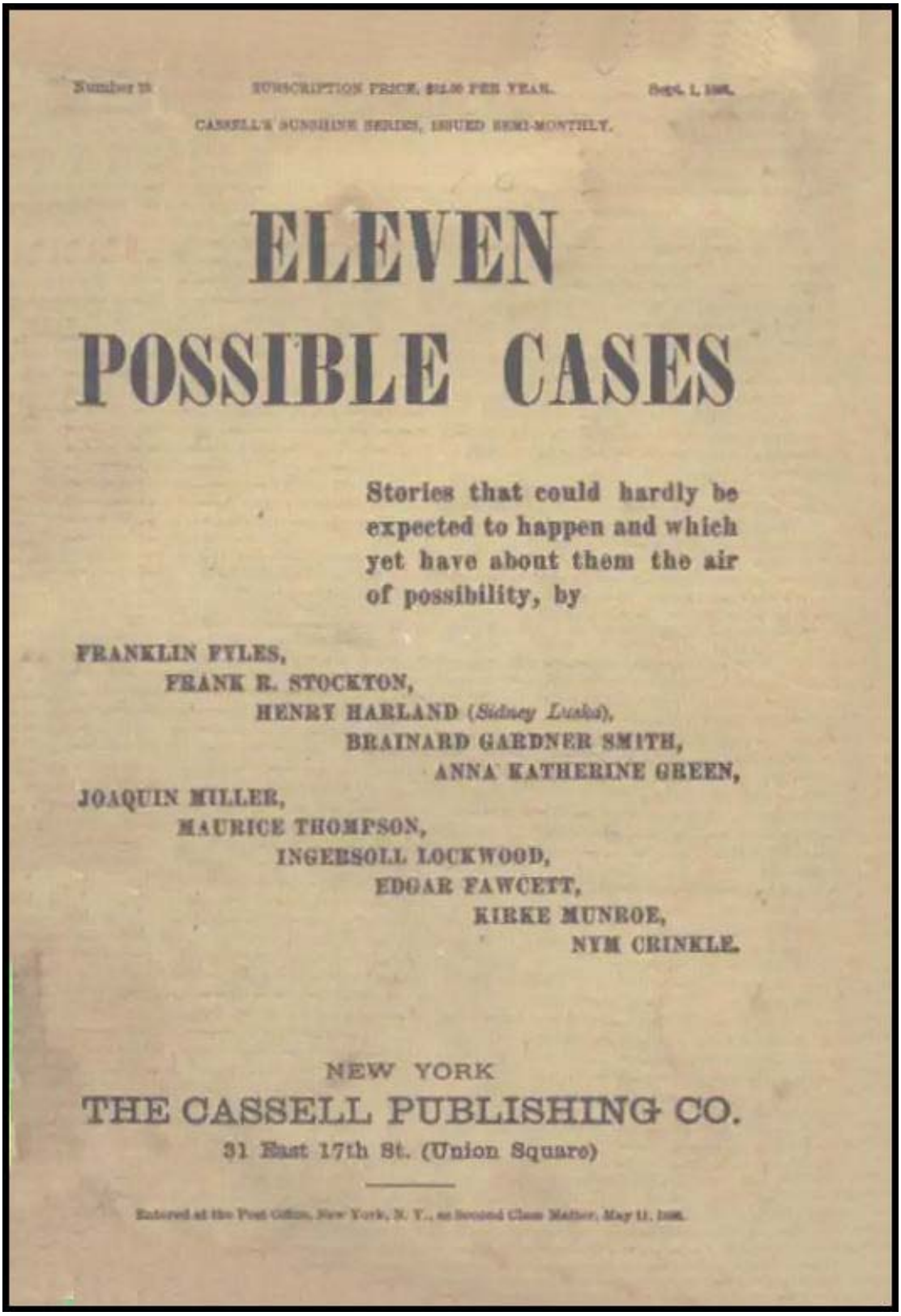

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POSSIBLE CASES

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Contents

The Only Girl at Overlook

Franklin Fyles

1847-1911

TWO NAMES were used for the only girl at Overlook. In addressing her, the men of the place always said "Miss Warriner." In mentioning her, they often said "Mary Mite." The reason for this distinctive difference was revealed by the sight of Miss Mary Warriner herself, as she sat on a high stool behind a rude desk, under a roughly-boarded shelter, and with rapid fingers clicked the key of a telegraphic instrument. There was a perfect poise of quiet self-possession which would have been very impressive dignity in an older and bigger person, and which, although here limited by eighteen years and one hundred pounds, still made a demand for respectful treatment. Therefore the men, when in her presence, never felt like calling her anything else than "Miss Warriner." If she had been less like a stately damsel in miniature, and more like such a child as she was in size only; if her employment had been something not so near to science as that of telegraphy, and not so far off from juvenile simplicity; if her brown hair had been loosely curled, instead of closely coiled, and if her skirts had stopped at her ankles instead of reaching to her feet, then she might have been nicknamed "Mary Mite" within her own hearing, as she was beyond it, by those who described her smallness in a sobriquet. There may have been a variance of opinion among those dwellers at Overlook who had made any estimate of her composure, but if there was one who believed that she merely assumed a reserve of manner because she was among two hundred men, he had not yet tried his chances of exceptional acquaintance.

Overlook was crude and temporary. The inhabitants were making a roadbed for a new railway at a spot where the job was extraordinary, requiring an uncommonly large proportion of brain to brawn in the work. Those who were mental laborers in the remarkable feat of engineering, or were at least bosses of the physical toil, were the ones who had errands at the telegraphic shed, and for whom Mary sent and received messages over the wires. The isolated colony of workers was one hundred miles deep in a wilderness of mountain and forest, but not as many seconds distant, measured by the time necessary for electrical communication from the construction company's headquarters in a great city.

"Must you wait for an answer?" Mary said, as she clicked the last word of a message. "It's an hour since your first telegram went, and they seem in no hurry to reply."

Polite indifference, and nothing else, was in her clear, gentle voice. There was neither boldness nor shyness in the eyes that opened wide and blue, as she lifted them from the paper to the man whom she questioned. There was no more of a smile than of a pout on the mouth that worded the inquiry. She did not indicate the faintest interest as to whether he went or stayed, although she did suggest that he might as well go.

