigand-like cloak and laced *alfargatas*, was extremely loquacious.

He explained that they were on their way to the crest of the Mountain of the Sun, the highest elevation in the vicinity of Granada, and he was at great pains to point out the Chair of the Moor and other landmarks, and to give some account of the traditions connected with them.

Blinkers chatted with the fellow in *peon* Castilian, but Trenwyck took no part in the conversation and listened only casually. Had the gay Anselmo been Mephistopheles leading them up the Brocken he could hardly have been more heavily oppressed.

They were passing from the nineteenth century in a manner that harmonized well with their extraordinary purpose. As they proceeded, ruins of ancient structures rose thickly about them.

Ahead and to the left Trenwyck took note of a stone tower in a tolerable state of preservation. His eyes were fixed on this tower when a clatter of hoofs from behind, and a startled ex-



clamation from Blinkers, drew his attention.

Zimmerman, astride a mule, was galloping after them up the *barranco*. Mounted on horses and following him closely were two *alguazils*, their white hats bobbing excitedly as they rode.

"Vait a leetle!" shouted Zimmerman, rising in his stirrups.

The *gens d'armes* repeated the command, in their own tongue, emphasizing it with a wave of their drawn swords.

"Christopher!" growled Blinkers, reaching for his guns. "They're after us, Tren!"

"Leave your guns where they are," said Trenwyck, "and get up to that old tower as fast as you can. Unload the mule and make everything ready—I'll stay here and parley with them while you're doing it. Sing out when you've got things in shape, Blinkers!"

As Trenwyck finished he handed his friend the packet of seeds.

The Texan was all activity on the instant. Anselmo, frightened by the hostile manner of the *alguazils*, grabbed his mule and was for holding it in that spot until the officers arrived.

Blinkers lifted him from his feet and cast him aside, then took hold of the mule himself and scrambled for the tower. The fact that Trenwyck was remaining to talk with them in a manner calmed the officers and acted as an offset to these warlike proceedings.

The muleteer, rising from where he had fallen, stood inert, dividing his bewilderment between the vanishing mule and the approaching riders. Blinkers was at the tower and unloading the plunder when Zimmerman drew rein in front of Trenwyck.

"Herr Trenwyck," said the German, "you und your friend vill haff to go back by Granata, under arrest."

"Why so?" returned Trenwyck, dissembling to the best of his ability.

"You haf been suspected oof knowing someding aboutt vat has happened mit Baron von Lauderbach, by Burgos. Und it is believed dot you can also make some explanations concerning der vereabouts oof der baron's enemy, der Herr Major."

"Nonsense!" cried Trenwyck in great indignation. "Major Wickers was my friend, man! As for the baron, I never saw him in my life."

"No? Vell, your friend saw him, und aboutt der time vat he vanished away. I haf been following you, Herr Trenwyck, und in your stateroom on der boat, between Cadiz and Malaga, I findt me dot you carry two refolfers marked mit der initials oof der Herr Major. Ha! Iss it nod so? You must go mit us by Granata!"

The *alguazils* had dismounted and now came up, echoing in their own tongue the statement that he must return to the town.

"Everything's ship-shape, Tren!" came booming down the hillside from the tower.

"This is an outrage!" Trenwyck fumed; "but if you insist I suppose there is nothing for us to do but to yield."

Then in Spanish to the officers:

"I will accompany you to the ruins and explain matters to my friend. He is a little hot-headed and might make trouble for you if you went alone."

This appeared like a reasonable suggestion and they all ascended the slope, the *alguazils* still keeping on either side of Trenwyck.

Blinkers stood in the doorway of the tower, a cup in each hand.

"Here's that drink you wanted, Tren," said he, handing his friend one of the cups. "What's the matter with these lads, anyhow?" he added, sweeping his eye over Zimmerman and the *alguazils*.

Zimmerman began to talk, but Trenwyck cut into his remarks with the word "Now!" accompanied by a significant look at Blinkers.

At the same instant the two cups were lifted and drained. A sort of haze caught up everything within Trenwyck's line of vision; his ears roared as with deafening thunder, blackness descended and closed him in, the earth shook under his feet, and he felt himself hurled outward and down, down, down, until sensation failed and there was nothing but oblivion.

(To be continued.)



# THE MURDER OF EBEN CANNIFF.

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

The champion of the Doelger Crowd and what his espousal of his father's cause did toward putting a rope around his neck.

WHEN Eben Canniff was elected to the office of district attorney there was no flutter in the political chicken-roost of Denborough.

Canniff was known as a good lawyer, a supposedly good party man, and he gave a certain tone to the rest of the ticket that the most enthusiastic member of the "gang" had to admit was sadly needed.

Canniff was a silent, taciturn individual, who showed his whole mind or heart to no man; he could not be frank, but that was no reason for the party managers to believe that he was not honest.

And within three months the managers, or the "Doelger Crowd" as they were called, awoke to the terrifying fact that in the new district attorney they had an uncertain quantity.

He took his oath of office seriously, and in those first ninety days he discovered just how rank was the crowd who had misgoverned affairs for some years in Denborough.

And then, instead of winking at this matter or of making a gallery play by indicting some small boodler, he went at the fountain-head of it all, and laid evidence before the grand jury which, if true and proven in the courts, would send Mr. Graham Doelger himself "over the road."

When the local newspapers breathed these tidings with awe, and the more distant newsmongers blazoned the story broadcast with no fear of the Doelger Crowd before their eyes, Burke Doelger saw it.

Burke was at Harvard. How he managed to scrape through the examinations to get there may be better understood when I say that he was six feet three inches high, broad in proportion, and the greatest center rush the college had ever had on its eleven.

Burke was a good-natured giant, who

never took his college course seriously, but who considered athletics worth while. As he was a wealthy man's son, the college had been unable to offer him any pecuniary inducement; indeed, the board never really knew how it came to secure the prize.

Burke might have told them. There was just one person in the world whom Burke Doelger worshiped—and it wasn't a girl!

Old Graham Doelger, in his son's eyes, was the greatest man who ever lived. The boy never tired of hearing his father tell of his first struggles when he, Doelger senior, arrived from the old country.

When it came time for Burke to decide what he would do in life, Graham Doelger had heard, or read, that a college educated man had an advantage over other men, and that a diploma was an open sesame to that society which had refused to welcome the great cheese manufacturer himself.

Doelger had gone into politics and ruled the city (or thought he did, for he was too simple to see that he was used by more unscrupulous men to their own ends), but he was not satisfied. He wanted Burke, his only child, to be something better and greater.

Burke had brains enough to know that he did not come of a family that took easily to book learning; he hated books, but he said:

"All right, dad! What track do you think I'd better be trained over?"

"They all say that there's a place near Boston that's chock full of book learnin' and such," replied the old man wistfully. "It's a long ways off——"

"We'll fix that," declared Burke. "I'll take your private car and run back and forth frequently. I know about Harvard. I guess they'll have me there."

For he had already been approached



by certain alumni who had the welfare of their athletics at heart.

That is ancient history, however.

When Burke heard the stories of the new district attorney getting after Graham Doelger, the private car brought him home to Denborough faster than it ever had before.

He reached the city in time to be present in court at his father's examination!

It was terrible. To think that that white-haired old man, who looked so blighted now, should be brought on such a charge before the court of the city which he had practically governed.

Doelger had allowed his name to be used by his henchmen; money had been looted from the city treasury; if Canniff could prove this, the old man's wealth could not save him, for a wave of reform opinion was sweeping the State.

"I knew you'd come, Burke!" gasped Graham Doelger, as the big fellow slid into the seat between him and his lawyer and took the old man's hand.

"Come? You bet I'd come—from Hades, dad!" growled Burke, his eyes flashing. "Who's doing this? What does it mean?"

"It is that Canniff. I—don't—just—understand—it," faltered the old man, hanging his head.

"Does he really mean to try to indict you?" muttered Burke.

"I'm—I'm afraid so. He says he isn't after money."

"It's a dirty political trick!" gasped Burke. "He's trying to make himself solid for the gubernatorial nomination."

"I—I don't know," stammered his father.

"By God, if he does this I'll have his life!" Burke burst out, and there were many who heard him.

The court session—the first scene of a drama bound to be intensely interesting to Denborough—droned on. Influenced as he was by party prejudice and by the knowledge that he was expected to stand up for the "boss," the magistrate was finally forced by the astute district attorney to hold Graham Doelger for trial.

By the time the fight over the bail was over it was growing dusk in the corridors of the court-house.

As Eben Canniff, stern-faced, taciturn, clear-eyed as ever, came out of the court-room after most of the crowd and the prisoner himself had gone, he was suddenly confronted by a huge figure whose pallid face and blazing eyes were those of a madman.

"You scoundrel!" hissed Burke in the attorney's face. "If you don't drop this you'll be the sorriest man who ever wore boots!"

The district attorney did not change the expression of his hatchet-like countenance. He brushed by the young giant, and, without hastening his pace in the least, went down the steps and entered the old building a short distance along the street in which he had his office.

Several loungers had noted the encounter in the hallway of the court-house. They had marked Burke Doelger's attitude and noted his words.

And perhaps Eben Canniff took the threat seriously, too. When he reached his office, after putting his papers in the safe, he sat down in his hat and coat before his desk and rang up Judge Blaine.

Judge Blaine was the senior justice of the county, a man of irreproachable character, a man with whom Canniff had advised before taking this first step in the punishment of the boodling ring.

"I am threatened," he said over the 'phone to the judge. "They are mad enough to do some foolish thing, no doubt. But you have the combination of my safe, and the papers are all there. I have nothing personal against poor old Doelger; he was merely a catspaw. But his son Burke thinks I have."

That was all he said. Judge Blaine remembered it clearly afterward.

Some men in the street had seen the lawyer enter and walk up the single flight to his office. His shadow had crossed the drawn blind once or twice.

Then a bulkier shadow had darted into the doorway and disappeared in the darkness of the stair flight.

By and by the electric light which had been turned on in Canniff's office when he entered was extinguished. Nobody saw either the lawyer or the bigger figure which had followed him come out of the building.



Canniff was not a married man, and there was nobody to be worried over his non-appearance at home. But he had an office boy, and at eight o'clock the next morning that young man ran shrieking and blubbing from the old building and quickly gathered a startled crowd.

He had found Eben Canniff dead upon the floor of his office. The attorney had fallen, or been flung, from his chair.

Later it was decided that the murder must have occurred immediately after his brief talk over the 'phone with Judge Blaine. In falling, Canniff had dragged the transmitter; he had hung the receiver upon it, and still clasped the nickel standard when he fell.

There was a pool of blood on the rug; his chair had been overthrown and likewise an iron dictionary stand. From the deep gash in his head the blood had spurted upon everything for several yards around.

It was a most foul and horrible murder! Even the previously lukewarm newspapers of Denborough took up the hue and cry for the apprehension and punishment of the one who was guilty.

And before noon every soul that had arrived at years of discretion within the precincts of the city of Denborough knew who the guilty man was.

A dozen witnesses to Burke Doelger's threats in the court-house were ready with affidavits. Half as many more could swear to seeing the big fellow follow Canniff into the building where the district attorney was found slain.

Public opinion demanded that the Harvard center rush be put behind the bars of the county jail at once. There was no bail for such a creature. And the Doelger Crowd were on the run, any way.

Old Graham Doelger was shaken out of the dazed condition into which his own arrest had thrown him.

The coroner refused bail, it was true; but Graham Doelger hurried to obtain the best legal help in the State for his accused son. Had he known Burke to be guilty he would have done the same, probably, and Burke assured him that he had not killed Canniff.

To do the thing was in his heart that evening. The young fellow did not

deny that; indeed, he would have admitted it to the reporters had not his legal adviser forbidden his speaking.

Burke had followed Eben Canniff to his office, determined to force the attorney to give up the prosecution of his father. He went as far as the office door, and then fearing what he might do to the smaller and slighter man if the latter refused, the big fellow fled temptation, postponing the interview until he should be calmer.

But to make an admission like this would be fatal. It was the work of the prosecution to prove Burke's connection with the murder.

There was a bare possibility that circumstantial evidence could not convict him of murder in the first degree. In other words, there was a narrow chance for the sentence to be life imprisonment rather than death by the electric chair.

A *post mortem* examination had shown no other mark upon Canniff's body than the wound in his head. And no weapon had been found.

Indeed, the physicians did not entirely agree regarding that wound.

In itself some said the blow would not have killed the murdered man. It must have stunned him, and he had lain there during the night slowly bleeding to death.

On the other hand, other of the medical examiners declared that death must have been almost if not quite instantaneous. It was true Canniff had bled a great deal, and such wounds do not bleed much after the victim's heart has stopped its action.

The spattering of the blood, however, seemed to prove that it had spurted in great quantity from the wound, and in that case much could have been lost in a very few moments.

However, despite these small disagreements in the medical testimony, public opinion declared that Burke Doelger was guilty, and there was none to rise in denial of the charge save his broken, white-haired old father, himself an indicted criminal.

Grandy Edwards would have liked to do so. He had been Burke's chum at the local schools, and he knew just how good-hearted and noble a fellow Burke Doelger was.



When the city rang with the story of the murder Grandy was horrified. He almost fainted when his chief gave him the assignment to interview Burke in his cell in the county jail.

"My God, Leggett," gasped the reporter, "give it to some other man. Burke and I were chums."

"So much the better. He'll talk to you," said the editor, who would have sacrificed his own grandmother for a news item.

Grandison Edwards would have gone to his own hanging more cheerfully than he visited the county jail on that occasion. He sent in his name to Burke, and it was evident that Burke forgot that his old friend was a newspaper man.

It was really the first ray in the darkness—this visit of Grandy's. The latter was the only old friend who had come to see him.

Grandy felt like a thief, but he was heartily sympathetic, and came away from the jail with the idea that Burke Doelger was not guilty.

"They all believe I did it," Burke said quietly. "That is, all but poor old dad."

"Even the lawyers seem to go to work on that basis. Instead of looking for the real murderer, they are endeavoring to throw all the dust possible in the eyes of the prosecution, and base all hope of acquittal on the inability of the State conclusively to *prove me guilty*."

"My God, Grandy, I don't want to be released from a murder charge merely because they can't actually prove me guilty. I want to be honestly cleared."

This appeal made a telling point in Edwards' story when he handed it in to the *Bugle*. But the editor penciled it out.

The *Bugle* was not running the risk of appearing to back up the Doelger Crowd, now that the régime was bound to be changed and the reformers were coming in.

Secretly, however, Grandy remained impressed with the truth of Burke's statement. He believed his old friend guiltless.

But a belief based on mere sentiment would not go far in such a case.

Grandy was not an inactive fellow; his work gave him opportunities of talking with all manner of people, and he had an open sesame to all manner of queer places.

He determined to look over the scene of Canniff's murder himself, although the *Bugle's* police reporter had done that already.

Unfortunately, just as he came down to the old building in which Canniff had had his office so many years, a fire broke out in the upper hallway, and although his badge carried him past the fire lines, the department would not let him into the building until the fire was out.

Canniff's office was smoke-filled, but the fire had begun in a closet in the hall, and seemed to have no connection with the murder of the attorney, even in Grandy Edwards' suspicious mind.

He could not learn at once what had started the conflagration, so he hung about the neighborhood until after the insurance people had examined the place, and it was this hanging about that first set Grandy's mind in the groove which later had so great a bearing on the murder mystery.

Next to the old rookery that had come so near being destroyed by fire was a little café, patronized by the loungers of the neighborhood. It was a good place in which to pick up news, as Grandy knew of old.

While he was there a lineman of the electric lighting company came in and, over his beer, began to talk with the barkeeper.

Grandy sidled up and listened. You never know how much of importance may be unintentionally dropped in casual conversation.

The lineman had been sent over to repair the wires in the building where the fire had occurred. In the opinion of the fire marshal, the conflagration of the morning had been caused by a live wire the insulation of which had become worn.

"An' I reckon he's right," said the repairer. "There's a mess of wires in that closet. I've got an afternoon's job."

And while the lineman did his work in the closet he had an interested spectator in Grandy Edwards.



Grandy was as full of questions as he could stick. The lineman was inclined to be grouty, despite a big cigar the reporter gave him, before his catechizing was complete.

Burke Doelger had been held for the murder of Canniff on the coroner's finding. The public prosecutor, who had been Eben Canniff's assistant in office, was in no hurry to ask for an indictment; the finding of the coroner's jury would hold until the case against Burke was in better shape.

But to his surprise—to the amazement of the whole city, in fact—Doelger's counsel suddenly moved in the matter. Application was made for Burke's release from custody on the ground that there was no evidence to support the accusation upon which the young man had been arrested.

"They'd show better taste by waiting," was the legal consensus of opinion. "There is never anything to be gained by hurrying the public prosecutor.

"Besides, there is always a chance of something turning up to favor the accused as time goes on. Delay benefits the prisoner. His own lawyers seem to wish to railroad him through."

But the public—or that part of it which could crowd into the court-room—was still more amazed when the leading counsel for the defense, in addressing the justice, not only declared his client guiltless of the crime laid at his door, but broadly hinted that he was prepared to offer evidence proving this amazing fact!

The course of the defense seemed inexplicable. Instead of taking the aggressive in this way, it was expected that Burke's lawyers would harp upon the fact that his absolute connection with the murder could not be proven by eye-witnesses.

"The nature of this evidence you claim to possess?" queried the bench of the confident lawyer.

"I have three witnesses, if it please your honor," declared the attorney. "One is a gentleman who first suspected the facts in the case—Mr. Edwards yonder, engaged on the Denborough Bugle.

"Another is a lineman and repairing electrician in the employ of the lighting

company. The third is Dr. Abram Little"—pointing to a professional-looking man who sat beside the reporter.

"With your permission I will call Dr. Little first. Dr. Little is on the medical board of the State penitentiary. It has been his privilege to examine, and professionally pronounce dead, most of the criminals that have received the extreme penalty of the law in our State during the last ten years.

"Dr. Little has examined the body of our late district attorney, Eben Canniff. The medical testimony given at the inquest showed more than the usual discrepancies; no two of the medical examiners agreed upon all points regarding Eben Canniff's—er—taking away.

"Because my client in the heat of youthful anger threatened the unfortunate man who is now dead, he was at once accused of murder—even before it was proven that murder had been committed! Will the court hear Dr. Little?"

The court would, for it, as well as the spectators, was on the *qui vive*. It was plain that the astute attorney was working up no legal "bluff."

Under his questioning, Dr. Little showed the number of bodies he had examined following their death in the chair, offering voluminous notes regarding the state of the various organs and the condition of the flesh.

Then he said, while the dramatic tension was too great to be expressed in mere words:

"It is my opinion that the body of Eben Canniff shows in every important particular the same indications which marked the bodies of those criminals who have been electrocuted in this State during the last decade.

"There are no exterior evidences of the electric current, as I have said. But to the trained eye the manner of Mr. Canniff's death is conclusively proven.

"He was killed by the shock of an electric current passing through his body, strong enough to have killed ten men!"

The testimony of the lineman and of Grandy Edwards followed. The stories given out by Judge Blaine and the



other men whom the prosecution intended to use as witnesses in the conviction of Burke Doelger were skilfully utilized by the defense.

Judge Blaine had told how he had spoken over the 'phone with the dead district attorney, and the men in the street testified to the sudden putting out of the electric light in Canniff's office.

"That light, your honor," declared the lawyer, "was the shaded bulb over Mr. Canniff's desk.

"He sat there in his hat and coat, ready to go home, while he telephoned to Judge Blaine. As he completed his message, he hung the receiver on the shaft of the telephone standard, and, as he placed the latter on his desk, reached up to turn out his electric light.

"As the testimony of the lineman and his letter from the electric light company proves—as well as the contributory evidence of the recent fire in the building and the report of the city fire marshal on the same—the worn insulation of the lighting wire in the closet on the floor with Mr. Canniff's office doubtless caused a grounding of the current, and the metal trimmings of

the globe over the dead man's desk were heavily charged with the fluid.

"As Canniff turned out his light he touched this metal. Instantly his body short-circuited the electric current, his right hand still grasping the telephone standard. In falling to the floor his head struck the dictionary stand and was cut.

"Your honor, I ask that my client be set free at once. There was no murder. Eben Canniff's death was caused by an act of God, with which is found some contributory negligence by man.

"The death of our brilliant district attorney, Eben Canniff, is a public misfortune. He undoubtedly made enemies by his determination to root out the evil of misgovernment that has sapped the political strength of our community. However, to hold my client an hour under this awful charge, and after these proofs are laid before the court, is an injustice that I do not believe my brother"—with a bow to the public prosecutor—"will countenance."

He sat down. Half an hour later Burke walked from the court-house a free man, with his broken and white-haired father leaning upon his arm.

## THE HOODOO RANCH.\*

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS.

An inheritance that was unexpectedly come by, miraculously reached, and which staggered its possessor when finally viewed.

### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

RICHARD WALLACE is a young college graduate thrown upon his own resources in New York. He has failed in various pursuits, and has reached his last cent. At this crisis he is notified that an uncle has died, bequeathing him a cattle ranch in the wilds of Arizona.

Wallace works his way to New Orleans, and there seeks to get money enough from the ranch to reach Arizona. He receives discouraging news from the foreman, Miguel, but no cash in reply to his letter. Taking his last few dollars to buy a supply of food, he stows away on a freight train loaded with cotton for San Francisco, California.

### CHAPTER V.

MY TROUBLES SEEM ONLY TO BEGIN.

BEING in total darkness, I could not tell the hours. I slept well, on top of a bale of cotton, and was awakened by the jar of getting under way.

The rumbling continued; there were jolts and jars, the noise of couplings, and then a steady motion and rumble on the track that indicated we were going forward.

The only way I had of judging time was by my hunger.

\*This story began in the July issue of THE ARGOSY, which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 10 cents.



I forgot to say that one of my purchases was of necessity a can-opener. Whenever I felt hungry I would take a can, trusting to luck whether it was salmon or beef, and open it, eating all I wanted.

When I was hungry again I judged about six hours had passed.

When I was sleepy I lay down to rest, and when I awoke, according to my calculation, about eight hours had passed.

So it was, according to my calculation, I had been rumbling along about three days. I was growing stiff and cramped, and wished I could run about and ease up my muscles.

Then there came some more jolts and jars. We were shifting or being put into another train. I didn't care. I knew we were going to San Francisco.

Again there came the steadiness of onward motion, and the speed seemed greater than before.

We had gone on thus for two meals, my only clock and calendar, when there was a terrific shock that hurled me against the front end of the car, and then another, and a crunching, grating sound, and before I could realize what had happened the car swung to one side, swayed from right to left, and then turned turtle.

I heard the splintering of wood, but the weight of the cotton as the car stood on its head almost killed me, and I became unconscious.

When at last I recovered consciousness I was not lying under the cotton in the top of the car, but on top of it. The cotton had been disarranged, and the car was light.

I crawled to the edge of the load and found that the strain from rolling down some embankment or falling from a trestle had sprung the door. One bale of cotton was missing.

I reached out and got my jute bag, with what was left of my eatables, and worked my way down to the door. I lost my hold on the cotton and slipped. I fell on the missing bale of cotton, which had fallen under the door.

The air was warm and dry. I took a few deep breaths to fill out my lungs after the stifling air of the car and then looked about me.

Three cars lay there, mine alone right

side up. One was on its side and the third was completely upside down.

There had evidently been a rear-end collision, for the back of the last car was smashed. The platform was gone and the iron ladder twisted into all kinds of shapes.

The track was about fifty feet above me, and the bank down which the cars had plunged was torn and plowed up by the weight of the loads.

I clambered to the top and gazed upon the veriest scene of desolation it had ever been my lot to look upon. There was not a house in sight, not a barn—nothing that looked like a habitation.

Acres of withering grass was all I could see, waving in a wind that was hot enough to bake it without the aid of a blistering sun.

I looked as far as I could see in every direction and could not make out a sign of anything alive.

"Well," I said to myself, "I am no worse off if I can reach some kind of town and learn where I am. This is not Louisiana, that is certain. It's a cinch I'm in Texas."

I stood for a moment longer contemplating the scene.

"Funny they left the cars," I said. "But there's nobody here to steal the cotton. I suppose they will send a gang. Now, then, which way to the nearest station? If I go back I am going farther away from Mackinville. If I go forward I draw nearer Arizona."

Forward I started, my jute bag over my shoulder. It was some lighter than it had been. I wondered what I should have done if the stuff had not lasted till I reached San Francisco.

I trudged on and on and grew parched with thirst. I saw no signs of water until I had gone perhaps five miles. Then I perceived a few trees ahead, and trudged on joyfully, for the lines on which they grew told me they were beside a little stream.

And I found it so. I discovered a shady spot under a tree right at the side of a brook, and sat down to eat. First I quenched my thirst, and then I opened a can of beef and a can of tomatoes. Putting salt and pepper on these, I made a first-class meal and drank my fill of the sweet water.



I washed the two cans thoroughly, filled them with water, and journeyed on.

I walked, I suppose, about four miles more, drinking from the cans when thirsty. Then I saw ahead a shanty on the side of the track. Going some distance farther, I saw a house and a little store.

"At last," I said to myself joyfully, "I am in luck. I won't have to sleep out in the desert to-night. Wonder what place that is."

The first building I reached was the little box-like affair near the track. The door stood open, and looking inside I saw a man of about forty sitting there with his feet on a box and a pipe in his mouth.

"Do, stranger. Tramped fur?" was his greeting.

"Not very far," I answered; "only from the wreck."

"Holy smoke! Did they leave you behind?"

"Yes. But I don't mind a little thing like that."

"Come in. I'll flag a train fer ye."

"But I have lost everything. My baggage and money and ticket are all in the train."

This was a random shot, for I did not know whether it was a passenger train or another freight that hit us.

"Wall, ye kin git them any time. I'll explain ter the conductor."

I began to feel as if I had been hurled into luck after all.

"What place is this?" I asked.

"This yar place? Why, this is Green's Corners."

"Are you the station-master?"

"Wall, sorter. Ye see this ain't nothin' but a flag station. I'm all they is to it."

"I see a store. Whose is that?"

"Oh, that store over yer? That's Green's."

"Post office?"

"Yep. Mail oncet a week."

"Who lives in that house over there on the knoll?"

"Oh, that one over there? Green lives thar."

"Is that the only house around?"

"Oh, they's some farms along ther road."

"I see. And Green keeps the store. Where do you live?"

"I live over thar in Green's house."

He took aim at a huge fly and its life went out in a flood of tobacco juice.

"Oh, board with him, eh?"

"Nope. Ain't rich enough to board nowhar. I'm jest Green."

"Oh, I understand now," I said. "And is Green's Corners in Texas?"

"Yep. Jest a few miles this side er Hewsting."

I did not ask him which side of Houston we were on, but wondered.

"You look like a likely feller," he said. "What you carryin' that bag fer?"

"I found it down the track. Some tramp had it, of course. I found some canned goods in it. There are cans of beef, some of salmon, and some of tomatoes."

"Do tell! Wall, wall! Pretty good livin' fer a tramp! Must ha' stole 'em."

"Yes. The cans are not touched. They could go right on your shelves, Mr. Green."

"By gol, they could! Don't ye want 'em?"

"No. You see, I don't know the country very well. I am going out to take a look at a big ranch I own in Arizona. You don't think there will be any trouble about the train, do you, Mr. Green?"

"Naw. 'Tain't like askin' fer a ride. You paid fer a ride, an' ther company went an' dumped you off in the desert. I'll fix that."

"Was the passenger engine hurt much?"

"Bunged up pretty well. Yes, bunged up, but she could go on. They'll send a gang back after the cars."

"About how far is this from Arizona?" I asked the accommodating Mr. Green.

"I d'now exact. It's a long way."

"Will there be a passenger train to-day?"

"Not a good one. Not yourn. You jest wait to my house over night and let me fix yer up."

I accompanied Mr. Green to his store. Apparently nothing had been disturbed in some time, for everything was covered



with dust. But dust gets into everything down here, and I doubt man's ability to keep it out for one day. I enjoyed a bountiful supper and found Mrs. Green an affable and pleasant woman.

We chatted during the evening, heard a local go by, and Mr. Green remarked that a freight would be due soon. This was their life, listening for trains that seldom stopped.

Bacon and creamed potatoes, good coffee and a great plate of luscious berries with cream made a fair breakfast. At ten o'clock the passenger came along, and Mr. Green flagged it. The conductor wanted to know what was up.

"Yer see, conductor," said Mr. Green, "this gent was on the express what run inter that freight yistiddy. He got out ter look, en ther durn thing went off an' left him.

"He walked here an' stayed all night. He had first-class passage with cowpons fur meals an' sleeper. But everything is in that train. He ain't got no money ner ticket ner nothin'."

"That's a bad predicament to be in out here," said the conductor, smiling. "I suppose about ten thousand damages might satisfy you?"

I knew this was a feeler.

"I don't want damages," I replied, "so much as I do haste. I am wanted at Mackinville, Arizona, where I own extensive properties. I really ought to be there now."

"I guess the company will stand by what I do," he said. "I have room, so come with me. I'll drop you at Mackinville."

Luxury, thou art a jewel.

I received a Pullman seat, a ticket for a sleeper, and a meal check.

"Make yourself perfectly at home," said the conductor. "You are as welcome to all the comforts just the same as though you had bought that ticket. My report will cover that."

"Richard," I said, as the train sped on, "once in awhile the devil takes care of his own. He seems to be a friend of yours."

There was no more trouble after that. I lived sumptuously and slept well. And eventually, having ridden through cactus, mesquite and drifting sands, the

train slowed up at a little station where I knew an express would not stop.

"This is Mackinville," said the conductor. "Good-by. Hope you have had a pleasant ride."

"Very, and I thank you," I said.

For once I had told the truth.

I alighted from the car and looked around.

Mackinville seemed to be pretty much on the straggle; the streets were crooked, and there were more streets than were necessary for the accommodation of the number of houses.

There was a general store, and the post office was in that. In the next building there was a dentist, and next a drug store. Then a one-story affair, with the sign on the door:

JAFFRY & JONES, ATTORNEYS.

I walked into the office. A tall, raw-boned man sat in a wooden chair, reading a legal paper.

"I am Richard Wallace," I said. "Is this Mr. Jaffry?"

"No. I'm Jones. Glad to see you, Mr. Wallace. Your hand. Glad to see you. Jaffry is out to lunch. He'll be back. Sit down."

Mr. Jaffry came in soon after my arrival. Jones introduced me.

"Ha, ha! Did you get bit on cotton?" laughed Jaffry.

"Cotton! I never speculate in cotton."

"See that! Hear that, Jones! He never does. What did I tell you? That fellow in New Orleans was an impostor."

Then he told me all about it.

"I would never think of asking a favor of a stranger," I said.

We got down to business pretty quickly.

I cared little to hear how my uncle died. I was satisfied that he had died at all. I wanted to get out to my ranch where I could breathe like a free man, the owner of all he surveys.

I gave them the letter, the certificate and my father's picture.

"By Jove, Jones, that looks enough like old Tom to be himself when he was young," said Mr. Jaffry.

The evidence was sufficient and Jaffry said:

"Mr. Jones will take you out to the



ranch. By the way, Mr. Wallace, you will perhaps want a legal adviser. Many do around here. We should be pleased to have you for a client."

"Then count me as one," I said. "If I need a lawyer, Mr. Jaffry, I shall call on you."

"Thank you."

A boy brought a buckboard to the door. It was drawn by two Texas ponies, tough, wiry, but not at all handsome.

"The proper papers will be prepared to-morrow, Mr. Wallace, and we will drive out to see you."

"All right, Mr. Jaffry; I'll be on the lookout for you."

I got into the buckboard after Jones. I asked him all sorts of questions, eliciting the following information: My ranch contained two thousand acres. It lay to the westward of Mackinville about twenty miles. Mackinville was the nearest post office, though there were a few small villages between.

The ponies trotted away at a good gait. The road was dusty. I was parched again. The air was too dry after a life in New York. My throat filled with dust.

We passed mesquite groves and great cacti grouped together as if for mutual protection.

As we decreased the distance between us and my ranch, the scenery grew more desolate. We reached a place where there was not a house in sight. Grass was growing and cattle were nibbling at it. But it was withered with the baking sun and had little if any nourishment in it.

There was a line of mesquite with a break in it. We drove through the break.

Here was a small adobe dwelling, one story high, big enough for two rooms if the rooms were very small.

Desolation was rife. Not a bit of water, not a spear of grass that had not been blighted by the heat.

"This," said Jones grandiloquently, waving his hand all around him, "is your splendid property. This house the old man built himself."

My heart sank down into the heel of one of my shoes. This—this vista of drifting sand and smothered grass—my

fortune! This pile of mud my home! Not a soul to speak to!

I got down from the buckboard and swallowed hard. It was tough. The old fool did have a grudge against me, after all.

I thought of New York with its brilliant lights, the display of fine dresses on the avenues, the places of amusement, the sparkling conversation at the Press Club, to which I still belonged, and then—miles upon miles of desert, a lot of scrawny, starving cattle, a few sheep that were dying, and a mud hut to live in—alone.

I had ten cents in my pocket.

"You're a lucky man, Wallace," said Jones. "You've got the biggest ranch in Arizona."

"It looks to me," I said as I contemplated the vast waste, "that my uncle has left me all of Arizona. Who owns what's left?"

Jones laughed and drove away, leaving me alone—alone with my big ranch near Mackinville, Arizona.

## CHAPTER VI.

### I STUMBLE UPON A MYSTERY.

I WATCHED the disappearing buckboard as Jones drove down the lane to the mesquites, and when he had turned into the main road I laughed a grim, sardonic laugh.

"At last," I said, "I am monarch of all I survey."

For a moment the spirit of desolation seized me. But I was not of a despairing nature, and soon rallied.

"There is this much about it," I told myself; "Richard, the old man left you this ranch probably because he didn't have anything any worse to leave. I wonder if he planted a curse anywhere around here. The future will tell that. Now, Richard, explore your magnificent palace."

To tell the truth, I was somewhat agreeably surprised when I entered the place. From the outside the house looked more like a heap of sun-baked mud than a habitation. The entrance had no door, but was simply an irregular opening so low that I had to stoop to get inside.



This led to a room larger than the entire thing seemed to be from an outer view. In this room there was a bed and two wooden chairs and a small table. On this table there were a few old papers on agriculture and grazing.

In a corner there was a mesquite bush cut to form a sort of hall-tree, and on this there hung a coat, a sombrero, an old rifle, and a pistol. Near the tree stood a pair of heavy boots.

The next room was about the same in size, and in this there was a table and two wooden chairs of the same make as those in the first room. Around the walls were pegs on which hung sides of bacon, a couple of hams, bunches of sage, dried apples, and other things I did not recognize.

In one corner of this room, the kitchen, a crude attempt had been made to build a closet in a corner. This was a triangular affair, with a door. On opening this, I discovered some dishes, knives, forks, and spoons.

A few pots and pans were hanging near the old cook-stove that stood at one side, its chimney being a hole in the roof through which the stove-pipe went up straight.

The spirit of adventure that seemed to go with the rest of my experience now settled upon me and I began to relish the joke my uncle had played on me.

I had gone to a terrific lot of trouble to reach that ranch. I had worked like a slave on a ship; had smothered in cotton; had lied; owed Vidal three weeks' board; and now that I was here I determined to make the best of it.

"At any rate," I said, "I must have some cattle and sheep. If the worst comes, I can eat them."

What bothered me was I saw no men. I wondered where Miguel, my superintendent, was.

I was hungry. I hustled around, and back of the house found a small pile of gnarled pine sticks unfit for anything but firewood. I took some of these and found an old paper, and soon had a roaring fire.

I sliced some bacon, and found some potatoes and cooked a couple of them. I found coffee, tea, and sugar. Half a can of condensed milk was also in the cupboard.

"I'll get along, I reckon," I said to myself.

Supper over, it was growing dark and I began to feel rather lonesome. I lit my pipe, for with all my poverty I was never without a little tobacco, and went outside to smoke.

I took a chair with me, and tilting against the adobe wall, leaned back and contemplated my future life.

"It isn't going to be the most hilarious in the world," I said to myself. "But it is a living, and I'll wring something from this old grass bakery before I am through with it."

I heard the soft patter of an unshod horse, and turning saw a dark-featured fellow, apparently about my own age, galloping toward me.

"You take him easy, that life, señor," he said.

"I feel as if I could take anybody's life without any trouble at all," I replied. "Live around here?"

He laughed, showing two rows of white teeth.

"Yes, I live here. But you! Señor, you make free."

"Well, confound it, the thing is mine, so I suppose I can lean against it. Everything seems to be lean around here."

"Ho! Then you are Señor Wallace!"

"Well, I suppose I am a señor to you. I own this blooming ranch, any way."

"Good! Ver' good. I am Miguel Sebastian. I was superintendent for the old man."

"Oh, you are Miguel, eh? Well, let me congratulate you on the fact that you speak English a heap better than you write it."

"*Si*, señor. I talk with men and learn, but I never went to school."

"So that's it. Well, Miguel, get off that horse, get a chair, and let's converse happily upon the situation. Let us commune with each other about cattle and sheep, and sing a ditty about 'the desert life is the life for me.' Come, Miguel. Light up and talk."

He was applying a match to a cheroot.

He let the horse wander where it would and got a chair, placing it near mine.



"Are you the only man on the ranch?" I inquired.

"Oh, no, señor. Many. My brother, he is in charge of the horses and sheep in the hills. His name is Manuel. Then Jose Nicko, he is with three boys down with the cattle, and I am there also. But I see to all, señor; I see to all."

"I have no doubt you are faithful. How many head of cattle have we?"

"Two thousand."

"That's a lot. How many sheep?"

"One thousand."

"Wow! How many horses?"

"Five hundred ponies."

"Good. How many hogs?"

"No hogs only a half-breed who eats everything. His name it is Dumfer. He is no good. He is with Manuel."

"Then the ranch is really worth something."

"Oh, yes; ver' good ranch for Arizona. Some time much rain, then grass good an' wool good. The cattle they get fat. Good money then. This year, no rain, wool coarse an' short. No good. Wait till rain come, then be good."

"Any neighbors?"

"Such a way, like that," he said, pointing toward the north, "Mr. Bethune. Ver' nice man; ver' nice. An' the señorita ver' nice."

"How old is this very nice girl?"

"Oh, some time twenty; maybe twenty-two."

I looked around me again. If this wasn't a dandy place for a girl twenty-two years old, I was willing to swallow a lump of my own ranch. I had swallowed some, any way.

"Look here," I said, "I can't find any drinking water."

"Not here. Old man he never drank any water. He get whisky down to Mackinville."

"That was his drink, eh? But what about making coffee and tea. I found in a barrel outside some water that looked and tasted like stagnant rain water. I used some. It wouldn't hurt after it was boiled."

"Old man he carry water from the creek. Over there. Yes, deep, some places. Big falls. Pretty place."

"We must improve that. That won't do. Where do you sleep?"

"We got a little shack down in meadow. Yes, logs. We live in that."

"I think you had better move in with me. Then we can talk over matters evenings."

"As you say, señor."

He rode away about nine, and being weary after my day of excitement and the long ride, I went to bed. I slept like a log, scarcely stirring. Once I heard a peculiar cry, as of a dog. I learned afterward that it was the cry of a hungry coyote.

In the morning while I was getting breakfast I heard the clatter of hoofs again, and went to the door. It was Miguel, and he had a fine young pony with him, saddled and bridled.

"You take a look at your ranch, señor?" he asked. "I brought a pony for you."

"I thank you, Miguel. Have you had your breakfast?"

"Yes, I have had breakfast, señor. Shall I wait for you?"

"Yes."

I swallowed my breakfast, got on the pony's back and we started off.

I shall not go into a wearisome detailed account of my long, dusty ride over my possessions. It was in reality a vast domain. Had it been well watered, undoubtedly it would make its owner rich.

There was about as much prospect of making it better as there was of carrying it to New York.

For a mile on the south the line ran straight, marked by pine posts painted white, set at such a distance from one another that from any one you could see another in either direction. Then there was a peculiar turn and it ran on a slant to the north, and the northern boundary was irregular.

The eastern boundary was the main road that led from Mackinville to Prescott, having turned from a westerly to a northerly direction at Santa Rosa.

My ranch comprised all sorts of land. There were hills covered with pine. There was a gorge through which a pretty stream tumbled and foamed. The gorge was about a hundred feet deep in some places and in others less or more. The stream, so Miguel told me, emptied into the Colorado.



I saw my herds, and though they were thin they did not seem to be in a weak condition.

I left Miguel talking to Manuel, his brother, and jogged toward a house I saw not a great distance from my border. Miguel told me it was where Mr. Bethune lived, and I wanted to get acquainted with my nearest neighbor.

As I clattered up to the door, a girl with her face out of sight in a huge sunbonnet was just coming from the door with a pail, evidently going after water. She heard my horse, gave a startled glance, and ran back into the house.

The house itself was a much more comfortable looking one than mine. It was built of logs, and very substantially built, too.

In a moment a tottering old man came to the door. In his hand there was a pistol.

"Not going to shoot before you know me, are you?" I asked as I dismounted.

The old man looked at me a moment with dim eyes.

"Thank God!" he cried. "I thought you were De Paro."

Then he turned and tottered back into the house.

"Eunice! Eunice!" he said. "It is not De Paro. Thank God!"

"But to-morrow—to-morrow! Oh, my God!" I heard the girl sobbing.

"It is evident, Richard," I said to myself, "that there is something radically wrong here, and especially with De Paro. I am not acquainted with Señor De Paro, but whoever he is he is *persona non grata* in this place. Well, do we go in, or return home to wonder what the trouble is?"

I stood debating with myself when the old man came out.

"Stranger," he said in a trembling voice, "won't you come in?"

I tied my pony to a stake near the door and entered. The girl had cast aside her sunbonnet, and I saw that she had been weeping. Not merely the little show of emotion she had exhibited upon my arrival, but there were tear stains and pale cheeks and other evidences that some great trouble was on her mind.

The old man was just the same. His dim old eyes were filled with tears when

he looked at the girl, and his voice broke into a quaver every few minutes.

I could not, as a stranger, ask what was the trouble, as they were evidently trying to keep it from me. Still I knew that nothing short of a tragedy would cause so much emotion.

The conversation was short, and I introduced myself first, saying that Miguel had informed me they lived there.

When I left, the old man followed me to the door.

He stood wringing his hands as if in agony, and whispered:

"Will you be at home in the morning, sir—or perhaps this evening?"

"This evening, any way," I answered.

"Don't speak so loud—she will hear. I will come and see you before dark. May I?"

"I shall be glad to have you come at any time," I said.

Greatly amazed at what seemed to be an indication of some terrible anxiety on the part of the old man and the girl, I rode homeward.

"Any way," I said, "Eunice is a pretty girl, Eunice is a pretty name, and I'll do anything the old man wants me to. There! What a fierce resolve!"

I laughed, and got myself a bite to eat.

## CHAPTER VII.

I LISTEN TO A STRANGE STORY AND SPEND A TERRIBLE MOMENT.

I WAS sitting with my chair tilted back against my beautiful adobe house about half-past four, when I saw the old man coming along the road. He was driving a pony to a buckboard, and through the mesquite I could watch his bent old form. His head would every few minutes drop on his breast and then he would shake it sadly.

Reaching the mesquite gate, he turned in and I rose to greet him.

"You kept your word, Mr. Bethune," I said.

He stepped down from the buckboard and left the pony to his own devices.

"Ah, Mr. Wallace," he began, "if you had carried the load that I have had on my heart for two years, and had seen



to-day the first frank and manly face, the first face you could trust, in all that time, you would keep your word also. Yes, thank you, I will sit down. I am not as strong as I was once."

That was an evident fact. The poor old fellow sank into a chair, and to my utter amazement burst into tears.

"Poor Eunice! Poor Eunice!" he moaned. "A ruined life! I see it! A life of degradation and misery with an evil man! Oh, my God!"

"Mr. Bethune," I said, "don't take it so hard. If you wish to tell me anything, let me hear it. Perhaps I can help you out."

"Ah! Perhaps you can. Let me ask you, sir, are you a married man?"

"No, sir," I answered with a laugh. "I have not met the lady yet—that is, to know it."

"I am an old man. My head is full of fanciful ideas, but you must excuse me," he said. "You would be better married."

I laughed. Putting my hand in my pocket, I felt the ten-cent piece, all I possessed. I was going to show it to him, but he broke in.

"I came to tell you a story, Mr. Wallace—to ask your help, your advice, and perhaps a sacrifice. I am bewildered—strangely bewildered. But let me begin. You will see that there is enough at this time almost to make me insane."

I filled and lit my pipe again, and told him to proceed.

"Mr. Wallace," he began, "up to four years ago I was a happy man, living with my son, his wife, and Eunice, their daughter, in a pretty home in Mississippi. My son was named John, and my own name is William.

"John became dissatisfied with conditions there, and having read of the enormous profits in sheep-raising here, he came out and purchased the ranch upon which we live now. Of course you see the land is of poor quality, owing to lack of water. We had no money, and could not improve the natural conditions. My son's wife could not endure the loneliness and soon pined away. After that, my son was not the same. He took to drink and spent much of his time in Mackinville.

"There he met companions that were

not good for him, and at times they would come out to the ranch and all day Sunday would drink and play cards. My son grew so bad that I was afraid Eunice would sicken and die, she wept so much.

"Then, two years ago, the awful thing happened. Among the boon companions my son had found at Mackinville was a Mexican named De Paro. Frederick De Paro was perhaps the worst of the lot. He was not a bad-looking fellow, but a dare-devil, unscrupulous when it was necessary to get somebody out of his way—in fact, a perfect scoundrel.

"He was apparently rich, and it was said that he got his wealth by stealing cattle. At any rate, it was known that he was the chief of a gang of Mexicans that infested the border, always making trouble. Well, one Sunday they were all out at the ranch, six of them, drinking heavily and betting high. My son had already lost his little savings.

"Among the others was the sheriff. He was a rough man, but not a wicked one. But he traveled with a bad lot, and he, too, drank a great deal. Toward night the game was almost a frenzied one. Horses and cattle were wagered on the cards, and one man wagered his farm and lost. A week later he shot himself.

"My son John had lost all control of himself, but De Paro never did that. He was always cool and calculating, and never lost an opportunity that showed itself.

"I had sent Eunice away to the front of the house so that she would not hear their coarse, vile language. I watched them, for I did not know what they would do.

"‘I am out!’ I heard my son say. ‘I am busted!’

"‘You’ve got a ranch and plenty of cattle,’ said De Paro.

"You see, Mr. Wallace, the ranch and stock were all mine. He could not bet that.

"‘Well,’ I heard De Paro say to my son, ‘if you can’t bet the place, bet the girl. I like her. She is pretty, and I want a wife, any way. Bet the girl. I’ll put up a thousand dollars against her.’



"My son eagerly leaped at such an offer because he was drunk.

"'I protest!' I shouted. 'It is not legal.'

"There was a loud, insulting laugh. Of course they did not care whether it was legal or not.

"It was a most exciting game, and my son lost.

"Oh, God, how my old heart throbs now as I recall the scream that Eunice gave when John told her she had been lost to De Paro!

"She fell on her knees and implored him not to sacrifice her to such a man. But whisky had got the best of John, and he would not relent.

"There was a brother of De Paro in the crowd. He and John were always having words. The younger De Paro did not like John.

"They had words that day, and my son drew his pistol and shot young De Paro dead.

"At first there was consternation. But the coolness of the living De Paro was such that the others became calm. The sheriff was going to arrest John, but De Paro stopped him.

"'Wait,' he said; 'let me have a few minutes' speech with Eunice.'

"At that moment there was a clatter of hoofs and two horsemen rode up. They were United States officers, and they wanted De Paro for a crime. They covered him with revolvers, took him away, and when they saw the dead body of his brother they asked who committed the murder. The sheriff showed his badge.

"'I've got him all right,' said he.

"'Gentlemen, I know what you want me for,' said De Paro. 'You've got the drop on me, and I will go. But first I want to talk to the girl who is to be my wife. Just a moment.'

"'Hurry up,' said one of the officers.

"De Paro went in where Eunice was crying herself sick and tried to calm her. He said he would be kind to her. He said the marriage could not be at once, any way, for two men were going to take him on a long journey for awhile. It was for cattle-stealing on the Indian reservations.

"He called for a pen and some paper and he wrote. Oh, do you know what

he wrote? He wrote to the effect that she was to be his wife; that her father had killed his brother, and that unless she agreed to marry him the day he returned he would shoot her father, her grandfather—that's myself—and carry her off to Mexico, where he would keep her so she could never escape.

"The poor girl was in terror. She was white and trembling, and the thought of her father being hanged for murder impelled her to do the bidding of De Paro. She signed that paper, promising to become his wife on the day he was liberated."

The old man stopped and a sob broke from him. I sat silent, pondering upon the question whether such a promise was good for anything or not.

"Did your son die?"

"That, sir, I do not know. He got worse, and one day went to Mackinville and never came back. We have not given him up for dead."

The story had stirred me greatly. I knew the kind of man De Paro must be, without soul or conscience, and to picture pretty Eunice Bethune the slave of such a one was revolting.

"Now, Mr. Bethune," I said, "tell me just what you think I can do to help you and Eunice."

"Ah! My head is old and full of fancies. I did think something when I saw how manly, how honest you looked, and how strong. But it would be too great a sacrifice."

"No sacrifice would be too great if by it I could insure your happiness," I said.

"What I thought, in my old head," came the quavering voice, "was if you should take the right to protect Eunice. I am old. One day, not far from now, I shall lie down and never wake. Eunice then must fight the world alone, which she could not do. She is a good girl, educated and pretty. She would make a good wife. I thought if you should marry her before De Paro came he would be afraid of you when he would not of an old man like me."

I was stunned for a minute. This was certainly a strange request, yet as I looked upon the wild surroundings, the uncivilized setting in which the girl was placed, I could not wonder at it.



"Mr. Bethune, I am a poor man," I said. "I have this ranch and just ten cents to my name."

"You have a big ranch. At your age it ought to make no difference whether you have money or not. Eunice is a hard worker. When I die she will have that ranch of a thousand acres. Yours is two thousand. You will be rich enough, you two."

"But," I stammered, "would Eunice consent?"

"Would she? Consent to marry you? When she knows that she must marry De Paro to-morrow? If she does not, she will be worse off. I shall be killed, but I care little for that. My time has almost come. But with you I know my Eunice would be safe."

"If Eunice wishes it to be so, Mr. Bethune, I will do it," I said.

I had become so reckless that I was ready for anything.

I saw some difficulty ahead, but at least the marriage would be legal. It would give me the right to protect the girl if anything did happen to the old man.

At my reply his eyes closed and a bland smile of happiness came upon his face. He slowly rose to his feet. He held out a trembling hand to me and I took it.

He tried to speak, but his voice failed. He swayed with glad emotion or weakness, and I tried to help him into the buckboard. I heard him make a peculiar noise.

I looked at him. His eyes were staring at me, and he was evidently trying to say something. An ashen gray color had spread over his face.

"It will be all right, Mr. Bethune," I said.

I was alarmed at his condition.

He understood. The poor, worn-out heart gave way and he sank back against me—dead.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### I HUNT UP THE WRONG MAN.

HERE was a predicament that I had not bargained for. I now had my work cut out for me, and no mistake. It was growing dark, and Eunice was alone. I supposed they had men on the ranch, the

same as I had, but none to protect her at the house.

I wanted Miguel then worse than I had wanted money in New Orleans. But Miguel was nearly a mile away.

Manuel was nearer. I could reach him by making a *détour* to the west on my way to Bethune's house. But I could not take the old man very well on the buckboard, for it was not a large one, and the idea was not pleasant.

I carried him inside my house and placed him in my own bed. Then I caught my pony and, leaping into the saddle, galloped off.

I found Manuel and spoke to him at a distance.

"Manuel!" I called.

"*Si, señor!*"

"Take a man with you, get Miguel, and go to the house. Mr. Bethune is there, dead."

For a moment he stood and stared. Then with a wild rush he caught a horse and, without saddle or bridle, started on a wild career to the southward. Another of my pony herders followed, and I went on my way to Bethune's. Eunice was standing in the door as I rode up, and her face showed great anxiety.

"Mr. Wallace, have you seen my grandfather?" she asked.

I dismounted before I replied.

"Yes, Miss Bethune," I said, "he came over to see me."

"About—about—"

"Yes, about to-morrow."

"What did he say?"

"Sit down and I will tell you."

She sat down and looked at me in a way that seemed almost terror-stricken.

I repeated just what the old man had told me, and she said it was all true.

"Now, Miss Bethune, he asked me to assume the right to protect you."

"How can you?"

"Well, his idea was for me to ask you to be my wife. If you consented, it would give me the right. If you did not consent, of course I could do nothing any more than any friend."

She shrank from me.

"But I do not know you. You do not know me."

"I explained all that to Mr. Bethune. But he seemed to think it was the only way out."



"And you?"

"Well, as for me, I am the gainer, since I get a wife. I do not ask you, thinking that you wish to marry a man you have seen only a few minutes and never heard of before. That would be preposterous. But our ranches are close together, you knew my uncle, and if you like you can get my record from New York.

"On the other hand, there is De Paro, and now you have no one but me to rely on."

"Yes; grandfather is old. He cannot do much."

"Miss Bethune, when your grandfather had my promise he attempted to get into his buckboard. But the excitement was too great, and he sank into my arms, dead."

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she moaned, placing her hand against her heart. "Alone! Alone! Helpless and alone!"

"You see now it becomes even more necessary. You cannot remain alone in your house. Somebody must protect you. I do not wish to force myself upon you, Miss Bethune. If you prefer not to enter into the matter at all, you must tell me so. I had not thought of such a marriage. Perhaps I might in time to come, but until your grandfather asked me pointblank I had no such thought. Now, think about it a moment. Take time."

"Oh, take me to grandfather!" she sobbed.

I saw then where I had blundered. I had ridden my horse and left the buckboard at my place.

"Can you manage with this saddle?" I asked her.

"Yes; anything to get to poor grandfather!"

I assisted her, she arranged her skirts, and we started. We reached the adobe house, having had very little conversation on the way.

Miguel and Manuel stood before the door.

"This ver' bad news, señor!" said Miguel. "What happened?"

"Why, he came to see me, and became somewhat excited, and, as he went to go, dropped dead."

"It was no quarrel?"

"No; nothing like that. It was per-

haps more a sudden relief from tension than anything else—a reaction."

Miguel nodded, but probably did not understand.

Eunice had rushed into the house, and I went slowly after her. I heard her sobbing and saw her down on her knees kissing the dead man's hands.

"Grandfather! If it was your wish! If you said so! I will consent! Anything, dear grandfather, to be free from De Paro!"

I went over and stood by her side, with my hand resting on her brown hair.

Finally she rose and looked at me.

"Mr. Wallace," she said, and her voice did not tremble as much as it had, "I see nothing before me but darkness. If my grandfather trusted you, I may do so. It seems a strange thing to do, but now I am all alone, and this is not the place to be left alone. I could perhaps sell the ranch and go elsewhere, but nowhere would I be free from De Paro. I have no one to whom I could go. I must place my confidence in you."

"It shall not be misplaced," I answered. "I swear it at your grandfather's side."

She began to weep again.

"You must be calm," I said. "We have much to think of. In the first place, you must not go back to your house to-night. I am going to start for Mackinville, and will not be back till some time to-morrow. You see, I can trust my own men, Miguel and Manuel. They could not go to your house and protect you, because they would have no authority to keep any one out. Here they have that authority, even to shooting, if I am absent. So you remain here to-night, and they will take care of you."

"If any one should come to see you to-night, they would go to your house. Not finding you, they might return to Mackinville or wherever they came from, and not molest this place at all. Don't you think it better for you to remain?"

"I cannot think," she said. "I will do whatever you advise."

"That is settled, then. Now, Miguel, you and Manuel remain here to-night and keep watch. Permit no one to see Miss Bethune. If any person, I care



not who, tries to force his way in, shoot him at the door. Do you understand, señors?"

"Si, señor."

Once more mounting my pony, I dashed away.

It was with a strange tumult within me that I rode to Mackinville about ten o'clock that night. The owner of a big ranch on which three thousand five hundred animals were slowly starying to death, with ten cents of working capital, I was going to be married to-morrow.

I remembered as I rode into town that Jones had not kept his promise and had not come out to see me about the papers as he had agreed to do. But they could wait. I wanted to see Jaffry first. There was a light in the office, and I went to the door. Dismounting, I walked in. Jones sat writing.

"How are you, Mr. Jones?"

He looked up, and I thought a note of surprise came into his face and at once died away again.

"I hardly expected to see you," he said, and I fancied there was a tinge of restraint in his voice.

"Where can I find Mr. Jaffry?" I asked.

"I am not sure, but he may be over at the hotel playing pool."

"You did not get out to my ranch to-day."

"No," he said, beginning to write again. "I was busy."

"Maybe he's got a sore head because I didn't offer him any money," I said to myself.

I walked over to the hotel, and there was Jaffry with several others playing pool. A group stood watching the game.

I motioned to Mr. Jaffry, and fancied a look of annoyance showed itself on his face. But he came to me.

"Mr. Jaffry, tell me something about the marriage laws of Arizona."

"Why, they are about the same as elsewhere," he replied. "The ceremony performed by a minister or a justice of the peace is binding."

"Where is the nearest minister?" I asked.

He looked at me curiously and as though amused.

"Are you going to be married?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You are in somewhat of a hurry, don't you think—the second day you are here?"

"The circumstances make it necessary," I answered.

"Oh," he said, with a smile of significance.

"Will you tell me where to find the minister?"

"Why, yes. The Rev. Mr. Slimpeke. He lives on Mexico Street, near the church."

"Where is that?"

He showed me, and I went to see Mr. Slimpeke.

The minister took me into his little room which was called by courtesy a library.

"Sit down," he said smugly, but with a tone of inquiry in his voice.

He was the kind I never liked. He was too infernally good. A religion in which his selfish personality was the central point stood out all over his every feature.

"Mr. Slimpeke," I said, "I am about to be married to-morrow. It is rather a sudden call. My name is Wallace. I live on the ranch that was my uncle's, west of here."

"Ah, yes. Um! Who is the fortunate young lady?"

"Miss Eunice Bethune, on the next ranch to mine."

"Bethune! Eunice Bethune! I could not do that! There must be some mistake. I have already received a fee to marry Miss Bethune to-morrow morning at ten o'clock to a Mr. De Paro."

"Do you know you would be aiding and abetting in a great crime if you did that?"

"Young man, a minister of the Gospel judges his acts by the——"

"Money he receives," I answered.

"All right. Good-night."

"There is one hope left," I told myself. "The justice of the peace. I wonder where he is."

(To be continued.)



# DIXON'S VENETIAN DODGE.

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

An American's memorable night in Venice, when he took a desperate chance in a daring game.

DIXON stepped out on the little balcony and gnashed his teeth as his eye took in the beauty of the scene. Across the Grand Canal the Church of La Salute stood out in all its transcendent beauty, revealed by the red fires burning on its steps; countless gondolas threaded their way in and out of the space between, while over all the moon looked down, and across the waters came the tinkle of mandolins accompanying an Italian baritone in the toreador song from "Carmen."

It was Dixon's first night in Venice, an experience to which he had been looking forward ever since February, when his passage had been taken, and here he was—alone.

It had been arranged that he was to join the Van Brunts in Austria. He and the girls had read up and thought up and talked up this particular evening all the trip across, and while business detained Dixon in London, he had kept in frequent touch with them by letter and post-card while they made the grand tour, and now Mrs. Van Brunt had fallen ill in Vienna, the girls could not leave her, and so Dixon found a telegram in Innsbruck to inform him that they could not go into Italy just then.

And it was equally impossible for him to wait. He was to sail back from Cherbourg on the following Sunday, and as his tour tickets had been bought there was nothing for it but for him to go on by himself.

He was thinking ruefully of what might have been, and trying to decide whether there would be an atom of pleasure in taking a lonely gondola ride, when his attention was caught by a petulant exclamation in the room behind him.

"I think it was very inconsiderate of the Keelers to leave Italy out at the eleventh hour in this way. Here we are cooped up on this glorious night because

we haven't a man to go out with us. No, mother, I'll just sit here and read. It only exasperates me to look at something when I can't be part of it."

Dixon turned and saw a girl he had noticed when they changed cars that afternoon at Verona. She was a stunning creature, and he had not known till now that she and her mother had come to his hotel.

The mother had stepped out on the other balcony, and the girl had thrown herself into a chair, which she had drawn up in such a way that it blocked his return into the room.

"I wonder if I dare."

Schemes began to make a wild circuit of Dixon's brain. Here they were, a man and a maid, each from the far-away home country, each pining for companionship of the opposite sex, and yet placed as far apart as though the whole Atlantic rolled between, by a mere law of convention.

"No, that won't do," he cogitated. "Merely asking her to move her chair a few inches so that I can pass will scarcely constitute a sufficient excuse for inviting her and her mother out in a gondola. No, Hugh Dixon, you must play high or pass the trick."

He might pretend that he had met her at some dance at home and forgotten her name, but this was terribly risky when he didn't even know the city from which she hailed. Besides, it savored too strongly of the confidence-man trick as played on the rural visitor to the metropolis.

Meanwhile the precious minutes of his few hours in Venice were flitting. He *must* think of some device and act once.

The old lady was absorbed in the gay scene on the water, the hotel itself appeared to be deserted; every one was out on the Grand Canal. Dixon turned and took one more look at the temptation with its back to him.



What an entrancing curve of the cheek that was; and he was sure those eyes, now fixed so moodily on the three-weeks-old *Tribune*, could dance with fun.

Suddenly he had an inspiration. Where was it he had seen the name Keeler across the end of a dress suit-case? If he could only recollect that, the way might be open.

Ah, he had it now! It was on the station platform at Botzen, where he had stopped for lunch.

"Aleck," he remembered now hearing the woman say, "you had better keep your eye on that man," and she had pointed to a *traeger* who was walking ahead of them with the suit-case in question.

"It's a mighty insecure peg on which to hang an acquaintance," Dixon told himself, "but I'll risk it. So here goes."

Fate helped him to the extent of his being obliged to speak to the girl in any case in order to leave the balcony.

"I beg pardon," he said, keying his voice to a pitch which he thought would not reach "mother's" ears.

The young lady started, nevertheless, as if a cannon had gone off behind her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, leaping to her feet and turning around so as to face Dixon. Then, with a relieved look, as she took in the unmistakable American cut of his clothes: "I'm in the way. I'm very sorry. I didn't think."

She stood aside while Dixon bent over and moved the chair, stepped into the room, drew a long breath, and then made his desperate plunge.

"By the way, I believe I met some friends of yours this morning."

"You did!" she cried, her face alight. "Who were they, and where did you meet them? Not here in Venice, surely?"

"No, it was back in Austria, at Botzen. Keeler was the name, I think."

"How perfectly jolly! Oh, mother, mother, here is some one who knows the Keelers," and she stepped to the other window and appeared the next instant with the chaperon in tow.

Dixon came up to the scratch in fine form.

"My name is Dixon, Hugh Dixon," he said in his easy way. "I am from

New York, and merely ran into the Keelers in passing."

"Yes," said the old lady, who was surveying him through her lorgnette in critical fashion. "They were to have met us here, but sent a wire. Was it bad news from home that caused them to change their plans?"

"Oh, no," answered Dixon recklessly. "You see, at the last minute Mrs. Keeler conceived a terror of Italy in the hot weather."

"Mercy, do you think there is any danger?" burst out the old lady, while at the same instant Dixon noted that the daughter's eyes first grew round in amazement and then began to glint with the fun-light that he had wanted to see in them.

"Not in the least," he declared. "You see how delightful it is here, or at least it would be if we were out in the moonlight on the Grand Canal. Allow me to be your escort. I think I can secure a gondola."

"Oh, mother, it would be heavenly!"

And Dixon flew to the porter to make arrangements, fearing to linger lest the old lady might put more embarrassing questions regarding his acquaintance-ship with the Keelers.

Once aboard the gondola, Dixon assured "mamma" that as daughter was the lightest she must sit in the middle, with himself and mother on either hand to trim ship, and so the ecstatic evening began.

Dixon recked not of the awful blunder he had made, and wilfully shut his eyes to the fact that he did not even know the names of his companions. Was he not floating about the Grand Canal under the moon, with music in the air, the stones of magnificent Venice rearing their impressive architecture about him, and a pretty girl, who was also clever, by his side? Later, when the lights on the water began to thin out, they landed at the Piazzetta, and Dixon prevailed upon the ladies to take refreshments at Florian's while they listened to the band play in St. Mark's Square.

It was while he was face to face with "mamma" at the small round table that Dixon's bad quarter of an hour began.



"It is most fortunate, Mr. Dixon," she said, "that the Keelers told you to look us up. You see, we have only this one night in Venice, and I would not consent to come out without an escort. And poor Ethel was most disconsolate. Did Miss Keeler find the ring she lost in Paris?"

The perspiration broke out on Dixon's forehead, and he wondered in alarm what would come next.

"Who the mischief is Miss Keeler?" he asked himself.

But he knew that he who hesitates is lost, so he replied glibly:

"No; not yet. But detectives are at work on the case, I believe, with hopes of success."

"And what have they heard from home lately?" went on the old lady.

"Oh, Mr. Dixon, I'm sorry," exclaimed Ethel.

Her glass of water had overturned and sent a stream trickling over the table into his lap.

Damages repaired, "mamma" returned to the charge, this time from a new quarter.

"They tell us, Mr. Dixon," she began, "that listeners never hear any good of themselves, but I should like to have overheard the Keelers' description of us which enabled you to identify us so readily."

"How absurd, mamma," broke in Ethel. "Don't you remember those snap-shots on the ship? They were very good indeed. I am sure Mr. Dixon must needs be very dense indeed if he could not readily locate us after a glimpse of them."

Dixon did not dare flash her the grateful glance which was inspired by her words.

"She is either 'on to me,'" he told himself, "or else all the gods in the world of chance have camped on my trail."

Meantime "mamma" was rambling on.

"You know we met the Keelers on the basis of a blunder. We were all stopping at Narragansett one summer, and our letters were continually getting mixed."

"You see," Ethel struck in, "while Keeler and Riker don't sound much

alike, they can be made to look so in writing."

Dixon fell back in his chair. Could it be possible?

"Are you Ethel Riker," he gasped in astonishment.

"Yes; to be sure I am. And why not?"

"And you knew the Gliddens at Narragansett?"

"They are our best friends," declared Mrs. Riker.

"Then I've carried a letter of introduction to you all over Europe. What an idiot I've been!"

"How remarkable!" exclaimed the chaperon. "I should have thought that the letter would have occurred to you when the Keelers told you to look us up."

"Yes," added Ethel wickedly, as Dixon fished the letter in question out of his pocket and handed it over to her mother, "Mrs. Keeler might better have been talking about the Gliddens than telling you about the detectives she engaged to hunt the ring that she wrote me her brother found the very next day. I forgot to tell mamma of it."

Ethel had lowered her voice and was leaning across the table toward him while her mother was absorbed in the letter from Mrs. Glidden.

"I believe you were 'on' from the first," whispered Dixon.

"You mustn't talk slang in poetical Venice," the other admonished him. "Did you say you weren't leaving until to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes, but we'll have plenty of time to do the Doge's Palace together?"—eagerly.

"I hope so. You certainly should make a pilgrimage across the Bridge of Sighs to groan over your sins of this evening."

"But isn't it better to lie a little, as Blanche Bates used to tell us in 'The Darling of the Gods,' than to be unhappy much? Besides, maybe I made two people happy," he added audaciously.

"I wonder," rejoined Ethel, with the glint of mischief again in her eye. "Shall we not ask my mother to tell us?"



# DOWNING THE KING-PIN.\*

BY MARCUS D. RICHTER.

A conspiracy against a Wall Street manipulator which found itself astray and wrought fear and frenzy aboard an ocean liner.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE yacht Babler, belonging to Brandon Burgess, the wealthy Wall Street speculator, lies across the pier from the steamer Yantic. Both are ocean bound. Burgess and his secretary, Horace Tarr, are to take a Mediterranean cruise. Two trunks, both marked H. T. in a diamond, are brought to the pier, addressed to the Yantic and the Babler respectively. One is stenciled in red, and one in black.

The watchman's dog, excited by the constant ticking in one of the trunks, worries off their tags, which the watchman replaces in reverse order.

Helen Trainor, her invalid brother Calvin, and her aunt are to sail on the Yantic. Burgess, who is in love with Helen, decides to send Tarr on their steamer in case that he may be of service. Tarr suggests his destitute cousin, Ben Crowding, as valet for Trainor. Crowding has been employed in Burgess' mills, which are shut down, and he is very bitter against him. Tarr has met his cousin in suspicious places, and notices that he seems ill at ease in Burgess' presence.

While befriending a little Italian boy, Angelo, Tarr's attention is called to an old woman in the steerage who bears a striking resemblance to Brown, one of Crowding's suspicious associates. Through Angelo, the old woman tries to discover Tarr's identity.

Miss Trainor finds the wrong trunk has been sent to her stateroom, and asks to have the right one, stenciled with a black H. T. in a diamond, sent up from the baggage-room. Angelo searches for the trunks, and reports only a red label of the same style. He says something was moving in the trunk.

On his way back from the baggage-hunt Tarr overhears the conversation of some passengers. By a Marconigram they have learned that Burgess' stocks are rapidly falling, and that he has left the city. Pondering this, he notices Angelo thrust a note into Crowding's hand. Crowding reads it and faints. In attending to him Tarr discovers a goad concealed in Crowding's clothes, preventing him from lying down or even resting. In the stateroom Crowding seems terrified, and he obviously has some terrible secret that is preying upon his mind, but which he refuses to divulge.

Up on deck Tarr finds Miss Trainor with the broker, Kinney, one of Burgess' rivals. An unpleasant remark is passed between the men. Later Kinney insults Tarr, who boxes his ears. The rumor is circulated that the quarrel occurred about Helen Trainor, and that Tarr has been sent to watch her by Burgess.

Tarr receives word that Crowding has become delirious, and after an interview with the old woman in the steerage has tried to break into the baggage hold. Going to his stateroom, he finds Crowding raving about something which he must stop, and shrieking over and over again "Only a hundred hours."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN UNANSWERED PROBLEM.

DAY broke at last—a blowy, misty, dirty morning; a morning when it looked all along the sea-line as though the slatternly wind-sprites had hung all their dirty rags of cloud out to air, and the sea was sullen.

Wave after wave rose out of the northeast to meet the proud prow of the Yantic, slapped her sullenly and with no little spitefulness on either jowl, and parted for her passage, running hissing aft as though angry that they could not stop her progress.

Horace Tarr viewed the unsightly

prospect from the door of his stateroom as soon as the gray light of dawn shimmered on the apparently flat surface of the sea. The air was raw. The smell of fog was still dank in his nostrils; the night which had just passed had been no time of rest or calm for him.

Crowding had finally sunk into a stupor and his babblings had ceased for the time. But the broken sentences rankled in Tarr's mind—gave him no peace—gripped his thought and would not set it free again.

What was the mystery which had driven poor Crowding into his present state of mind? What did those broken words mean?

\*This story began in the June issue of THE ARGOSY. The two back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 20 cents.



There was a deep and sinister significance, Tarr was certain, to every sentence the sick man uttered.

In the calm of the morning, after reviewing each particular phrase the sick man had used, it seemed rather improbable that his mention of the "red diamond" had aught to do with either Tarr's trunk which he had sent down to the Babblers the night before he sailed on the Yantic or with the trunk that Trimble had found in the hold marked in the same way and with the same initials.

And while he stood there watching the changing sea the figure of little Angelo appeared before him.

"Signor, is the other signor better this morning?" he asked in his soft voice.

Tarr looked down upon him rather blankly for a moment.

"Do you mean Crowding—Mr. Trainor's man?"

"*Si*, signor."

"He is no worse; but he is very ill. He does not know me, and he is likely to be ill a long time."

"It is bad, signor," said the boy with his ingratiating smile, and would have withdrawn had not Tarr stayed him with a beckoning forefinger.

"Who sent you to inquire, Angelo?" he asked.

"*She* sent me."

"The—the old woman below?"

The boy nodded and would have again departed, but Tarr had another question.

"See here, my son," he said, drawing some silver from his pocket. "You earned half a dollar yesterday by telling me something. Now, here is another," and he held it up.

The boy's black eyes snapped, and he waited in silence for what was to follow.

"You went into the hold with Mr. Trimble to look for that trunk yesterday forenoon," Tarr observed, watching the boy closely.

The change that came into the little fellow's face at this was quite startling. He paled and drew farther away from the secretary.

"Don't be afraid," Tarr said soothingly. "I saw you go down there. You

found a trunk marked in red with two letters—H. and T.—inside a diamond figure likewise marked in red. You remember?"

The boy evidently remembered. There could be no doubt of *that*. But why being reminded of that trunk should so trouble him was quite mystifying.

"What's the matter?" the secretary demanded. "You were telling something about that trunk to the old woman below—"

"No, no, signor!" gasped the boy, still drawing away. "I say not'ing. Eet is not so."

"Come; here's half a dollar for you. Repeat to me what you said—"

But before he could say more the boy turned and darted away and was quickly out of sight.

"Hang it!" muttered Tarr. "That's Messerode's fault. He threatened to beat the boy if he repeated it. What was it—something about a noise in the trunk? A clock ticking? What an asinine thing it is for me to pay any attention to such foolishness!

"What could it possibly be? The boy imagined something, or he is a natural born liar, as Messerode intimated. I—I'm a fool!"

He tried to drive away all thought of the trunk, and when the steward came up ordered an early breakfast sent to his cabin. Crowding was still asleep when Dr. Meachem appeared.

"You'd better get some rest yourself," the surgeon advised. "Go down into my cabin—you'll find it quiet there."

But Tarr would not leave the room. He lay down on the extra berth, however, and slept soundly for an hour, while the doctor watched the patient.

Tarr was awakened by the thin voice of Crowding babbling his incessant phrases about the red diamond, and a hundred hours, and all the rest of it.

"I feel a hundred per cent better," the secretary declared when the surgeon would have urged him to retire for proper rest.

Indeed, he felt anxious to have nobody listen to Crowding's delirious words. He was convinced that there was some sinister meaning to them.



When the doctor departed he sat down beside the sick man and listened again and yet again to the familiar phrases. By and by he seized a pencil and paper and began to jot them down.

Crowding seemed to go through the same formula of words, ending with that terrified cry about "a floating hell," and then began all over again. Part of it he muttered too low for Tarr to catch the words; but it was not always the same phrases that were missing.

By writing down all he said the secretary saw a chance of finally obtaining a pretty connected expression of what was on the sick man's mind.

In some book he had read, a secret had been discovered in this manner. The words Crowding uttered, he was sure, were the same each time, and they were not many.

When the poor fellow's mind had given way his trouble had expressed itself in these thoughts; and now that he was delirious, these same thoughts recurred to his weakened mind again and again, finding expression over and over in the same phraseology.

Each time the poor fellow reached the climax of his reflections his agony became more intense. After one of these paroxysms, when he began to speak again, Tarr, with his ear held close to enable him to distinguish the faintest sounds, wrote down the words as he heard them:

"The red diamond! \* \* \* I must stop it—I must stop it! \* \* \* These innocent people—God help them! \* \* \* Set for one hundred hours! \* \* \* One hundred hours and then—hell! \* \* \*"

The last of the words were too indistinct that time for him to get, but the sick man writhed on his couch and beat his hands feebly in despair. Then he began again, and the first words Tarr distinguished were different:

"I must open— \* \* \* Only one hundred hours. What a wretch— These innocent people—God help them! \* \* \* Happy, untroubled, secure. \* \* \* Half has passed. \* \* \* Hell!—a floating hell!"

Once more the muttering began:

"I must stop it! I must stop it! \* \* \* What a wretch I am! My punish-

ment is too great. \* \* \* They little know—unconscious of peril! \* \* \* It was set for one hundred— \* \* \*"

And on and on the poor fellow babbled his misery, while Tarr, the sweat standing on his brow, jotted down the broken phrases, until he, like Crowding himself, had learned them by heart.

And what did he make of them? After the sick man had worried himself into exhaustion, Tarr set himself the task of dove-tailing the words together into their logical sequence.

"The red diamond! I must open—. I must stop it! I must stop it! Only one hundred hours. What a wretch I am. My punishment is too great. These innocent people—God help them! They little know—unconscious of peril. Happy, untroubled, secure. It was set for one hundred hours. Half has passed. One hundred hours and then—hell! A floating hell!"