"I'd rather lounge here, if you don't mind," was Gerald Heath's answer.

Here the alertness of the placid girl was faintly shown by a quick glance, but it was so furtive that the subject of her wariness did not know his face was being scrutinized; and she was quickly convinced that she was not the cause of his remaining, for he said: "I'll tell you why I'm anxious about the telegram, and in a hurry to get it."

Gerald Heath had been lazily leaning against the makeshift desk of the telegrapher, as he waited, and for pastime had whittled the smooth birch sapling that formed its outer edge. He had chipped and shaved, after the manner of those to whom a sharp pocket knife and a piece of wood provide a solace. There had been no conversation, except a few words concerning the messages. But now he heightened himself to six feet by standing erect, and took on the outlines of a magnificent physique. His proportions had not been realized before by the girl at the other side of the counter. She comprehended, too, that if his somewhat unkempt condition were changed to one which included a face cleaned of stubbed beard, a suit of modish clothes to replace the half-worn corduroys, and the shine of a silk hat and polished boots at his now dusty extremities, he would become a young gentleman whose disregard might be an appreciable slight. That was the conclusion which she reached without any visible sign that her careless eyes were conveying any sort of impression to her mind. As it was, he looked an unusually burly specimen of the men to whom isolation from city life had imparted an aspect of barbarians. Before he had uttered another word she realized that he was wholly engrossed in the matter of his telegrams, and had no thought of the individuality of the listener. Not only was she not the thing that made him wait, but she might as well have been old, ugly, or a man, if only she had ears to hear.

It was a summer afternoon, and the clear, balmy weather was seasonable. The removal of protective canvas had left the structure an open shed, over the front of which hung the boughs of the two trees against whose massive trunks it leaned. Gerald Heath reached up with both hands and held the foliage aside.

"Do you get an unobstructed view?" he said. "Now, I've helped lay out railroads through many a place, where it was a shame to let trains go faster than a mile a day. I've surveyed routes that ought to provide special trains for passengers with eyes in their heads—trains with speed graduated between

sixty miles an hour and sixty hours a mile. It is an outrage on nature and art that travelers should ever be whisked past Overlook without a good chance to see what we're looking at. That's why I wrote to the president of the company a month ago, telling him how a slight deviation from the surveyed line would enable passengers to get what's in our view now. He asked how much the line would be lengthened by my plan. 'A hundred yards,' I answered. And I submitted a map, showing how the tracks, after coming out from the tunnel, might make a small detour to this very spot, instead of going behind a mass of rocks that will completely hide this—" and a comprehensive gesture of one arm followed his sweep of vision.

Places that get their names on impulse are apt to have appropriate ones. Camps of railway makers in a hitherto unbroken country are not often miscalled. An ensuing town on the same site may be unmeaningly named as a permanency, but the inspirations that afford transient nomenclature are usually descriptive. It was so in the case of Overlook. The railway tunneled through the mountain, and emerged at a height of 1000 feet above a wide valley. Mary had daily, and all day long, sat overlooking the prospect. It had astonished and enchanted her at first, but familiarity had blunted the keenness of her appreciation. As shown to her anew, it was like a fresh disclosure. Gerald Heath stood holding aside the boughs, which otherwise obscured a part of the landscape, and seemed like an exhibitor of some wondrously big and beautiful picture. Miles away were hills rising behind one another, until they left only a little of sky to be framed by the eave of the shed, as seen by the telegrapher. The diversities of a wilderness, distantly strong in rugged forms, but indistinct in details, became gradually definite and particular as they came nearer, and were suggestive of conscious design, where they edged a broken, tumultuous river. Overlook was shelved so high on a precipitous mountain that, from Mary's point of vision, the foreground almost directly underneath passed out of her sight, and it was as though the spectator stood on a platform before a painted canvas, too spacious for exhibition in an ordinary manner. But in this work the shapes and the colors, the grandeur and the beauty were inconceivably beyond human copying.

Gerald Heath appeared to feel, however, that if he was not the painter of this enormous landscape, he at least had the proprietary interest of a discoverer, and it was with something of the air of an art collector, proudly extolling his choicest possession, that he turned his eyes from it to Mary Warriner. The expression of admiration on her face, although quiet and delicate, was quite satisfactory—for a moment only; and then the denotement of delight passed out of her visage, as though expelled by some physical pang. It was the suddenness of the change, for it was of itself very slight, that made it

perceptible. Gerald instinctively turned to look for the cause.

Into the picture had come a human figure. A few yards in front of the hut stood a man. In relation to the landscape far beyond he was gigantic, and the shade of the trees made him devilishly black by contrast with the sunlight of heaven that illumined the rest. He was thus for an instant in silhouette, and it chanced that his sharp outlines included a facial profile, with the points of a mustache and beard giving satanic suggestion to an accidental attitude of malicious intrusion. The illusion was almost startling, but it was momentary, and then the form became the commonplace one of Tonio Ravelli, who walked under the shelter.

"Do-a I eentrude?" he asked, with an Italian accent and an Italian bearing. "I suppose no, eh? Thece ees a placa beesness."

Mary's small departure from a business-like perfunctory manner ended at once. She took the scrap of paper which Ravelli laid on her desk, and without a word translated its writing into telegraphic clicks. Ravelli was a sub-contractor, and this was one of his frequent communications with officials at the company's city office. The response was likely to be immediate, and he waited for it.

"To get the full value of this view," Gerald Heath resumed, and now he addressed himself to Mary directly, as though with almost a purpose of ignoring Ravelli, to whose greeting he had barely responded, "you need to come upon it suddenly—as I once did. We had been for months blasting and digging through the mountain. Every day's duty in that hole was like a spell of imprisonment in a dark, damp dungeon. And your men, Ravelli, looked like a chain-gang of convicts."

"You woulda no dare say so mooch to their-a fa-ces," Ravelli retorted, with an insolence that was unmistakably intentional.

"O, I didn't mean a reflection on them," said Gerald, disregarding the other's quarrelsome aggressiveness. "We all look rascally in the mud, drip, and grime of tunnel work. And your gang of swarthy Italians are bound to have a demoniac aspect underground."

It was more careless than intentional that Gerald thus provoked Ravelli. There had been dislike between them, growing out of friction between their respective duties as a civil engineer and a sub-contractor, for the former was necessarily a critic of the latter's work. But they had never quarreled, and Gerald saw nothing in this occasion, as Ravelli seemed to, for any outbreak of temper.