Tarr read this, striving to understand the mystery to which the words referred. He knew he had not gathered every word of Crowding's delirious mutterings. He had been unable to learn *what* it was the man felt that he must "open."

And the reference to the "innocent people" who were "unconscious of peril" was quite as blind. Crowding had done, or thought he had done, some dreadful thing which had imperiled others. Had it been something which had occurred before Tarr met him in New York?

"Perhaps the story he gave me about losing his job and being half-starved and penniless because of the shutting down of the mill was not entirely true. He may have done something—broken the law in some way—and run away from his home.

"But surely there is some foundation for his agony. There must be some fire where there is so much smoke."

The reference to the one hundred hours puzzled Tarr quite as much as anything else. What had Crowding "set for one hundred hours"? And what did he mean by "a floating hell"?

Surely that last must refer to some craft. Something may have been done on a boat! What boat? Could it be



that some peril threatened the Yantic? Why, that seemed impossible. What could Crowding know about this steamship? He probably had never heard of the vessel until Tarr had told him of his chance to serve Calvin Trainor as nurse.

"Yet that fellow Brown—or whatever his name is—is aboard this ship, and Crowding knows him. It was directly after an interview with Brown that he went off his head entirely," muttered the secretary.

"Is there some plot against the peace and lives of the passengers on this ship? But that is preposterous. If it were so, surely Brown and Crowding, if they knew of it, would not have risked their own lives by coming aboard her. No, no! That can't be it. And who can I take into my confidence? I cannot be a traitor to my own cousin—not to Ben Crowding, with whom I played and studied years ago—even if he is mixed up in a criminal conspiracy.

"Until I have proof that he has really committed a crime I am not called upon to sacrifice him. And perhaps not then. My mind is not at all secure on that point."

He rose and began to pace the confines of the stateroom. The situation presented an unsolvable enigma.

## CHAPTER XV.

### NEWS OF THE BABBLER.

A GENTLE tap at the door startled Tarr as though it had been a much more commanding summons. It was now mid-forenoon, and the deck was well peopled with first-class passengers, despite the unfriendly aspect of the weather. When he opened the door his amazement was in no way decreased by the presence of Helen Trainor awaiting his pleasure.

For a moment Tarr was quite speechless.

"Good-morning," she said quietly and without her usual smile. "I understand you have been watching with your cousin all night, Mr. Tarr. We shall have you ill next. You must allow us to assist you."

"Really—really," stammered Tarr, "I don't know what you can do——"

"I can sit beside him while you go

somewhere and lie down," she said quickly.

"But, Miss Trainor, I do not think I ought to allow it. He is quite delirious."

"Dr. Meachem tells me he is far too weak to try to get out of his berth now—poor fellow! What a terrible thing it is! How little we know what far-reaching results may be entailed by our actions."

"What do you mean?" he asked wonderingly.

"I presume you realize that, as the doctor says, this condition of affairs has been brought on by mental worry. Poor Crowding, being driven from home and from those—from her whom he loved, by the shutting down of his work, has now come to this pass. It is terrible."

Tarr saw that she, and probably her brother, blamed it all upon Brandon Burgess and his corner in cotton. But Tarr was not minded to oppose her statement now.

Indeed, he was rather glad that she looked upon Crowding's illness from this standpoint.

"She will not suspect anything if he babbles this stuff to her," he thought. Aloud he said: "It is not right to tax you with my cousin's care, Miss Trainor."

"But if I wish to do this?"

"Then I surely will not refuse you, and I thank you heartily for your kind thought. Perhaps I will be better for to-night's watch if I sleep some during the daytime."

She was looking at him with unwavering eyes as he spoke, and although she flushed a little her reply was uttered in a firm tone:

"Do not mistake me, Mr. Tarr. If I am kind, it is for the sake of the poor man who is ill. *You* certainly do not look for any favor at my hands, sir?"

The words were biting, and Tarr fell back before her as she entered the stateroom. He knew to what she referred.

As Calvin had told him, and as he had seen the evening before by her manner, Helen held him accountable for the unpleasant position in which she had been placed by the gossip having its birth at the quoit game.



So she believed that he had allowed her name to be brought into a low row on the public deck of this steamer! Tarr withdrew without further words. He was too hurt to seek to defend himself or to deny what she believed true. He avoided Calvin when he went out upon deck, although he saw him in the distance, attended by the ex-waiter. It was a fact that, more than he was troubled by the mystery of Crowding's illness, Tarr was disturbed over this misunderstanding with Helen Trainor and her brother and aunt.

And as his mind dwelt upon the fact, it was not for Calvin's mistrust in him that he mourned. He thought first of Helen's attitude.

Dr. Meachem had evidently been on the lookout for him, and kindly insisted that Tarr go below to his, the doctor's, cabin and lie down. But despite his wakeful night, the secretary could not sleep for long.

His many worriments were with him in his dreams. Burgess and the Babler, Kinney and Helen Trainor, Crowding and the disguised Brown passed through his visions in continuous procession.

And finally the luncheon bugle awoke him as though it were the signal of some threatening disaster which had troubled the latter part of his dream.

Finding it impossible to sleep again, he arose, had a bite of luncheon himself, learned that the doctor had relieved Miss Trainor as nurse, and felt able to go into the steerage before returning to his own cabin.

As he drew near, the strains of a fiddle and an accordeon and the shuffle of feet announced the fact that the steerage passengers were having an afternoon dance. Although there were few young people among them (aside from the small children), the returning emigrants mustered a goodly company on the cleared space of the deck which answered for the floor of the ball-room.

The couples were gravely moving about in time to the rather rasping sounds of the two instruments. Tarr wended his way between them, paying no attention to either the dancers or the audience of first and second cabin pas-

sengers that had gathered. He had spied the figure of the disguised Brown in an out-of-the-way corner and approached him directly.

He did not startle the supposed old woman this time, for his coming was observed.

"I have a word to say to you in private," he said in a low voice, looking intently down upon the shawl-shrouded figure. "Do you want to see me here?"

The supposed old woman showed no sign of understanding him. Her face retained an expression of perfect blankness, and she shook her head with energy.

"No, no, signor!" she whined.

"Come, come!" exclaimed Tarr. "Don't play the fool with me. I know you, and unless you want me to go to the officer of the ship and tell who you are——"

"I no spe'k Inglese," whined the creature again, vigorously shaking her head.

One of the men who had been dancing came over to them, mopping his flushed face with a yellow bandanna and smiling broadly.

"She no understand you, sir," he said, showing his white teeth in a broad smile. "She only speak-a da Italian."

"By Jove," muttered Tarr, "she writes English all right!"

"No, no! How can that be?" cried her fellow-countryman. "She no spe'k eet; how can she write eet?"

"I no spe'k Inglese," declared the supposed old woman for the second time.

Her face was swathed in a bandage, and she put her hand to it now and began to moan, rocking her body to and fro.

"She haf one bad tooth—eh?" said the man commiseratingly, yet still smiling brilliantly. "What you want wit' her, signor?"

Tarr saw that unless he was ready to make a row right then and there, there was no use in following his intention further.

The creature wouldn't speak or give him any satisfaction.

Besides, so much did she seem the character she appeared that the secre-



tary was puzzled and began to grow doubtful again.

Suppose he had made a mistake? Suppose it was *not* Brown, after all? Many old women have a down on their upper lip as heavy as that which shaded the mouth of this person. He would have given a good deal to remove the bandage from about her face. He believed that it hid from view cheeks which would show plainly the need of shaving.

He had to beat an inglorious retreat, and on his way to his own stateroom to relieve Dr. Meachem Mr. Brier found and halted him.

"Mr. Tarr, Captain Holds wishes to see you. He is on the bridge. How's your friend? No better? Sorry to hear it."

The secretary of the millionaire cotton king hastened to find the commander of the Yantic. The captain was pacing the deck with a slip of paper in his hand.

"You're Mr. Horace Tarr?" he asked in his gruff way.

"I am. What can I do for you?" asked the young man.

"Not a thing, sir—not a thing," snapped Captain Holds. "You can answer a question, however, sir."

Tarr waited in doubt. Captain Holds did not seem in a very pleasant mood.

"I want to know, sir, if you know anything about this?"—and he held the slip of paper toward Tarr. "What is this yacht chasing us for? I tell you, I don't care to have my steamer chased as though she was a stray pup. What does it mean?"

Tarr, in vast amazement, read the typewritten lines on the paper:

Yacht Babbler, New York, Burgess owner, Midriff master, spoke us this forenoon fifty miles eastward, asking for Yantic. Anxious to speak.

"Wha—what does it mean?" gasped Tarr.

"That's what I want to know, sir—that's what I want to know," growled Captain Holds. "You are employed by this Burgess, they tell me. Do you know anything about it?"

"How should I know?"

"Don't dodge my questions, confound you!" snapped the captain.

"And don't you address me in that manner. I don't like it," declared Tarr angrily. "I had heard that the Babbler left New York night before last. Your own wireless telegraph operator got the news from some shore station, I believe.

"I had no idea that the yacht was following us. I don't know what Mr. Burgess wants with you. I'm sure I don't know what he wants of me——"

"Well, sir, when a man chases a steamship which numbers among its passengers one of his trusted employees he doesn't usually do it for pure enjoyment," sneered Holds.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" flashed out Tarr.

"I judge, sir, that you catch my meaning," said the captain of the Yantic, boring him with a suspicious glance. "There is something very strange about this—very strange indeed."

"Your insinuating tone implies an insult that I will not bear, sir!" cried Tarr. "Explain yourself."

"You declare you know nothing about this message?"

"I don't even understand how you could have got such a telegram——"

"We passed the Savoird, of the Merchants and Importers Line, an hour ago. She communicated by wireless with us. The yacht spoke her, as you can see, this forenoon. It must have passed us and is now somewhere ahead looking for us. I want to know what it means!"

"Well, don't ask *me*. I can't tell you," declared Tarr.

"It seems very suspicious to me, Mr. Tarr," said the captain.

"And your remarks seem very impudent to *me*," cried the passenger, and turning on his heel without further words he left the bridge.

He was quite enraged at the Englishman. But nevertheless the message astounded him. He was completely dazed by it.

What did it mean? The Babbler should be far on her course to the Mediterranean if Burgess had really started on his vacation. Why should



the yacht be in this part of the North Atlantic?

And hunting for the Yantic! Why, it seemed preposterous.

What should possess Brandon Burgess to start out of the port of New York on such a fool mission as this? Searching the highways of the sea for a particular steamship seemed a good deal like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

What was the matter with him? Had Burgess, too, gone mad? If there had been a raid made upon the cotton market, he should not have left New York at all. And to be way off here——

"It's nonsense! sheer nonsense!" he muttered as he hurried to his stateroom.

Yet, looking down, he saw the paper in his hand and again read the type-written lines. That made it look very real.

But it did not explain the mystery.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE TREASURE CHAMBER.

It was plain that Dr. Meachem was greatly worried over Crowding's condition. Despite the fact that the steamship physician was a most self-opinionated man, he was devoted to his profession, and the chance of losing a patient worried him.

"The fellow is badly off, I admit, Mr. Tarr," he declared to Horace when the latter appeared in the sick-room again. "I have changed his medicine. The treatment of disease is for the most part a groping in the dark by even the best-trained physician. We know what remedies will act upon certain diseased organs, but they will not act the same with every person. I cannot seem to allay this man's fever. It is terrific. He grows weaker.

"These delirious paroxysms are becoming more infrequent——"

"And isn't that a good sign?" asked Tarr, wondering if the doctor had made anything out of Crowding's wandering speech.

"It is not—assuredly not! You hear him gabbling a lot of stuff here, now and then. Between the times of this speech you suppose he is calmer?"

"Of course," declared Tarr.

"No, no! You are wrong! There is something of extreme moment on that man's mind. It was on his mind, as we know, when he was taken with the first mad paroxysm down below. He repeats over and over again what was making that strong impression upon his brain at the moment he collapsed. Do you follow me?"

Tarr nodded. Nobody knew better than he that poor Crowding was repeating again and again that mysterious combination of phrases.

"Well, sir, he continually goes over these same words. At times he is strong enough to repeat them aloud. But when he apparently sleeps or sinks into exhaustion, his state at this present moment, his troubled brain is still engaged with these same thoughts. Over and over again, time after time, into the many thousands, the man has repeated these sentences since yesterday afternoon."

"He is repeating them even when he is silent?"

"Automatically his thoughts repeat them. There! See his lips move? As though he whispered in his sleep. He lies like a dead man otherwise, d'ye see? Like some machine geared to a system of perpetual motion, his mind continually repeats this thing that troubles him.

"And until I can assuage this mental disturbance, how can I get the best of his fever? Can you tell me that, Mr. Tarr?" demanded the worried physician.

"Good Heavens! How can I tell you?" gasped the secretary.

"The moment will come when the man's brain will be sufficiently clear to understand what is said to him. If one knew what had so disturbed his mind at that—well, call it occult moment, he might be assured that the cause of his worryment was removed. Then I would have a better chance to bring him out of this condition."

"But—but we don't know what's the matter with him!" gasped Tarr.

"Ah, that's it!" said Dr. Meachem, slowly wagging his head. "That's it! And what it is we may not be able to find out. *You* should be better able to guess that than anybody, sir."



"I wish to God I *did* know!" cried Tarr fervently.

The physician's remarks put him quite in a fever of worriment. When he was left alone with the sick man, and the latter began babbling again, Tarr drew forth the paper on which he had transcribed the sentences which were the burden of Crowding's delirium and studied them once more.

"The red diamond! I must open——" Now, what could that mean? What of the red diamond, and what was it the delirious Crowding felt that he must open?

When he had suffered his collapse the previous afternoon, Crowding had been fighting like a madman to enter the hold forward through the hatchway in the orlop deck. Trimble had reported that the man tore, tooth and nail, at the hatch fastenings.

Was *that* what he had felt he must open? And why?

Or had the association of ideas in his poor, weakened mind made him do this? Tarr could not see how any danger, known to Crowding, could menace the Yantic. It must be some other vessel which was referred to in the man's delirium as "a floating hell."

"Crazed as he was," muttered the secretary, "he would not be likely to distinguish between this boat and the one which troubles his mind. If he knows of some accident which has befallen or is about to befall another ship, in his sudden insanity he might try to do aboard this ship what he would do aboard that other, were he *there*. Something has happened or is about to happen in the hold of another vessel. Crowding is criminally aware of what it is. His conscience, as he told me himself yesterday morning, and as his previous actions prove, was lashing him terribly.

"He has done something or has knowledge of the doing of something which endangers the lives of innocent people. When he went entirely off his head he strove to get into that hold because he thought that was the place where this awful thing would occur.

"Gad! What a mess! It isn't possible that any danger threatens *us*. That fellow Brown—if it *is* Brown—is

mixed up in it. He'd never risk his neck on a vessel that was likely to be injured—blown up or scuttled or anything like that."

Tarr paced the confines of his cabin in a terribly disturbed state while he thus soliloquized. And the thought of Brown set his mind off on another track.

Could it be possible that he had been mistaken in that individual below in the steerage? If not, the man was a consummate actor.

It might be a woman, after all—an old woman of Brown's own nationality and who looked like him.

Yet, he swore to himself, Crowding had recognized the person, too. Crowding had denied all knowledge of the identity of the old woman. Yet Angelo said he had been the means of communication between them, and Tarr had seen the boy pass the paper to Crowding.

"Confound it! Somebody's lying. Messerode said the boy is a liar. Crowding told me he had not received any note and knew nothing about it. The boy acts strangely, it is true—he acted strangely this morning when I spoke about that trunk. Yet, what object can he have in mystifying me?"

And with these and similar thoughts he worried his mind for several hours. He did not forget to attend to Crowding's every want, however, and followed the physician's instructions implicitly.

The forenoon passed, and several passengers came to the door to inquire about the sick man.

That part of the deck was avoided by the passengers in general, who realized that the doctor desired quiet for poor Crowding.

Toward mid-afternoon two visitors came whom Tarr was not anxious to see—Helen and her aunt. The strained relations which had existed for the last twenty-four hours between the Trainors and himself made any conversation extremely awkward.

Mrs. Shackelford showed this awkwardness more than Helen, for the latter was anxious regarding Crowding and put every other thought aside but that of mercy.



"You must let us relieve you for awhile, Mr. Tarr," she said, while Mrs. Shackelford looked coldly on in the attitude of a person bent upon upholding the proprieties but with interest neither in the sick man nor his nurse.

"It is good of you, but you have your own trouble with Calvin——"

"This Messerode is very efficient. We have decided to take him with us to Berlin," declared Helen. "He is well recommended."

"And poor Crowding wasn't, I suppose she means," thought Tarr. "Well, it's an unfortunate mess. I reckon Burgess would be sorry he sent me on the Yantic if he knew how objectionable I had become to Helen Trainor."

This swung his thoughts, pendulum-wise, to Burgess and the Babbler, and as he left his cabin to pace the deck for a breath of air the strange message received from the passing Savoird puzzled his mind again.

Why had Burgess changed the direction of his intended voyage across the Atlantic? Why was he hunting for the Yantic?

The cotton king had been greatly disturbed by nervous apprehension as regarded Helen's trip across, but Tarr had attributed this nervousness on his employer's part to overwork. For six months Burgess had carried a responsibility that was bound to tell upon any man.

He had engineered a financial scheme such as the Street had never seen before, and he had done it practically alone. There was little wonder that Burgess' mind was easily disturbed.

But after sending his secretary on the steamship with the girl whom he so much admired, Burgess should have been satisfied. This chasing the Yantic about the ocean was an utterly ridiculous thing.

Yet so much had occurred within the last few hours to puzzle Horace Tarr that the message from the Savoird disturbed him greatly. And it had evidently bothered Captain Holds likewise.

Tea is usually served in the afternoon aboard the ships of the Blue Crescent Line, and having paid little attention to his meals of late Tarr was hungry and went below. As he came

down the companionway to the main deck, he noticed a sailor in uniform and with a short cutlass strapped to his side standing upright before a heavy steel door which was built into the bulkhead.

It was a place where the officers and other members of the crew were passing and repassing all the time, both day and night, and Tarr knew he had never seen this sentinel here before. Observing Mr. Trimble, the junior officer, passing, he asked him what it meant.

"Why, I'm sure, sir, I couldn't tell you," Trimble declared. "That is the strong room—you knew that, didn't you?"

"The strong room?" repeated Tarr, much puzzled.

"Yes, sir; the treasure vault."

"Where the passengers put their diamonds for safe keeping?" asked the secretary, smiling.

"Oh, no, sir; those go into the purser's safe. But that is literally a treasure vault. Sometimes there isn't much in it, but at others the old Spanish treasure ships which Morgan and his ilk captured didn't have in their cargoes the worth in gold and silver that is locked into that vault."

"You surprise me!"

"Most people would be surprised if they came to think of it. You read a line in the newspaper that such and such an amount of gold was exported by a certain ship to Europe. One doesn't realize what it means. The captain is held personally responsible for what is in that place. He alone has the combination which opens it."

"And how much do you suppose is in there now?" asked Tarr, mildly curious.

"Why, I heard before we sailed that they expected to put twenty millions in gold behind that door."

"Twenty millions!" gasped Tarr, amazed.

"Sh!" Trimble warned him, seeing Brier passing and watching them closely. "So I heard. I don't know what the captain has suddenly put a guard there for. He has his reasons, I expect. We're not supposed to speak of the room or its contents to the passengers, sir. You will excuse me now?"



Something in the purser's looks had seemed to trouble the junior officer, and he hastened to break away from Tarr. The latter went on to the table, however, without attaching any particular meaning to this.

His mind reverted again to the twenty millions in gold, however. And whose would not?

## CHAPTER XVII.

### UNDER THE BAN.

FOR the first time since the little scene at the quoit game, Tarr came face to face with Kinney. He sat down at a table just opposite him. Kinney returned Tarr's look with an offensive stare. Then he whispered something to a man beside him and he likewise lifted his head and looked sharply at the newcomer.

But the secretary had made up his mind to get into no further trouble with Lodowick's man.

Had he noticed the company before sitting down, Tarr would certainly have selected another table, but it would look childish to change his seat now, and he paid strict attention to the viands which the steward brought him.

But this did not satisfy Kinney. He was one of that breed of curs which are never contented to ignore one whom they dislike. He must needs snap and snarl at his heels.

And possibly having the fear of Tarr's strong hand before his eyes, the broker cast about for other means of tantalizing his enemy than by personally addressing him. The men about him were gentlemen; he dared not speak of Helen Trainor.

Therefore he set upon the one other subject that was bound to "get a rise" out of the secretary. He did not glance at Tarr while he talked, but he raised his voice so that the young man would be sure to hear every word.

"As you were saying," he remarked to his next neighbor, "the crash is going to be a 'beaut.' The fellow won't have enough left to pay his laundry check. Call him the 'cotton king'—huh! He's the cotton fool, I reckon."

Tarr did not raise his eyes, but a little silence fell upon the men near at hand.

All realized that the broker was baiting his *vis-à-vis*.

"And the rascal deserves all he's going to get. He's a mucker, any way. Who ever heard of him before he struck New York? God knows how he came by the money he started with. He's about the smoothest proposition that ever broke into the market——"

Tarr's spoon dropped into his saucer with a sharp crash—a sound that startled even Kinney himself. The secretary half rose from his chair and leaned across the board.

"Sir," he exclaimed in a low but clear voice, "you are speaking of a man whom I count as my friend as well as my employer. I see plainly that you are talking with the hope of creating a disturbance again. And I presume you intend lying about the cause of our difference of opinion, as you did before.

"But let me warn you, sir, and I take these gentlemen to bear me witness, that I shall consider any slurring reference to Mr. Burgess from *you* a personal insult, and——"

He had leaned farther over the table as he spoke, his eyes blazing and his face deadly white. Kinney's smile rather lost its freshness as he observed these indications of passion. He had intended to annoy his enemy, but he did not seek a personal encounter with him.

At this instant, however, a heavy hand was laid upon Tarr's shoulder and he was jerked back into his chair. The effect of this upon the young man was to set him in a violent rage. Wrenching himself free, he rose to confront this new antagonist.

"Mr. Brier!" he exclaimed, seeing that burly officer at his elbow.

"Now, look here, Mr. Tarr," exclaimed the purser firmly; "we'll have no more of this. This is our public dining-room. You can't pick a quarrel here—nor anywhere else on this boat. You should be ashamed, sir!"

"Ashamed!" gasped Tarr.

"Now, now!" pursued the purser; "don't have any words over it. You're a gentleman, I hope."

It was maddening, but what could Tarr do or say? The word of the officer of a ship is a law that no sensible passenger will disobey.



It was evident that the garbled account of his former trouble with Kinney had reached the ears of the powers that be, and Brier, seeing the two men together again, had seized upon Tarr as the aggressor. The latter would not belittle himself by explaining.

He left his luncheon and without a word to either Brier or the others about the table hurried out upon the open deck.

There he paced to and fro the length of the promenade along one rail, boiling with rage and wishing with all his heart that he had never stepped foot upon the Yantic.

And yet how he had been secretly delighted when Burgess insisted upon his accompanying the Trainor party across the Atlantic.

And why? Not because he needed a vacation. He would have been much more comfortable on the Babblor; the yacht was a floating palace.

Tarr's eyes were being broadly opened to his interest in Helen Trainor. The fact that to his mind it savored of disloyalty to Brandon Burgess made no difference to the truth. Tarr had looked forward to the companionship of Helen; that was the chief pleasure he would have taken in the voyage under other circumstances.

But whether he had been disloyal in thought and intention or no, the fact remained that his association with Helen Trainor was not fruitful of much pleasure. He really shrank now from going back to his cabin and relieving her in her care of the sick man. Her coldness was hard to face, especially when he knew he was undeserving of it. He awoke to the fact after a time, however, that for some reason he was attracting a deal of attention while pursuing his lonely promenade.

Most of the passengers were on the shady side of the deckhouse, but two of the junior officers—one forward, the other aft—watched him at every turn.

At first he thought this imaginary on his part, but when he went into the smoking-room for a drink one of these young men followed him. Going out through the opposite door and passing around the other alley into the bows, he found the second man on his trail.

"Confound them all!" Tarr muttered. "Do they think I'm looking to pick a fuss with Kinney, or what is it? I seem to be under a ban."

This surveillance made him nervous, and it seemed to him that every person he passed looked upon him askance. He could swear that more than one promenading couple glanced at him and whispered together.

This became so unpleasant at last that he was fairly driven back to his own quarters. Mrs. Shackelford was evidently glad to see him come, and rose to leave the cabin at once. Crowding was muttering and crying out again, and Helen was bending over him, bathing his face and moistening his parched and fever-cracked lips.

"Your cousin is very, very ill, Mr. Tarr," she said, looking up with a curious expression upon her face.

"I am afraid he is, I wish we were ashore."

"His mind seems weighed upon by something—do you hear him?"

Tarr nodded and dropped his glance, for he felt that there was something more than ordinary curiosity behind her question.

"He says the same things over and over. That must be what the doctor says is worrying him. Do—do you know what it means, Mr. Tarr?"

"Sick people in his condition usually have their heads full of fancies. He is delirious, I presume, like any other person suffering from such a trouble."

"I believe that his worriment is the cause of his present condition," Helen said firmly. "And he says such strange things."

"I hadn't noticed," muttered Tarr.

But as she went out, following her aunt, he knew that the look she gave him showed serious doubt.

Tarr was in a cold perspiration. How much of Crowding's babblings had Helen heard and understood?

"By gad! if she is wise to much of it and knows what he means, she's better at guessing than I am," he muttered when he was alone.

He was convinced, however, that he had much better remain by his cousin all the time and let nobody else care for him. He was likely to say something



that would reveal the mystery, whatever it was, and Tarr felt that he lacked only the keyword to explain the secret about which Crowding muttered.

Suppose the doctor or Helen or some other visitor should discover this secret! Suppose while Helen sat there, this very hour, Crowding had murmured the keyword to the problem. Tarr looked at the paper again.

"The red diamond! I must open——" Open what? Ah, if Crowding should say what he wished opened while Tarr was absent.

"I must remain here from this time on, until we land. Nobody must learn the meaning of his mystery until I have found it out myself," he told himself.

He was not disturbed by visitors for the remainder of the afternoon, and nobody but the physician came to the cabin during the evening excepting the steward with ice and with his own dinner.

The change in the weather which had threatened early that morning finally culminated in a thunder storm and electric display about nine o'clock. This drove everybody below but the officers and members of the crew whose duty it was to remain on deck.

But after the rain stopped, an hour later, Tarr set open his door and sat there watching the foam-flecked sea and dun clouds for a long time. Sea and sky were as perturbed and troubled as his own mind.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AN ASTOUNDING MESSAGE.

THE thunder storm was a prelude to a bad night—the overture of a Wagnerian session of wind, rain, and beaten, maddened sea. After midnight the return of the rain drove Tarr inside the stateroom, and a little later he heard the men rigging life-lines along the upper deck.

The Yantic began to heave unpleasantly, too, and the slapping of the waves against her tall hull sounded like the crack of a long pennant in a hurricane. Now and then the clouds seemed to open and the water came down by the bucketful.

As the night grew old and the worry of the storm increased, the sounds evidently made some impress on Crowding's troubled brain. Once he weakly rose up in his berth—something he had not done for hours—and looked wildly about.

At the moment he came close to being conscious—he knew that he was in Tarr's room and that his cousin was with him. The latter had sprung to his side and enfolded the man's form in his own strong arms.

"Wha—what is it?" gasped the sick man.

"It's storming, old man. Lie down. It's all right," said Tarr soothingly.

The patient's eyes rolled around in their sockets till their glance was focused upon his nurse. Then suddenly he whispered:

"What day is it?"

"Saturday morning," replied Tarr in amazement.

"Saturday—Saturday—— My God! Let me get up. I must stop it! I must stop it! Only one hundred——"

His eyes were glazed with delirium again, he sank back upon the pillow, and was babbling his mysterious phrases once more. The momentary flash of intelligence had gone.

But this incident assured Tarr that he was right. The moment would come when Crowding's secret could be obtained by his nurse.

"Nothing shall get me out of this room again if I can help it," thought Tarr. "And the next time he shows the least intelligence I'll ask him what it is he wants opened. I'll get to the root of the matter then."

It was almost dawn when he looked out of his stateroom door again upon the wet and glistening deck. Torn rags of cloud were scurrying overhead, apparently scarcely out of the reach of the steamship's snubbed bowsprit as she shot heavenward upon the heave of every giant wave.

About these tattered storm-flags was a heavy and impenetrable blanket of mist, of a dun color excepting where the wind had whitened the edges. The dawning day threatened to give the passengers of the Yantic a taste of the Atlantic in her worst mood.



A sailor was pacing the deck directly before the stateroom door, and he turned quickly to look at Tarr when the latter appeared. The passenger was reminded of the surveillance which he had noted the evening before, but put it away.

"My imagination is getting the better of my common sense," he muttered, as he looked off across the sea. He had to cling to a line the instant he stepped out upon the deck, for the slant of the planks was painfully acute.

Far out on the sea line he observed a smudge of smoke. He thought of the Babbler, which was somewhere in this part of the ocean if the report from the Savoird was true.

"What do you suppose that is out yonder?" he asked the sailor.

The latter glanced up at the shrouded figure on the bridge before replying in a low tone:

"I couldn't just say, sir, barring that it's a steamship. She's likely one of our own line or a Cunarder. It might be the Peruvian Monarch; she should pass us hereabouts. She's a-many miles away from us, sir."

"You have no sure way of telling at this distance?" asked Tarr curiously.

"Not now, sir. If it's the Monarch, she'll send aboard the news. You'll get it at breakfast in the extry *News-Letter*."

"Oh, by the wireless system?"

"Aye, sir."

An officer approached and the sailor turned quickly away. Tarr went back into his room and lay down a bit, as Crowding seemed very quiet. The constant strain and his sleepless night had exhausted him, and he sank into a slumber that was only broken when a steward came with his coffee.

Beside the urn was a note from the captain's clerk:

"Captain Holds requests Mr. Tarr's presence in his, the captain's, cabin immediately."

"What the devil does *that* mean?" growled Tarr. "What does he want of me?"

"I could not tell you, sir," said the man politely.

"But I can't go down there now. I can't leave my cousin alone."

"The clerk told me to remain with him if you so desired, sir."

"You can tell the clerk, with my compliments, to go to the devil!" exclaimed Tarr in a rage. The order stirred his bile. "No offense to you, young man, but Crowding is much too ill for me to leave him."

"But it's the captain's command, sir," said the steward softly.

"When the doctor comes up I'll see about it. Meanwhile, if Captain Holds wishes to see me he knows where I am."

The steward looked horrified, but there was nothing more to say, and he backed out of the room.

"Catch me chasing around at the beck and call of that pig-headed Englishman!" muttered Tarr, who vividly remembered the manner of the commander the day before.

Ten minutes later Mr. Brier rapped at the door of the cabin. The purser was buttoned tightly into his uniform, his face was very red, and he puffed as though he had hastened up from his room, which was the truth.

"See here, you, sir!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Tarr, if that's your name! The captain wants you at once."

Tarr was by no means appeased, and he stepped out of the room, closed the door so as not to disturb the sick man, and shook his fist in the purser's face.

"Who the dickens are you speaking to?" he demanded in a tone which made Brier draw back. "Do you think I'm one of your crew? My passage is paid for on this steamship, and was paid for by a man who may have some influence with the directors of the Blue Crescent Line.

"I consider that I've borne from your captain about all I'll stand. Now, take *that* back to him, with my compliments. And let me tell *you*, sir, when you speak to me, to be a little careful what you say and how you say it!"

Brier had been opening and shutting his mouth like a fish, trying to get a word in edgewise all this time. Now he sputtered forth:

"I—I reckon the man who sent you here won't have much influence with the owners by the time you reach land, Mr. Tarr. And, passenger or not, you must obey the captain of this ship."



"I'll see him hanged first!" declared Tarr with emphasis. "When the doctor comes up to look after my cousin I'll call on the captain. But not before."

"Sir! sir!" gasped Brier.

But the passenger turned on his heel and went back into the room.

Mr. Brier had been routed out of his early morning nap (it was his watch below) to bring Tarr into the captain's presence. He knew better than to appear before Captain Holds without him.

But, having had a chance to cool a little, he favored accomplishing his ends without further trouble with the obstinate passenger. So down he trotted to the surgeon, and in a little while Dr. Meachem entered the besieged cabin.

"Great Scott!" he said, "you'll get yourself into serious trouble, sir. I'll stay with the patient—how is he this morning?—while you go down and see the captain."

"Well, I don't know whether I will or not," said Tarr.

"Come, come, Mr. Tarr!" advised the physician. "Don't get into unnecessary trouble. Don't make matters worse than they are."

Tarr wondered what he meant by this, but although tempted to ask him, he would not do so, finally putting on his hat and raincoat and stepping out upon the deck.

Mr. Brier was waiting for him and favored the obstinate passenger with no cheerful face.

"Oh, come along!" exclaimed Tarr in disgust. "You're here to take me to the captain, I suppose. But I'd like to know what these actions mean."

Brier grunted and went ahead, rapping at the door of the captain's private suite of rooms. When he got an answer from the commander he opened the door, motioned the passenger inside and shut the door quickly, remaining outside himself.

Captain Holds, in a rather undress uniform of peajacket over his pajamas, and a steamer rug wrapped loosely about his legs, was seated at the table in the chart room. He wore a white nightcap, too, which made his face seem redder than usual.

"Well, young man, you've taken your time in coming here!" he exclaimed.

"I usually do," returned Tarr. "What do you want of me? I am not used to having the captains of third-rate steamers like the Yantic play the grand mogul with me. What is your meaning, any way?"

"Look here, sir——"

"And you listen to me!" cried Tarr angrily. "You insulted me yesterday on your bridge. Let me tell you that the officials of the Blue Crescent Line will be held accountable for your actions."

"And ordering me, through a subordinate, to your cabin is not one of the least things for which you will have to answer."

Holds looked at him from under his shaggy gray brows.

"I don't know whether you are a fool or a knave, young man," he growled.

"And I am quite convinced in my mind which *you* are," Tarr said, with blazing eyes. "In addition, I wish to know at once why you called me here. I am in no mood for conversation with you, Captain Holds. Be quick, please."

The commander of the Yantic looked for a moment as though his temper would burst all bounds of control, but finally he gulped down his choler and suddenly spread a sheet of paper on the table between himself and the passenger.

"See here," he growled; "here's another message. We just received it from the Peruvian Monarch, which passed us somewhere to the north'ard an hour or more ago."

"Of what interest is it to me?" demanded Tarr coolly.

"It's addressed to you, young man," was the captain's surprising statement.

"A wireless telegram to me!" exclaimed Tarr, and seized the paper in vast amazement.

The reading of the message did not serve to decrease his wonderment.

MR. HORACE TARR, STR. YANTIC, BLUE CRESCENT LINE.—*Transmitted for B. Burgess, Yct. Babbler, by Peruvian Monarch, of the Green Star Line: Your trunk on Yantic by mistake. Open it at once. Matter of life or death.*

Very likely Tarr read these lines over at least ten times, and the tenth time he



understood quite as much of what he read as he did the first—and that was nothing at all.

The words were there. It was type-written in English all right. But the message itself made absolutely no intelligent impression on his brain.

“Well, sir! Well, sir!” snapped the captain at length. “What does that mean?”

But Tarr looked at him with unseeing eyes, nor did he hear him for a moment. Instead, he was trying to make head or tail of the telegram.

Was it a joke? Was somebody trying to play upon his credulity?

It was hard enough for a man to believe in the reality of the wireless telegraph any way—at least, so Tarr told himself; but to believe that a sane man like Brandon Burgess would be traveling about the North Atlantic on a big steam yacht, searching for this steam-

*(To be continued.)*

ship, merely for the sake of telling him that there had been a mistake in a trunk—

What could it mean? Was it the trunk he had sent aboard the Babbler (as he supposed) the evening before the sailing of the Yantic? Was it the trunk marked with the red diamond and his own initials—the trunk of which he had been reminded when Trimble looked through the hold of the steamship for Helen Trainor’s missing property?

But here Captain Holds, driven to desperation, brought his fist down with a crash upon the table and swore a round oath.

“Answer me, sir! What does that mean?” he roared, starting from his seat and facing Tarr across the table. “Answer me, sir, or by heaven I’ll put you in the brig, passenger or no passenger!”

## THE RUN ON THE HERDSMAN’S.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

Face to face with disaster, and the intangible ally that was finally enlisted in the fight against it.

THERE was a time, even now not beyond the memory of some of our graybeards, when Chicago and Harksbury stood upon a precisely equal footing as regarded the killing of beeves and the shipping of meat.

Then times changed, as times will, and men and their plans changed with them. The capital that was interested in meat-packing seemed inexplicably to flow toward Chicago; in Harksbury the industry stood still.

Unavailing efforts were made to revive that beautiful temporary boom. The huge Graves slaughter-house continued a brisk enough business—even built a group of additions in the course of time, and eventually a big refrigerating plant—and some half-dozen smaller establishments still operated, but that was the extent of beef-dressing done at Harksbury.

However, the little town was not altogether idle in other directions. Shoe

factories grew up, and a monster tin-plate plant. The population swelled from four figures to five, and progressed cheerily into the ’teens of thousands, and Harksbury came to be in every way a satisfactory city.

It was a great point of pride with Harksbury that everything in town was solid; everything paid and kept on paying.

There was money and to spare for all requirements, public and private—for asphalt streets and electric lights and sewers, for residences that grew more ornate and expensive with each new erection, for churches and schools and libraries. Harksbury, in a word, existed calmly and happily in that heavenly state we call Assured Prosperity.

Conceive, therefore, the shock when one morning during the last money panic, Harksbury awoke to find that the Trust Company had closed its doors!

There were many who had had open



misgivings about that Trust Company, and they wore a placid I-told-you-so air that maddened many others who had not.

The former contingent was frank in believing that the smash would have come in any event; the latter knew for a moral certainty—which was the fact, by the way—that the prevailing upheaval in the money world had been at the bottom of the affair.

At any rate, the Trust Company was out of business, temporarily at least, and a state of things ensued hitherto unknown to smug little Harksbury.

Something past noon that day, the poor young Stone Street Bank began to feel a sad tugging at its purse-strings. The tugging increased—the tuggers grew from a long line to an uneasy crowd.

The Stone Street people paid and paid and paid until three o'clock. Next morning they continued paying and paying and paying.

And at noon three or four policemen gently persuaded the depositors to step outside and the big doors closed, and a weary-looking clerk stepped up inside and pasted a little white notice on the glass panel.

The Stone Street Bank had suspended, too!

Two of Harksbury's financial institutions had gone by the board—two remained: the Bank of Harksbury and the Herdsman's Bank, down by the stockyards.

The former held the bulk of Harksbury's ready money; and the way that Harksbury, having regained breath, descended upon it was what is sometimes termed a caution.

Huge notices were posted at the beginning of the rush, little circulars were even mailed to the depositors that first evening, frankly setting forth the situation and making it clear that Harksbury had it within her power either to wreck or to perpetuate her main bank.

Perhaps the arguments appealed to the depositors collectively; it is very likely that they did. But individually each of them wanted his money, and wanted it right away; and the simplest method of satisfying the want was to take the next trolley down-town and get

on the line that stretched a block beyond the Harksbury Bank.

This last run had been going on for one solid, dreary day and part of another, when young Robert Janeway, superintendent of the Graves packing establishment and refrigerating plant, stepped across the alley that separated the abattoir from the Herdsman's Bank, to pay a morning call upon his brother Richard, who happened to be cashier of the institution.

He found the latter with an out-thrust under lip and an unlighted cigar, staring with just the least suggestion of a frown at the calendar on his desk.

His face cleared, though, as the little door swung open, and he turned with a cheery:

"Hello, Bob."

"Hello, Dick." The younger man found himself a chair and reached over for the cigar-case that lay in sight. "You look chipper."

"Feel so—reasonably."

"You're not worried, then?"

"Not particularly."

"Things seem to be getting pretty lively up-town—they say there's a dickens of a run on the Harksbury."

The cashier smiled amiably.

"So I hear."

"Well, why hasn't it struck the Herdsman's? That's what beats me!"

His brother laughed.

"It doesn't beat me, Bob. I've been giving a bit of thought to the subject—naturally—and I can't see any real reason why there should be a run here. For one thing, we're the richest bank in town."

"Even so, the depositors have just that much more to get scared about."

"Very true, but there's another point as well, my boy—most of our depositors live out of town—in the cattle country and elsewhere."

"The shoe factory people don't."

"No, of course not. But a great part of the others do. News doesn't reach them so quickly."

"Maybe not, but when it does—phew! Won't there be a rush for Harksbury!"

"I don't know that there will."

"I do! You'll see those drovers flock in here by hundreds and roar out



for their cash. Don't believe it, eh? You never can tell what's going to happen at a time like this."

"No; as a matter of fact, Bob, I don't believe it. Still"—his face grew grave—"it is very true that one can't tell."

"And suppose there was a run? Could you stand it?"

"Well"—the elder Janeway chewed his cigar—"it would depend very largely on the size of the run. Things are strained mighty hard just now, as you seem to be aware. We haven't much money, and we'd have to scratch like sin to get more. Nevertheless, we could stand any ordinary demands on us."

"If they come, they won't be ordinary—I'll gamble on that!"

"Look here, my pessimistic young brother," said the cashier, "will you kindly dry up about runs and such like cheerful things? Don't you suppose I've been over this devilish situation somewhere between three and four thousand times? If a run should come, we'd have to do the best we know how—that's all. But I've got my mind firmly made up that there isn't going to be any run—sort of Christian Science or New Thought treatment, I guess—and if you have no objection, we'll let it rest at that until we're forced to do otherwise."

"Good, sensible way to look at it," the Graves superintendent commented.

He nodded to some one passing the glass partition.

"Who's that?" Richard, behind his desk, could not see the entrance.

"Carter, Dick."

"Frank Carter?"

"Same old Frank Carter, manager of the Smith shoe factory."

"Yes." The cashier shook his head impatiently. "He's after his payroll, confound him! I wish to Heaven they'd postpone payday for a week this time!"

"What does it amount to?"

"Oh, about nineteen hundred, as a rule. Thunder! I don't want to pay that out to-day!"

"Can't be helped," smiled his brother.

"No, I suppose it can't."

Richard Janeway drummed on his desk for a moment and mentally condemned people who had to have payrolls in the middle of a money panic. He turned quickly as a teller entered.

"What is it, Brown?"

"Mr. Carter, Mr. Janeway. He's just turned in his check for five thousand four hundred!"

"Fifty-four hundred!" The cashier gasped. "What the deuce does he want all that for?"

"Don't know, sir. It wipes out his account to a few dollars, I think."

"Five thousand four hundred dollars!" muttered the elder Janeway. "It's nearly four thousand more than he's ever drawn on Monday before!"

"Yes, sir."

"Must be taking on new hands up at the shoe place," the young brother commented facetiously. "That's a husky little payroll, Dick."

The cashier scowled, then turned to the teller with a resigned shrug.

"Well, give it to him. That's all, Brown."

"Very well, sir."

The door clicked again, and the cashier whistled softly. His brother wagged a knowing head.

"What did I tell you?"

"There's no need to gloat over it, Bob. Carter's taken a bit of a fright—that's all it amounts to. I don't blame him altogether."

"And he looks relieved. There he goes now, with a wad of greenbacks big enough to fill a wheelbarrow."

"Fifty—four—hundred!" Richard repeated under his breath. "Well, I hope most fervently that he's the first and last of his kind."

"So do I."

"Oh, pshaw, he must be!" The cashier was trying hard to convince himself. "There's nothing to justify a run on this bank. We're fully equal to weathering even this crisis, if they'll let us alone. We're solid in so many ways——"

"Aha! Another."

"Another what?"

"Another old friend, Dick. Look at him."

The cashier arose and glanced along the bank; he sat down again with a smile of satisfaction.

"That's only old Jim Coles, the cattleman. This is his day for depositing—fifth of the month, you know. Well, that means five or six hundred, at least."



"Does it, though? Is he in the habit of depositing his cash at the paying teller's window?"

"The what?"

"He's standing there now. Yes, as sure as you're born, he's passing in a check to be cashed!"

"Good Lord!"

Richard Janeway was on his feet again. He squinted down toward the window; finally he strolled through the little cages toward the teller.

He glanced casually over the clerk's shoulder. There lay a check, laboriously signed "James C. Coles," and written for three thousand dollars!

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Coles," said the cashier, with a smile in which the pleasure was plainly forced.

"Mornin'." The drover's volubility seemed to have vanished.

"Fine day, isn't it?"

"Toler'ble."

"Making a draft on us, I see?"

"Yep."

"Going to do some buying?"

"Nope."

Janeway was rather nonplussed. Coles seemed dogged and avoided meeting his eye. He shifted before the window for a moment, then grunted somewhat gruffly:

"Gimme fifties and hundreds, mister. I'm in a hurry."

He received his money and left quickly. The cashier returned to the office, a troubled light in his eyes.

"How much?" asked the Graves superintendent.

"Three thousand, Bob. Nearly nine thousand dollars paid out in ten minutes!"

"Phew!"

"I wonder—— Jimminy, it does look as if it were coming!"

"I should say it did! And when that eleven o'clock train gets in——"

"It's going to bring some of our out-of-town friends? Yes, I'm afraid that's not outside the possibilities."

Robert glanced at the clock and recalled that the Graves Company was not paying him a salary for morning calls. He strolled to the door of the office, and was about to say good-by when the telephone bell took to ringing. He paused.

The cashier stepped to the 'phone.

"Hello! Hello! Yes—Janeway, yes. Oh, is this you, Thomason?"

"Thomason, eh?" muttered the younger brother. "The Bank of Harksbury must be on the wire!"

"Yes?—Is that so?—Yes, I knew about it.—What? *What?*—Just now? Great Cæsar!—All right, thanks for letting us know.—No, I don't see that we can do anything else.—No.—Good-by."

When Richard Janeway turned back his face was several shades paler.

"Well, the Harksbury has closed up, Bob."

"Harksbury, too!"

"Yes. Thomason says that all the big depositors must have secured first places on the line. They've been absolutely cleaned out—he says they've got about seven dollars in cash—all told."

"Good gracious!"

"And we're next now!" groaned the cashier. "The Christian Science treatment was no go, was it?"

"Seems not."

"Well, skip out of here, Bob." The cashier ran his fingers through his hair. "I'll have to think up some scheme or other—I'm blest if I know what!"

With sympathetic words, the Graves superintendent left.

From his private office at the top of the next building he watched almost involuntarily for a sight he knew to be inevitable.

He was not disappointed. Just before half-past eleven, knots of three or four were to be seen coming down the street below—big, burly, rough-clad men from the ranches.

They hurried, too, and at the door of the Herdsman's Bank they disappeared. Afterward, singly, they emerged and walked away more slowly.

The news had indeed traveled, and the run on the bank was under way!

The one o'clock train brought more—the one-fifty still more. They appeared regularly at the corner of the street leading to the railway station; others, resident depositors, could be seen dropping off the trolley cars two blocks away and scurrying toward the bank.

Within an hour Robert came to know perfectly what their movements would be.

They popped into view, walking leis-



urely. They looked down the street and saw a group of people, and quickened their pace. Coming nearer, they knew the group to be at the Herdsman's, and they ran the last half-block at full tilt.

At two or three-minute intervals they stirred, swayed forward and parted again. A man walked out and stepped briskly up the street, carrying in his pocket just so and so many dollars from the Herdsman's treasury.

Thus far it was a very quiet, orderly proceeding, but for the bank it was spelling Disaster with a large D.

Something past three, Robert managed another trip to his brother's office.

The doors were closed, and in the street a crowd of unsatisfied men talked rapidly and loudly. There were gesticulations, and here and there a candid shaking of fists.

The general opinion was all too evident—they were first on the spot, and there they would remain until the bank opened on the morrow and business was resumed. Regardless of the eighteen or nineteen hours of discomfort that must ensue, they formed in regular order along the wall, some lounging, some sitting on the pavement, some calling to passing boys to bring them sandwiches or some other refreshment.

The cashier's face was drawn when his brother entered for the second time that day.

"Your friends seem determined," the latter remarked.

"They're all of that, Bob."

"Are they going to spend the night there?"

"Looks like it."

"Pshaw! How are things going?"

"Rotten!" replied the cashier tersely and inelegantly.

"Cash running out?"

"Running out. No, it's not—it *has* run out!"

"All gone?"

"All but three or four hundred dollars, Bob. I instructed the tellers to dilly-dally and fuss and fumble as much as they could, and I fancy that they've been doing it, but if three o'clock had been ten minutes later we should have had to suspend to-day!"

"And as it is?"

"We shall have to suspend about ten

minutes after we open to-morrow!" said the cashier bitterly. "Mercifully, a lot of the little fellows came in first—that's all that saved us this afternoon. When we open in the morning—well, there's Bainbridge, cashier of the tin-plate works, sitting on the step. He's third in the line."

"How much will he want?"

"Seven thousand and something. Can't you see him getting it?" Richard laughed harshly.

"It—it does look bad!" the Graves superintendent contributed.

"Bad! It's more than bad—it's absolute ruin! And the worst of it is that it's entirely unnecessary. This fiendish situation isn't going to last more than a day or two longer—I had wires from Chicago this morning stating that two or three of the big fellows are going to resume. The panic will be over at the end of the week—all over. And this bank needn't break at all unless the depositors go to work deliberately and smash it, as they did the Harksbury! Why on earth can't the fools realize that? Why can't they—oh, damn!"

Outside the broad window, two or three had taken note of the cashier's excited mien and commented thereon. Several more hurried to the bars before the pane and stared curiously inward.

Richard sat down with his back to the crowd and lit a cigar.

"Well, cussing won't help it much," his brother observed.

"I'm afraid it won't, but—oh, well, they'll have it their own way, any way, I suppose. First come, first served, and the devil take the hindmost!"

"Looks as if he would, too, just now. See here, Dick, have you done anything toward getting more cash?"

"Not being entirely daft, I have. But it won't help us now, that I can see. I sent Burroughs, the assistant cashier, up to Chicago on the two o'clock express. He'll get in too late to do anything much to-day. In the morning, I've ordered him to hustle about and raise all the money he can before the eleven o'clock train leaves. We'll have to shut up shop long before eleven o'clock, however, as things appear now—and he may not be able to get any money at that."



"Hum."

Robert Janeway had taken to sharpening his pencil in an absent-minded fashion. Having achieved the very perfection of smooth points, he proceeded further to carefully carve scrolls along the length of wood. That accomplished, he set about rounding off the end.

Finally, however, he snapped the knife-blade and looked across at his brother with a queer little grin.

"Dick, that fatal run is cock-sure to come in the morning, isn't it?"

"Cock-sure."

"And you'd like to avoid it?"

"Yes, we'd be real happy to avoid it," his brother acquiesced dryly.

"All right then; we will."

"Hey?"

"I said that we'd try avoiding it."

"What the deuce have you in mind?"

"What's in the cellar?" inquired the Graves superintendent irrelevantly.

"Eh? Why, the vaults, of course."

"What else?"

"Oh, old packing-cases in the rear, I suppose, and the gas-meter, and the furnace, and a couple of broken chairs. Why?"

"Never mind. Is our old friend Timothy still night watchman?"

"Of course."

"All right. You be sure to tell Timothy to come over and see me as soon as he reports for work. I'm going to spend a few hours with him to-night, just for sociability's sake, as it were. And the bank will open its door on time to-morrow morning, and there'll be no run, I'll guarantee that."

"But——"

"Oh, don't bother about details. As a reputable bank official, you might have a conscience and object. Anybody like me, who associates with a few thousand chilled corpses every day, can't be expected to distinguish between the strictly right and the possibly wrong. You send Timothy over, come down to business on time in the morning—and leave the rest to me. Good-afternoon, Richard."

He was gone; and Richard Janeway, having stared at the closed door for a moment, turned savagely to his desk and came near to swearing at a brother who could be flippant at such a time.

Toward evening, though, he grew more desperate, more in a mood to snatch at straws. The outlook was becoming blacker and blacker; and when Timothy appeared, just as he was about to leave, the cashier paused and, with shame in his heart, directed him to step across the back alley to the packing-house and ask for Mr. Robert Janeway, who wished to see him.

He had no particular desire to push through that inquiring crowd outside. He left by the rear entrance and surveyed the ground from the corner.

Undeniably, there was a quantity of anxious ones down there by the door. The line had grown—longer and thicker. It covered almost the block, and reinforcements were arriving all the time. Another train would be due from the ranch country at ten—another at eight next morning. What would happen at nine, when the bank was to open for business?

Janeway knew his clientele—knew that they lived near to nature and that natural instinct predominated. When they found that their money was not forthcoming would they break loose?

Would they not very likely tumble pell-mell into the bank and essay a loot—where there was nothing to loot? Was there not a very good chance of their swarming in and attempting to shoot up the outfit?

Well, they were perfectly welcome to try it! Having demolished the business standing of the institution, they might as well make an end of the structure itself, if it pleased them.

The cashier shrugged his shoulders again and strode off for the car-line.

He waited through most of the night for news from Burroughs, for he had directed that any important cheering information should be sent to his home. None came, and toward morning he snatched a few hours of sleep.

Throughout the panic he had considered that the game was fairly within his hands; now it had left them entirely, and he became resigned to the end.

He walked to the Herdsman's Bank next morning fully prepared to see the throng, further augmented, clamoring at the doors.

He was most pleasantly disappointed.



Not only were the depositors refraining from battering down the panels, but they seemed to have conceived an actual distaste for the Herdsman's Bank! For fifty feet either way there was not a soul on the sidewalk—most of the waiting crowd had assembled across the street!

Among those nearest the bank he recognized the clerical force, some of them bareheaded, standing about and talking hard among themselves. He pushed closer, and from half a dozen directions at once he heard the word "ammonia," and wondered further.

Then he was through and in the open space—and he found himself choking and gagging. The air was filled to suffocation with the odor of ammonia!

The doors of the Herdsman's were open, and the unbearable stench seemed to surge through and into the outer air. Janeway recalled his brother's words of the night before, stared hard at the open doors, and shook his head.

For the moment it was beyond him.

He searched for Brown, the paying teller, and found him devoid of hat and with red, running eyes.

"What's happened, Brown?"

"The Lord only knows, Mr. Janeway." The teller coughed and wheezed. "We were just getting ready to open up when—it came!"

"It? What?"

"That fearful ammonia, sir! Great Scott, it's something awful in there! It just seemed to pour in from everywhere at once. There's no living within ten yards of the place, sir."

"But where the deuce does it come from?"

"One of the ice-machines in the cold-storage plant next door burst, they say. We sent word around to know what was up, and that's what they told us. They hope to have it fixed by noon, sir."

The cashier, shielding his nose and mouth with a handkerchief, tried to enter and investigate. He walked through the very doors, watched curiously by the crowd, and stepped into the main aisle of the bank.

His stay was brief. There seemed no breath of air in the place—every cubic inch had been replaced by the strangling fumes of ammonia gas.

With an effort and a distress that were in no way simulated, Janeway staggered into the open air, fell, and was dragged away by a daring clerk.

He recovered himself in a minute or two, and one great fact rose uppermost in his mind—beyond all dispute, there would be no run on the Herdsman's Bank until the building was clear of that infernal smell!

He permitted himself a quiet smile. Whether this were chance or some of Robert's work, the result was glowingly perfect.

But a crowd of money-mad men do not stand long upon ceremony. A sort of informal meeting took place at about ten o'clock, and a delegation was appointed to call at the Graves plant and ask whether the ammonia could not be cut off or turned away from the bank.

They were received most politely by the superintendent. He was charmingly frank and anxious to please.

He told them that one of the ammonia ice-machines had broken during the night, while in charge of an inexperienced workmen; that, as they would readily understand, no repairs could be made until that particular cylinder had exhausted itself and they were able to send workmen to the spot; that, however, there was every prospect of their getting at the job within fifteen minutes or half an hour, when the regrettable nuisance would, of course, cease.

They asked why the bank was so full of gas, and he told them that the machine, being located at the side which abutted on the Herdsman's, had blown away a portion of the wall and was discharging its deadly vapors straight at the bank. He added a further brief dissertation on the marvelous penetrating powers of ammonia, and suggested that if any one doubted his words they might step inside and conduct a personal investigation.

No one cared to attempt it. The delegation returned to the main body and another consultation followed.

Something like half an hour later they reached a new conclusion.

It being plainly impossible to do business in the Herdsman's Bank, the sole alternative was to do it outside. In short, as a newly chosen committee



of three set forth to Richard Janeway, it was the duty of the bank officials to bring forth their cash and their books and conduct the banking in the street!

Warrantably, he declined. The committee returned. Very shortly a murmuring arose. The crowd drew together and advanced as a solid mass upon the cashier.

Here and there a rough shout arose, demanding that the money be brought out and paid in order. They crushed against Janeway and the tellers and forced them along toward the wall of the bank, the ammonia notwithstanding.

When finally the vapors did halt them, the cashier leaped to one of the lower window ledges and, clinging by the bars, addressed them with pithy informality.

"See here, all of you!" he shouted. "I don't know what's wrong in there, but I'm not responsible for it, and I'm not going to lose my life by going into the vaults for money—nor am I going to sacrifice any of the employees! You'll have to wait until the machine can be fixed, when business will be resumed."

A dozen voices yelled at him, and he shouted again:

"I'm sorry you don't like it, but if you think it's possible to enter that place just now, go right in and take all you can lay hands on!"

It was an unexpected suggestion, and, excited as they were, they adopted it without due thought. With a simultaneous impulse, the crowd surged about and straight toward the main entrance.

Janeway caught his breath and wondered for an instant whether he had not been the most monumental kind of idiot to make that last statement and run the chance it entailed—but no; it was all over even then!

The leaders, as they came to the open doors, shrieked aloud and pushed frantically backward. One or two fell prone and were in danger of a trampling.

Some five or six seconds they swayed uncertainly—and the ammonia won! To the last man the depositors fled precipitately from the invisible, invincible foe.

No further talk of assault was heard.

There was a fluttering of handkerchiefs as eyes were wiped; there were coughings innumerable and curses as well, but no one cared risking another rush. They settled instead to a season of dogged waiting—for they wanted their money, and some of them had spent the night waiting for it already, and they would wait now until the ammonia had dissipated itself, whether it consumed the day or the week!

When things in general had quieted down, Janeway heard the tolling of eleven from the distant City Hall clock, and some five or six minutes later he distinguished the whistle of the outgoing train as it took a crossing beyond Harksbury.

Burroughs must be in town now. What success had he to relate? Or had he returned empty handed?

It was an anxious quarter-hour for Richard Janeway. Alternately he watched the crowd and the streets. The former was silent; the latter empty.

He glanced finally at his watch. It was twenty minutes past eleven—and no Burroughs!

But as he looked again a dust-cloud up Crossley Street resolved itself into a span of galloping horses. Janeway knew them on the instant—Dr. Parker's gray team—and Parker was a great friend of Burroughs!

Something less than a minute later all doubt was past. With a clatter of hoofs and shouts of warning from the two men in the carriage, the span trotted briskly through the crowd and drew up before the bank.

Janeway waved them away from the entrance. Burroughs stood erect, and in either hand was a heavy leather satchel.

"It's all right!" he sang out joyously. "Cadman and Paulson have both started up again, and the Third National, Brooks, & Company and Phillips Brothers and three or four more resume to-morrow!"

"Did you get money?" the cashier inquired in low tones.

"One hundred and fifty thousand, right here! I didn't even wait to get detectives to come with me!"

Janeway leaped to his side and raised a hand for silence.



"Will you please form in line and present checks to me here?" he cried. "I think we shall be able to accommodate everybody. Jenkins and Brown, will you come here and give me and Mr. Burroughs a hand?"

Human nature, as some one may have observed before this, is a queer thing. Five minutes before the crowd had been almost ready for bloodshed, so that it secured them their money. Now anxiety vanished as if by magic.

Some two or three dozen lined up beside the doctor's carriage. Before their turns came, half had dropped out. The body of the throng talked excitedly and argued among themselves for a time, and then departed.

The run on the Herdsman's was practically over.

Some thirty minutes later the street was clear save for those directly interested in the bank's operation. Janeway was explaining to Burroughs why the place could not be entered, when a voice came from the doorway.

"Won't you step in and sit down?"

It was the Graves superintendent. His face was covered by a heavy cloth, and he blinked painfully, but somewhere behind the covering lurked the semblance of a grin.

"The air's more breathable now," he supplemented thickly.

But the best part of another half-hour had elapsed before the brothers, choking still, found themselves alone by the open window of the cashier's office.

"Well, the bank opened her doors, didn't she? And there was no run, was there?"

"There certainly was no run, Bob. How on earth did you manage to smash an ice-machine in such a fashion that this whole building next door was filled?"

"Ice-machines don't smash in a

plant that I run," returned the younger brother serenely. "Ours have been going without a hitch for the last six months."

"Then——"

"Where did the ammonia come from? How does this strike you?"

He raised his arm and turned on the gas-jet. A strange, lively hissing resulted, and he quickly shut it off again.

"I guess you'll smell a little more ammonia in a minute," he commented.

The cashier smiled in bewilderment.

"You don't mean to say that you turned ammonia gas into those pipes last night?"

"But I did, my boy. With the assistance of your good Timothy, I opened your supply pipe down-stairs by the meter, hitched on a few lengths of piping which protruded from our cellar, and coupled a cylinder of compressed ammonia at the other end. We left all the gas-cocks open, and at eight-thirty sharp this morning I started things up with a monkey wrench. Say, Dick, you should have seen your clerks break for the open!"

"Well, I'll be everlastingly hanged!" the cashier muttered.

"You needn't be. It was a very bright, bizarre little idea, I will admit, but it's going to cost you just ninety-seven dollars in cash. That's the value of the gas I've squirted in here to-day, and I don't care to have the transaction on the books."

Silently the cashier walked out. When he returned it was with a hundred-dollar bill.

Robert pocketed it indifferently, selected another cigar, and headed for the door.

"I'll keep the odd three," he observed. "I need a new hat, and I've earned it. By-by, Dicky. Get busy with your banking business!"

#### A SUMMER PICTURE.

WITHIN the garden poppies spring,  
And tangled sweet pea vines have spun  
A rosy-tissued web, and run  
Along the orchard fence, to cling  
Beneath the trees where robins sing,  
While to and fro the mowers swing  
Their scythes athwart the sun.

*Evelyn Stein.*



# WHO AND WHY?\*

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR.

A story of college life with a tragic start and an atmosphere of solution-defying mystery.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ARTHUR STANTON, toastmaster of the freshman dinner at Old Orange College, is kidnapped by nine sophomores. They give him chloroform to keep him quiet, but are horrorstricken to find him dead on their hands. It seems that he had been stabbed with a dagger of glass, and the nine sophomores are summoned to President Cady's house, where Coroner Jackson and Chief of Police Cottrell place them under arrest (they have already been suspended) for complicity in the murder of Stanton, who had been paying attention to Effie Hilton, in whom Courtney is also interested. Courtney is one of the nine, but fails to respond when his name is read off by Cottrell. It seems that he has been seen leaving town, satchel in hand. A search of Courtney's rooms shows that his departure was hurried, and also results in the finding of the handle and upper portion of a glass dagger among his things.

The eight sophomores present are placed under arrest, and a telegram is sent to Courtney. He appears on the following day under charge of officers sent to his native town, whither he had gone believing himself expelled from the college by the rules already existing against hazing.

Professor Starling, an amateur detective, secretly undertakes the case, and decides that the murder was committed by a woman. The clues seem to lead to Effie Hilton.

At the preliminary trial it is discovered that Miss Hilton had, in a spirit of perversity, refused Courtney's offer of marriage, telling him of a previous engagement to Stanton which had been arranged in their childhood by their respective parents.

Ormsby's testimony is the only direct evidence against Courtney, but the jury renders a verdict of guilty.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PROFESSOR ASKS QUESTIONS.

AFTER the coroner's inquest Courtney was taken back to his cell, to be kept there some weeks awaiting trial.

He had not been there for more than half an hour when he received a visit from Professor Wilson, of Old Orange law school.

"Courtney," began the professor, "at the request of President Cady, who takes a warm interest in you and greatly regrets the straits in which you are placed, I have come to offer to take your case."

Courtney was sitting dejectedly in a corner of his cell with his elbows on his knees and his hands supporting his chin.

"Very well," he said almost listlessly, "I shall be glad to have you undertake my defense, professor. I know that if anybody can save me, you can."

"I can save you, my boy, and I will. I am going to make the fight of my life to do it. At present I must admit the case against you looks pretty strong. Even at the coroner's inquest the police

have forged an almost incontrovertible chain of evidence.

"By the day of the trial they will have strengthened this chain considerably, in all probability, and you must admit that the circumstances are all against you."

"You didn't come here to tell me that, professor," protested Bob wearily.

"I know I did not. Now, Courtney, my boy, this sullen air will not do at all. Don't act like a guilty man, for I know that you are not such. Throw up your head and keep up your spirits and we will break through this cloud yet. You must give me all the help you can, though, my boy."

"I help you? Why, how can I do that?"

"Easily. First of all, you must answer all my questions truthfully. Remember I am your counsel and you must conceal nothing from me. Now I want to know how the police came to find that dagger in your room."

"See here, Professor Wilson," said Courtney, starting suddenly to his feet. "I of course appreciate your desire to help me, and naturally I have no wish to

\* This story began in the June issue of THE ARGOSY. The two back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 20 cents.



die an ignominious death on the gallows if I can help it; but, nevertheless, I cannot answer a single one of your questions—that one particularly. If you want to undertake my defense you must do it without asking me to answer a single question. I would rather go to the gallows than do so.”

“Well, well! This is most extraordinary,” said Professor Wilson in amazement. “I never heard of a prisoner refusing to confide in his counsel before except when he was guilty of the crime, and even then many have trusted their lawyers with a full confession beforehand and got off scot free as a consequence.”

“Think me guilty if you want to, professor,” said Courtney with a bitter laugh; “perhaps I am. Those are the only terms, however, on which I will consent to being defended at all. If you want to take up my case, you must not, I repeat, expect me to answer a single question.”

“But, my dear fellow, don’t be absurd. How can I build up any sort of defense without your help? Be reasonable. Tell me at least why you fled to Slocum Corners, instead of awaiting developments as the others did.”

“I can tell you nothing, professor. If you can’t build up a defense without my help, why, let me hang. I won’t blame you any.”

“You’re not guilty, are you, my boy?” asked the lawyer in so anxious a tone that the words were robbed of all offense.

“You can believe me so if you wish,” replied Courtney obstinately. “I may plead not guilty to the charge, or I may change my mind even about that. What do I care if I am hanged or if I am freed?”

“And you won’t tell me how that dagger came into your room?”

“I must respectfully decline.”

“You are assuming a very foolish attitude.”

“Possibly so; but remember, professor, these are the only terms on which I will consent to being defended at all. Don’t think, please, that I do not appreciate your kindness and the kindness of President Cady. It is impossible, however, for me to make any explanations

about this affair. I must let things take their course and trust to fate.”

“If you persist in this silence there is not one chance in a thousand of getting you off. Do you understand that?”

Bob’s only reply was a shrug of his shoulders.

“Well,” said Professor Wilson almost angrily, “perhaps you’ll change your mind later on and desist from this stubborn course. I will leave you now and do all I can to help you. Think this thing over and see if you would not be doing better by taking me into your confidence.”

Professor Wilson left the prison, and as he walked up the road to the university he met Professor Starling.

“Hello, Wilson!” exclaimed the latter. “Just been to visit your client, I suppose?”

“Yes, I have,” was the moody reply.

“Guess you will have a hard job to get him acquitted, eh?”

“I shan’t be able to get him acquitted at all,” burst out Wilson angrily. “The confounded young ass will hang for a crime I am almost sure he did not commit.”

“What! You don’t mean to say you have despaired of the case already?”

“Yes, that is just what I do mean to say. I can’t get any help out of the young fool. He won’t answer any of my questions or take me into his confidence at all. Maintains a haughty, indifferent manner, as if I were the public prosecutor instead of the lawyer for the defense.”

“The deuce you say! Did you tell him that he was running a desperate risk by such a course?”

“I most certainly did. I told him he would positively hang if he did not open up to me. The silly ass replied that he didn’t care if he was hanged or not.”

“Most extraordinary attitude to assume. Well, we must save him some way.”

“Save him! With that strong circumstantial evidence against him, I tell you there isn’t a chance in the world. Why, I almost begin to believe in his guilt myself.”

“Nevertheless, we will save him. I am working on this thing, too, my dear



Wilson. Before the day of the trial I will put you in possession of some evidence which will surprise you as much as it will the judge and the jury. Courtney will go free without any doubt."

"You surprise me greatly, Starling," rejoined the lawyer. "Can't you give me this evidence now and allow me more time to amplify?"

"No, I can't do that because there are still some links incomplete and I want to work the whole thing up to a finish alone and unaided. Perhaps in a day or two, though, I will offer you the results of my careful investigations, which will cause a greater surprise than any scandal which has ever shaken Old Orange society."

"You don't tell me! Well, I am all impatience to hear what it can be. I hope that it is really good and strong, for the case certainly needs it. We haven't got a leg to stand on at present, with Courtney's confounded obstinacy to handicap us."

"Wait until I get through and you will have two legs to stand on. My disclosures will also explain somewhat Courtney's stubbornness, I think."

With that the two professors parted.

Late that evening Professor Starling paid a visit to the home of the Hiltons.

"Is Miss Hilton within?" he asked of the maid who responded to his ring.

"No, sir. None of the family is home at present."

"Good. My girl, tell me what is your name."

"Ruth, sir."

"Well, Ruth, can you tell me what this is?"

"It looks like a ten-dollar bill, sir," answered the girl.

"Exactly. A bright girl—a very bright girl. One of the brightest girls I have seen for many years. This is a ten-dollar bill—absolutely correct. Now, how would you like to own this ten-dollar bill, Ruth?"

The girl appeared undecided whether to close the door in this strange man's face or to continue the colloquy. Avarice inclined her to the latter course, however. Ten dollars was a lot of money in her eyes.

"What is it you want?" she asked suspiciously.

"Don't be alarmed, Ruth. I am Professor Starling, of Old Orange University. See, here is my card. I want you to answer a few questions in return for which you shall receive this brand new ten-dollar bill. Is it a go?"

"You can ask the questions, sir," replied the girl pertly. "If I don't care to answer them, that's another matter."

"Well, for a starter, what kind of perfume does Miss Effie use?"

"What an extraordinary question! Why, I guess there is no harm in answering that. Jockey Club, sir."

"Jockey Club. Very good; very good indeed, Ruth. And what kind of note paper does your Miss Effie use generally?"

"That I don't know, sir. I think she has several kinds of writing paper, as all young ladies have—some fancy and some plain."

"Humph! Now tell me, Ruth, just what you know about poor Mr. Stanton. Did he come to this house very often?"

"He did, sir; quite often."

"And was he very friendly with Miss Effie?"

"He was, sir. We understood as how they was once going to be married."

"Do you think that Miss Effie is very grieved over his death?"

"She does take on a little about it, but then of course it didn't mean so much to her since——" The girl stopped abruptly and colored up.

"Since what? Go on, my girl," said the professor eagerly.

"Nothing, sir. My, how one's tongue do slip away with them when one isn't careful! I was goin' to say something I shouldn't have mentioned."

"Oh, yes, you should, Ruth," coaxed the professor in his most wheedling tone. "Since what? Come, tell me."

"I can't, sir. It is something that I mustn't tell to anybody."

The professor held the ten-dollar bill temptingly before the girl's eyes.

"Tell me what you want to know and what all this questioning means," she demanded.

"I want to try to clear an innocent man of the charge of murder. If you will tell me all you know, my girl, you will save an innocent man from the gallows. If you hold back important evi-



dence, you are a murderess. Do you hear that, Ruth—a murderess?"

The girl shuddered.

"It isn't for the ten dollars, sir—don't think that for a minute. But I can't see anybody what is innocent suffer hanging by the neck until he is dead, and I don't want to be no murderess."

"Then tell me what it was that happened which made Miss Effie care less for poor Stanton than she did formerly."

"Well, sir, they had a quarrel."

"A quarrel? What about, my girl? Come, tell me all you know, and I will add another five dollars to this ten."

The girl's eyes sparkled greedily.

"I don't know how they started it, sir. You see, I only heard it from outside in the hallway. You see, I couldn't help hearing it, sir; they spoke in such loud voices. I hope you won't think that I would deliberately listen at a key-hole, sir."

"Of course you wouldn't, my girl. Tell me quickly, what did you accidentally hear?"

"I heard Mr. Stanton tell Miss Effie that he was going to get married to an actress and he asked Miss Effie to release him from his promise to marry her."

"And what did Miss Effie say?"

"She seemed kind of bitter. Spoke in that loud, haughty tone she can use so well. She said something about Mr. Stanton's being mistaken about there being any arrangement between them; that she hadn't made up her mind to accept him, any way. She hoped that they would both be very happy. She didn't sound as if she meant what she said, though, for she seemed horribly angry."

"And what happened after that?"

"Mr. Stanton left soon afterward. I met Miss Effie on the stairway. There were tears in her eyes and she looked very pale, but real scornful-like and handsome."

"And when did this little quarrel take place, Ruth?"

"Last Monday afternoon, sir."

"Last Monday afternoon—the day of the murder. Hah!" The professor could not repress the exclamation of triumph which rose to his lips.

"I hope that you are not trying to insinuate that Miss Effie——" cried the girl, suddenly wide awake.

"Miss Effie? Bless me, no! Why, the idea! Thank you, my girl. You have helped me considerably in my efforts to clear an innocent man of this fearful crime. Here is the fifteen dollars."

The girl took the money almost unwillingly, despite her previous eagerness.

"Oh, what have I done? What have I done? I shouldn't have told you anything about it," she said, beginning to cry.

"Hush, my girl. It will be all right. You have done only your duty. Don't cry. You will get into no trouble."

"You won't tell Miss Effie that I told you?"

"I will not, Ruth; but hush, here she comes now, unless I am very much mistaken."

Effie, with her mother, was entering the garden gate. Professor Starling doffed his hat.

"I have been waiting to have a few words with you, Miss Hilton," he said.

"Certainly, professor. How careless of Ruth to keep you waiting outside on the stoop. Come right up-stairs into the cozy-room, please. We shall be more comfortable there."

"My luck is with me," the professor told himself. "She probably has her typewriter in her cozy-room. I was afraid that she might ask me into the parlor."

Professor Starling's supposition proved correct. As Effie led the way into her favorite apartment and lit the gas with her own hand, he noticed the typewriter on the table in the corner.

Leisurely and unostentatiously he walked over to the machine. One glance told him what he wanted to know. It was a double keyboard make.

That one glance told the professor even more.

On the table beside the typewriter was an open box of writing-paper—plain white writing-paper of the same style as that on which the anonymous letter was written. From the interior of the box came a faint odor of Jockey Club perfume.



"Well, professor," said Effie cordially, sinking on the lounge and motioning him to a comfortable armchair. "I am very glad to see you and hope that I can be of some service to you."

"You can, Miss Hilton," replied the professor, slowly rising and taking from his pocket a typewritten letter. "You wrote this anonymous communication to President Cady. As one of the faculty of Old Orange University, I want you to tell me why you did it."

Effie's face flushed scarlet.

"How do you know that I wrote it?" she said stiffly.

"I have every proof. Miss Hilton, is it necessary to go into that? Will you not confess that you wrote it and save time and trouble?"

"Well, yes," replied the girl slowly. "I will confess that I wrote it, since you put the question so positively. What of it?"

"Why did you write that letter?"

"Because I wanted those cowards punished for hazing a defenseless freshman."

"I don't quite understand."

"I should think that my words were perfectly comprehensible, professor. I will explain more fully. I was at this window when I saw the kidnapping taking place across the campus there at the left-wing dormitory. I detest those hazing plots, they are so cowardly. It is many men against one who has no show. Of course I did not then know who were the parties concerned. I could not recognize them at that distance, and, besides, the men were masked."

"You knew that it was Stanton who was being kidnapped?"

"Yes, I recognized him. But if it had been any other man my sympathies would have been with him equally."

"But my dear Miss Hilton, if you could not recognize the faces of these men, how did you know their names, which were mentioned in your anonymous letter?"

For a minute the girl hesitated.

"That is perfectly simple," she answered. "I was unable to sleep, and was standing at my bedroom window several hours later when the men came home from their expedition. I recog-

nized the face of each as he passed the house."