"Bettare be civ-vil with-a your tongue," Ravelli sneered.

"Well, I think so, too, as we are with a lady."

"Zat ees why-a I inseest you treat-a me as one gentleman."

So it seemed that he was especially regardful of how he figured in the presence of Mary Warriner.

"Like one gentleman? Oh, I will treat you like two gentlemen—so politely;" and Gerald began to again nonchalantly whittle the birchen pole. "I was going to tell how, when at last we broke through the rock at this end of the tunnel, I happened to be right there. A blast tore out an aperture several feet wide. We saw daylight through the smoke. We rushed pell-mell over the broken stone, and struggled with one another to get through first. It was—why, it was you, Ravelli, wasn't it?—whom I tussled with. Yes, we got into the breach together. You tried to push me back. You couldn't—of course, you couldn't;" and the narrator's reference to his own superior strength was exasperatingly accompanied by a glance not free from contempt.

"Eet was-a all een fun," Ravelli smilingly explained to Mary, and then his eyes turned darkly upon Gerald: "Eef eet had-a been one ear-nest fight——," the different result was vaguely indicated by a hard clinch of fists and a vicious crunch of teeth.

It was beyond a doubt that Ravelli could not bear to be belittled to Mary; but she and Gerald were alike inattentive to his exhibition of wrath.

"No prisoner was ever more exultant to escape," Heath went on, "than I was to get out of that dark, noisome hole into clean sunlight. I ran to this very spot, and—well, the landscape was on view, just as it is now. It was like getting from gloom out into glory."

The young man's exuberant words were not spoken with much enthusiasm, and yet they had sufficient earnestness to prove their sincerity. He had stopped whittling, and his knife lay on the desk, as he turned his back against the sapling and rested both elbows on it.

"So I've been writing to the president of the company, urging him to deflect the route a trifle, so that passengers might come out of the tunnel to see a landscape worth a thousand miles of special travel, and to be had by going less than as many feet. This is the very latest day for changing the survey. To-morrow will be too late. That is why I'm telegraphing so urgently."

Click, click, click. Mary went to the telegraphic instrument. She delivered the message by word of mouth, instead of taking it down in the usual manner with a pen.

"Gerald Heath, Overlook," she translated from the metallic language of the instrument. "Your idea is foolish. We cannot entertain it. Henry Deckerman, president."

Gerald looked like a man receiving a jury's verdict involving great pecuniary loss, if not one of personal condemnation, as he listened to the telegram.

"Zat ees what-a I theenk," remarked Ravelli, with insolent elation; "you

ar-r-e one-a fool, as ze president he say."

Gerald was already angered by the dispatch. The taunting epithet was timed to excite him to fury, which he impulsively spent upon the more immediate provoker. He seized Ravelli by the throat, but without choking him, and almost instantly let him go, as though ashamed of having assailed a man of not much more than half his own strength and nearly twice his age. With Italian quickness Ravelli grabbed Gerald's knife from the desk, against which he was flung. He would have used it too, if self-defense had been necessary, but he saw that he was not to be further molested, and so he concealed the weapon under his arm, while Gerald strode away, unaware of his escape from a stab.

"He is-a one beeg bully," said Ravelli, with forced composure. "Eef a lady had-a not been here—"

"You tormented him," the girl interrupted. "I once saw the best-natured mastiff in the world lose his temper and turn on a—" She stopped before saying "cur," and added instead: "If he was foolish, you were not very wise to tease him."

"He is-a what to you, zat you take-a hees part?"

She bit her lip in resentment, but made no reply.

"Pare-haps he is one-a lover oof you?"

Still she would not reply to his impertinence. That angered him more than the severest rejoinder would have done.

"Oh, I am sure-a zat he ees one suitor."

She gave way at length to his provocation, and yet without any violent words, for she simply said: "You are insulting, while he is at least reasonably polite—when he heeds me at all, which isn't often."

"Not-a often? But some-what closely he heed-a you. See zat."

With an open palm he struck the place on the sapling where Gerald had whittled. The spot was on the outer edge, where Mary could not see it from her seat. She went around to the front of the primitively constructed desk, or high counter, to gratify her curiosity. There she saw that Gerald had carved a hand—her own hand, as she instantly perceived. The small and shapely member was reproduced in the fresh, pale wood with rare fidelity. She had unconsciously posed it, while working the key of the telegraphic instrument under the jack-knife sculptor's eyes, and there had been ample time for him to whittle a fac-simile into the birch.

"He is almost as impertinent as you are," she said, and turned to see how Ravelli took the comment.

But Ravelli had disappeared.

Then, being alone, she laid a hand of her own coquettishly alongside its

wooden counterpart, and critically admired the likeness.

"It was an unwarranted liberty," she said to herself, "but he did it very well."

The delicate fiber of the wood had favored the carver's purpose. The imitation hand bore a shade of flattery in the barely tinted birchen white, and in the fine grained satin smoothness that the keen blade had wrought, but this was not too much for more than a reasonable compliment. As to the modeling, that was sincerely accurate, and the fingers rested on the key precisely as Mary had seen them during many hours of many days. It is an excessively vain girl who admires herself as actually as she does a portrait, and the telegrapher really saw more beauty in the birchen hand than she had ever observed in the live one. As she contemplated it, Ravelli returned noiselessly behind her.

"I a-wish to say something, Mees Warriner."

The Italian accent of Ravelli grated with unnatural harshness on Mary's ears, and if he had been an intruder upon her privacy, instead of a man in a really public place, she would not have been surprised into a deep flush. She snatched her hand away from its wooden counterpart, and clasped it with its mate behind her, as she leaned her shoulder against the carving to hide it.

"If you have a message to send," she said, "I can't get it on the wire too soon. It's within five minutes of time to shut off."

She started to go behind the desk. He stopped her with a touch upon her shoulder, and she shrank away reprovingly, although it was solely the man's earnestness that had made him do it.

"No, no; it ees not words for-a ze wire zat I have-a for you," he said. "I wish-a to tell to yourself something. Will you lees-ten?"

"Yes, if it is something that I ought to hear."