"In the dark?" asked the professor dubiously.

"That street lamp yonder lighted up their faces with perfect clearness."

"Oh, yes; of course. And you sent that anonymous letter because you disapproved of hazing?"

"Not at all. Knowing that the penalty was expulsion, I would not have acted the part of an informer, no matter how much I personally detested the act," replied the girl, with eyes flashing scorn and defiance at the professor.

"Then why did you send the letter?"

"Because early that morning my brother brought the news to me that he had heard from a freshman that Stanton had been murdered. Then I deemed it my duty to inform President Cady of what I knew about the matter."

"And in that event, Miss Hilton, why is it that you omitted from your letter the names of two of the participants?"

"Ormsby did not come back with the others. I did not see him and did not know that he was with the party."

"Well, how about the other kidnapper, Robert Courtney?"

As the professor asked the question he looked at the girl keenly. Her eyes fell beneath his gaze and again the warm blood rushed to her face.

"Professor Starling," she said, "why do you cross-examine me this way?"

"Did you know that Courtney was among those kidnappers?" asked the professor, ignoring her question.

"I did."

"Then why did you omit his name from the list?"

The girl raised her eyes and fairly and squarely met those of the professor. Over her strong, handsome face came a look of quiet determination.

"I wanted to shield him—because I love him," she said.

"Ah!" said the professor, and fumbled in his coat pocket for a minute, taking therefrom a little lace handkerchief with two round holes cut in it.

"Miss Hilton," said the professor very gravely, "is not this your handkerchief?"

The girl took the handkerchief and examined it carefully.



"No," she answered; "I have never seen it before."

## CHAPTER XI.

### TWO STARTLING SURPRISES.

WHEN Effie Hilton declared that the handkerchief was not hers, her denial somewhat staggered Professor Starling.

Of course it was hardly to be expected that the girl would freely admit that the handkerchief belonged to her when she must have known what such an admission would imply.

There was so much earnestness in Effie's manner, however, when she made her denial, and she had such an air of telling the truth as well as of being in ignorance of the significance of the question, that the professor experienced a sharp pang of disappointment.

If she had stammered out a wild, passionate denial—if she had shown the slightest evidences of confusion or had launched into vehement, exaggerated protestations of innocence—he would have been sure that his chain of evidence had led him aright; but the coolness and sincerity of Effie's manner made him begin to doubt his ground.

"Either the girl is the cleverest actress and the most treacherous and heartless woman I have ever met," he said to himself, "or I have been mistaken in suspecting her in this affair. In that event, who was the woman who did this thing? The only answer that suggests itself is the actress who, Effie says, was engaged to marry poor Stanton. I must learn more about this actress as soon as possible."

He turned to Effie a trifle uneasily.

"Miss Hilton," he said, "would you forgive me if I asked you rather an impertinent question?"

"Have not most of your questions so far been more or less on the verge of the impertinent?" suggested Effie, with the shadow of a smile on her lips.

"I want to ask you about your quarrel with young Stanton."

Effie started from her seat as if she had been shot.

"My quarrel with Stanton! Who told you of that?" she cried, white and trembling.

"Never mind who told me. I know of it. I know that you quarreled with him the day he died and that he told you he was going to marry an actress, and left you very angry as a consequence."

"You are mistaken, sir, in that last respect. Young Stanton's plans were of the utmost indifference to me."

"He would have married you, though, if this actress had not intervened to claim his affections?" suggested the professor mercilessly.

"You are a little wrong there," said the girl haughtily. "He might have wished to marry me, but I should never have consented to marry him."

"Why?"

"Because I did not love him and I did love—somebody else."

"But, love apart, you would have obtained his uncle's fortune by marrying him. He and you both knew that."

"Your words have ceased to be merely impertinent, sir; they are downright insulting."

"I must ask your pardon if they have become so, Miss Hilton," said the professor, "but I am acting in the interest of one who is dear to both of us. I am trying to clear Bob Courtney of this murder charge and place this crime where it belongs."

"Then why do you come to me? How can I help you? I wish that I could."

Professor Starling hesitated for a second and his face turned a trifle paler. Then he said firmly, looking the girl straight in the eyes:

"Because the strongest of evidence now in my possession shows that this murder was committed by a woman; because, moreover, this woman is known to have used Jockey Club perfume and to have been acquainted with the undergraduates of Old Orange; because this woman was the owner of this lace handkerchief."

The professor stopped, for Effie had risen and stood facing him indignantly.

"No need to go on, professor," she said icily. "You think that I murdered poor Arthur Stanton, do you not?"

There was just the suspicion of tears in her eyes, but her voice was firm. The professor felt very uncomfortable. This was a more desperate job than he had imagined.



"No," he said; "not quite that, Miss Hilton. I will admit that I did believe that you were guilty of this deed up to the time when I entered this room to-night. Now, however, since you have denied the ownership of the handkerchief, I am convinced that the murder was committed either by yourself or by the actress whom Stanton was to marry."

"The actress Arthur was to marry was in London when the murder was committed. Did you not know that?" replied the girl. "She is filling a three-months' engagement at the Prince of Wales Theater, and as she gives a performance every night the lady should have no difficulty, I think, in proving an alibi. That leaves me the sole suspect, and under the circumstances, professor, you will excuse me if I wish you a very good night."

The professor found himself ushered out of the house before he could utter a word of expostulation.

"Well, well!" he muttered to himself. "She certainly is the most peculiar combination of a firebrand and icicle I have ever come across. God help poor Courtney if he should be saved from the gallows to be married to her!"

The professor, as may be guessed, was a confirmed woman-hater and held the entire sex in dread.

As he walked out of the front door of the Hilton cottage and was proceeding slowly up the road, he heard the sound of footsteps hastening after him and he knew that they were the steps of a woman.

He turned quickly, half suspecting that it was Effie come to assassinate him, for he stood in considerable fear of the girl. To his great relief, he saw that it was Ruth, the Hiltons' servant girl.

"Oh, sir," gasped the girl, "you did not tell her, did you?"

"Don't be alarmed; I have got you in no trouble," answered the professor.

"Don't let on that it was I who told you, will you, sir? I heard all that you said to her. I happened to be standing outside the door."

"Seems to be an unfortunate habit of yours—that listening act," remarked the professor dryly.

"I just happened to accidentally overhear it, sir. I hope that you don't think I was deliberately listening at the keyhole, sir," protested the girl.

"Of course I do not," answered the professor in a tone that belied his words. "But why have you followed me now, my girl? There are no keyholes out here."

"Because I heard all that you said, and I have made up my mind to tell you all."

"To tell me all! Do you know more than you have already told me? Come, answer me quickly!"

"Yes, sir. I know something that I had made up my mind to tell to absolutely nobody, but I have been thinking it over these last few minutes and I have made up my mind that it is my duty to save poor Mr. Courtney, no matter how much trouble it gets Miss Effie into."

"Quite right, my girl. Tell me quickly what is this information you have so properly determined to give me?"

"Simply this, sir, and I beg you to keep it secret and not let Miss Effie or Mr. Courtney know that I told you. On the sad day that we all learned poor Mr. Stanton had been murdered (last Tuesday, it was) Mr. Courtney visited this house."

"Ah!" exclaimed Professor Starling. "At what time, Ruth?"

"In the morning, sir. He rang the bell and I answered his ring. He came to see Miss Effie, but she had gone out with her mother. He asked for permission to come in and write a note to Miss Effie, and I asked him into the cozy-room, where Miss Effie has her desk and writing materials.

"Mr. Courtney went to Miss Effie's desk and spent several minutes scribbling on several sheets of letter paper, all of which he tore up after writing a few words on each.

"Then he changed his mind and came out to me and said 'I guess I won't write her a note after all.' Then he left, saying he was going down to the police station to see if Miss Effie and Mrs. Hilton had gone there to see poor Mr. Stanton's body.

"About an hour afterward he came



rushing back, hot and out of breath. He had evidently been running hard. He gasped out that he had left his pen-knife up-stairs and wanted to get it. I was surprised to see him again, and in such a state of excitement, too. He rushed up-stairs to the cozy-room and I watched him through the keyhole, for he shut the door behind him. What do you think he did, sir?"

"What? Speak quickly, girl," said the professor excitedly.

"He ran right to Miss Effie's desk, stooped to the floor and picked up from a corner under the desk a little flashing object that looked like the handle of a dagger with half a blade of glass. He put this quickly into his pocket and rushed out of the house."

"Good Heavens, girl! Are you sure of this?"

"Absolutely positive, sir. I could see the handle of the dagger and the glass blade quite clearly. I couldn't understand at the time why he did it, but since I heard you accuse Miss Effie of the murder I begin to understand a little more."

"Hush, girl, hush! Don't breathe a word of this to any one. You are a good girl, though, to have told me of it. You are sure that Courtney got the dagger from underneath Miss Effie's desk?"

"Positive, sir."

"And did you ever see the dagger before that day?"

"I never did, sir. That was the first and last time I laid eyes on it."

"Well," said the professor, "it may not mean anything, or it may mean much. Perhaps Courtney put the dagger there on his first visit and then repented of the act and came back for it afterward."

"I am sure he did not, sir, for I was watching him all the while he was in the room the first time."

"That time you really were looking through the keyhole, eh, Ruth?" suggested the professor.

"No, I was not, sir; the door was ajar. I ain't the keyhole-spying sort of a girl, I would have you to understand, sir."

"Well, well, Ruth! You had better get back to the house before your ab-

sence is discovered. I thank you very much for what you have told me."

"I like Mr. Courtney, and I ain't going to see him suffer for somebody else," said the girl as she turned away.

"The she-devil!" muttered the professor as he continued on his way. "The she-devil! So I was right in my suspicions, after all, and the handkerchief did belong to her!"

At this point he met Professor Wilson, still looking worried and despondent.

"Starling," said the lawyer, "I seem to be always meeting you lately. I hope you are soon going to spring that startling surprise in the Courtney case."

"Yes, sir," replied Professor Starling, "I will spring part of it now if you like. I know who committed that murder."

"The deuce you say! Who was he?"

"It wasn't a 'he' at all; it was a 'she.'"

"A she! Why, what woman would have done it?"

"Wilson, Arthur Stanton was murdered by Effie Hilton."

"Miss Hilton? Good Heavens, man, you are absolutely crazy! Is this the grand sensation you promised me?"

"It is, and what I am telling you is absolutely true. Don't ask me to explain any further to-night, because I don't intend to do it. Perhaps to-morrow I will give you convincing proofs. Any way, I will do so before the day of Courtney's trial."

Starling was turning to go, but the lawyer seized him roughly by the shoulder.

"See here, Starling," he said, "you don't think for a moment that you are going to get away like this. You don't seriously mean to charge Miss Effie with this foul murder, do you?"

"I most certainly do. So will you when I tell you all I know. Come up to my room to-morrow evening and I will perhaps be in a position to give you the entire evidence. You will be surprised and convinced when you hear it, old man."

"It astounded me when I made the discovery, but there isn't the shade of a doubt of my being right. Any jury



would convict her on the evidence I have."

"Good Heavens! And you won't tell me any more to-night?"

"Not to-night, Wilson. I have one or two little questions to clear up before I confide my case to anybody. See me to-morrow night at my room. I hope to be able to tell you everything then."

"Well, well!" said the lawyer to himself as he left Starling. "The man must be crazy to accuse Effie Hilton of such a crime. But if he should be right! Good Heavens, that would explain Courtney's reticent attitude, though! We know that he loves her. He may be forced to maintain silence in order to shield her. I certainly will keep that appointment with Starling to-morrow night, and I wish it was to-morrow night now. Starling can generally be depended upon to have a level head."

Meanwhile the professor of chemistry was unlocking the door of his bachelor apartment. As he stood there, keys in hand, he heard the sound of somebody ascending the stairs.

The person was approaching with a heavy tread and presently stood revealed before the professor in the uniform of a Western Union messenger boy.

"I have a telegram for Professor Starling," gasped the youngster. "Is he here?"

"Yes; I am Professor Starling."

"Sign this receipt first," demanded the careful boy.

The professor complied with his instructions and eagerly tore open the envelope, then uttered a cry of surprise as he read its contents.

It was a telegram from Billy Hilton, sent from Ossington, and it ran:

PROFESSOR STARLING,

OLD ORANGE UNIVERSITY.

Come here at once, if possible. Most extraordinary discovery. Found Stanton's uncle in his room with his brains blown out and pistol in hand. Evidently a suicide. Astonishing circumstances surrounding same. Don't fail to come

HILTON.

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHO AND WHY ?

PROFESSOR STARLING took the midnight train for Ossington and arrived

in that bustling little town before two o'clock.

He found Hilton at the Ossington Inn. The sophomore was asleep, but had left instructions that he was to be awakened when the professor arrived.

"This is a bad business, professor," said Hilton as the former entered his bedroom. "A startling surprise, I presume, to you as well as to me."

"It most certainly was. Tell me all you know. I must go and see the body, of course, but we can do nothing like that until morning. I presume that the Ossington police have been notified."

"Oh, yes. They have left the body where it was discovered, as the coroner has not yet made an examination. The police say, however, that there is not the slightest doubt that the old man committed suicide. You see, when I discovered the body he was lying on his face on the floor with a gaping hole in the back of his left ear and a revolver clutched tightly in his hand. How long he had been lying that way nobody seems to know."

"You were the first to discover him?"

"Yes. As soon as I arrived in Ossington last night I went immediately to old Daniel Stanton's bachelor apartment. He lived there all alone, you know.

"With all his wealth, he would never consent to hire a man. 'When these hands of mine can't dress me without the assistance of a male nurse,' he would say, 'I'll go to a foundling asylum and ask for admittance.'

"Well, last night I went up to his apartment on the third floor and knocked several times. There was no response, and when I tried the handle I found that the door was locked. I then went down to the basement to find the janitor and ascertain when Mr. Stanton was expected to return.

"'Don't know, sir,' was his reply. 'Haven't seen him for several days.' 'Where has he gone, my man?' I asked. 'Don't know,' was the answer. 'Last I saw of him was last Monday evening when he met me in the hall as I was coming out and he was going in.'

"'And you haven't seen or heard of him since?' I inquired.



"Then suddenly a startling thought shot through my brain. It came to me almost intuitively, for there was no good reason for it. 'I wonder,' I said, 'if Mr. Stanton could have met with foul play?'"

"'Maybe so, sir,' said the man almost indifferently, 'although I hope not, sir, for he was as kind an old gent as ever wore shoes.'

"'The last you saw of him he was going up-stairs,' I said suddenly. 'Then you never saw him go out again at all?'"

"'I did not, sir.'

"'Then, for all you know, he may be up-stairs now, perhaps lying dead or helpless.'

"'He may, sir, but I hope not,' the fellow replied with a coldness and indifference which maddened me.

"'Suppose we go up-stairs and find out,' I suggested.

"'We can't, sir,' replied the man. 'The door of the room is locked, and Mr. Stanton, sir, left strict orders when he took the apartment that nobody was to enter the rooms when he was out. He is a regular crank in that respect. Not even the cleaning woman is allowed to go into his rooms when he is not at home.'

"'Well,' I said, 'if nobody has been up to that room since last Monday evening, I'm going to break in that door, for I am afraid something terrible has happened. I am a friend of Mr. Stanton and will assume full responsibility for what I do.'

"Well, after a great deal of argument the man finally consented, though with great reluctance, and I took an ax and broke in the door.

"There I saw the horrifying sight I have described to you. Poor old Stanton lay dead on the floor with the revolver clutched tightly in his hand. There is scarcely a doubt that it was a case of suicide. The door was locked from the inside, and the key in the door.

"Of course I yelled for help as soon as I made the discovery, and the janitor went out and called in the police. Poor old man! No wonder he did not come to his nephew's funeral when we telegraphed to him."

"On the contrary," said the professor, with head bowed in thought; "the

most surprising feature of the case is that he did not come to his nephew's funeral. Young Stanton was murdered last Monday night. His uncle must have committed suicide since then. Why, it looks at first sight as if the old man must have killed himself directly on receipt of the news of his nephew's death, but surely he would not have been as much bound up in young Stanton as all that."

"No. Of course he thought a whole lot of young Stanton, but I hardly think he cared enough to commit suicide because of his death. I know, however, that he was very much set on Arthur marrying my sister. He was always talking of it to both Stanton and Effie."

"Did your sister know the old man well?" asked the professor suddenly.

"Of course she did. She was a great favorite with him, but he was so set on her marrying that he had sworn not to let either of them have a cent of his fortune unless they agreed to marry each other."

"And you think that Effie intended to marry Stanton if the latter had not been murdered?" asked the professor, taking care not to put too much interest into the words.

"I do think so, professor. You see, I am sorry to say, Effie is a girl who cares a great deal for the good things of life, and I think that she would not have let a fortune go begging. She had already refused poor Courtney, you know, who is a much better fellow than Stanton ever was."

"But your sister denied at the inquest that she intended to marry Stanton."

"That is something I cannot understand," said Hilton, shaking his head and wholly unsuspecting of the drift of the professor's questioning. "She must have changed her mind very suddenly, I think."

"I think so, too," said the professor, *solo voce*; but aloud he merely replied: "Well, we are straying from the subject, aren't we? To return to old Stanton's suicide. The point I should like to determine is exactly when he died. Of course there is no way of our telling that. In what condition did you find the body?"



"Well, from its condition the police think that he must have been dead at least two days."

"Of course they couldn't tell exactly. But wait a minute; I have an idea. If the old man committed suicide on receipt of the telegram telling of his nephew's death, that telegram ought to have been found in the room. Was it?"

"Yes; I forgot to mention that, professor. Every one of the six telegrams from Old Orange were in the room, but all unopened. The messenger boy had simply shoved them under the door."

"What! You don't mean to say that the old man did not get any of these telegrams?"

"Evidently not, for there were six telegrams from Old Orange unopened, and I understand that was all that were sent to him. When the police slit the envelopes they found three despatches from President Cady and three from me.

"One of the telegrams from President Cady notified him of his nephew's death and the others urged him to come to Old Orange immediately to take charge of the body. Mine were of course couched in a similar strain."

"Then if he didn't get that first telegram of Dr. Cady's, he couldn't have known about his nephew's death; so he certainly did not commit suicide for that reason."

"By Jove, professor! You are right there. I never thought of that. I am afraid I am a failure as a detective."

"And also," continued Professor Starling, "we get an idea from those telegrams as to when the old man died. The first of the despatches arrived Tuesday morning, and he was already lifeless, it seems, or the messenger would not have shoved the message under the door."

"You seem to be right in that respect also, professor. What next?"

"I want you to describe to me the appearance of the room when you entered it, as nearly as you can."

"I am afraid that I didn't stop to examine it very closely. All I remember is that the old man's will was laid out on the table as though he had placed it there before committing suicide. It

was a regularly drawn up legal document."

"Was there anything on the table besides that will?"

"I don't think so, professor. I can't remember anything else of importance about the room. As I say, I am afraid that I am a poor detective. You see, I was so horrified at finding the body that I did not stop to examine much else."

"There were no signs of a struggle, though, were there? You ought to remember that."

"No. I think that I should have noticed any signs of that. The furniture was not overturned or anything of that sort. I don't think that there is a chance in the world of his death being due to anything but suicide."

"It doesn't look like anything else but suicide, does it? Well, my boy, you get some sleep now, and at nine o'clock we'll call on the Ossington chief of police and visit poor old Mr. Stanton's rooms."

The professor left Hilton to his slumbers, but he himself did not take advantage of the few intervening hours for the purpose of sleep.

He sat on the hotel porch and pondered and pondered till nine o'clock came around.

"Now, why on earth did the old man commit suicide, I wonder?" he kept saying to himself. "I wonder if it could have been because he heard of young Stanton's intention to marry the actress and give up Effie. It hardly seems possible that he would have committed suicide because of that. I wonder if he really did commit suicide. The police are such blind fools. Well, I shall have to wait for a few hours and see for myself."

At nine o'clock, Hilton, freshened by his morning bath, joined him, and the two went in search of the local chief of police.

This was a man named Morton, a thick-set, coarse kind of man who was wont to boast that he had been for six years on the New York police force.

Professor Starling introduced himself to Chief Morton, who sniffed contemptuously when he heard of the professor's interest in the case.



"Want to see the body, eh?" he grunted. "All right, I'll take you around there, professor. But mind you, I don't want any interfering in our work or trying to teach us our business. There's no doubt about the thing being a suicide—not a thousandth part of a doubt."

Accompanied by Morton, the professor and Hilton climbed the stairs of the bachelor apartment where old Stanton had lived, and entered the death chamber.

As Hilton had said, the police had allowed the body to remain exactly as it had been discovered, pending the arrival of the coroner.

With hats in hand, each of them stood looking silently at the ghastly figure of the dead man for a full minute.

The police official stood by in stolid indifference; the other two were somewhat overcome by the terrible sight.

Professor Starling, however, despite his emotion, did not fail to take a rapid inventory of the room with his eyes.

"You see, professor," said the official almost sarcastically, "everything is perfectly regular and there is no doubt of suicide. Here is the gun as we found it, clutched tightly in his hand, with his finger stiffened on the trigger. Here is the poor gentleman's will on the table, evidently placed there by him just before he did the deed, so that there would be no mistake as to where the property was to go. Everything regular, eh?"

"There are one or two little things you perhaps may not have noticed, Chief Morton," replied the professor coldly. "I will call them to your attention because I myself cannot find time to come here and work up this case and must leave it to you.

"You will notice, in the first place, in the grate here the charred ashes of what was once evidently a sheet of paper. On the table is half of a cigar with the label on. Also those two chairs there at the table are drawn up as if two persons had put them in that position to enjoy a chat.

"Then there is a kid glove on the floor here, which I take the liberty of picking up and which has a button bearing the stamp of a Paris glove-maker;

also, the telephone receiver over there is dangling from the hook on the end of the wire, which isn't the proper attitude for a well-regulated telephone receiver to assume. Perhaps you have not noticed some of these little things."

"If I have or if I haven't, what is the difference, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?" said Morton sarcastically. "I can't see that they mean anything, any of them."

"And yet how easily they might mean something," said the professor, with a sarcastic smile almost equal to that of the policeman. "How easy they might mean, for instance, that this poor old man was murdered instead of a suicide."

"Murdered! You are crazy, professor, if you will excuse me for saying so. Show me what these things have got to do with a murder theory."

"Easily. That is what I intend to do, chief. Now, in the first place, these chairs, placed as they are, indicate that the dead man had a visitor shortly before he died, perhaps only a few minutes before he died.

"The cigar would lead us to the latter belief. You see it is half smoked. Who smoked it and left it there? Not the dead man, for I have learned from this young man here, who knew him well, that the deceased never smoked and in fact had an aversion for tobacco. Then how came that cigar in his room? Am I getting interesting, chief?"

"Pooh!" scoffed the police official a little uneasily. "You attach too much importance to trifles, professor; that's the trouble with all theorists. But go on and have your say."

"This kid glove picked up off the floor and with a Paris trade-mark on the button. To whom does that belong? 'To the dead man,' you are about to say; for there is the other glove on the sideboard there with his hat and cane. Well, you will be wrong there, for these gloves, as you will see if you look again, are not mates—they are both for the left hand, and probably the buttons show them to be two different makes. Yes, look here; you see I am right—this one is a Paris make and this one was made in New York, according to the trade-mark on the button. Evidently the man who sat in that chair and smoked that cigar had placed his gloves near



those of the professor and in hurrying out made the mistake of seizing one of the professor's gloves instead of his own. Am I right, chief?"

"Sounds pretty, but how do we know the dead man didn't make a mistake earlier in the day and get somebody else's glove without noticing it?"

"That, too, is possible, but it has been cold weather lately and he would probably have tried to wear the gloves and thus have discovered his mistake. But to proceed to our most important clue of all—that innocent-looking telephone receiver. Why is it off the hook?"

"Fell off," suggested the chief of police impatiently.

"Fell off, eh? Did you ever hear of a telephone receiver falling off its hook without being pushed, chief? That theory is hardly plausible. No! I think we should assume rather that it fell from the deceased's grasp when he dropped dead with a pistol shot behind his left ear."

"That may very easily be true, professor. He may have had bad news over the telephone and shot himself as a consequence."

"Yes, that is true, chief. As you imply, he may have heard such bad news that he threw the telephone receiver from him and then in despair took out a revolver and shot himself.

"That is a question which we must try to decide by other clues. If you can find out from Central what was the last call of this wire, it may give you considerable help."

"I don't suppose that Central would remember that after all this time," growled the chief of police.

"Well, wait a minute. See, here is another clue I had almost overlooked. The open telephone book over there.

You observe, chief, that it is opened about the middle of the book. There is strong probability that that page contains the last number the poor man tried to call. You will see, too, that the numbers on this page are all for Old Orange, so evidently he was either speaking or trying to speak to somebody in Old Orange just before he died. That, you will admit, is an important clue. Central at least ought to remember when Old Orange was last called on this telephone."

"But wait a minute! It isn't necessary to ask Central at all. Look there, Chief Morton! On the wooden slab of the telephone is a little memorandum pad used for jotting down numbers, with a pencil beside it. And see! The old man has noted down the number he was calling.

"We all do it when we are using a telephone if we have a paper and pencil handy. We look the number up in the book and then jot it down to have it before us so that we shan't forget it before we get Central. That is exactly what this old man did. See, here is the number scrawled on this memorandum pad—652 Old Orange.

"Let's look down this page for that number—652 Old Orange. Ah, here it is, right against the name of John D. Warren, lawyer, Main Street, Old Orange.

"And now let us look at the lawyer's name on this will. John D. Warren, lawyer. There you are.

"Chief of Police Morton," concluded the professor triumphantly, his face pale with excitement, "that poor old man there was brutally murdered—shot from behind by somebody while he turned his back on the assassin to call up his lawyer on the telephone."

*(To be continued.)*

#### HER FIRST SMILE.

I SMILED at her. She looked at me  
And dropped her eyes half angrily;  
But far within the depths of blue—  
So faint that only Cupid knew—  
I caught a smile born all for me,  
That whispered of what was to be.

*Silas McChesney Piper.*



# Professor Jonkin's Cannibal Plant.

BY HOWARD R. GARIS.

A triumph of cultivation which threatened a tragedy in mastication.

AFTER Professor Jephtha Jonkin had, by skilful grafting and care, succeeded in raising a single tree that produced, at different seasons, apples, oranges, pineapples, figs, cocoanuts, and peaches, it might have been supposed he would rest from his scientific labors. But Professor Jonkin was not that kind of a man.

He was continually striving to grow something new in the plant world. So it was no surprise to Bradley Adams, when calling on his friend the professor one afternoon, to find that scientist busy in his large conservatory.

"What are you up to now?" asked Adams. "Trying to make a rose-bush produce violets, or a honeysuckle vine bring forth pumpkins?"

"Neither," replied Professor Jonkin a little stiffly, for he resented Adams' playful tone. "Not that either of those things would be difficult. But look at that."

He pointed to a small plant with bright, glossy green leaves mottled with red spots. The thing was growing in a large earthen pot.

It bore three flowers, about the size of morning glories, and not unlike that blossom in shape, save, near the top, there was a sort of lid, similar to the flap observed on a jack-in-the-pulpit plant.

"Look down one of those flowers," went on the professor, and Adams, wondering what was to come, did so.

He saw within a small tube, lined with fine, hair-like filaments, which seemed to be in motion. And the shaft or tube went down to the bottom of the morning-glory-shaped part of the flower. At the lower extremity was a little clear liquid.

"Kind of a queer blossom. What is it?" asked Adams.

"That," said the professor with a note of pride in his voice, "is a specimen of the *Sarracenia Nepenthis*."

"What's that? French for sunflower,

or Latin for sweet pea?" asked Adams irreverently.

"It is Latin for pitcher plant," responded the professor, drawing himself up to his full height of five feet three. "One of the most interesting of the South American flora."

"The name fits it pretty well," observed Adams. "I see there's water at the bottom. I suppose this isn't the pitcher that went to the well too often."

"The *Sarracenia Nepenthis* is a most wonderful plant," went on the professor in his lecture voice, not heeding Adams' joking remarks. "It belongs to what Darwin calls the carnivorous family of flowers, and other varieties of the same species are the *Dionaea Muscipula*, or Venus Fly-trap, the *Darlingtonia*, the *Pinguicula* and *Aldrovandra*, as well as——"

"Hold on, professor," pleaded Adams. "I'll take the rest on faith. Just tell me about this pitcher plant. It seems interesting."

"It is interesting," said Professor Jonkin. "It eats insects."

"Eats insects?"

"Certainly. Watch."

The professor opened a small wire cage lying on a shelf and took from it several flies. These he liberated close to the queer plant.

The insects buzzed about a few seconds, dazed with their sudden liberty.

Then they began slowly to circle in the vicinity of the strange flowers. Nearer and nearer the blossoms they came, attracted by some subtle perfume, as well as by a sweet syrup that was on the edge of the petals, put there by nature for the very purpose of drawing hapless insects into the trap.

The flies settled down, some on the petals of all three blooms. Then a curious thing happened.

The little hair-like filaments in the tube within the petals suddenly reached out and wound themselves about the



insects feeding on the sweet stuff, and which seemed to intoxicate them. In an instant the flies were pulled to the top of the flower shaft by a contraction of the hairs, and then they went tumbling down the tube into the miniature pond below, where they were drowned after a brief struggle. Their crawling back was prevented by spines growing with points down, as the wires in some rat-traps are fastened.

Meanwhile the cover of the plant closed down.

"Why, it's a regular fly-trap, isn't it?" remarked Adams, much surprised.

"It is," replied the professor. "The plant lives off the insects it captures. It absorbs them, digests them, and, when it is hungry again, catches more."

"Where'd you get such an uncanny thing?" asked Adams, moving away from the plant as if he feared it might take a sample bite out of him.

"A friend sent it to me from Brazil."

"But you're not going to keep it, I hope."

"I certainly am," rejoined Professor Jonkin.

"Maybe you're going to train it to come to the table and eat like a human being," suggested Adams, with a laugh that nettled the professor.

"I wouldn't have to train it much to induce it to be polite," snapped back the owner of the pitcher plant.

And then, seeing that his jokes were not relished, Adams assumed an interest he did not feel, and listened to a long dissertation on botany in general and carnivorous plants in particular.

He would much rather have been eating some of the queer hybrid fruits the professor raised. He pleaded an engagement when he saw an opening in the talk, and went away.

It was some months after that before he saw the professor again. The botanist was busy in his conservatory in the mean time, and the gardener he hired to do rough work noticed that his master spent much time in that part of the glass house where the pitcher plant was growing.

For Professor Jonkin had become so much interested in his latest acquisition that he seemed to think of nothing else. His plan for increasing strawberries to

the size of peaches was abandoned for a time, as was his pet scheme of raising apples without any core.

The gardener wondered what there was about the South American blossoms to require such close attention.

One day he thought he would find out, and he started to enter that part of the conservatory where the pitcher plant was growing. Professor Jonkin halted him before he had stepped inside and sternly bade him never to appear there again.

As the gardener, crestfallen, moved away after a glimpse into the forbidden region he muttered:

"My, that plant has certainly grown! And I wonder what the professor was doing so close to it. Looked as if he was feeding the thing."

As the days went by the conduct of Professor Jonkin became more and more curious. He scarcely left the southern end of the conservatory, save at night, when he entered his house to sleep.

He was a bachelor, and had no family cares to trouble him, so he could spend all his time among his plants. But hitherto he had divided his attention among his many experiments in the floral kingdom.

Now he was always with his mysterious pitcher plant. He even had his meals sent into the green-house.

"Be you keepin' boarders?" asked the butcher boy of the gardener one day, pausing on his return to the store, his empty basket on his arm.

"No. Why?"

"The professor is orderin' so much meat lately. I thought you had company."

"No, there's only us two. Mr. Adams used to come to dinner once in a while, but not lately."

"Then you an' the professor must have big appetites."

"What makes you think so?"

"The number of beefsteaks you eat."

"Number of beefsteaks? Why, my lad, the professor and I are both vegetarians."

"What's them?"

"We neither of us eat a bit of meat. We don't believe it's healthy."

"Then what becomes of the three big



porterhouse steaks I deliver to the professor in the green-house every day?"

"Porterhouse steaks?" questioned the gardener, amazed.

"Do you feed 'em to the dog?"

"We don't keep a dog."

But the butcher boy questioned no further, for he saw a chum and hastened off to join him.

"Three porterhouse steaks a day!" mused the gardener, shaking his head. "I do hope the professor has not ceased to be a vegetarian. Yet it looks mighty suspicious. And he's doing it on the sly, too, for there's been no meat cooked in the house, of that I'm sure."

And the gardener, sorely puzzled over the mystery, went off, shaking his head more solemnly than before.

He resolved to have a look in the place the professor guarded so carefully. He tried the door when he was sure his master was in another part of the conservatory, but it was locked, and no key the gardener had would unfasten it.

A month after the gardener had heard of the porterhouse steaks, Adams happened to drop in to see his friend the professor again.

"He's in with the *Sarracenia Nepenthis*," said the gardener in answer to the visitor's inquiry. "But I doubt if he will let you enter."

"Why won't he?"

"Because he's become mighty close-mouthed of late over that pitcher plant."

"Oh, I guess he'll see me," remarked Adams confidently, and he knocked on the door that shut off the locked section of the green-house from the main portion.

"Who's there?" called the professor.

"Adams."

"Oh," in a more conciliatory tone, "I was just wishing you'd come along. I have something to show you."

Professor Jonkin opened the door, and the sight that met Adams' gaze startled him.

The only plant in that part of the conservatory was a single specimen of the *Sarracenia Nepenthis*. Yet it had attained such enormous proportions that at first Adams thought he must be dreaming.

"What do you think of that for an

achievement in science?" asked the professor proudly.

"Do you mean to say that is the small, fly-catching plant your friend sent you from Brazil?"

"The same."

"But—but——"

"But how it's grown, that's what you want to say, isn't it?"

"It is. How did you do it?"

"By dictating the blossoms."

"You mean——?"

"I mean feeding them. Listen. I reasoned that if a small blossom of the plant would thrive on a few insects, by giving it larger meals I might get a bigger plant. So I made my plans.

"First I cut off all but one blossom, so that the strength of the plant would nourish that alone. Then I made out a bill of fare. I began feeding it on chopped beef. The plant took to it like a puppy. It seemed to beg for more. From chopped meat I went to small pieces, cut up. I could fairly see the blossom increase in size. From that I went to choice mutton chops, and, after a week of them, with the plant becoming more gigantic all the while, I increased its meals to a porterhouse steak a day. And now——"

The professor paused to contemplate his botanical work.

"Well, now?" questioned Adams.

"Now," went on the professor proudly, "my pitcher plant takes three big beefsteaks every day—one for breakfast, one for dinner, and one for supper. And see the result."

Adams gazed at the immense plant. From a growth about as big as an Easter lily it had increased until the top was near the roof of the green-house, twenty-five feet above.

About fifteen feet up, or ten feet from the top, there branched out a great flower, about eight feet long and three feet across the bell-shaped mouth, which, except for the cap or cover, was not unlike the opening of an immense morning glory.

The flower was heavy, and the stalk on which it grew was not strong enough to support it upright. So a rude scaffolding had been constructed of wood and boards, and on a frame the flower was held upright.



In order to see it to better advantage, and also that he might feed it, the professor had a ladder by which he could ascend to a small platform in front of the bell-shaped mouth of the blossom.

"It is time to give my pet its meal," he announced, as if he were speaking of some favorite horse. "Want to come up and watch it eat?"

"No, thank you," responded Adams. "It's too uncanny."

The professor took a large steak, one of the three which the butcher boy had left that day. Holding it in his hand, he climbed up the ladder and was soon on the platform in front of the plant.

Adams watched him curiously. The professor leaned over to toss the steak into the yawning mouth of the flower.

Suddenly Adams saw him totter, throw his arms wildly in the air, and then, as if drawn by some overpowering force, he fell forward, lost his balance, and toppled into the maw of the pitcher plant!

There was a jar to the stalk and blossom as the professor fell within. He went head first into the tube, or eating apparatus of the strange plant, his legs sticking out for an instant, kicking wildly. Then he disappeared entirely.

Adams didn't know whether to laugh or be alarmed.

He mounted the ladder, and stood in amazement before the result of the professor's work as he looked down into the depth of the gigantic flower, increased a hundred times in size.

He was aware of a strange, sickish-sweet odor that seemed to steal over his senses. It was lulling him to sleep, and he fought against it. Then he looked down and saw that the huge hairs or filaments with which the tube was lined were in violent motion.

He could just discern the professor's feet about three feet below the rim of the flower. They were kicking, but with a force growing less every second. The filaments seemed to be winding about the professor's legs, holding him in a deadly embrace.

Then the top cover, or flap of the plant, closed down suddenly. The professor was a prisoner inside.

The plant had turned cannibal and eaten the man who had grown it!

For an instant, fear deprived Adams of reason. He did not know what to do. Then the awful plight of his friend brought back his senses.

"Professor!" he shouted. "Are you alive? Can you hear me?"

"Yes," came back in faint and muffled tones. "This beast has me, all right."

Then followed a series of violent struggles that shook the plant.

"I'll get you out! Where's an ax? I'll chop the cursed plant to pieces!" cried Adams.

"Don't! Don't!" came in almost pleading tones from the imprisoned professor.

"Don't what?"

"Don't hurt my pet!"

"Your pet!" snorted Adams angrily. "Nice kind of a pet you have! One that tries to eat you alive! But I've got to do something if I want to save you. Where's the ax?"

"No! No!" begged the professor, his voice becoming more and more muffled. "Use chloroform."

"Use what?"

"Chloroform! You'll find some in the closet."

Then Adams saw what the professor's idea was. The plant could be made insensible, and the imprisoned man released with no harm to the blossom.

He raced down the ladder, ran to a closet where he had seen the professor's stock of drugs and chemicals stowed away on the occasion of former visits, and grabbed a big bottle of chloroform. He caught up a towel and ran back up the ladder.

Not a sign of the professor could be seen. The plant had swallowed him up, but by the motion and swaying of the flower Adams knew his friend was yet alive.

He was in some doubt as to the success of this method, and would rather have taken an ax and chopped a hole in the side of the blossom, thus releasing the captive. But he decided to obey the professor.

Saturating the towel well with the chloroform, and holding his nose away from it, he pressed the wet cloth over the top of the blossom where the lid touched the edge of the bloom.



There was a slight opening at one point, and Adams poured some of the chloroform down this. He feared lest the fumes of the anesthetic might overpower the professor also, but he knew they would soon pass away if this happened.

For several minutes he waited anxiously. Would the plan succeed? Would the plant be overcome before it had killed the professor inside?

Adams was in a fever of terror. Again and again he saturated the towel with the powerful drug. Then he had the satisfaction of seeing the lid of the pitcher plant relax.

It slowly lifted and fell over to one side, making a good-sized opening. The strong filaments, not unlike the arms of a devil fish, Adams thought, were no longer in uneasy motion. They had released their grip on the professor's legs and body.

The spines which had pointed downward, holding the plant's prey, now became limber.

Adams leaned over. He reached down, grasped the professor by the feet, and, being a strong man, while his friend was small and light, he pulled him from the tube of the flower, a little dazed from the fumes of the chloroform the plant had breathed in, but otherwise not much the worse for his adventure.

He had not reached the water at the

bottom of the tube, which fact saved him from drowning.

"Well, you certainly had a narrow squeak," observed Adams as he helped the professor down the ladder.

"I did," admitted the botanist. "If you had not been on hand I don't know what would have happened. I suppose I would have been eaten alive."

"Unless you could have cut yourself out of the side of the flower with your knife," observed Adams.

"What! And killed the plant I raised with such pains?" ejaculated the professor. "Spoil the largest *Sarracenia Nepenthis* in the world? I guess not. I would rather have let it eat me."

"I think you ought to call it the cannibal plant instead of the pitcher plant," suggested Adams.

"Oh, no," responded the professor dreamily, examining the flower from a distance to see if any harm had come to it. "But to punish it, I will not give it any supper or breakfast. That's what it gets for being naughty," he added as if the plant were a child.

"And I suggest that when you feed it hereafter," said Adams, "you pass the beefsteaks in on a pitch-fork. You won't run so much danger then."

"That's a good idea. I'll do it," answered the professor heartily.

And he has followed that plan ever since.

## THE BLACK SMUDGE.\*

BY J. AUBREY TYSON.

A story of Russia in the present, setting forth the thrilling experiences of an American who became entangled in a grand ducal conspiracy.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### ON THE SIDE-TRACK.

WITHIN six hours after his escape from the Krazo and his finding of Lankirk, Kenck and Peringoff, Gridley learned more of the wonderful resources possessed by the men whose lives were consecrated to the struggle for Russian liberty.

The young engineer's determination to start in pursuit of Claire and Edith had excited the forebodings of the two Russian patriots. They soon convinced him of the futility of seeking the aid of the United States consul.

Then, just as they had almost made him despair, Peringoff suggested a plan which made the blood leap into the veins of both Gridley and Lankirk.

\* This story began in the May issue of THE ARGOSY. The three back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 30 cents.



In accordance with Peringoff's suggestion, the two Americans were to enlist as privates in a Russian regiment that had been ordered to join the army of General Kuropatkin in Manchuria. This regiment, known as the Twelfth Riazans, and commanded by Colonel Crieff, was to start from Rijsk, a few hours' ride from Moscow, on the following day.

Captain Sinoff, commanding one of the companies, it was explained, was, like hundreds of other military officers in the Russian service, an ardent revolutionist.

"In the Twelfth Riazans are many men who are our friends," Peringoff had added. "These are going to the Far East for the purpose of carrying on our propaganda among the troops in the field. In every town you will find friends with whom we are constantly in touch. Sinoff is a tower of strength. Without exciting any suspicion, he can summon scores of men to your aid in any town through which you may pass. Trust him as you would trust us. He will not fail you."

In a few hours Gridley and Lankirk were in Rijsk, in the province of Riazan. There they enlisted in Sinoff's company, and on the following morning they were *en route* for the Far East.

Two days later Colonel Crieff, of the Twelfth Riazan Regiment, was in despair. The regiment was on two trains, and when it left Rijsk it had been supplied with only one day's rations.

For the last sixteen hours the men had been looking from their car windows with sullen faces—the result of empty stomachs.

The owners of these sullen faces were, for the most part, sons of *moujiks*, and from the colonel's view-point they were no more than dogs. But famished dogs may become as dangerous as famished wolves.

While serving in Trans-Caucasia the colonel had seen some of these famished "dogs" kill their officers. That was scarcely likely to happen here, of course, but the congestion of the railroad ahead of them and behind them was responsible for great difficulty in carrying out certain orders.

The colonel knew that strikes on sev-

eral divisions of the Trans-Siberian Railroad were imminent; that the spirit of revolt was stalking through the eastern as well as the western provinces, and that, despite the rigid censorship, reports of risings in St. Petersburg and Moscow were being received by all classes of the inhabitants.

How had these reports been carried? The government officials shook their heads. Proclamations issued by the revolutionary leaders in St. Petersburg had been torn from walls and posts in public streets as far east as Ufa and Orenburg.

And so the government had given strict orders that commanding officers should see to it that there should be no communication between civilians and soldiers *en route* for Harbin and Mukden. The whipped and disheartened army in the Far East must not know that the nation which had sent it out, half-clothed, half-fed, and inadequately armed, was a house divided against itself.

The trains that were bearing the Twelfth Riazan Regiment were stalled with nearly a score of others just west of Kinel, a little town in the province of Samara that constitutes the junction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and the branch that runs to Orenburg.

Colonel Crieff, striding to and fro beside the cars, stroked his beard nervously.

"How long is this going to last, Captain Sinoff?" he inquired of that officer, who, having been on ahead, now approached and saluted. "We have been here for two hours. Is there no relief in sight?"

"None, colonel," said the other quietly.

"How are the men behaving themselves?"

"My company is perfectly orderly."

"Good. Kelpz had to shoot two of his young whelps this morning for trying to desert at Samara."

Sinoff shook his head gravely. The colonel passed on toward the head of the train. The captain looked after his superior officer thoughtfully for several moments, then walked on slowly in the opposite direction.

At length he paused beside a car from



the windows of which were thrust half a dozen frowsy heads.

"Send Kogalonovitch to me," he said to one of the men who were leaning out.

The head disappeared, and a few moments later a short, stocky private with a broad face climbed down from the car and saluted.

Captain Sinoff walked to the rear of the train, followed at a respectful distance by Kogalonovitch. When the two men were half-way between the last car of their train and the locomotive of the train behind them, Sinoff stopped, glanced around carelessly, then said in a low voice:

"Tell Levaine that his car is side-tracked just this side of the Great Kinel bridge, fifteen miles ahead of us. We will overtake it at Kinel station. Tell him also that he must make no move without first consulting me."

Kogalonovitch saluted and returned to his car. Walking forward on the other side of the train, Sinoff came upon Lieutenant Kratow, of his own company.

"Well, Kratow, how are the men standing it?"

"Splendidly, under the circumstances. When I left them last they were trying to draw out those two Frenchmen we recruited at Zaratse."

"They're a taciturn pair."

"So I thought, at first; but they seem to be livening up this morning and are keeping the others in good spirits."

It was dark when the train bearing the men from Riazan got under way. At eight o'clock that night it slowed down in Kinel, and in Kinel it remained on a side-track for many hours.

From one of the cars occupied by members of the Twelfth Riazan two men descended shortly before midnight. Both wore privates' overcoats. As they stepped to the ground they were promptly challenged by a sentry. They gave the password and walked on until they came to a railway carriage which, having been detached from the train, stood alone on one of the side-tracks.

The shorter of the two Riazans advanced and answered the challenge of one of the three sentinels who guarded the car. The sentinel called to one of his comrades, who went within. In a

few moments he came out of the car and beckoned to the shorter of the visitors, who quickly ascended the steps and entered the forward compartment.

\* \* \* \*

Tossing restlessly in their berths, Claire and Edith, victims of the most profound despair, sobbed softly, prayed, and then told themselves that Heaven was too far from Russia to hear their supplications for relief.

Suddenly both started. The sound of voices in the compartment ahead of them was followed by a brief period of silence, then a vigorous rapping on the locked door.

Both women, who were partly dressed, leaped to the floor and looked at each other with expressions of great alarm.

There was a pause, then the rapping was repeated.

"Who is there?" asked Edith sharply.

"A friend. In God's name, open quickly."

The voice of the speaker was new to them, but the words were in English.

Throwing a shawl around her shoulders, Edith brushed aside the warning hand that Claire had placed upon her arm. Then she opened the door. She saw the pale face of a stranger—a stranger who wore a gray military coat similar to that worn by Sviokon. He was of Sviokon's build, but was scarcely more than thirty years of age. His hair and mustache were dark.

"Gridley, in the uniform of a Russian private, waits outside," said the stranger quickly. "I'm his foreman—Lankirk. You must get into these at once."

As he spoke he thrust through the door the overcoat, blouse and trousers which he had worn when he entered the car.

Edith gave a little cry of horror. In a corner she saw something covered by a quilt from the berth.

"Never mind that," said Lankirk sharply, as he followed the direction of her eyes. "This is Russia. Be quick, miss, if you want to leave it."

"But the princess?"



"Come, come—either one of you. Don't stand talking there. We'll return for the other afterward. Be quick, I tell you!"

He closed the door. Soon afterward he rapped again.

"For God's sake, woman!" he called impatiently.

The next time, without rapping, he flung open the door. The princess, clad in the blouse and trousers, was struggling with the overcoat which Edith held in her hands.

"Let me have it!" Lankirk commanded between set teeth.

In another moment the princess was in its folds.

"Turn up the collar—there!"

He suited the action to the word, and grasping the princess by the arm he hurried her through the other compartment.

"Walk slowly, keep erect, and don't speak to any one until Gridley gets you away. Brace up. Now go."

He swung open the door and thrust her out. Then he closed the door, and after locking it he darted back to Edith.

"Get ready to slip into Gridley's uniform," he said. "He'll be here in a minute."

He closed the door. As he turned away from it he drew a white wig over his head and placed over his ears hooks that held a white beard to his face.

This done, he nervously paced to and fro, then raised the quilt from the still figure in the corner.

"It will do," he said, as he dropped the quilt again.

A few moments later there was the sound of feet on the steps without, then a knock on the door. Lankirk opened it.

"All right," said Gridley.

The door was opened wider, and the young millionaire stepped in.

Lankirk, now completely disguised as Sviokon, opened the door again and stepped out.

"Sentinel, come here," he commanded calmly.

The sentinel saluted and ran up the steps. When he had entered the compartment the door was closed and locked behind him.

"I want you to take a message to the

station-master," Lankirk said, and as he spoke a paper that he had been holding in his hand fluttered to the floor. Without waiting for a request, the sentinel stooped. As he rose, a blow from a short, loaded stick felled him to the floor. Two blows followed in quick succession.

When he, too, found a place beside the body of Sviokon beneath the quilt, his uniform and overcoat had been thrust into the adjoining compartment.

Attended by two figures in the attire of Russian privates, Lankirk, still disguised as Sviokon, left the compartment, locked the door behind him and quickly descended from the railway carriage. He returned the salutes of the two sentinels who remained on that side of the car, and walked briskly away, with his companions at his heels. One of the sentinels chuckled as he turned to the other.

"By the soul of the Great Peter, they've recruited Ivan Crasky for the Third Section!" he said.

"Nay, Ivan Crasky's still inside the carriage," replied the other. "I was standing near the steps when they came down, and——"

But he said no more. Behind him——

Three hundred persons standing on the platform of the Kinel station were deafened by the sound of a terrific explosion. Four hundred yards down the railway line there was a blinding flash of light—then darkness.

Hundreds of windows in cars and stores and dwellings were shattered into bits. There was a shower of fragments of wood and iron and unsightly things that afterward were identified as pieces of human flesh.

With cries of alarm, more than six thousand soldiers leaped from their cars. Hundreds of others lay limply in seats and on floors as a result of the concussion.

Bewildered officers shouted orders as bewildering as their own mental faculties. Bugles were sounded, and there was a general reaching for rifles and sabers.

While the excitement was at its height, five persons—three in the uniform of privates, one in the overcoat and



cap of an officer, and another in the dress of a *moujik*—were plunging blindly and half-stunned through a great snowdrift near the railway. Three of them soon recovered, however, and were supporting the two others when four *moujiks* went to their assistance. Three sledges were at hand, and in a few minutes the whole party was safe in a hut well back from the railroad and out of the town.

A quarter of an hour later, Captain Sinoff, of the Twelfth Riazans, was standing on the platform of the station when he was approached by Colonel Crieff, the commanding officer of the regiment.

The colonel's face was drawn and haggard, and there was a look of horror in his eyes.

"My God, Sinoff, it is awful!" he exclaimed.

"In Heaven's name, what does it all mean?" asked the captain.

"What does it mean? Why, it means that, right in the midst of eight thousand Russian soldiers, Count Sviokon and a party of Grand Duke Casimir's friends have been assassinated in Casimir's private car by revolutionists!"

"Revolutionists!"

"Aye," answered the colonel. "This unhappy country, affected by our Far Eastern reverses, has gone mad."

As the agitated colonel hurried on, Captain Sinoff stroked his long mustache to hide a smile.

"It was work well done," he muttered.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE RIGHT OF WAY.

At six o'clock on the morning following the destruction of Sviokon's car the Kinel station-master stood beside one of the telegraph operators in the station. His face was pale and drawn and the hand that rested on one of the shoulders of his subordinate trembled visibly.

The operator had just repeated to the master a message that he had received over the wire from Moscow. The message was as follows:

Westbound Red Cross train leaves Buzuluk at 6.10. Keep line clear.

The division mentioned had only a single track, and the station-master was sorely perplexed. He hesitated for a few moments before he spoke.

"Tell him," he said, "that ten thousand troops for Harbin, short of rations, which cannot be supplied this side of Buzuluk, are waiting here at Kinel."

The operator nodded and fingered his key.

When he had finished there was a pause. Then the receiver began to click.

The operator spoke the words as they were sounded:

The Red Cross train has the right of way to Moscow. By order of the Czar.

"So be it then," the station-master said.

He opened the door of the telegraph office, and standing on the threshold he repeated the words to a score of anxious-faced officers who were assembled outside.

There was a discontented murmur and a shrugging of shoulders, then the group dispersed. Among the first to go was Captain Sinoff.

"Seventy miles—two hours," he murmured with a chuckle. Suddenly his face grew grave. "Aye, God loves liberty, and these Americans are in his keeping," he said.

And as he spoke he made the sign of the cross upon his breast.

A few minutes afterward the Kinel operator sent to the colonel commanding at Buzuluk this message:

Are nurses needed on the Red Cross train that has just left your town?

The answer came:

Yes. Supply four if you can.

The written answer was placed by Colonel Crieff in the hands of Captain Sinoff.

"I only know of the two that I have mentioned," the captain said when he had read the message.

Then he added carelessly: "By the way, colonel, when we put these women on I'd like to ship with them a



couple of queer Frenchmen that we recruited a few days before we left. They are in a pretty bad way, it seems. Their faces are as yellow as old parchment and they are only holding in their stomachs by their teeth. Whether it is the lack of food or something still more serious our surgeon cannot say. Any way, they haven't sufficient stamina to stand the campaign. We'd better get rid of them now."

"Who accepted them?"

"I did—in an offhand sort of way, at the last moment. They seemed to be likely fellows, but——"

The colonel made a gesture of impatience.

"The devil take them, then," he said. "All Frenchmen lack stamina. They go at things with a rush and then collapse. Ship them on the train."

Captain Sinoff produced two blanks that had been filled with the names of the despised Frenchmen.

"Here are the orders, sir," he said. "We will be well rid of them."

The colonel drew out a fountain pen from his pocket and with a few exclamations of disgust he signed the necessary orders. Then he hurried off.

When the Red Cross train steamed into the Kinel station, Claire and Edith, clad in the trim gowns and caps of nurses, were escorted to it by Captain Sinoff and his lieutenant.

A few moments later two men were borne aboard on stretchers. The skin of both indicated that they were suffering from some form of jaundice.

When, still with the right of way, the train started on its run to Samara, the two new nurses with heavy hearts addressed themselves to the tasks that were assigned to them in cars other than those in which the two Frenchmen lay side by side.

There still was something in the sudden illness of the two men that they could not understand. They knew the cause, but were apprehensive concerning the nature of the effects. But they were not alone in their fears. As the Red Cross train rolled out of the Kinel station, a *moujik*, approaching Captain Sinoff, suddenly seemed to lose his clumsiness.

"What do you think of it, captain?"

he asked cautiously, as the captain, slowly stroking his long mustache, looked half-smilingly after the disappearing train.

The captain chuckled.

"What do I think, Monsieur *Moujik*?" he murmured laughingly. "Well, I'm thinking how happy I'd be if, with two such women with me, I could so easily leave all my troubles behind."

The *moujik* shook his head.

"Ah, captain, you should have seen them eat that soap!" he said.

"Don't be alarmed, my dear count," the captain answered reassuringly, laying his hand on the arm of the pretended *moujik*. "You and those Americans did something last night that has contributed much to advance the cause of Free Russia. Sviokon is dead. May God have mercy on his soul!"

"Amen," murmured the count.

Then, without so much as a word of farewell or a handshake, they parted.

No tickets or passports were required of the passengers on the Red Cross train. Five or six times on its way to Moscow it was side-tracked, but it was only for brief periods that its humming wheels were still.

Flowers did not bloom in the gardens of Russia during those rigorous winter days any more than they bloomed in the hearts of that dark nation's unhappy people. But as the Red Cross train passed over steppe and through cities, men removed their caps and bowed their heads.

"They are our brothers who have come back to us," said the *moujiks*.

"They are the Little Father's children," said the priests, as they stood with upraised crosses.

"They are the sacrifices which we have laid on the altar of Russian despotism," said the Sons of Freedom.

And so, in the course of time, the Red Cross train came to Moscow. Most of the invalids were distributed among the city hospitals. Some, however, were pronounced convalescent and were discharged with passports to their homes.

The two Frenchmen, Henri Levaine and Louis Rotin, received passports to St. Petersburg. Two nurses, Marie



Caton and Louise Barteau, went with them. The four had a compartment to themselves. Old friends would have recognized in Marie the Princess Kodaleski, and in Louise her friend Edith Wyanforth.

The four had spent several days in Moscow, keeping close to their rooms in a part of the city that was inhabited by workmen. Kenck had selected the apartments, and it was through Kenck and Peringoff that they obtained their news from the outside world. By means of the "Swallow Post" they learned that Casimir believed that Edith and Claire had perished with Sviokon in the private car which was destroyed at Kinel. Assured of this, they decided to go to St. Petersburg and place themselves under the protection of the United States embassy.

After bidding farewell to Kenck and Peringoff, they boarded a train about eight o'clock on the morning of Saturday, January 21. The train was an express which was scheduled to make only two stops between Moscow and the capital.

These stops were Tver and Bologoe, the latter being about half-way between their starting-point and their destination.

The day was clear, and as the four friends were borne northward in the swift-moving train their spirits were almost as unclouded as the skies. When the train slowed down at Tver, however, the two women, watching Gridley, saw a grim look come into his face as the door of the compartment was flung open and the conductor, accompanied by an officer of the police, demanded passports and tickets.

Both were returned and all breathed easier. When the train moved off, however, Gridley unfolded one of the passports.

And as he did so, he gave utterance to an exclamation of dismay. It was obliterated by a black smudge.

Each of the three other passports was examined in turn. All were smudged.

Gridley passed the papers to Lankirk, who, after glancing at them, regarded his friend blankly.

The two men tried the doors. They were locked, and even if they had not

been, the speed of the train would have made leaping suicidal.

And so, hour after hour, the four sat in silence, with haggard faces, until the train finally drew up at the Bologoe station.

The car scarcely had come to a standstill when the door was opened by the conductor. Gridley's heart sank within him.

Behind the railway official he met the searching eyes of Colonel Verbanovof.

"Tickets and passports," demanded the conductor.

With his eyes still on those of Verbanovof, Gridley hesitated, then he passed out the papers.

The conductor took them and handed the passports to Verbanovof. The representative of the Third Section, without opening them, smiled faintly at Gridley and returned the unopened passports to the conductor, who passed them on to the young millionaire. The door was slammed shut, and about two or three minutes later the train moved on.

In five hours more they were in St. Petersburg.

With beating hearts, the four fugitives left the railway carriage. The clothes they wore had been obtained in Moscow. Kenck, who selected them, had been careful to see that the outer wraps of each were provided with big collars.

These were now turned up. The little party had no luggage, so it did not pause on its way from the station platform to the street.

Two sleighs were quickly found. Gridley and Edith seated themselves in one, and Lankirk and the princess entered the other. The drivers were directed to go to an address in the workmen's quarter that had been given by Kenck.

Twenty minutes later they took possession of four neat but plainly furnished rooms in a quiet apartment above a furniture store.

The night was uneventful. Despite Kenck's assertion that they would be visited before midnight by one of the members of his society, they had no callers. At about one o'clock they retired.



Shortly after six o'clock in the morning all were awakened, however, by a violent thumping on the main door.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE "LITTLE FATHER'S" CHILDREN.

As the knocking continued, Gridley rose and, being already partly dressed, hurried to the door and opened it.

A man, heavily muffled in a fur overcoat, quickly entered the room.

"Close the door," he said abruptly.

As the visitor rolled down his collar, Gridley recognized Worenkensi, the president of Kenck's society.

Gridley held out his hand, and Worenkensi grasped it perfunctorily.

"Anything wrong?" asked Gridley, with a sudden feeling of apprehension.

"There is likely to be if you do not keep close under cover," the other answered. "You have been traced to this street, and nearly every house for three minutes' walk on each side of you is watched by spies."

"On what charge will they attempt to arrest us?"

"The assassination of Sviokon."

Gridley's face grew pale.

"All of us?" he gasped.

"The four," said Worenkensi tersely.

"Is it known, then?"

"Only to Casimir and Verbanovof, I think. The formal charge will not be made until after you are in custody. You were recognized at Tver. In Heaven's name, how did you get past Bologoe?"

"Verbanovof——"

Gridley stopped.

"Our passports were not examined there," he went on.

Worenkensi looked at Gridley sharply, then rolled up his collar again.

"Do not leave the house or be seen at the windows under any circumstances," he said. "If all goes well we may arrange to have your comrade——"

"Lankirk?"

"Aye, that's the man I mean. We may arrange to have him see some representative of your embassy to-day. You must get away to-morrow."

Worenkensi turned abruptly, and,

without further ceremony, left the room.

The woman who had admitted them to the house served the little party with a light breakfast. Her manner was sulen, and when Gridley attempted to improve her temper by offering a couple of gold pieces to her, she refused them with a contemptuous gesture.

"You are my man's guests, not mine," she said. "I'm no servant who is to be paid with money."

Shortly before ten o'clock there was another series of knocks on the door. When Gridley opened it he saw a man, in the Sunday dress of a workingman, standing in the hall.

"A letter for Monsieur Gridley," said the man.

Gridley tore open the envelope. Within was a letter that read as follows:

The bearer will conduct you and your friend to a place where I am awaiting you with a representative of your embassy. Leave the princess and made-moiselle where they are. You will have passports in time to start to-night.

WORENKENSKI.

Gridley turned to Lankirk and gave him the note. The foreman nodded, and in a few moments both men had slipped on their overcoats, said a few encouraging words to the two women, and set off after the messenger.

Their conductor led them down a stairway in the rear of the building, and thence through several alleys to a street that ran at right angles with that in which they had their lodging. As they emerged into this, four policemen suddenly seized them by the arms.

Both men turned upon the captors and fought desperately. The street was crowded, and from the throng that surged toward the struggling men there suddenly leaped a brawny man in a fur-lined coat.

"They are our brothers! Quick, my friends—release them!"

The speaker was Worenkensi.

In a thrice the policemen were thrown down and trampled underfoot. Worenkensi caught Gridley by the arm.

"Why did you leave your rooms?" he demanded with flashing eyes.

The American thrust into his hands



the note that the messenger had given to him. Worenkensi's hands trembled as he read the lines.

"The women—the women—back to the women!" he cried. "It is a trick of Casimir's!"

Followed by a little group of Worenkensi's friends, the three men ran on with all the speed that was possible in the crowded street. As they came within sight of the house in which the party had spent the night, they saw a closed carriage moving away from the door.

"Stop them! Stop them!" Worenkensi cried in Russian.

A hundred voices took up the cry, and the crowd started in pursuit.

A few moments later the carriage turned into the Nevski Prospect. There the driver encountered an unexpected obstacle.

From curb to curb the broad thoroughfare was crowded with marching men—thousands of workers, clad in holiday attire. All were orderly, but each face wore an expression of grim determination, and, from time to time, ice-picks, the ends of clubs, and other rude weapons of self-defense were to be observed thrust in pockets and coat-sleeves, when, indeed, they were not carried openly.

It was in vain that the driver attempted to force his way through the marching throng. A dozen hands seized the bridles of his horses and forced the animals back upon their haunches.

The sturdy shoulders of Worenkensi and Gridley forced a way through the crowd. Lankirk was close upon the heels of his companions.

As the three men drew nearer the vehicle, however, their progress was more difficult. Fifty feet away from it the closely packed mass was impenetrable.

It was in vain that Worenkensi demanded recognition. The howls and jeers of the persons around the carriage smothered his words.

Women vied with men in shouting insulting epithets to the occupants of the carriage. In a few moments the doors were a-swing. Three or four pairs of arms reached within.

Then there was a mighty shout, and persons standing in front of Gridley tried to climb on the shoulders of those in front of them.

With a hoarse cry of desperation, Gridley again began to fight his way forward. Ahead of him, as in a mist, he saw hundreds of heads, shoulders and moving arms and the black top and sides of the carriage.

Inch by inch he moved forward. His hat was gone, his coat was torn, and the veins in his head and neck stood out like cords. At length he was within twenty feet of the vehicle.

Through one of the doors a man in a military uniform was being dragged. For an instant only Gridley saw his face.

It was Carboloff, the lieutenant he had seen in the Krazo.

The American saw a club fall on the head of the young officer. The crowd in front of him surged back. Hoarse yells—jubilant and vengeful—rose from those around the victim of the awful fury of the mob, and these were taken up by the thousands who were now surging behind him.

Then a second man was dragged from the carriage. He wore a gray beard, and was clad in the uniform of an officer of police.

As he fell forward there came a shout from an intersecting street, and a detail of police forced its way to where the wrecked carriage stood. The vehicle was drawn away, and the police, finding that they were unable to cope with the angry marchers, gave way.

The tumult subsided, and the marchers began to move on again. The voices of the leaders began to be heard—voices giving utterance to frenzied appeals for order.

"Brothers, would you ruin all?" cried one. "Would you go to the Little Father with blood upon your hands?"

"The quarrel was of their seeking," cried a workingman at Gridley's elbow. "Did not the autocrats try to beat down our women and children under the feet of their horses?"

"Why did they drive among us?"

"Would they pave the streets with our bodies?"

While these cries were rising around



him, Gridley turned and tried to get into the street into which the wrecked vehicle had been drawn. But, breathing heavily as a result of his exertions, and almost paralyzed by his apprehension concerning the safety of Claire and Edith, he was no more capable of freeing himself from the onward-moving human tide than a man would be in an attempt to swim against the rush of water in the rapids of Niagara.

"Were there women in the carriage?" he cried, addressing the crowd around him.

"Aye, aye," answered one. "Two hussies—hung with silk and diamonds."

"Nay, nay, there were no women," cried another. "A Russian working-man would not harm a woman."

"Aye, there were women," said a third. "I saw——"

"Nay, nay, there——"

Some one began singing the "Marseillaise."

"Silence! Silence!" shouted a score of voices.

"We are workingmen—not revolutionists!"

"Silence! We are children of the Little Father!"

The voices that had taken up the song were stilled.

"Will the Little Father see us?"

"Yes."

Another voice began singing the national anthem of Russia. Others took up the words.

"Hurrah for the Little Father!"

"Hurrah!"

The head of the procession had now come into the great semi-circle in front of the Winter Palace. Before them rose the lofty column of Alexander II. The shouts died away, and the marchers spoke in whispers.

"Will he come to us?"

"Yes."

"See the soldiers! Does the Little Father fear his children?"

"No, no! Hush!"

"What regiments are there?"

"Cossacks."

"Aye, and the Ismailovsky Guards."

"The Pavlovsk and Pracobrajensky regiments of infantry."

"Aye, aye, I see them now."

"Will they fire on us?"

"No. We are their brothers. But see! The priest is speaking to an officer. He holds his crucifix aloft."

"He is a noble man."

"Aye."

"What are they saying?"

"No man can hear as far as that."

"Will the Little Father come to a window, or ride forth from the Neva Gate?"

"The window."

"No. He will ride out to us."

"See! The priest and those around him are moving forward!"

There was a crash of firearms.

"My God!"

"Heaven help us! They are firing."

"They are blank cartridges. No one falls. But——"

Then came a second volley, louder than the first.

The priest stood alone with upraised crucifix. Around him lay a score of human bodies—some were writhing—some were still.

From the assembled thousands rose a cry the like of which no man ever heard before—a cry similar to that a loving wife might utter when, felled to the floor by the blow of her husband, she falls with her cherished ideals in the dust.

"And now, ye fools, ye have the Little Father's answer!" cried a stertorian voice.

"Little Father—Little Devil!"

Trembling with anguish, hundreds of men raised clenched hands to their eyes. Wailing women, with horror-stricken countenances, threw shawls over their heads and turned away.

"The Cossacks! The Cossacks!"

A thousand horsemen were spurring their steeds toward the mob.

"Ah, Heaven save us! The Little Father has gone mad!"

The lips that spoke the words were closed and numb and bleeding, as the result of the blow of a powerful fist.

"Little Father!" exclaimed the owner of the hand. "Let no man call him 'Little Father' more! Curse him—curse him! He is a tyrant!"

There was another volley from the regiments of infantry, then the Cossacks were upon them, with the blood-lust in their eyes.



In the sun of that Holy Sabbath morning their sabers flashed on high. Then they fell, and when they were raised again the blood of unarmed men and women had robbed them of their sheen.

Back, back pressed the mob, with horror-stricken faces. Women fainted and sank down to be trampled to death under the feet of men.

Then there rose a cry of "Casimir!"

Thousands of voices shouted his name. Ice-picks, stones, and clubs were hurled at the heads of the Cossacks whose steeds were trampling down the human grain that Cossack sickles reaped.

But above the din—the last despairing shrieks of the dying, the cries of the wounded, and the roar of the fleeing mob—rose the angry shout:

"Casimir! Casimir! It is the work of Casimir!"

Gridley found refuge in a doorway as the frenzied mob surged past. The Cossacks, glutted with blood, turned back. And, as they went, the American saw a priest, who, with pallid features, still stood before the horrified throng.

In his hand he held a crucifix. Before him was the Cossack horde, returning with dripping sabers to the Winter Palace of the Czar. Behind him was his flock.

Then the black-robed man bent down. At his feet was lying the bleeding and mangled form of a little child who felt no pain.

Into the blood of the little one the priest thrust the crucifix. Then he raised it Heavenward, and said:

"Again, O Father of us all, look upon this blood-stained emblem of the sufferings of Thy Son, and let the light of Thy mercy shine once more upon the children of men."

Then, with the cross still upraised, he turned to the throng behind him and went on:

"Like the old Herod, he whom we, in our blindness, have called our 'Little Father,' has shed the blood of the innocents. He has defiled the image of the Christ-child. He has caused those to be slain who were created in the image of the Virgin. Henceforth the only father that Russia may call its own is our

'Father which is in Heaven.' Nicholas, no longer our 'Little Father,' is the tyrant of all the Russias. He can beget only tyrants that can find no favor in Heaven's eyes. May his whole reptile brood be accursed!"

He stopped, and pressed to his lips the blood-stained crucifix.

For several moments all were silent, then a woman's voice said:

"Amen!"

"Amen!" the throng repeated after her.

"Amen! The Little Father is no more!"

From across the Neva there came the sound of rifle volleys. The mob began to murmur.

"To Casimir's! To Casimir's!"

The murmurs swelled to shouts.

"To Casimir's! To Casimir's!"

And rushing on at the head of the avengers was Gridley.

"To Casimir's!" he cried.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE HOUSE OF CASIMIR.

"To Casimir's!"

Gridley's voice was hoarse. His head was bare, his coat was torn, and his face had the expression of a fanatical Russian revolutionist.

"To Casimir's!"

They came to Casimir's palace at last. Mounted Cossacks were on guard—a score of them—but the onrushing mob laughed at the bared sabers.

One of the riders aimed a blow at Gridley. The American laughed wildly as he dodged it. When he raised his head, the foaming mouth of the steed brushed his cheek.

In a moment he had thrust his hand in its nostrils. Over, over, with a mighty grip, he turned the horse's head. The animal fell on its side.

The toes of heavy boots were kicking the head of the entangled Cossack. Gridley picked up the fallen saber, fighting with another member of the mob for its possession. The American kept the blade.

"On, on!" he cried, as he flourished the weapon over his head.

Another Cossack aimed a stroke at



him. Gridley caught it on his saber, then thrust his blade through the body of the horse. The animal went down.

The mob surged over the rider, and the American ran on to where a group of men were striving to break the lock of the steel-barred gate to the palace yard. The lock gave way and the mob rushed in.

On the four sides of the palace the mob howled and jeered. The windows were shattered by flying missiles, and revolvers began to bark ominously.

The bronze entrance doors were locked. With Gridley at its head, the mob, mounting on boxes and brawny shoulders, began pouring through the windows.

As the invaders passed from room to room the servants fled aghast. Mirrors were shattered, furniture was broken, and costly pictures and carpets were slashed by ruthless knives.

"Casimir! Casimir! Where is Casimir?" was the cry.

Room after room on the first floor was searched, closets were opened, and the stairways creaked under the weight of the advancing throng.

"Casimir—coward! Casimir, come out! Where is the degenerate son of the Romanoffs?"

All over the second floor of the palace the searchers spread. In a woman's boudoir they found a cigar and a cigarette; both were burning.

"He is here! The scent is hot! Casimir! Casimir!"

A group of vandals tore down a painting. It was a portrait of Peter the Great. They trampled it under their feet.

As they passed on, Gridley paused. A line in the wall, just beneath the top of the frame, caught his eyes.

As he passed his finger along the bottom of the frame it touched a lever. He gave this a twist, and the frame moved outward.

Below the frame was a mantelpiece, and beneath this stood a chair. He mounted in a moment.

Then, saber in hand, he entered the opening in the wall. Turning to the right he saw a flight of steps. At the top he came to a little attic-room about ten feet square.

Casimir was before him, a revolver in his hand. The weapon snapped. In another moment the saber had knocked it to the floor and the point of the blade was at the grand duke's breast.

"Stop!"

A woman, clothed in black, rushed forward, and one of her hands closed over the blade.

"Remember!"

The speaker was Kortese, the Tzigane.

"You have won," she said, addressing Gridley. "But your triumph is my own. The life of Casimir is mine!"

Cut by the blade, one of the hands of the Tzigane was bleeding.

With a firm grasp on the grip of the weapon, Gridley lowered the point of the saber and hesitated.

"You and all your friends are free," said Kortese.

Gridley looked once more at Casimir.

The grand duke nodded.

"I have been wrong," he said. "Leave Russia when you will—all of you."

His face was pale and haggard, and as he sank down in a chair beside a little table, he picked up a pen and wrote a few lines on a writing-pad that lay before him.

While he was thus employed, Gridley took from his pocket a little bag of chamois skin and held it toward Kortese.

"I have not touched a copeck of it," he said coldly.

The Tzigane hesitated, then took it from his hands.

"And you will not permit that mob to——"

"No," said Gridley. "Our accounts are balanced now."

As Casimir placed a paper in Gridley's hands there came to their ears a hoarse shout from below.

Gridley rushed down the steps. He found three men staring at the open panel.

"I found the panel and searched the chamber," he said. "There is no one there."

Even as he spoke cries of warning echoed through the house.

"The Cossacks—the Cossacks are here!"



The invaders fled. As Gridley was running down the stairs, an officer aimed a revolver at his breast.

Gridley held forth the paper he had received from Casimir, but which he had not read.

The officer scanned each line carefully.

"Pass on," he said.

\* \* \* \*

At the house in which he had passed the preceding night Gridley found Lankirk and a note.

The note informed him that when the carriage had been stopped by the mob, Claire and Edith had been allowed to escape. They were at the home of Worenkensi, and there the two men found them.

The note written by Casimir was as follows:

John Gridley, Edith Wyanforth, Stephen Lankirk and the Princess Kodaleski have placed themselves under my protection. They will leave Russia within the next forty-eight hours. Any person who places an obstacle in the way of

their preparations or departure will make an enemy of

CASIMIR.

Note.—Necessary instructions will be given to all government officials. C.

On the following morning Gridley called on Torrell and obtained the necessary passports. Through Torrell he learned that Prince Kodaleski's relations with certain revolutionists had been discovered, and that, compelled to flee from Russia, he was awaiting the arrival of his wife in Paris.

That afternoon, Gridley, Claire, Edith, and Lankirk left St. Petersburg for Berlin. A week later, in the American Church in Paris, Edith, in the presence of Lankirk and the Prince and Princess Kodaleski, formally substituted for Wyanforth the surname of Gridley.

As they leaned over the church register, Gridley passed the pen to his bride and said:

"Here, at least, my dear, we need have no fear of finding the black smudge of Casimir."

THE END.

## The Tale of the Truthful Unfortunate.

BY EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT.

An up-to-date experience on the Arabian Nights order, and which is submitted minus a moral.

THE first day of the month having arrived, the Caliph Haroun al Raschid assumed the disguise of a working journalist, and in accordance with his custom walked abroad to inspect the order of the city.

He chose for his escort only the faithful Mesrour, chief of the eunuchs, and him he equipped in the habit of an artist bearing a kodak in his hand as a guarantee of good faith.

The electric lights were blazing brightly along the Bagdad streets as the pair set forth from the palace and joined the throngs that hurried along on business or pleasure bent.

"Bismillah!" cried the caliph angrily, as he was compelled to make the running broad jump to avoid being run down by a trolley car. "Make a

note of that motorman. His head shall be struck off to-morrow."

"I was so overcome by your majesty's peril that his face is but a blur in my memory," faltered Mesrour.

"What is your kodak for?" exclaimed the caliph. "Of all the incompetent character artists in the palace, you are the worst. But never mind. Your fault can easily be remedied. Have the heads of all the motormen in Bagdad struck off."