"Thees eez it. I am a-more than I seem here—deef-e-rent—so deef-e-rent you would hardly know-a me. In zis place I am on-ly a contractor for ze laborer. I am-a as com-mon as my gang in-a clothes—in-a manner, too, eh? But een one hour—een one minute—I could-a con-veence you zat I am-a something finer."

Mary did not show in her perfectly regained composure that she was so much as puzzled by the man's enigmatic talk. She said: "I don't see how it could be worth while, Mr. Ravelli."

"O, yes—I beg-a par-don for ze contradiction—yes, it ees worth-a while. Away from-a here, Mary, I would-a be so deef-e-rent zat you a-love me."

"Stop, Mr. Ravelli—stop."

The command was positive, but it was not obeyed.

"I love-a you."

He caught her by one wrist as he began. She was utterly unresistant. If she

had struggled or cried out, he would have gone on with his voluble, excited declaration; but her placidity was incomprehensible to him.

"Mr. Ravelli," she began after a moment, "you understand English?"

"Perfectly, Mees Warriner."

"Well, here is plain English for you. I would use Italian if I could, so that you mightn't mistake me. You are to let go of my hand."

He did it.

"You are to go away instantly, and never come here again except on business. Go at once."

That he did not do.

"For what-a did you come here, into one camp oof men eef—"

"If I didn't expect to be unsafe? I'll tell you. It was a mistake. Operator No. 9 was ordered to this post. No. 9 had been a man, who had within a week been discharged, and his number given to me. By an oversight, no alteration was made in the record to show the sex of the new No. 9. I couldn't afford to lose the work. Besides—"

"Well-a, besides—"

"Besides, I reasoned that every man at Overlook would protect me against all the other men— if—"

"Yes, eef—"

"Yes, if I cared absolutely nothing for any single one of them. Therefore, I am not afraid. But you must not annoy me."

Fury flashed into the man's eyes, into his reddened face, into the sudden tension of his gripped hands. The girl's contemptuous indifference maddened him. She saw this, and was at once alarmed, for she realized that here was a reckless lover—one who heated dangerously where another would have chilled under disdain; but she maintained an unshaken voice, as she said: "You may as well know, however, that I am amply protected. The night watchman is ordered to include this combined office and residence of mine in every round he makes. So I sleep quite unconcernedly. In the daytime, too, I shall have defense, if it becomes necessary."

"O, have-a no alarm, Mees Warriner," and the man's facial expression softened singularly as he gazed wistfully at the girl. "I haf said I love-a you." Then, with a startlingly quick transition, he glared menacingly off in the direction that Gerald Heath had gone. It seemed curious to Mary, too, that in his rage his English was clearer than usual, as he growled: "It is your lover that should be afraid of me." He flung out one fist in a fierce menace, and added in Italian: "*Nel vindicarvi bisogna ch'egli mi rende la sua vita*."

ii

THE FULL MOON looked for Mary Warriner's little house that night as soon as a clearance of the sky permitted, and then beamed down on her abode effulgently. But it was eleven o'clock before the gusty wind blew the thick clouds aside and let the orb illumine Overlook. Back of the shed in which the telegrapher worked by day was a structure in which she slept at night. It was built of slabs, with big growing trees to form its irregular corners, and their lowest limbs contributed the rafters, while stripped bark and evergreen boughs made the roof. The foliage swayed above in the fitful wind, and covered the cabin and the grass around it with commingling, separating, capering shadows of leaves, as though a multitude of little black demons were trying to get to the slumberer within. Their antics looked spiteful and angry at first: but as the wind lessened to a breeze, and as the moon seemed to mollify them, they became frolicsome without malice; and at length, when the merest zephyrs impelled their motions, they gambolled lazily, good-humoredly above and around the couch of Mary Mite.

It was midnight when a man shot into the open space around the cabin like a missile. He ran first to the front of the structure, where a tarpaulin curtained the shed for the night, and gazed for a moment blankly at this indication that the hour was not one of business. Tremendous haste was denoted in his every step and gesture. He plucked twice at the canvas, as though to pull it down. Then he skurried around to the single window of Mary's apartment, whose only door opened into the shed, and pounded with his knuckles on the ill-fitted sash, making it clatter loudly. Silence within followed this noise without. "Hello! Wake up!" he cried. "Don't fool for a minute. Wake up!"

There was no response, and he skipped to and fro in his impatience. He was an ordinary shoveler and pounder, with nothing to distinguish him from the mass of manual laborers at Overlook, but, unlike the usual man with an errand at the telegraphic station, flourished a scrap of paper.

"I want to telegraph," he shouted, and struck the window again. "Get up quick! It's life and death!"

Mary Warriner was convinced that her services were urgently and properly required. She peeped warily out to inspect the man, estimated him to be merely a messenger, and then opened wide the sash, which swung laterally on hinges. Her delicate face bore the same sort of calm that characterized it in business hours, but the moon shone on it now, the hair had got loose from the bondage of knot and pin, and for an outer garment she was carelessly enwrapped in a white, fleecy blanket. The man did not give her time to inquire what was wanted.

"You're the telegraph girl, ain't you?" he exclaimed. "Well, here's something to telegraph. It's in a hurry, hurry, hurry. Don't lose a minute."

"I couldn't send it to-night," Mary said.

"You must."

"It isn't possible. There is nobody at the other end of the line to receive it. The wire is private—belongs to the railroad company—isn't operated except in the daytime. You'll have to wait until to-morrow."

"To-morrow I'll be a hundred years old, or else dead," the man almost wailed in despair.

"What?"

"I was only ten years old yesterday. To-night I'm sixty. To-morrow'll be too late. Here—here—send it to-night, Miss. Please send it to-night."

The mystified girl mechanically took the piece of paper which he thrust into her hands, but her eyes did not drop before they discovered the insanity in his face, and when they did rest on the paper they saw a scrawl of hieroglyphics. It was plain that this midnight visitor was a maniac. She screamed for help.

A watchman responded almost instantly to her call. Upon seeing the cause of the girl's fright, he treated the incident as a matter of course. The lunatic wobbled like a drunken man about to collapse, as he mumbled his request over and over again.

"Here, now, Eph," the watchman said, with as much of cajolery as command, "you mustn't bother the young lady. Ain't you ashamed to scare her this way? Get right out of this."