By this time they had reached the business center of Bagdad, and the caliph's ill-humor was dispelled by the sight of a crowd gathered about some center of attraction with signs of interested attention that promised an entertainment exactly to his majesty's liking.



The faithful Mesrou opened a lane for his master through the throng, and the caliph then discovered a young man in evening dress attempting to walk on his hands while he balanced his feet gracefully in the air. The amateur acrobat had marked out a small circle on the asphalt, and his immediate purpose appeared to be to accomplish the feat of walking about it in the inverted position described without touching his feet to the ground.

Three times the caliph saw the young man lose his balance before he had completed the circuit; and at each failure the unsuccessful acrobat gravely rose, as gravely tossed a silver coin into the crowd, and then betook himself once more to his manumotory progress. At the fourth trial the young man completed the circuit without touching his feet to the pavement, whereupon he rose, bowed to the spectators with practised grace, and, taking up his silk hat from the center of the circle, passed it about among the crowd with the air of an *imam* taking up the collection.

At this end to the performance the throng hastily dispersed. The young man showed neither surprise nor mortification at this response to his enterprise, and Haroun al Raschid, forgetting the responsibilities of his disguise, threw a purse of *sequins* into the hat.

The young man halted, and with marks of lively astonishment on his face took the purse from the hat, scrutinized the coins closely, tested one with his teeth, and, his doubts satisfied, put the purse in his pocket and the hat on his head.

As he was turning to walk away, the caliph, overcome with curiosity, detained him.

"Pardon me," he said, "but may I ask the reason why a young man of your appearance and habit should perform so extraordinary an action?"

The young man looked doubtfully at the caliph for a moment, and then with an exquisite bow replied:

"I observe that you are a journalist. Nevertheless, as you are the first man to show financial appreciation of my efforts, and have thereby saved me from the last refuge of despair, I do not feel at liberty to refuse your request. I

place myself in the keeping of your discretion. Come in here and have one on me, while I tell you the story of my life."

He led the Commander of the Faithful and Mesrou to a neighboring café, and when they were seated at the table before the foaming schooners of *zemez*, he began his tale.

"You behold before you," he said, "the miserable victim of a malignant genie, ruined by the affliction of an intempestivitous veracity."

"Bismillah!" interrupted the caliph. "Say that over in Arabic."

"The curse laid upon me," explained the young man, "takes the form of an irresistible impulse to tell the truth at the most unseasonable times."

"The Koran," said the caliph severely, "teaches us that the truthful man is blest of Allah."

"That may very well be," admitted the young man, "for we are told that he blesses also the poor and the sick. Yet however grateful the pursuit of truth may be to Allah, I have proved that it is ruinous to the life and fortunes of man. Listen: My father was a merchant of Balsora, and by a steady attention to the business of Morganeering amassed a splendid fortune.

"For many years the wisdom of Providence denied him a son, but in his old age Allah listened to his prayers and vouchsafed him an heir who, he fondly supposed, was to transmit his name and wealth to future generations. But alas! In pursuing his plans for consolidating all the water-powers of the earth into the ownership of one company, he had seized upon one of the cataracts of the Caucasus that had been reserved by the King of the Genii for his own use. So when the festivities that celebrated my birth were held, with all the magnificence of display for which my father was noted, the King of the Genii entered the hall and with royal condescension said:

"I will endow your son with a precious possession. He shall be able to speak nothing but the truth."

"My father was overjoyed at this mark of favor, and offered on the spot to consolidate the properties of the genie into a single corporation, and to under-



write the issues of securities for half the usual commission. My father at that moment remembered the copy-book mottoes with their high appraisal of truth, and forgot how little of it he used in his own business.

"My father died before he saw the full effect of the malignity of the King of the Genii. Yet I am assured that I made his last years a heavy burden by my plain speaking upon his course of life. Before I reached the age of fifteen, I was left with the largest fortune in the caliph's dominions, and the curse of the genie on my tongue. I am now twenty-five. In ten years I have wasted those immense accumulations. You saw the last of his *sequins* flung among the unappreciative herd to-night, and but for your bounty I should now be on the way to the morgue, without a coin in my pocket."

The caliph's curiosity was but whetted by this summary of the young man's career, and he demanded:

"How did your gift of veracity deprive you of the enormous fortune that your father had provided for you?"

"I must speak frankly and trust to your good nature to keep the most shocking details out of print," replied the young man.

The caliph bowed at this tribute to the excellence of his disguise.

"We suppress more horrifying details than we publish," he said.

The young man pushed back his damp hair from his forehead, and resumed his tale:

"I make no claim to be wiser or better than other young men of fortune. Therefore a good share of my father's stealings went in tribute to the twin evils—wine and women. But that is a mere detail. My fortune would have survived the tax for the sparkling liquors and the handful of jewels that I flung about me had it not been for my fatal gift.

"My father's funeral had been but a few months past when the trustees of the estate called me into council and explained that one of the corporations in which I was the principal stockholder had proved unprofitable, and that it would be necessary to sell out if it were not to prove a total loss.

"But who will buy a worthless property?' I asked.

"Oh, we will unload it on the public,' replied the trustees. 'We will pay a thumping big dividend, and drop hints about a coming consolidation of warring interests, and the lambs on the Street will be breaking their necks to pay a fancy price for the stock.'

"But that will be stealing,' I objected.

"It ill becomes you to say so,' said one of the trustees. 'It is the way your honored father, may he rest in Abraham's bosom, brought this great fortune together.'

"I often told my father that I suspected him of being a thief,' I returned. 'Now I am sure of it.'

The trustees were shocked; then angry; and when I said calmly that nobody but a thief would make such a proposition, they threw up their hands and said that they would let the property go to ruin. I replied that they might use their judgment about that. I was merely stating the truth—not attempting to influence their action.

"One of the trustees a little later confirmed my judgment of him by running away to the dominions of the Sultan of Cashmere, taking with him five millions of my inherited *sequins*. After that I came into the management of my own business. But the genie's gift was fatal to every enterprise in which I embarked.

"I told the truth about the corporations in which I was interested. Few of them were able to survive the ordeal. I explained to one of your brethren of the press those methods of letting contracts to ourselves that make it so profitable to hold the control of railroads when we own so little of the stock. We were thrown out at the next stockholders' meeting, and some other plunderers were put into our places.

"I explained to another of your fellow-reporters the methods by which the Bagdad City Council was induced to grant us the privileges for running street railroads without compensation to the city. As a result, several of my friends were sent to jail, and I myself was indicted. It cost me one million *sequins* to avoid a trial.



"Enough of business. These are but samples of the chain of circumstances that brought me to betake myself with my diminished fortune to the study and practise of the law. I purchased a partnership in a noted law firm. In one year I had ruined the business.

"The genie's fatal gift forced me to tell some of our best clients that they had no case, and they took their business to another firm. I settled in a day an estate from which the firm had drawn a comfortable income for ten years. I told a jury that our wealthiest client was engaged in an attempt to get by the chicanery of the law the property that rightfully belonged to another, and that we hoped they would assist him in that nefarious scheme. I confessed to the court that there was just as much law on the other fellow's side as on ours, and that we knew he would decide as his prejudices dictated anyhow.

"In fine, I offended our clients—even those I benefited by my plain speaking—and brought down the wrath of the judges on our firm by candidly explaining the shams of the law in open court. So we were soon ruined.

"I was advised to enter the noble profession of medicine, and did actually begin its study under the patronage of one of the foremost practitioners of Bagdad. But within three months I was turned out of his office for telling the richest woman in the city that there was nothing the matter with her except her gluttony, and that the medicines she was paying us a thousand *sequins* a month to furnish her were no better than so many bottles of water out of the Tigris. The doctor overheard me, and I was thrown down-stairs by his Ethiopian bouncer.

"I would have sought refuge in the church and a life of devotion, but the genie's fatal gift was the flaming sword that barred me from this paradise. I complained before the college that the *imam* was not taught to preach the message of the Koran, but was required to expound a faith founded on the interests and prejudices of his congregation; whereat I was summarily expelled from the school as a heretic.

"I was as unfortunate in love as in business. A few years ago I became de-

votedly attached to a young lady. She was something above the average of her sex in good looks, and rather better in temper than the majority.

"When I tell you that she endured my plain speaking for above a month you can believe that she returned my affection. But a trifle parted us.

"You will perhaps remember that a few years ago fashion decreed that the young women should wear from five to ten black patches on their faces. This appealed to me as a highly barbarous and offensive form of decoration. I told my affianced that they suggested a condition of her blood that demanded a less gluttonous diet, and advised a course of those sarsaparillas that are advertised so profusely in your enterprising journal.

"She condescended to explain that the object of these patches was to enhance the whiteness and smoothness of the remaining skin in the eyes of the beholder by the effect of contrast. I was forced to assure her that the effect was not only unpleasant, but that it was also a gross form of deceit, unworthy of a modest and truthful woman.

"Instead of taking my remonstrance in good part, she flew into a passion, declared she was glad she had found me out for a domineering, jealous brute before it was too late. Then she flung the betrothal ring in my face, and called her slaves to throw me out. They did it with so much zeal that I was confined to my house for many days. Then I sought forgetfulness of her in the wine-shops and in the halls where the memory of the great Pharaoh is revered.

"Three days ago I discovered that my fortune was reduced to a few *sequins*, and I contemplated putting an end to a seemingly worthless existence. Yet before taking such an important step it seemed but right to consult the will of Allah. If he had work for me, it would be but the act of a poltroon to desert in the face of difficulties. Therefore, to discern the will of the Most High, I devised the test whose conclusion you witnessed, and I may even say assisted."

The young man now fell silent in contemplation, and the caliph eagerly demanded:



"Describe the test. I cannot read riddles."

The tone was so commanding that the other hastily continued:

"I had never in the course of my life made a profit on any investment, speculation, or form of labor whatsoever. Therefore I determined that unless Allah should within three days show me a way in which I might secure a return from my fellow-man equal at least to the outlay, I should put an end to an existence whose uselessness was proved.

"At this determination, some power of the air put it into my head to attempt a street acrobatic entertainment. I knew nothing about acrobatics, therefore when I made a mess of an act my sense of justice demanded that I pay to the crowd the sum that I regarded as a satisfactory reward in case I succeeded. Therefore at every failure I threw the spectators a *sequin*. Whenever I successfully performed an act I passed the hat."

"Unhappy man!" cried the caliph. "Why did you impose on yourself a test so hopeless?"

"Allah is omnipotent," was the reply, "and all tests are alike to him. I may freely confess, however, that the task seemed impossible. For three evenings I have performed my feats on this corner, and not a *sequin* had I received until you tossed your purse into my hat."

"And you have been saved by this narrow margin?" asked the caliph.

"The will of Allah is manifest," said the young man. "In the three days I have spent thirty *sequins*. In this purse, which is the first reward of my skill or folly, I find thirty-one *sequins*. I take them as a sign that Allah has still some work in the world for me to do."

"You have indeed been unfortunate," declared the caliph, "but better luck next time."

And giving the signal to Mesroul to keep the young man in sight, he returned to the palace.

When Haroun al Raschid opened his divan on the following morning the young man in the evening dress was brought into his presence between two stalwart guards.

"For what are you brought hither?" asked the caliph.

"I know not," answered the other, "unless it be that I am to have the privilege of serving you in your justly celebrated prisons."

"Do you not remember me?" asked the caliph sternly. "Look into my face."

"The reporter—O Commander of the Faithful!" gasped the young man, trembling with remembrance of the penalties for *lese majesté* into which his passion for speaking the truth might have brought him.

"Be not afraid," said the caliph kindly. "I am pleased with your wit, and touched by your misfortunes. I will see that your troubles are ended. I have discovered the only position in my dominions in which your peculiar talents will permit you to make a success. I appoint you Inspector of Lay Figures for life. I am told that figures never lie, and they will take no offense, however rudely you may call attention to their defects. I impose on you but one condition—and that is that you shall never marry. A multiplication of your species would be fatal to my empire."

And having taken the vows of celibacy, the young man lived happily forever after, and blessed the name of Haroun al Raschid.

#### THE TRUEST CONQUEROR.

WHO quells a nation's wayward will

May lord it on a throne;

But he's a mightier monarch still

Who vanquishes his own.

No power of fortune lays him low;

No treacherous smile allures;

King of himself, through weal or woe—

He conquers who endures.



# HOW BLEVINS MADE GOOD.

BY CHARLES CAREY.

A theatrical tale of an exacting manager, an indolent press agent, and a wandering juvenile star.

BLEVINS had been luxuriating in what is vulgarly known as a "snap." For three months now his duties had been limited solely to the drawing of his salary and to sending an occasional notice to the Sunday papers announcing that "Ring-Around-a-Rosy," that somewhat different musical comedy, with its phenomenal child, Little Joseph, is still continuing its record-breaking run at the Gaiety."

"Is this what you call 'press-agenting' a show?" demanded Henderson, the manager, one day, when he met Blevins leisurely sauntering along the Rialto about the middle of the afternoon. "I haven't seen anything about us in the papers for more than a coon's age."

"What's the use?" retorted Blevins airily. "'Ring-Around-a-Rosy' is the big, *bona fide* hit of the season. We are sold out for every performance, and the Wednesday afternoon matinee looks like a bargain-counter rush. There's no use in booming a thing that's already boomed; or, as the late W. Shakespeare put it, 'Good wine needs no bush.'"

"H'm," mused Henderson reflectively. "That might be taken to mean that a good show needs no press agent."

"Not at all; not at all," hastily interposed Blevins. "A press agent is as necessary to a show as a cigarette to the villain of melodrama. One may see no particular use in either of them, but to try to get along without them is to put your show or your villain, whichever it may be, very promptly on the blink!"

"That may all be," admitted the manager dryly, "but it strikes me that unless the cigarette gives out a few puffs of smoke once in a while the villain might as well have a quill toothpick stuck in his mouth. However"—impatiently—"I'm in a great hurry just now, and I've got no time to argue the point with you.

"Only," he added significantly, "I'd advise you to smoke up a bit. I'm not in the habit of paying the price for Egyptians when I get nothing more than quill toothpicks."

"And he means it, too," soliloquized Blevins ruefully, as the other turned swiftly away and raced off down the street. "That's the trouble with Henderson. He's so blamed strenuous that he wants every one around him to work his head off, too, whether there's any use in it or not.

"Yes"—with a sigh of regret for his vanished hours of ease—"I guess it behooves me to get somewhat of a hustle on myself, or I might be looking for another job."

Thereafter, no one on the staff of "Ring-Around-a-Rosy" could have been more indefatigably industrious than was the "promoter of publicity." Early and late he was at his desk, and under his flying fingers his typewriter reeled forth ream after ream of fiction.

At night he tossed upon a sleepless pillow, cudgeling his brains for novel schemes of advertisement, and he clung to every newspaper man he met with the tenacity of a stranded poet seeking to make a touch.

"I never worked harder when I had a dead frost on my hands," he confessed bitterly to a friend, "than I've had to to 'ballyhoo' this bloomin' old success."

But the very frenzy with which he worked wrought exactly the opposite effect to that which was intended.

Wily dramatic editors, noting the zeal with which Blevins bombarded their citadels, began to suspect that there was a method in his madness and that all was not as prosperous in the "Ring-Around-a-Rosy" camp as appeared upon the surface.

A whisper commenced to circulate through the newspaper offices, and



thence penetrated to the outside world, that the audiences which crowded the Gaiety were largely "paper," and that very little real money was coming in at the box-office.

And as this gossip was passed along it rapidly magnified into a story that the production was a complete failure, that its backer was about to withdraw its support, and that a speedy collapse was imminent.

Now, if it be true that "Half of success is the appearance of success," no less is the contrary an undeniable fact; and these rumors and reports soon began to react upon the business of "Ring-Around-a-Rosy" in a most depressing fashion.

"Oh, don't let's go to see that," protested the public. "They say it's on its last legs, so it can't amount to much. Let's go to 'The King's Houpla' instead."

Even those who had seen the play and had formerly been most vociferous in commending it now turned face and discovered that it was lacking in interest.

"Rather pleasing in parts, you understand," was their revised comment; "but hardly up to the standard of a Broadway production, don't you know?"

Henderson, unable to account for the sudden turn of the tide, ramped about the office like a veritable demon of unrest and kept constantly plodding Blevins up to increased endeavors.

"It's all your fault," he would aver, scowling savagely at the unfortunate press agent and garnishing his statements with a string of double-jointed expletives. "If you had been attending to business instead of loafing on me for three straight months this would never have happened."

But, worst of all, Blevins was no longer able to secure the insertion of the "copy" which he so madly ground out. Even the Sunday notice was shorn of the glittering adjectives which had formerly passed unchallenged, and now appeared merely as a curt announcement that "Ring-Around-a-Rosy" would continue at the Gaiety for *at least* another week.

Blevins dangled his most fascinating

lures in front of the dramatic editors, he concocted fictions of such verisimilitude that even the most doubting of Thomases should have believed; but it was all in vain. Not a nibble rewarded his efforts.

At last, Henderson, out of patience, called him sharply to book.

"Look here," said the manager, with withering sarcasm, "don't you think it would be rather nice to have our show mentioned just once in a while in the newspapers? I have heard that some press agents occasionally find time from their other arduous labors to do a little of that sort of thing, and although I wouldn't for the world encroach on your valuable time, I thought possibly you, too, might find leisure to get us up a line or so."

Then, cutting loose from persiflage, he launched forth into a flow of invectives which surpassed all previous efforts, and left Blevins limp and gasping in his chair.

"I don't want to hear any more excuses," he concluded grimly. "It's up to you, and you'll make good to-day or there'll be another man behind that desk to-morrow morning."

Of his earnestness there could be no doubt; and when the press agent was finally able to pull himself together and review the situation he was obliged to confess that the prospect could not well look more desperate.

To be discharged from his present position as incompetent would give him a black eye from which he could hardly hope to recover. It meant a long farewell to his New York career—at the best, a recourse to the arduous and precarious life upon the road.

Yet what could he do? He had pulled every editorial string which lay to his hand, had exercised his inventive faculties to their full bent; and all to no purpose, even while he had plenty of time at his command.

But now he was abruptly ordered to score a hit upon the moment, and as an alternative was threatened with immediate dismissal.

"Why, it's rank idiocy to attempt it," he protested. "I should simply have my trouble for my pains. No; I guess there's only one thing left for me to do,



and that is to get out before he has the chance to tin-can me."

Accordingly, he dipped his pen in the ink, and writing out a formal resignation, proceeded with it at once to Henderson's office, intending to accompany its delivery with a few pointed remarks in return for the insults which had been heaped upon himself.

The manager, however, proved to be out, and as he was not expected to return before two o'clock, Blevins was compelled to postpone his interview for a season.

He decided that he might most profitably put in the time in getting some lunch and in framing up a few more stinging rebukes to hurl at the enemy.

Engrossed, therefore, in his thoughts, and with his hat jammed over his eyes, he strode fiercely along Sixth Avenue, shouldering his way through the shopping crowds with a fine indifference as to whom he might jostle in his progress.

But suddenly he was brought to a halt by an angry voice raised in expostulation:

"Hi, I say there, fellow, look where you are going. You nearly pushed me into the bloomin' gutter!"

Blevins glanced up quickly to meet the indignant glare of a monocled eye, and to take in an ensemble of top-hat, frock coat, boutonniere, fresh, ruddy complexion, and long, tawny mustache, which inevitably proclaims its possessor as an Englishman.

At the same moment he gave a violent start, for with a flash of instant recognition he perceived that the other was no one else but Lord Balmoral, the wealthy British nobleman, then on a mysterious visit to New York, and whose portrait had been appearing in all the papers for the past week.

"Beg pardon, I am sure," he began hastily; but just then he was interrupted by a joyful hail of welcome, and turning his eyes in the direction whence it came was amazed to see His Lordship's hand tightly gripping the collar of "Little Joseph," the very clever child actor of "Ring-Around-a-Rosy."

"Oh, Mr. Blevins," cried the boy, tearing himself loose from his captor and casting himself tumultuously upon the press agent, "take me away from

this nasty man. He's going to take me to the p'leece-station, and I haven't done a thing except to run away from the theater and get lost. Don't let him give me to the p'leece, Mr. Blevins. I'll be a good boy after this, and never run away again, if you'll only save me."

The little fellow's face was tear-begrimed, and he was evidently consumed with a nervous terror at the thought of being consigned to the clutches of the law. But Blevins quickly soothed him, promising that no harm should befall him; then he turned to Lord Balmoral for an explanation.

"Ha," said the Englishman, with a gleam of relief; "you know the lad, eh? Well, I'm glad of it. I ran into him crying down here on the street, don't you know; and when he told me he was lost, started to take him to a police-station. But the young beggar has been resisting all the way, kicking at my shins until they are black and blue. I'll be only too happy to turn him over to you."

Blevins had it just on the tip of his tongue to thank the other for his kindness, and to announce that he would take the boy back to the theater, when a sudden inspiration seized him.

"Not so fast," he exclaimed fiercely. "That's a very pretty story, but it don't go with me. Officer," he shouted to a policeman standing over on the corner, and at the same time grabbing the lordly sleeve in a detaining clutch. "Officer! Come here!"

"Phwat's th' matter?" wheezed Patrolman Casey, propelling himself into the m $\acute{e}$ l $\acute{e}$ e, and bringing a crowd in his wake. "Phwat's all this disthurbance about?"

"This man is a kidnapper," charged the press agent, raising his voice so that all could hear. "I insist that you arrest him for attempting to abduct 'Little Joseph,' the famous child star of 'Ring-Around-a-Rosy.'"

"Oh, but that's all bally rot, don't you know?" stuttered Lord Balmoral, drawing back from the policeman's heavy hand, and growing very red in the face. "What do I want with the kiddie? This man is insane. Why, I am Lord Balmoral."

It was an unfortunate admission, for Casey was just then deeply incensed



over the afflictions of some relatives who had been evicted from this very Lord Balmoral's estates in Ireland.

"An' so it's that crool-h'ar-r-ted spalpeen yez are?" he broke in excitedly. "Well, thin, I don't doubt but that th' lad's tale is throe. At anny rate, we'll be lettin' th' captain find out. Yez'll be comin' along wid me now quiet-like, or," with a significant grip on his club, "I'll be afther findin' out th' ray-sin why."

So, for all his protests, the indignant peer was marched away to jail, with Blevins, still holding little Joseph by the hand, chuckling along behind, and a crowd the size of which caused the press agent's heart to swell with exultation tailing in the rear.

At the station-house the rescuer of Little Joseph, with one eye on the newspaper men who had gathered eagerly around, volubly pressed his terrible charge and insisted on recounting a story full of lurid details to the impatient sergeant.

The men there were police reporters, and it was hardly to be expected that they would spot the fake. So he felt free to elaborate and embroider to his heart's content.

But suddenly, when in the full tide of his narrative, his tongue faltered and his heart sank to his boots; for there, sauntering leisurely into the place, came Belknap, shrewdest and wiliest of all the dramatic editors.

"Hello, Blevins," grinned the critic malevolently, "trying to rig up a new gas-plant for your wilted old balloon, eh? I heard about it over at a restaurant where I was eating, and thought I'd drop over and spike your guns just for fun."

"But, Belknap," protested the other reporters, "Lord Balmoral is the prisoner in the case. He would never stand for being rung in on such a deal unless there was something behind it."

"Of course there is something behind it," sneered Belknap. "His Noble Lordship is now a member of the theatrical profession. I happened to learn only this morning that the purpose of his mysterious visit over here was to invest in some American musical comedy, and I doubt not from these devel-

opments that 'Ring-Around-a-Rosy' is the one he has selected. In short, boys, don't let Blevins sell you; this is all a big fraud framed up in Henderson's office."

"What's that you say?" broke in the Englishman, who up to this point had seemed completely dazed by the swift progress of events. "That I am a willing party to this outrageous arrest? You don't know what you are talking about. True, I did purchase a musical comedy to-day, but it was 'The King's Houpla,' not that miserable old thing, the 'Ring-Around-a-Rosy.' Therefore, I——"

"What?" cried Belknap, springing excitedly to his feet. "You own the 'Houpla'?" Then this must be on the square, after all."

And, without waiting for further explanations, he dashed off for a telephone, the whole pack of other reporters trailing at his heels.

"Then you want this prisoner held, do you?" inquired the sergeant gruffly of Blevins.

"Want him held?" repeated the press agent. "Not in a thousand years. I wouldn't cause him another second of uneasiness. He has saved my life, if any man ever did."

A slow comprehension dawned in the eyes of Lord Balmoral. He opened and shut his mouth uncertainly once or twice.

"Then this was really a trick to get your bloody show mentioned in the papers?" he questioned.

"Yes," admitted Blevins, "it was. I am sorry to have had to drag Your Lordship into it, but when I've explained the circumstances——"

"No apologies necessary," interrupted Balmoral; and then as the full humor of the thing broke on him he went off into peal after peal of ringing laughter.

Suddenly, however, he checked himself and looked at Blevins with a quick interest.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, "you are just the chap I need for 'The King's Houpla.' Would you consider a change of berth?"

"Would I?" cried Blevins rapturously. "You bet I will!"



# A PLURALITY OF BURGLARS.

BY EDWARD A. MOREE.

A summer night's adventure with a housebreaker who proved to be more than the stuff of which dreams are made, after all.

I OPENED the wooden door, meant to protect the house against burglars, with the sort of homesick feeling which everybody who has spent a night in a summer-closed town house has experienced.

Really, it seemed a pity I had not hunted up father and stayed with him at the club. But the fever was on me, and I simply had to look up that reference.

I was a little sore, however, on the merry old Rabelais for not having been more decent with his jokes so that I could have found him without coming all the way back to town. But Rabelais isn't for all men, and I was in town, and I intended to do a lot of reading that night.

As soon as I got into the hall I lighted the gas. The yellow globe over the lamp made everything look so unearthly, especially the canvas-covered furniture, that I immediately put it out and started up-stairs in the dark.

Every step gave out a creak that sounded like a gun explosion in that closed-up silence. And despite the efforts of a caretaker, there was a tomb-like musty odor pervading the place which was exceedingly oppressive.

I was in that mental condition, a legacy from our Stone Age ancestors, when everything is magnified into something to be afraid of. I was very alert, and, indeed, I had a half-feeling, of which I was very much ashamed, that something was about to happen.

I was nearly at the top of the stairs when I caught sight of the crack under the library door.

I believe that my heart actually stopped beating for several seconds. There was a light in the library! A burglar in the house!

Something *was* happening.

I stopped on the stairs to collect my thoughts and listen.

The silence was worse on my nerves than the trooping of a hundred burglars through the hall beneath me would have been. I stood it for a while, until I could come to a decision as to what to do—for I am a very careful man, and never do even the most trivial things without giving them a great deal of thought.

This characteristic was accentuated now that there was a real emergency before me. I remember trying to think when I had ever before been confronted with the problem of catching an actual burglar.

Of course the first thing to do was of a negative order. That was not to make a noise. I therefore very calmly and very deliberately took off my shoes.

Then before starting to descend the stair, in search of help, I looked to see if my burglar was still in the library. The light had disappeared!

"Nice position this," I thought. "Here I am, right in the path of a desperate man bent on escaping. He probably heard me take off my shoes!"

But I was not going to run away. No, the face of a lace-bedecked ancestor seemed to stare out from one of the portraits in the hall and bid me preserve the dignity of a family of fighters.

I crept up one step, intent on seeing the thing through if it should cost me my life. I had no more than moved than the light in the library flashed out through the crack again.

Still there? What luck! And then, he certainly had not heard me or he would not have flashed the light from his lantern again.

Satisfied that the intruder was still in a capturable situation, I made a quiet descent of the stairs.

You can bet that as soon as I reached the bottom I took the precaution to arm myself. True, the armory facilities of our house were not very extensive



nor very efficient in case of a real serious emergency.

"But," I thought as I took down that old Revolutionary sword and carelessly flourished the 1812 horse pistol, "these burglars are usually arrant cowards, and only need the show of fight to frighten them into submission. A real brave burglar would rob a house in broad daylight, where there was some chance of resistance."

I had started up the stairs again when my precautionary instinct stopped me.

What reason had I to think there were not three or four burglars in that lighted room? Why, if there were only two, they would make it exceedingly difficult for me to capture them!

No, I never could think of going into that room alone against a possible multitude of burglars. I was not afraid of one, but it would be folly to think of attacking two or three.

I must have police aid. Still, I did not want to leave the house.

The intruder, or intruders—for I had decided that no one man would be bold enough to light the gas in a house he was robbing—might take it into their heads to depart at any moment, and then I would have my labor for my pains.

A happy thought struck me. Undoubtedly, if they decided to leave the house, knowing that it was empty, they would come down-stairs and depart by one of the lower windows.

I had no sooner decided on my plan than I proceeded to carry it out forthwith, a characteristic of our family and peculiarly prominent in me.

My idea was to barricade the stairway. Simple? Yes, but how beautifully effective! If those men in the library should come down they would run into that barricade and probably seriously injure themselves and be unable to escape before I arrived with the police.

I took chairs and made a nice toppy pile of them, and on the pinnacle of the heap, nearly six feet high, I placed an exceedingly heavy piano stool.

I was almost sorry for those burglars when I thought of that stool crashing down upon their heads. But they had no business in my father's house at that time of night.

After carrying out my exceedingly clever scheme, I crept to the door and cautiously unlocked it.

The street was deserted. The cold flags gave me a little chill, coming in contact with my stocking-clad feet, but I ran rapidly and soon forgot the discomfort. At the next corner I looked up and down for a policeman. None was in sight, and I went on.

At the second crossing I came upon an officer, sleepily leaning against a store door. I went up to him and stated in very calm language just what I wanted of him.

"And phwat the devil do yez call thim things ye hov in yer honds?" he inquired in an exceedingly insolent tone.

It never pays to wake up even a policeman suddenly, for they are liable to be rather dull of comprehension.

I explained that the sword and horse-pistol were weapons of offense or defense as occasion might require. I really had not intended to take them out on the street with me, but in my excitement had forgotten to leave them behind.

"But are you not coming to my assistance in capturing these burglars?" I demanded of that stupid policeman.

"Lade on, me hearty, lade on," he made answer.

And we set forth to the scene of the battle that was to be.

Coming to the stoop, I allowed the policeman to precede me. There is no use running unnecessary danger. And then, the officer had a revolver in his hand which would be much more effective in case of an encounter than my rather antiquated weapons.

When we got into the hallway, however, the officer insisted upon my leading the way.

"Come on, come on!" I shouted—for there was really no need of maintaining silence now—and ran for the stairs.

There was a terrific crash, a splintering of chair legs, and I found myself at the bottom of a heap of mahogany furniture. I had forgotten all about my barricade! Yet how beautifully it had worked.

I was a little dazed at first, but I felt,



even in that condition, that my plan would have succeeded. The bumps on my head were not painful enough to take away the pleasure of that realization.

I was brought back to the serious business before me by hearing muttered curses and a violent struggle at my left. The burglars must have descended and been stopped by the policeman!

But upon investigation I found my reinforcement had simply fallen in with one of the barricading chairs and was having a fine time extricating himself from the tangle of rounds and upholstery.

"That's the foineest skame I iver saw," muttered the officer. "Thim's foxy burglars to cook up a trap of that kind."

It was unnecessary to explain to him then that the plan had been mine, so I suggested that we proceed at once to the capture.

I had nearly reached the top of the stairs when my foot came in contact with something which moved, and I took a sudden drop. I was stopped by the policeman.

"And now phwat's the matter?" he demanded.

"I stepped on some shoes, I think," I whispered.

"The foxy schnakes! Took off their shoes, did they?"

Again I did not tell him the shoes were mine. It's very curious how a person endowed with great reasoning facilities will do things unconsciously that are for the best.

Now, if those burglars had struck those shoes they would have pitched head-first into my barricade, making the wreck and their consequent injuries much more serious. An explanation of all this would have been lost on that policeman, and there was serious business before us yet.

As I proceeded up the stairs I caught sight of the light from under the library door again, and actually felt a thrill of pleasure that the intruders were still there and about to be brought promptly to justice.

"There's the light!" I whispered breathlessly.

I stepped down to the policeman's side to point it out, whereupon the gleam promptly disappeared!

The thing was getting almost uncanny. I was unable to explain the disappearance and reappearance of that light. The only explanation I could offer was that the intruders had heard us coming up the stairs and were now preparing to meet our attack in the dark.

But I was not in the least frightened. After getting my breath, I persuaded the policeman that there was really nothing to fear, and clutching my weapons firmly I followed him up the stairs.

"There it is," remarked the officer in a quiet tone before he had taken many steps, and lo! if the glow of light was not shining from under the library door again, just as I had seen it when I first entered the house!

We crept on up the stairs, and, would you believe it, we had hardly started when that light went out again! Then the whole explanation flashed vividly upon me!

That seeming putting out and relighting of the lamp in the library was caused by some one passing before it! Yes, that was the solution of the mystery.

Well, I can tell you I did feel proud over figuring that out.

But my pride did not take away my desire to see those burglars brought before the law. No, I was right on the heels of the policeman when he threw open the door!

The most astonishing thing, you know! That room was absolutely empty!

Surely no one had had time to get out of it since I last saw some one standing before the light not three seconds before! And the shutters were closed, the window locked, and there was no other means of getting out of the room by that door into the hall!

A really sensible person does not believe in ghosts, but candidly, if I had ever given them any credence whatever, I would have thought they had been at work now. But, on the other hand, I had never before heard of a ghost lighting a gas-jet.

No, there must be some one in the house!



I was thinking deeply, as is my habit when confronted by anything mysterious, when I felt a stealthy clutch at my arm.

"Sh!" whispered the policeman. "He's somewhere else!"

Of all the absurd declarations I ever heard, that was the worst. Of course he was somewhere else. But why had he left everything in the library just as it was Tuesday afternoon when I was last in town? The light—well, now, do you know, that was the first I had thought of my leaving the gas lighted that afternoon after I had got through with Rabelais.

There was a translation and an old original, worth enough to tempt any burglar, lying on the table. No one can ever tell me again that any one can have a mind capable of remembering trifling details. I had completely forgotten my lighting the gas instead of taking the trouble to open the shutters for light.

I did not like to tell the policeman of my mistake, so when he proposed that we search further for the burglar I readily assented.

The dining-room was our first objective point. When we entered and lighted the gas, a scene of utmost confusion presented itself.

The sideboard drawers were pulled out and everything was in heaps upon the floor, and the silverware was strewn about the table.

Then there *had* been a burglar!

"Skeart off," laconically remarked the policeman, picking up a bottle of testing acid.

Well, to make a long story short, we hunted all over that house, but could find no other trace of the robber. Nothing had been stolen, and the burglar had been nowhere except in the dining-room.

This morning I found a partial expla-

nation of the mystery in the newspaper. Here it is:

#### CONFESSES MANY BURGLARIES.

##### TENDERLOIN POLICE MAKE IMPORTANT CAPTURE.

The police of the Tenderloin station arrested a man last night, who, after getting the Third Degree, confessed to having robbed several Fifth Avenue mansions. The burglaries, at the time of their commission, were great mysteries.

The police believe the man committed many more than he has confessed to. Among the latter was the mysterious burglary in the Flacker home in lower Fifth Avenue. The man said he was passing the house, bent upon another job, when he saw the door open. He entered and had just begun his work when he was frightened away by a terrific crash in the hall. He waited a moment, and heard two persons mount the stairs, and then fled by the way he had come.

It will be remembered that the last case caused considerable comment at the time.

Why, yes, I might have left the door open when I went out after the police. I do not remember now. But note how that barricade of mine frightened away the thief before he had an opportunity to steal anything.

Still, with all my hard thought upon it, and with all my analytical ability, I am unable to explain what made that light disappear.

Yes, it might—why, of course it did—strange I never thought about that. Don't you see? When I took off my shoes I stepped down one stair, and it seemed as though the light disappeared. And then every time we moved up or down there on the stairway it would appear and disappear, as the crack under the library door came in range or out.

I knew I'd think of a solution in time. I'm now all ready for my next burglar, for there was one, you see, after all.

#### JOY.

JOYS have three stages, Hoping, Having, and Had.

The hands of Hope are empty, and the heart of Having is sad ;

For the joy we take in the taking dies, and the joy we Had is its ghost.

Now, which is the better—the joy unknown or the joy we have clapsed and lost ?

John Boyle O'Reilly.



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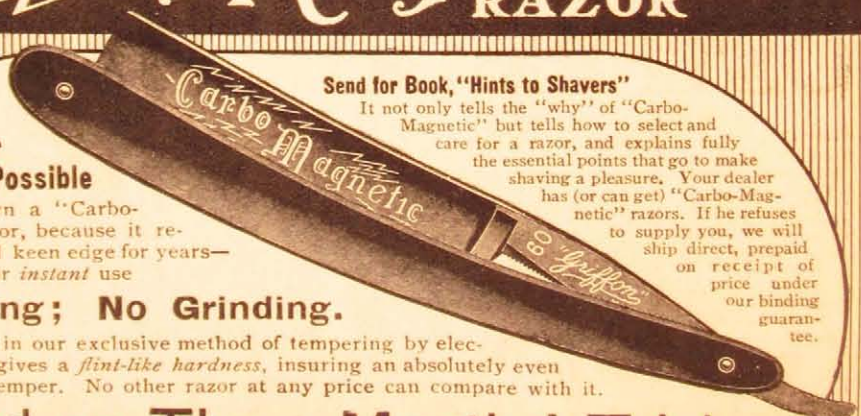
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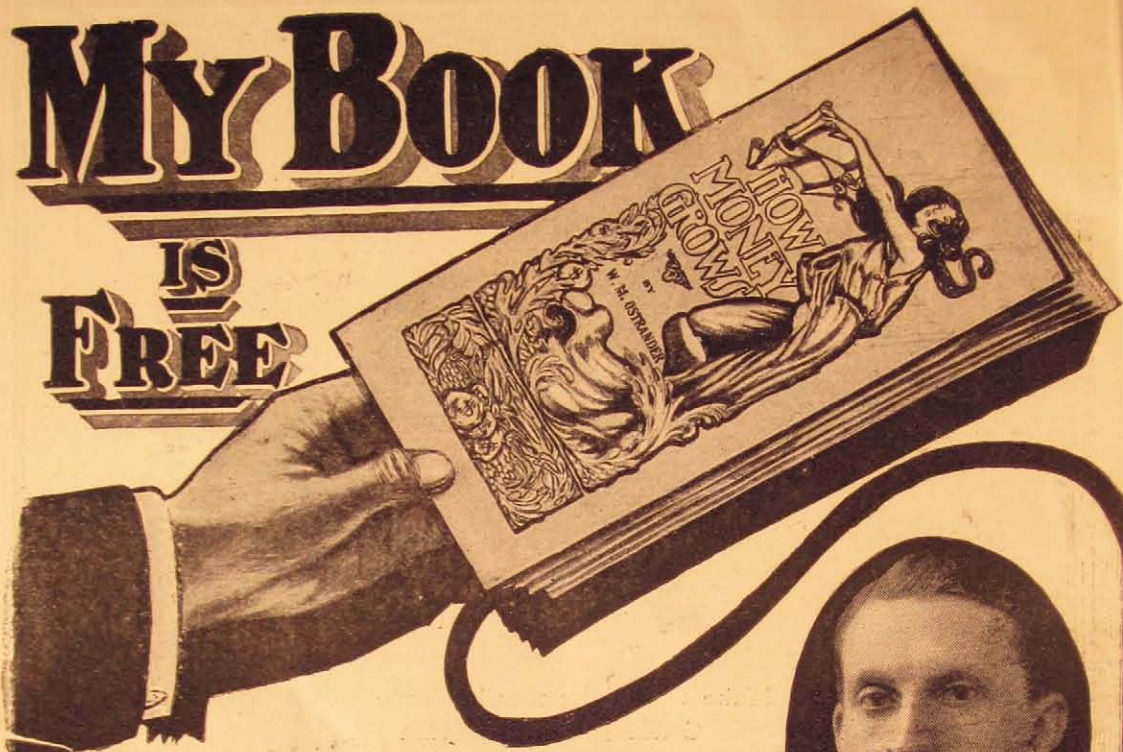
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It tells a hundred and one other things you will be interested in knowing.

This book is not an advertisement of any particular investment. It is a talk on investments in general, and is based on my personal experiences and observations.

I will send my book, free, to any address. I want to place a copy in the hands of every man and woman in America. I want it to be the most widely circulated book that has ever been published.

I want **YOU** to send for a copy.

You will find it a veritable guide-book to safe and profitable investments of all kinds.

If you are now investing small amounts (\$10 a month and up), my book will show you how to invest them wisely, so that your money will work directly for you.

Most everyone could and should save at least \$10 a month from his income.

Sit right down and write me a postal saying, simply, "Send '**How Money Grows.**'" I will send you the book by return mail.

**W. M. OSTRANDER**

106 North American Building, Philadelphia, Pa.



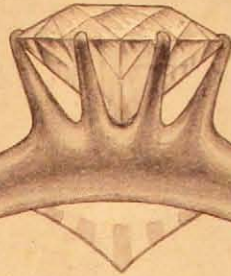
# DIAMONDS

## LOFTIS SYSTEM

## ON CREDIT

DIAMONDS

WIN HEARTS



**T**HE sparkling Diamond reminds the loved one every day of the giver's admiration and generosity. No lover is too poor to buy a Diamond on the Loftis System. There is no delay, disappointment, publicity, security required, or interest to pay. Mothers can buy Diamonds for Sons and Daughters—Husbands can buy Diamonds for Wives—Brothers and Sisters can buy Diamonds for each other—Lovers can buy Diamonds for Sweethearts. All can buy Diamonds on Credit by the Loftis System.

Write for our Catalog, and we will send you not only this superb work, sixty-six pages, 1000 illustrations of Finest Diamonds, Highest-grade Watches and Jewelry, but also our Diamond Souvenir Booklet, which is worth its weight in gold to intending investors in Diamonds. Write To-day!

The Famous Loftis System of Diamonds on Credit won the Gold Medal at the Saint Louis Exposition. Distant buyers by writing for our catalog can select the Diamond or Watch or article of Jewelry which is their special choice. The article is sent on approval to your home, place of business, or express office, as preferred; so you can examine it; being free to buy or not as you please. We deliver our goods anywhere in the United States, paying all charges, taking all risks. We ask no security. We create no publicity. We make no inquiries of employers. All transactions are private and confidential. Your account will be welcomed. Write for Catalog—To-day!

All Honest People—employer or employee—can open a confidential account with us. One-fifth the price to be paid on delivery—you retain the article—pay balance in eight equal monthly amounts sending same direct to us. You will not miss the small monthly payments from your income. Diamonds pay better than savings banks. Save a Diamond by Loftis System. An increase of twenty per cent in the value of Diamonds is predicted during the present year. Diamonds win Hearts.

**Our Cash Offer.** You select your Diamond. You pay cash for it, and receive a written guarantee from us that you can return the Diamond any time within one year and we will pay you all you paid for it less ten per cent. We thus enable you to wear a \$50 Diamond Ring or Diamond Stud one year—you return it to us—and get \$45, which is less than ten cents per week for one year.

**Our Guarantee.** With each Diamond we give a written Guarantee of Quality and Value. Each Diamond that we ever sold is good for full value in exchange for other goods or a larger Diamond.

Write To-day to Us for our Catalog and Souvenir Diamond Booklet, containing all advantages of the famous Loftis Diamond Credit System in detail. Lowest quotations, easiest terms, finest goods.

SIXTY SIX PAGES

WRITE FOR CATALOG

ONE THOUSAND DESIGNS

DIAMOND  
CUTTERS  
WATCH MAKERS  
JEWELERS

# LOFTIS

BROS & CO ESTD 1858

DEP'T. H-63  
92-98 STATE ST  
CHICAGO  
ILL. U.S.A.



# Pabst Extract

When you are wearied from work or worry, when you feel listless or languid, or when you cannot sleep, just use

## Pabst Extract

the "Best Tonic." It is simply rich, pure malt—the most healthful, wholesome and upbuilding food known to science. It gently soothes the tired nerves, makes digestion easy, and brings to all the sweet sleep of childhood.

25c at all druggists.

Write for free booklet telling how Pabst Extract is made, and why you ought to have it in your home.

Pabst Extract Dept.,  
Milwaukee, Wis.





# WINCHESTER



## RIFLES FOR ALL KINDS OF HUNTING.

Winchester rifles are not the choice of any one special class, but of all intelligent sportsmen who go to the woods, the plains, or the mountains in quest of game. They are designed to handle all calibers and types of cartridges, to meet the requirements of all kinds of shooting, and can always be counted on to shoot where they are pointed when the trigger is pulled. Winchester rifles and Winchester cartridges are made for one another.

FREE: Send name and address on a postal card for our large illustrated catalogue.

WINCHESTER REPEATING ARMS CO., - - - - NEW HAVEN, CONN.

## Diamond Decisions

are made with confidence by the Marshall Method. Our free booklet, "How to Buy a Diamond," explains Marshall reputation for quality and honesty brings us many expressions of confidence like this:

"I enclose Chicago draft for \$200, for which I would like the following described ring--leaving it to you and your judgment as to selection."--Letter from Nevada--want the name?



This Rare  
Mid-Summer Opportunity  
Value \$40.00

(14 kt. hand made setting--any style--all cash \$36.80; "Pin Money Saving Plan," \$8.00 cash, \$4.00 monthly)

will convince you of our high standard of diamond perfection. A flawless gem, perfect cut, unexcelled blue-white color--snap, sparkle, fire, life. Crystal-pure color in original stone--enhanced by skillful cutting--that's the secret of fascinating radiance that makes a Marshall Diamond a good business investment. Tell us your wants in gems or jewelry.

Write for July issue "Marshall's Monthly"--for diamond lovers.

Lady's solid gold neck chain and pendant with genuine diamond; rich, delicate design,

Mid-Summer Price, \$10.00

GEO. E. MARSHALL, Inc., 97 State St., Chicago

W. S. HYDE, Jr., Pres. A. S. TRUE, Sec'y  
Reference--First National Bank, Chicago



## REVERSIBLE Linene Collars and Cuffs



## Have You Worn Them ?

Not "celluloid"--not "paper collars"; but made of fine cloth, exactly resemble fashionable linen goods and cost of dealers, for box of ten, 25c. (2½ cts. each).

## No Washing or Ironing

When soiled discard. By mail, 10 collars or 5 pairs of cuffs, 30c. Sample collar or pair of cuffs for 6c. in U. S. stamps. Give size and style.

REVERSIBLE COLLAR CO., Dept. 6, BOSTON, MASS.



# MOST LIBERAL CIGAR PROPOSITION EVER MADE

All the time that you have been paying ten cents over the counter for a Panetela cigar, we have sold our Fedora Panetela, a cigar of exactly the same value, at 4c.

In fact, it was one of our standard brands that we sold successfully for many years to the leading jobbers at \$40 per thousand.

But, as you know, our method was changed a long time ago and we came direct to smokers with our entire product at the same jobber's prices.

Now we make you a special proposition:

The FEDORA Panetela is not only equal in every respect to the regular ten cent cigars at retail, but also better than any five dollar per hundred Panetela ever advertised.

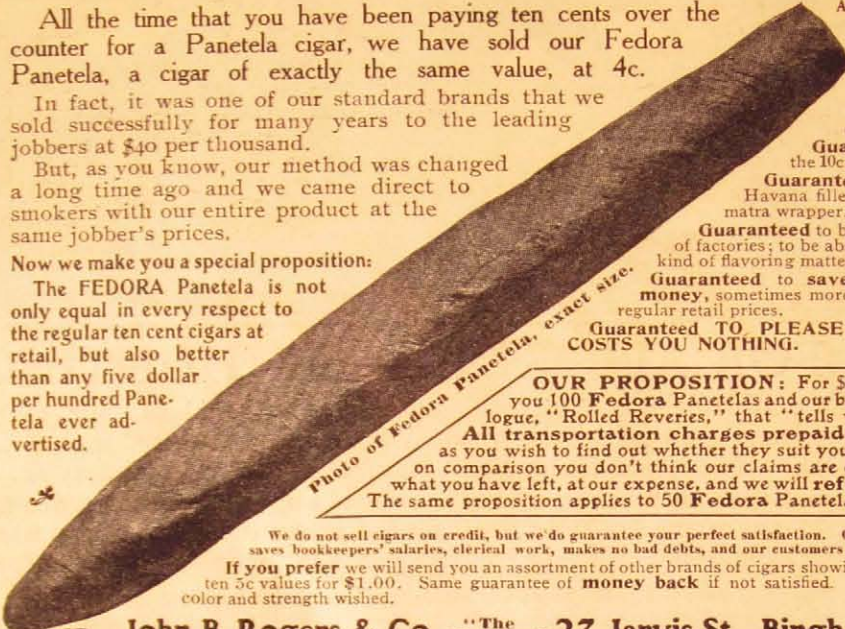


Photo of Fedora Panetela, exact size.

Altogether, here is our **FEDORA PANETELA.**

**Guaranteed** superior to any \$5.00 per hundred Panetela advertised, though the price is 20 per cent less.

**Guaranteed** superior to the 10c cigars sold by dealers.

**Guaranteed** to be made of pure Havana filler and high-grade Sumatra wrapper.

**Guaranteed** to be made in the cleanest of factories; to be absolutely free from any kind of flavoring matter.

**Guaranteed** to save half your cigar money, sometimes more, in comparison with regular retail prices.

**Guaranteed TO PLEASE YOU** or the trial **COSTS YOU NOTHING.**

**OUR PROPOSITION:** For \$4.00 we will send you 100 Fedora Panetelas and our beautiful cigar catalogue, "Rolled Reveries," that "tells you all about it." **All transportation charges prepaid.** Smoke as many as you wish to find out whether they suit you or not. If not, or on comparison you don't think our claims are carried out, return what you have left, at our expense, and we will refund every cent. The same proposition applies to 50 Fedora Panetelas at \$2.00.

We do not sell cigars on credit, but we do guarantee your perfect satisfaction. Our strictly cash business saves bookkeepers' salaries, clerical work, makes no bad debts, and our customers get the benefit in value. **If you prefer** we will send you an assortment of other brands of cigars showing fifteen 10c values, ten 5c values for \$1.00. Same guarantee of **money back** if not satisfied. **Order now,** stating color and strength wished.

**John B. Rogers & Co. "The Pioneers" 27 Jarvis St., Binghamton, N. Y.**



## DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

Any diamond or jewelry bought from this house is absolutely reliable.

We will forward prepaid any catalogued article for examination, granting you the privilege of returning it if not satisfactory.

Anyone of good character may make a purchase from us of any magnitude, on these terms:

**20% Down; 10% Per Month**

Transactions strictly confidential. No employer's reference required. Any diamond purchased may be exchanged.

LYON PRICES are 20% lower than any competitors. We buy the "rough" stones in London in immense quantities, saving heavy duties, and selling them to you on a one profit basis.

If your dealer can duplicate our values we will take back your purchase and refund your money. Send for new catalogue edition. 10

**J. M. LYON & CO.**

65-67-69 Nassau St. NEW YORK



Notice Improved Flexo Button and Loop Fastener.

Price 25¢ & 50¢

## MEN'S Flexo Garters

fit perfectly, hug the limb comfortably without binding, never let go of the hose, never tear them, last longest, look neatest—are best garters.

Sold by all dealers. Insist on Flexo, and if the dealer hasn't them, send us his name and 25c, and we will see that you are supplied. Flexo Garters in fine heavy ribbed silk elastic, 50c.

**A. STEIN & CO., 315 Franklin St., Chicago.**





# Marlin

When a big cock grouse thunders up through the brush, he presents the most difficult mark in the world, and it's a quick man with a good lively gun that makes a fair bag of these birds. The new *Marlin* 12-gauge, Model No. 17 is a light, quick gun, made to meet the demand for repeating shot-guns of highest quality at a very moderate price. It is similar to the *Marlin* Model No. 19 Grade A, except for its solid frame and straight grip stock.

Important improvements, such as the use of two extractors and a two-piece safety recoil block, make it the easiest, most reliable and best working gun in the market. Bored for both smokeless and black powders and any size shot. Guaranteed to pattern better than 325 pellets in a 30-inch circle at 40 yards using 1 1/4 ounce of No. 8 chilled shot. A perfect trap gun, having every advantage of the single barrel. You sight over the center of your load—not off at one side. You are not breaking your birds with the right side of your left barrel load and the left side of your right barrel load. *You center the bird every time.*

This, and every other *Marlin*, has the unique solid top and side ejector features, which guarantee safety and prevent the ejected shell from flying in your face. The *Marlin* Breechbolt keeps out water, twigs, leaves or sand. The shells are always dry and your *Marlin* in service. No other gun has this feature.

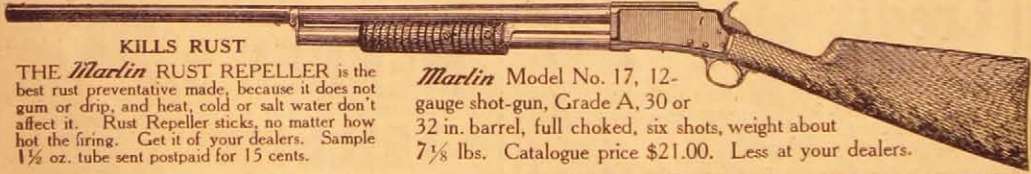
WRITE TO-DAY for our new Catalogue, containing a complete description of this splendid gun. Sent free for 6c postage with our Experience Book, consisting of hundreds of stirring stories of *Marlin* prowess.

**The Marlin Firearms Co. 7 Willow St., New Haven, Conn.**

## KILLS RUST

THE *Marlin* RUST REPELLER is the best rust preventative made, because it does not gum or drip, and heat, cold or salt water don't affect it. Rust Repeller sticks, no matter how hot the firing. Get it of your dealers. Sample 1 1/2 oz. tube sent postpaid for 15 cents.

*Marlin* Model No. 17, 12-gauge shot-gun, Grade A, 30 or 32 in. barrel, full choked, six shots, weight about 7 1/2 lbs. Catalogue price \$21.00. Less at your dealers.



## A Relief for Every Housewife

### The American Door Catch One Million Sold

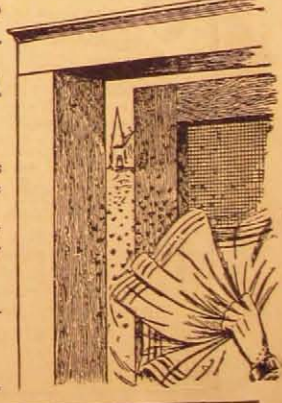
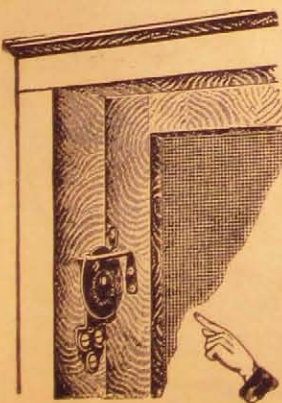
For Screen, Cupboard, Storm, Cabinets, Refrigerators or any door that swings on hinges. A slight pull or a gentle shove and the catch works automatically.

Does away with the old style latch. Keeps the door closed and flies out; prevents rattling, warping and door being blown open by draught.

The American Door Catch can be locked.

Sold by Hardware and Housefurnishing Dealers everywhere, or sent by mail postpaid, for 15c.

**American Hardware Mfg. Co.,  
26 Fulton Street. Ottawa, Ill.**







**EASILY APPLIED** **QUICKLY DRIED**

Natural JAP-A-LAC renews the finish on your  
**Hardwood Floors**  
 and makes them look like new.  
 It dries with a beautiful luster, and retains its brilliancy through wear and tear right down to the wood.  
 Besides Natural, JAP-A-LAC comes in twelve colors. It is a stain and varnish combined, and rejuvenates everything about the home.  
 "You can do the work yourself."

Upon receipt of ten cents, to cover cost of mailing, and the name of your dealer, we will send, FREE OF CHARGE, to any point in the United States, a quarter-pint can of JAP-A-LAC, together with interesting booklet and color card.

Ask your dealer or

**THE Glidden VARNISH CO.**  
ADDRESS DEPT. T,  
 1088 WILLIAMSON BLDG.  
 CLEVELAND, OHIO.

**JAP-A-LAC**  
 YOUR FLOORS  
 MAKE THEM SHINER

**THOUSANDS MAKE**  
**\$5,000.**  
**- A YEAR - IN THE -**  
**REAL ESTATE BUSINESS**

No other business yields the profits that are made every year in the real estate business.

You can learn the business, its principles and practices, thoroughly and technically, in a few weeks' time, without it interfering with your present employment. **We teach you the real estate business.**

You can make more money in the real estate business in less time than you can in any other because it is the biggest and best business in the world. It is a profession and the business of a gentleman.

Other special features of our method are: We furnish you lists and descriptions of exceptional offerings of all kinds of property situated in all parts of the United States and Canada; we list your property; we furnish you our "Real Estate Journal" of business opportunities, investments, etc. **We give you instruction in general brokerage and insurance.**

Notice for yourself in the newspapers and magazines the tremendous growth of the real estate business—railroads selling land grants; the government opening new home-stead territories; timber concessions being sold; factories going up in small towns; new subdivisions, etc.

Summer is a splendid time for you to commence this course. You will then be graduated by Autumn when real estate will be booming.

Real estate firms in the cities pay large salaries to competent men, and if you do not desire to go in business for yourself we will list your name, **free of charge for one year**, with one of the largest placing bureaus, and you will have the privilege of applying to this bureau for a situation in the city.

Write for our **free booklet**. It will interest you.

**H. W. CROSS & CO., Suite K, Tacoma Bldg., Chicago**

**Diamonds on Credit**

OTHER GRADES OF SAME SIZE OR WEIGHT AS LOW AS \$50.00



**O**UR plan of selling diamonds on credit is not alone for those who can't afford to buy for cash—it is for those as well who can pay cash, but prefer not to put a large lump-sum into a diamond at one time. Amongst our customers are many bankers, merchants and individuals who could buy fifty diamonds and pay cash—yet they take advantage of our liberal plan. Why? Because our credit prices are practically the same as cash prices.

Let us send you ring like cut, on approval, express charges paid. If it's as represented, pay express agent \$10.00. Balance monthly. If you send first payment in advance, we will send ring by registered mail. Your reputation for honesty is our security.

Ring Catalog No. K124 or Special Watch Catalog sent on request. Both free.

**Herbert L. Joseph & Co.** Diamonds Watches Jewelry

213 (K124) STATE ST., CHICAGO  
 1260 (K124) Fifth Ave., PITTSBURG

Write to either address  
 Established 1882 Responsibility \$250,000.00

**Fisherman's Luck**

in Summertime means freedom from Prickly Heat, Chafing and Sunburn.

**MENNEN'S Borated Talcum TOILET POWDER**

always brings immediate relief. Be sure that you get the original.

For sale everywhere or by mail, 25 cents. Sample free.

Gerhard Mennen Co.  
 Newark, N. J.







Quality

# DIAMONDS

Quality

We sell but one grade of diamonds—**PERFECT WHITE**. A good Diamond is just as easy to pay for as a poor one, and it is a fifty per cent better investment. Any Diamond that you select from our Catalogue will be White and Perfect. We will submit the one that you would like to consider at our own expense, and leave you to decide upon its quality, value, price and terms. If you want to keep it, pay—say, one-fifth, then send the balance monthly while you wear the Diamond. Our Diamonds are of a grade that we can always take back at a slight discount for spot cash, or at full price in exchange for other goods or a larger Diamond. Our Credit Plan is open to all honest persons on a confidential, personal basis. We satisfy every customer. That is why we are in a position to say that we have more customers on our books who bought from two to six times each, than all the other houses in the business combined. We can satisfy you, and invite you to make a selection from our Diamond and Watch Catalogue. Sent promptly; terms will be arranged to suit.

WALKER-EDMUND CO.,

M 99 State St., Chicago, U. S. A.

THE SIGN OF THE  WHITE DIAMOND

## Dixon's Eterno

**Writes Black Copies Purple**

The new indelible pencil that has all the good qualities of a good fountain pen, *without the bother*

The writing is permanent.

It writes freely, smoothly, carries and holds a sharp point.

It makes a *better* copy than copying ink.

Both letter and copy are indelible.

Is sold with or without nickel pencil point protector by all stationers.

For all records requiring speed or memoranda of a permanent character, Dixon's Eterno will be found a great convenience, as the writing will last as long as the paper endures.

Dixon's Pencil Guide, indexed by vocations, will tell you the kind of lead pencil you should use. Sent free.

JOSEPH DIXON CRUCIBLE CO.,

Dept. C

Jersey City, N. J.

Dixon's Eterno No. 2050



**I am John Mackintosh the Toffee King**

**TOFFEE** If it's MACKINTOSH'S TOFFEE, it is the delicious old English candy that is taking America by storm. If it isn't Mackintosh's, you don't want it unless you want an imitation.

### MACKINTOSH'S TOFFEE

The Original Old English Candy

sold in ten-cent cartons, my name and face on every package. No, not a chewing candy. You break off a small bit and let it dissolve in the mouth.

If your dealer smiles and says he hasn't got MACKINTOSH'S but has an imitation, if you're genuine you will, of course, try another dealer. I am always ready to send my Toffee by mail. Send ten cents for the first size package or \$1.60 for a large four-pound family tin, but try your dealer first.

JOHN MACKINTOSH, Dept. 17, 78 Hudson St., N.Y.

## Why Have Gray Hair?

Gray Hair is costly. Society and business demand "Young Blood."

### Mrs. Potter's Walnut Juice

Stains gray, bleached, faded and patchy hair or beard a beautiful modest brown, so natural in appearance that even experts cannot detect it. The shade may be made lighter or darker as desired to suit each individuality. Stains nothing but hair. Does not show on scalp. Makes no muss. Does not make hair conspicuous. Best remedy for Bleached and "Chemical Blonde" Hair. Very easy to use.

**Enough to last one year for \$1.00**

At drug-stores or by mail, prepaid, in plain sealed wrapper. Money refunded without argument if not fully satisfied.

Trial, 25c., enough for thorough test.



**Look Young It Pays**

**MRS. POTTER'S HYGIENIC DEPOT 15 GROTON Bldg. CINCINNATI OHIO**



# Kola Plant CURES HAY-FEVER AND ASTHMA.



The Kola Plant.

**FREE.** The African Kola Plant is Nature's Positive Cure for Hay-fever and Asthma. Since its recent discovery this remarkable botanical product has come into universal use in the Hospitals of Europe and America as an unfailing specific cure for Hay-Fever and Asthma in every form. Its cures are really marvelous.

**Mr. W. H. Kelley**, 317 48th St., Newport News, Va., writes Jan. 23d, was a helpless invalid and was cured of Hay-Fever and Asthma, by Himalya after 15 years' suffering. **Mrs. J. E. Nurdyke**, of Hill City, Kas., writes Jan. 25th, had Hay-Fever and Asthma for ten years and could get no relief until cured by Himalya. **Mr. D. L. Clossen**, 126 Morris St., Philadelphia, writes Jan. 16th, Doctors did me no good but Himalya cured me. **Mr. W. F. Campbell**, Sanbornville, N. H., also writes Feb. 6th, that Himalya cured his son. **Rev. Frederick F. Wyatt**, the noted Evangelist, of Abilene, Texas, writes April 15th, 1905, I never lose an opportunity to recommend Himalya as it cured me of Hay-Fever and Asthma and have never had any return of the disease.

Hundreds of others send similar testimony, proving Himalya a truly wonderful remedy. As the Kola Plant is a specific constitutional cure for the disease, Hay-fever sufferers should not fail to take advantage of this opportunity to secure a remedy which will positively cure them. To prove the power of this new botanical discovery, if you suffer from Hay-fever or Asthma we will send you one trial case by mail entirely free. It costs you absolutely nothing. Write to-day to The Kola Importing Co., No. 1162 Broadway, New York.

# HOW I MAKE THE BLIND SEE AND CURE ALL EYE DISEASES

Without the Knife or Pain in Patient's Own Home

## Glasses Are Thrown Away

CATARACTS, and all other eye diseases which produce blindness, are caused by poor circulation of blood in the eye, the result of eye strain some time in the past.



It is folly to attempt to restore the usefulness of the eye by applying a knife to any of the delicate, intricate parts. Think of the pain, suffering, blindness and even death that has been caused by the use of the knife on the eye. I discovered, several years ago, a method of restoring the natural circulation of blood to the eyes, which is so simple that a child can apply it.

When this treatment is applied it immediately removes all strain on the nerves and muscles of the eye, equalizing the circulation, thereby assisting nature in restoring the eye to its normal functions.

Glasses are eye crutches. You have to wear them because your eyes are crippled.

After a course of my treatment you can discard your glasses (eye crutches) just like one can discard other crutches after recovering from a broken limb.

My book about eyes, sent free, tells all about it, and contains pictures of and letters from hundreds who have been cured.

A postal card will get the book, and I will give you my free advice if you will write me a short description of your case. Address Dr. Oren Oneal, Suite 183, 52 Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

# MODENE

## HAIR ON FACE NECK AND ARMS

INSTANTLY REMOVED  
WITHOUT INJURY  
TO THE MOST DELICATE  
SKIN

IN COMPOUNDING, an incomplete mixture was accidentally spilled on the back of the hand, and on washing afterward it was discovered that the hair was completely removed. We named the new discovery MODENE. It is absolutely harmless, but works sure results. Apply for a few minutes and the hair disappears as if by magic. **It Cannot Fail.** If the growth be light, one application will remove it; the heavy growth, such as the beard or growth on moles, may require two or more applications, and without slightest injury or unpleasant feeling when applied or ever afterward.

*Modene supersedes electrolysis.*

Used by people of refinement, and recommended by all who have tested its merits.

Modene sent by mail, in safety mailing-cases (securely sealed), on receipt of \$1.00 per bottle. Send money by letter, with your full address written plainly. Postage-stamps taken.

LOCAL AND GENERAL AGENTS WANTED.

MODENE MANUFACTURING CO., Dept. 44, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Every Bottle Guaranteed.

We Offer \$1,000 for Failure or the Slightest Injury.

## ROUGH ON RATS



## Unbeatable RAT

## Exterminator

Though originally designed for Rats and Mice, experience has demonstrated it the most effective of all exterminators of

## Roaches, Ants and Bed Bugs

and it is the only thing at all effective against the large Black Cockroach or Beetle. **15c, 25c.**

Fools the Rats, Mice and Bugs, but never disappoints or fools the buyer. Always does the work and does it right.

We make also **Rough on Roaches, 15c and 25c**  
**Rough on Bed Bugs, 15c and 25c**

E. S. WELLS, Chemist, Jersey City, N. J., U.S.A.

## Rough on Corns

LIQUID.....25c

SALVE.....15c

For Hard or Soft Corns.

Cures without making the feet sore. Relieves pain and soreness the instant applied. The Standard.

Three Rough on Corn Plasters with each Bottle of Liquid and two with every Box of the Salve.

**Rough on Bunions**—We claim it is the only cure. The remedy, with two of our Bunion Plasters, **35c.**

Eight Rough on Corn or Three Rough on Bunion Plasters, which stick and stay where you put them, best made, supplied separately in envelopes, **10c.** All at druggists or by mail.

E. S. WELLS, Chemist, Jersey City, N. J., U.S.A.





# TO FLESHY PEOPLE

I know you want to reduce your weight, but probably you think it impossible or are afraid the remedy is worse than the disease.

Now, let me tell you that not only can the obesity be reduced in a short time, but your face, form and complexion will be improved, and in health you will be wonderfully benefited. **I am a regular practising physician, having made a specialty of this subject.** Here is what I will do for you: First, I send you a blank to fill out; when it comes, I forward a five weeks' treatment.

You make no radical change in your food, but eat as much and as often as you please. No bandages or tight lacing. No harmful drugs or sickening pills. My treatment is given successfully by mail, in your own home. You will lose from **3 to 5 pounds weekly**, according to age and condition of



body. At the end of five weeks you are to report to me and I will send further treatment if necessary.

When you have reduced your flesh to the desired weight, you can retain it. **You will not become stout again.** Your face and figure will be well shaped, your skin will be clear and handsome, you will feel years younger. Ailments of the heart and other vital organs will be cured. Double chin, heavy abdomen, flabby cheeks and other disagreeable evidences of obesity are remedied speedily. All patients receive my **personal attention**, whether being treated by mail or in person. All correspondence answered by me personally. Treatment for either sex. Distance makes no difference. **Satisfaction guaranteed.**

Send for my new book on **"Obesity; Its Cause and Cure"**—it will convince you. Address

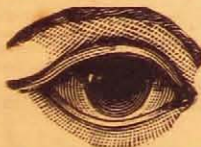
**UNITED STATES MEDICAL DISPENSARY**, Department 52, 20 East 22nd St., New York

## Restores Eyesight

SPECTACLES A THING OF THE PAST

**"Actina," A Marvelous Discovery That Cures All Afflictions of the Eye and Ear Without Cutting or Drugging.**

There is no need for cutting, drugging or probing the eye for any form of disease, for a new system of treating afflictions of the eye has been discovered whereby all torturous and barbarous methods are eliminated. There is no risk or experimenting, as hundreds of people have been cured of blindness, falling eyesight, cataracts, granulated lids and other afflictions of the eye through this grand discovery, when eminent oculists termed the cases incurable.



General Alexander Hamilton, Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson, N. Y., highly recommends "Actina."

Louis Meyer, 93 Herman Street, Rochester, N. Y., writes: "Actina" has effected a wonderful cure in my wife's case, curing her of a severe eye trouble and I would not be without it.

Mr. A. L. Howe, Tully, N. Y., writes: "Actina" has removed cataracts from both my eyes. I can read well without my glasses; am sixty-five years old.

Robert Baker, Ocean Park, Cal., writes: I should have been blind had I not used "Actina."

Hundreds of other testimonials will be sent on application. "Actina" is purely a home treatment and self-administered by the patient, and is sent on trial, post-paid. If you will send your name and address to the New York and London Electric Ass'n, Dept. 123 B, 929 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo., you will receive absolutely free a valuable book, Prof. Wilson's Treatise on the Eye and on Disease in General.

1877. **No New Discovery** 1905.

Can offer more hope in cases of

## CANCER

Than exists today by our method

**Without the Use of the Knife.**



## The Berkshire Hills Sanatorium.

The only institution in the world where cancer and tumors (that are accessible) are permanently cured.

Describe your case and we will mail the most complete information ever published on the subject of cancer, and will give an opinion as to what we can accomplish for you. Ask your family physician to investigate. He will be entertained as our guest.

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Complete and permanent freedom follows. The whole system reconstructed. No more attacks or symptoms. Appetite, digestion, sleep, nerves, all become healthy. Further medicines, "Reliefs" or change of climate no longer necessary. Twenty-one years experience with constant study. Increased skill. New methods. Great success. Over 60,000 cases treated. Stay at home and be CURED TO STAY CURED. Book D explains principle and contains interesting reports of cases. Mailed to you FREE on request.  
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To People Who Think  
Goat Lymph Feeds Nerve Cells**

Brain Fag  
Paralysis  
Epilepsy  
Neurasthenia  
Nerve Exhaustion  
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During the last four years we have thoroughly demonstrated by actual results that Goat Lymph is the scientific and rational treatment for all nervous affections. Scientific men, medical journals, and the daily press after investigation have given it their unqualified endorsement.

The action of the Lymph is such that the exhausted nerve cells are physiologically revitalized thus giving new life and force to the worn-out system.

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**Goat Lymph Sanitarium Association,**

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Brings Quick Relief. FREE on  
Approval. TRY IT.**

We want everyone who has rheumatism to send us his or her name. We will send by return mail a pair of Magic Foot Drafts, the wonderful external cure which has brought more comfort into the United States than any internal remedy ever made. If they give relief, send us One Dollar; if not, don't send us a cent.



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So writes Hon. Alfred Bernstein, Room 801, Stock Exchange Building, Chicago, one of Chicago's most eminent lawyers and capitalists. He also says in his letter, "I was completely incapacitated for business, suffering the most intense bodily pain, but in 5 days I am cured." At your own home the

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BE CURED ABSOLUTELY**

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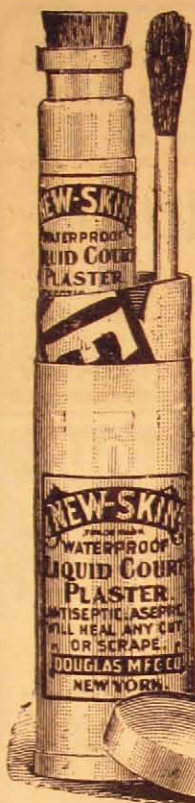
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Do Not Neglect Foot Troubles



BUNION CURED





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Heals Cuts, Abrasions, Hang-Nails, Chapped and Split Lips or Fingers, Burns, Blisters, etc. Instantly Relieves Chilblains, Frosted Ears, Stings of Insects, Chafed or Blistered Feet, Callous Spots, etc.

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Applied with a brush and immediately dries, forming a tough, transparent, colorless waterproof coating.

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At the Druggists, or we will mail a package anywhere in the U. S. on receipt of price.

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All makes and Models, good as new.

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The great remedy for the relief of aches, pains, and the thousand-and-one hurts and accidents that are likely to occur at any time, is

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*First Aid to the Injured.*  
Checks external and internal bleeding, and reduces all kinds of inflammation.  
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Cut this notice out and mail to us and if we have no agent in your town we will send you **FREE**, by return mail, postpaid, a big assortment of cloth samples, fashion figures, cloth tape measure, order blanks, etc., and we will name you prices on men's fine made to measure clothing that will be so much lower than you ever heard of that it will surprise you; terms, conditions and privileges that will astonish you; a free trial offer on a suit for your own use that will make you wonder.

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"HIS MASTER'S VOICE"

To any reliable party, property owner, or holder of steady position, responsible business man or farmer, we will ship on approval our Victor Royal Talking Machine and your choice of one dozen Victor records.

Terms: \$5 after 48 hours trial at your home, then **\$2.50 A MONTH For 6 Months**

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The famous Calculating Machine. Enthusiastically endorsed the world over. Rapid, accurate, simple, durable.

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Consumes 395 Barrels of Air to one gallon of Kerosene. Penny fuel, burns like gas, hottest fire, won't explode, saves work and fuel bills. No coal, wood, dirt, ashes—no wick, no valves, easy operated, handsome, durable. **Grand cooker, baker, quick work, cool kitchens. 13000 Harrison Wickless, Valveless Oil-gas and Air Burners sold 1 month. AGENTS WANTED—\$40 Weekly. Greatest MONEY MAKER.** Guaranteed, all sizes, sent anywhere, \$3 up. Write, **FREE proposition, 30 day trial offer.**  
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SAFETY AUTOMATIC REVOLVER

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It Won't Go Off  
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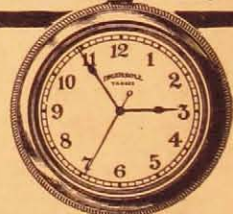
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10,000 watches are offered to the 10,000 people who send in the correct solution of Sam Loyd's Ingwersoll Watch Problem before September 1st, 1905. No entry conditions are imposed. Send your answer right in. \$500 in cash prizes are offered in addition to the above contest to owners of Ingwersoll Watches. If, when you send your solution, you enclose a 2-cent stamp we will send you an acknowledgment of your solution and formal entry blank and conditions of the cash prize contest.

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Show Card Writer	Surveyor
Window Trimmer	Stationary Engineer
Mechan. Draughtsman	Civil Engineer
Ornamental Designer	Building Contractor
Illustrator	Architect Draughtsman
Civil Service	Architect
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The success of the entire Regal system is based on the plan of giving you the best shoes \$3.50 can buy; of making that \$3.50 buy more than it ever bought before, and of selling every shoe we make *direct* at one fair profit.



**\$3.50**

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illustrates and describes them,—and tells you all about the Regal Mail-Order system of personal attention and *guaranteed* fit by mail. Sent free.

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**This** is the razor that is as different from any other razor as smooth is from rough. Made as true and fine as a watch.

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12 Blades  
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**\$5**

COMPLETE  
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EVERYWHERE



Exact size of razor and velvet lined case.

BEAUTIFULLY FINISHED — TRIPLE SILVER PLATED.

Every blade will shave from 20 to 40 times before dulling — when dull throw away.

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**Ask Your Dealer** *Accept no Substitute*

Ask your dealer for the **Gillette Safety Razor**; he can procure it for you. Write for our interesting booklet which explains our thirty-day free trial offer. Most dealers make this offer; if yours don't, we will.

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