The watchman took the other by the arm, and, as they started off—one insisting and one objecting—the official looked back to say: "He won't hurt nobody, Miss Warriner—he's just a little cranky, that's all."

Mary watched them out of sight, and while she was doing so, Gerald Heath approached from the contrary direction. He had heard the girl's scream. Why he was within earshot he might not have been able to explain satisfactorily, for it was not his habit to take midnight walks, even when the air was so brightly moonlit and so temporarily fine; but if cross-questioned, he would doubtless have maintained that he had sought only to escape from the darkness and closeness of his shanty quarters. Besides, where would he so likely wander, in quest of good sight and breath, as to the spot whence he could view the scenery which he in vain asked the railway company to exhibit to their passengers. As he turned the corner of the cabin he saw Eph and the watchman departing, and comprehended the disturbance.

"Eph has been frightening you, Miss Warriner," he said.

Mary screamed again, but this time it was a low, musical little outcry of modesty. She had not observed Gerald's approach. She clutched the blanket

closely around her white throat, which had been almost as much exposed as by an ordinary cut of frock, and drew under cover the gleaming wrists which had all day been bared to a greater extent by sleeves of handy working length. Then she reached out one taper arm, and swung the sash around on its hinges, so its inner covering of muslin made a screen between her and the visitor. He did not apologize for his intrusion, and she pouted a little on her safe side of the sash, at his failure to do so.

"I see it was Eph that alarmed you," he said. "What did he do?"

She told him, and then asked: "Who is he, and what ails him?"

"He is a common laborer with an uncommon affliction," was the reply. "One day an excavation caved in, and for an hour he was buried. Some timbers made a little space around his head, but the rest of him was packed in earth. He had breathed the inclosed air two or three times over, and was almost suffocated when we got him out. He was insensible. He never came back to his senses. He believes he is living at the rate of more than a year every hour. This is why he was in such a hurry with his imaginary message."

"Poor fellow," came from the obverse side of the sash.

"Yes, poor fellow," the narrator assented. "I understood his hallucination at once. When a man is suddenly placed in mortal peril, his past life dashes before him. Half drowned men afterward tell of reviewing in a minute the events of years. It is a curious mental phenomenon. Well, this poor chap had that familiar experience, but with a singular sequence. The impression that all his lifetime before the accident happened in a brief time has remained in his disordered mind. He believes that his whole earthly existence is condensed—that future years, as well as his past ones, are compressed into days, and his days into minutes. Nothing can disabuse him of this idea. Everything is to him ephemeral. That's why I nicknamed him Eph—short for Ephemeral, you see. He doesn't remember his real name, and on the roll he had only a number. He has done his work well enough until within a few days, but now his malady seems to have turned to the worst. He has talked wildly of getting some physicians to check the speed of time with him, and it may have been that he wished to telegraph to this fancied expert."

"It is singular," Mary said, "and very sad."

The midnight incident seemed to have come to a conclusion. It was a proper time for Gerald to say good-night and go away. He still stood on the opposite side of the half-open sash, around the edge of which appeared a small set of finger tips, which pulled the screen a little closer, showing that the girl was minded to shut herself in. But a hand twice as big opposed hers, gently yet strongly, and in doing so it touched hers; upon which she let go, and the window flew open.

"Oh, you mustn't see me," Mary exclaimed, as Gerald got a vanishing glimpse of the white-draped figure. "Good-night."

"You will be afraid if left alone," Gerald protested; "you can't go to sleep, nervous as you must be."

"I surely can't go to sleep talking," was her rejoinder, with the first touch of coquetry she had indulged in at Overlook.

"I won't talk, then. I'll only keep guard out here until daylight. Eph may return."

"But there's the watchman. It is his duty."

"It would be my delight."

That silenced the invisible inmate of the cabin. The moon shone into the square opening, but Mary was ensconced somewhere in the darkness that bordered the income of light.

"Should I apologize?" Gerald at length began again. "It is like this, Miss Warriner. I used to know how to behave politely to a lady. But for six years I've lived in wildernesses—in railroad camps—from Canada to Mexico. We've had no ladies in these rough places—no women, except once in a while some mannish washerwoman or cook. That's what makes you so rare—so unexpected—that is why it would be a delight to be a patrolman outside your quarters—that is why I don't wish to go away."

"Oh!—oh! I am interesting because I am the only specimen of my sex at Overlook. That isn't a doubtful compliment; it is no compliment at all. Good-night."

"You misconstrue me altogether. I mean—"

"I am sure you do not mean," and now the tone was pleadingly serious, "to remain here at my window after I request you to go away. I am, as you have said, the only girl at Overlook."

"If there were a thousand girls at Overlook—"

"Not one of them, I trust, would prolong a dialogue with a young gentleman at night through the open window of her bedroom."

Half in respectful deference to Mary's unassailable statement of the rule of propriety applicable to the situation, and half in inconsiderate petulance at being dismissed, Gerald let go of the sash with an impulse that almost closed it. This time two miniature hands came out under the swinging frame. Would more than one hand have been naturally used? Was it not an awkward method of shutting a window? And Mary Warriner was not a clumsy creature. But there were the hands, and Gerald grasped them. They fluttered for freedom, like birds held captive in broad palms by completely caging fingers. Then he uncovered them, but for an instant kept them prisoners by encircling the wrists long enough to impetuously kiss them. Another second and they were gone,

the window was closed, and they were alone.

He walked slowly away, accusing himself of folly and ungentlemanliness, and he felt better upon getting out of the clear, searching moonshine into the dim, obscuring shade of rocks and trees, among which the path wound crookedly. There rapid footsteps startled him, as though he was a skulking evildoer, and the swift approach of a man along an intersecting pathway, made him feel like taking to cowardly flight. But he recognized the monomaniac, Eph, who was in a breathless tremor.

"Mr. Heath, could a man walk to Dimmersville before the telegraph station there opens in the morning?" Eph asked, with several catches of breath and a reeling movement of physical weakness.

"You go to bed, Eph," was the reply, meant to be soothing, "and I'll see that your telegram goes from here the earliest thing in the morning. That won't be more than six or seven hours from now."

"Six or seven hours," the poor fellow deploringly moaned; "I'll be a good many years older by that time. Oh, it's awful to have your life go whizzing away like mine does," and he clutched at Gerald with his fidgety hands, with a vague idea of slowing himself by holding to a normal human being.

Then he darted away, swaying from side to side with faintness, and disappeared in the foliage which lined the path he was following.

Gerald watched him out of sight, and was about to resume his own different way when the voice of Tonio Ravelli was heard, with its Italian extra a to the short words and a heavy emphasis on the final syllable of the long ones.

"Mistair Heath," he said, "I saw-a your affectionate par-ting weez Mees Warriner."

Gerald had just then the mind of a culprit, and he began to explain apologetically: "It was cowardly in me to insult a defenseless girl. She didn't invite it. I am ashamed of myself."

He hardly realized to whom he was speaking. The two men were now walking rapidly, Ravelli taking two strides to one of the bigger Gerald, in order to keep alongside.

"You-a should be ashamed—you-a scoundrel."

As much of jealous fury and venomous malice as could be vocalized in six words was in Ravelli's sudden outbreak. Gerald was astounded. He turned upon his companion, caught him by both lapels of the coat, and shook him so violently that his boot-soles pounded the ground. Ravelli staggered back upon being loosed, and threw one arm around a tree to steady himself.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," said Gerald, "but you shouldn't be reckless with your language. Perhaps you don't know what scoundrel means in English."

"I saw you-a kiss her hands."

"Did you? Well, do you know what I'd do to you, Ravelli, if I saw you kiss her hands—as I did—without her consent? I'd wring your miserable neck. Now, what are you going to do to me?"

"I am-a going to keel you!"

The blade of a knife flashed in Ravelli's right hand, as he made a furious onslaught; but the stronger and quicker man gripped both of his assailant's wrists, threw him violently to the ground, and tortured him with wrenches and doublings until he had to drop the weapon. In the encounter the clothes of both men were torn, and when Ravelli regained his feet blood was dripping from his hand. The blade had cut it.

"You meant to kill me," Gerald exclaimed.

"I said-a so," was the sullen, menacing response.

"And with my own knife!" and Gerald, picking up the knife, recognized it.

"Your own knife—ze one zat you carve a Mary's hand with so lovingly."

Ravelli had retained it since the previous afternoon, when he had picked it up from Mary Warriner's desk. Its blade was now red with blood, as Gerald shut and pocketed it.

"You cowardly murderer!"

"Murderer? Not-a yet. But I meant to be."

Ravelli turned off by the cross-path, and Gerald passed on.

iii

THE FIRST MAN to go to work at Overlook in the morning was Jim Wilson, because he had to rouse the fire under a boiler early enough to provide steam for a score of rock drills. The night watchman awakened him at daybreak, according to custom, and then got into a bunk as the other got out of one.

"Everything all right?" Jim asked.

"I guess so," the other replied. "But I hain't seen your boiler sence before midnight. Eph was disturbin' Mary Mite, and so I hung 'round her cabin pretty much the last half of the night."

Jim went to his post at the boiler, and at an unaccustomed pace, from the point where he first saw and heard steam hissing upward from the safety valve. On quitting the night previous, he had banked the fire as usual, and this morning he should have found it burning so slowly that an hour of raking, replenishing, and open draughts would no more than start the machinery at seven o'clock. Going nearer he found that open dampers and a fresh supply of coal had set the furnace raging.

What was that which protruded from the open door, and so nearly filled the aperture that the draught was not impaired?

A glance gave the answer. It was the legs and half the body of a man, whose head and shoulders were thoroughly charred, as Jim was horrified to see when he pulled the remains out upon the ground.

Jim ran to tell the superintendent, and within a few minutes a knot of excited men surrounded the body. The gathering grew in numbers rapidly. By means of the clothing the dead and partially burned man was identified at once as Tonio Ravelli. That he had been murdered was an equally easy conclusion. The murderer had apparently sought to cremate the corpse. Whether he had found it physically impossible, or had been frightened away, could only be conjectured.

"Who can have done it?" was the question asked by Superintendent Brainerd, the autocrat of Overlook.

There was a minute of silence, with all staring intently at the body, as though half expecting it to somehow disclose the truth. The night watchman was first to speak.

"Eph might have done it," he said.

Then he told of the monomaniac's visit to the telegraph station, and of the acute stage which his malady had reached. Nobody else present had seen him since the previous evening. Superintendent Brainerd ordered a search of the lodgings. Ten minutes were sufficient for a round of the different quarters. Eph was in none of them. The searchers returned to the furnace, and with them came Gerald Heath.

"I met Eph yonder where the paths cross, not a hundred yards from here, a little past midnight," Gerald said. "He was terribly excited. That was after he had tried in vain to telegraph a crazy message. Evidently his delusion, that his whole life was condensed into a brief space, had driven him to a frenzy. He spoke of walking to Dimmersville, but I tried to quiet him, and he disappeared."

Dimmersville was a town about ten miles distant, in a direction opposite to that from which the railroad had worked its way through the mountains. No wire connected it with Overlook, and there was no public road for the nearest third of the way, although a faint trail showed the course that a few persons had taken on foot or horseback.

"Very likely Eph has gone toward Dimmersville," Brainerd argued, "and we must try to catch him."

Before the order could be specifically given a horse and a rider arose over the edge of the level ground and came into the midst of the assemblage. The man in the saddle had a professional aspect, imparted chiefly by his smoothly shaven face. In this era of mustaches a hairless visage is apt to be assigned to a clergyman, who shaves thus from a motive of propriety; an actor, who does it

from necessity; or somebody who aims at facial distinction without the features suitable to that purpose. A countenance of which it can only be said that it has one nose, one mouth, and two eyes, all placed in expressive nonentity, and which is dominated utterly by hair on and around it, may be less lost to individuality if entirely shaven. Of such seemed the visage of the dark man, who calmly rode into the excitement at Overlook.

"Which way have you come?" Brainerd asked.

"From Dimmersville," was the reply.

"Did you see anybody on the way?"

"I started very early. Folks were not out of their beds in the houses—as long as there were any houses—and that is only for five or six miles, you know. After that—yes—I did see one man. A curiously excited chap. He looked tired out. He asked the distance to Dimmersville, and whether the telegraph office would be open by the time he got there. Then he skurried on before I'd half answered him."

All that was known of the murder was told to the stranger by half a dozen glib tongues, and it was explained to him that he had encountered the maniacal fugitive.

"I knew there was something wrong about him," said the stranger. "It is my business to be observant."

He dismounted and hitched his horse to a tree. The dead body was shown to him. He examined it very thoroughly. All the particulars were related to him over and over. Then he drew Superintendent Brainerd aside.

"My name is Terence O'Reagan," he said, and in his voice was faintly distinguishable the brogue of the land whence the O'Reagans came. "I am a government detective. I have been sent to work up evidence in the case of some Italian counterfeiters. We had a clew pointing to a sub-contractor here—the very man who lies there dead. Our information was that he used some of the bogus bills in paying off his gang. Now, it isn't going outside my mission to investigate his death—if you don't object."

"I would be glad to have you take hold of it," Brainerd replied. "We can't bring the authorities here before noon, at the earliest, and in the mean time you can perhaps clear it all up."

The eagerly curious men had crowded close to this brief dialogue, and had heard the latter part of it. O'Reagan became instantly an important personage, upon whose smallest word or movement they hung expectantly, and nobody showed a keener interest than Gerald Heath. The detective first examined the body. The pockets of Ravelli's clothes contained a wallet, with its money untouched, beside a gold watch.

"So robbery was not the object," said O'Reagan to Brainerd. "The motive is

the first thing to look for in a case of murder."

Next, he found blood on the waistcoat, a great deal of it, but dried by the fire that had burned the shoulders and head; and in the baked cloth were three cuts, under which he exposed three stab wounds. Strokes of a knife had, it seemed, killed the victim before he was thrust partially into the furnace.

A storm was coming to Overlook unperceived, for the men were too much engrossed in what lay there on the ground, ghastly and horrible, to pay any attention to the clouding sky. Gloom was so fit for the scene, too, that nobody gave a thought from whence it came. To Gerald Heath the going out of sunlight, and the settling down of dusky shadows seemed a mental experience of his own. He stood bewildered, transfixed, vaguely conscious of peril, and yet too numb to speak or stir. Detective O'Reagan, straightening up from over the body, looked piercingly at Gerald, and then glanced around at the rest.

"Is there anybody here who saw Tonio Ravelli last night?" he asked.

"I did," Gerald replied.

"Where and when?"

"At the same place where I met Eph, and immediately afterward."

"Ah! now we are locating Eph and Ravelli together. That looks like the lunatic being undoubtedly the stabber."

"And we must catch him," Brainerd interposed. "I'll send riders toward Dimmersville immediately."

"No great hurry about that," the detective remarked; "he is too crazy to have had any clear motive or any idea of escape. It will be easy enough to capture him." Then he turned to Gerald, and questioned with the air of a cross-examiner: "Did the two men have any words together?"

"No," was the ready answer; "I don't know that they even saw each other at that time. Eph went away an instant before Ravelli came."

"Did you talk with Ravelli?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"Not about Eph at all."

"About what, then?"

Now the reply came reluctantly: "A personal matter—something that had occurred between us—an incident at the telegraph station."

"The station where Eph had awakened the girl operator? Was it a quarrel about her?"

"That is no concern of yours. You are impertinent."

"Well, sir, the question is pertinent—as the lawyers say—and the answer concerns you, whether it does me or not. You and Ravelli quarreled about the girl?"

"The young lady shall not be dragged into this. She wasn't responsible for what happened between Ravelli and me."

"What did happen between you and Ravelli?"

The two men stood close to and facing each other. The eyes of the detective glared gloatingly at an upward angle into the pale but still firm face of the taller Gerald, and then dropped slowly, until they became fixed on a red stain on the sleeve of the other's coat. Did he possess the animal scent of a bloodhound?

"What is that?" he sharply asked. He seized the arm and smelled of the spotted fabric. "It is blood! Let me see your knife."

Quite mechanically Gerald thrust one hand into his trousers pocket and brought out the knife which he had taken back from Ravelli, whose blood was on it yet.

The storm was overhead. A first peal of thunder broke loudly. It came at the instant of the assemblage's tensest interest—at the instant when Gerald Heath was aghast with the revelation of his awful jeopardy—at the instant of his exposure as a murderer. It impressed them and him with a shock of something supernatural. The reverberation rumbled into silence, which was broken by O'Reagan:

"There'll be no need to catch Eph," he said, in a tone of professional glee. "This man is the murderer."

Again thunder rolled and rumbled angrily above Overlook, and the party stood aghast in the presence of the man dead and the man condemned.

"Bring him to the telegraph station," O'Reagan commanded.

Nobody disputed the detective's methods now—not even Gerald; and a prisoner as completely as though manacled, although not touched by any one, he went with the rest.

Mary Warriner had taken down the tarpaulin front of her shed when the men approached. In the ordinary course of her early morning doings she would wait an hour to dispatch and receive the first telegrams of the day, and then go to breakfast alone at the table where the engineers and overseers would by that time have had their meal. She was astonished to see nearly the whole population of Overlook crowd around her quarters, while a few entered. But she went quickly behind the desk, and took her place on the stool. The soberness of the faces impressed her, but nothing indicated that Gerald was in custody, and her quick thought was that some disaster made it necessary to use the wire importantly.

"I wish to send a message," said O'Reagan, stepping forward.

The eyes of the girl rested on him inquiringly, and he palpably flinched, but as obviously nerved himself to proceed, and when he spoke again the Irish

accent became more pronounced to hear, although not sufficiently to be shown in the printed words: "I will dictate it slowly, so that you can transmit it as I speak. Are you ready?"

Mary's fingers were on the key, and her bright, alert face was an answer to the query.

"To Henry Deckerman, president," the detective slowly said, waiting for the clicks of the instrument to put his language on the wire; "Tonio Ravelli, a sub-contractor here, was murdered last night."

Mary's hand slid away from the key after sending that, and the always faint tint in her cheeks faded out, and her eyes flickered up in a scared way to the stern faces in front of her. The shock of the news that a man had been slain, and that he was a man who, only the previous day, had proffered his love to her, was for a moment disabling. But the habit of her employment controlled her, and she awaited the further dictation.

"His body was found this morning in the furnace of the steam boiler." O'Reagan resumed deliberately, "where it had evidently been placed in a vain attempt to destroy it."

A shudder went through Mary, and she convulsively wrung her small hands together, as though to limber them from a cramp. But her fingers went back to the key.

"The murderer has been discovered," the detective slowly continued, and the operator kept along with his utterance word by word. "He killed Ravelli for revenge. It was a love affair." Here the girl grew whiter still, and the clicks became very slow, but they did not cease. O'Reagan's voice was cold and ruthless: "The motive of the murderer was revenge. His name is Gerald Heath."

All but the name flashed off on the wire. Mary Warriner's power to stir the key stopped at that. She did not faint. She did not make any outcry. For a moment she looked as though the soul had gone out of her body, leaving a corpse sitting there. A grievous wail of wind came through the trees, and a streak of lightning zig-zagged down the blue-clouded sky.

"Go on," said O'Reagan.

"I will not," was the determined response.

"Why not?"

"Because it is not so. Gerald Heath never murdered Ravelli."

Gerald had stood motionless and silent. Now he gave way to an impulse as remarkable as his previous composure had been singular. If there had been stagnation in his mind, it was now displaced by turbulence. He grasped Mary's hands in a fervid grip; then dropped them and faced the others.

"I did not kill the Italian," he said. "He attacked me with my knife which he had stolen. In the struggle his hand was cut, but I took the weapon away from

him. He quitted me alive and unhurt. I never saw him again. You don't believe it? Mary does, and that is more than all else."

"The circumstances don't favor you," the detective retorted, "they convict you. You killed Ravelli because you and he were both in love with this young lady."

"Isn't it the rejected suitor who kills the other one for spite?" This was in Mary Warriner's voice, weak, but still steady. "Ravelli loved me, I knew, and I drove him away. Mr. Heath loved me, I believed, and I had not repulsed him. If I were the cause of a murder between them, it should be Ravelli who killed Gerald."

"You detested Ravelli?" O'Reagan asked, with a strange bitterness.

"Yes."

"And you love Heath?"

The answer was no more hesitant than before; "Yes."

"Send the rest of my message," and the detective was boisterous. "Send the name. Gerald Heath is the murderer."

He roughly seized her hand and clapped it on the key. She drew it away, leaving his there. A blinding flash of lightning illumined the place, and what looked like a missile of fire flew down the wire to the instrument, where it exploded. O'Reagan fell insensible from the powerful electrical shock. The rest did not altogether escape, and for a minute all were dazed. The first thing that they fully comprehended was that O'Reagan was getting unsteadily to his feet. He was bewildered. Staggering and reeling, he began to talk.

Mary was first to perceive the import of his utterance. He was merely going on with what he had been saying, but the manner, not the matter, was astounding.

He spoke with an Italian accent, and made Italian gestures.

"You-a send ze mes-sage," he said; "Heath ees ze murder-are. Send-a ze mes-sage, I say."

Tonio Ravelli had unwittingly resumed his Italian style of English.

His plenitude of hair and whiskers was gone; and in the face, thereby uncovered, nobody could have recognized him in Detective O'Reagan but for his lapse into the foreign accent; and he said so much before discovering his blunder that his identification, as indeed Ravelli, was complete.

Who, then, was the dead man?

Why, he was Eph.

Nothing but the fear of being himself condemned as a murderer of the maniac, as a part of the scheme of revenge against Gerald, induced Ravelli to explain. He had found Eph lying dead in the path, after both had parted from Gerald. The plot to exchange clothes with the corpse, drag it to the furnace,

burn away all possibility of recognition, and thus make it seem to be his murdered self, was carried out with all the hot haste of a jealous vengeance. Ravelli was not an Italian, although very familiar with the language of Italy, and able, by a natural gift of mimicry, to hide himself from pursuit for a previous crime. Overlook had been a refuge until his passion for Mary Warriner led him to abandon his disguise. Thereupon, he had turned himself into Terence O'Reagan, a detective, whose malicious work wrought happiness for Gerald Heath and Mary Warriner.

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A Thing That Glistened

Frank R. Stockton

1834-1902

IN THE FALL of 1888 the steamship *Sunda*, from Southampton, was running along the southern coast of Long Island, not many hours from port, when she was passed by one of the great British liners, outward bound. The tide was high, and the course of both vessels was nearer the coast than is usual—that of the *Sunda* being inside of the other.

As the two steamers passed each other there was a great waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Suddenly there was a scream from the *Sunda*. It came from Signora Rochita, the prima donna of an opera troupe, which was coming to America in that ship.

"I have lost my bracelet," she cried in Italian, and then, turning to the passengers, she repeated the cry in very good English.

The situation was instantly comprehended by every one. It was late in the afternoon; the captain had given a grand dinner to the passengers, at which the prima donna had appeared in all her glories of ornamentation, and the greatest of these glories, a magnificent diamond bracelet, was gone from the arm with which she had been enthusiastically waving her lace handkerchief.

The second officer, who was standing near, dashed into the captain's office and quickly reappeared with chart and instruments, and made rapid calculation of the position of the vessel at the time of the accident, making an allowance for the few minutes that had passed since the first cry of the signora. After consultation with the captain and recalculations of the distance from land and some other points, he announced to the weeping signora that her bracelet lay under a little black spot he had made on the chart, and that if she chose to send a diver for it she might get it, for the depth of water at that place was not great.

By profession I am a diver, and the next day I was engaged to search for the diamond bracelet of Signora Rochita. I had a copy of the chart, and, having hired a small schooner with several men who had been my assistants before, and taking with me all the necessary accouterments and appliances, I set out for the spot indicated, and by afternoon we were anchored, we believed, at or very near it. I lost no time in descending. I wore, of course, the usual diver's suit, but I took with me no tools nor any of the implements used by divers when examining wrecks, but carried in my right hand a brilliant electric lamp connected with a powerful battery on the schooner. I held this by an insulated handle, in which there were two little knobs, by which I could light or

extinguish it.

The bottom was hard and smooth, and lighting my lamp I began to look about me. If I approached the bracelet I ought to be able to see it sparkle, but after wandering over considerable space, I saw no sparkles nor anything like a bracelet. Suddenly, however, I saw something which greatly interested me. It was a hole in the bottom of the ocean, almost circular, and at least ten feet in diameter. I was surprised that I had not noticed it before, for it lay not far from the stern of our vessel.

Standing near the rocky edge of the aperture, I held out my lamp and looked down. Not far below I saw the glimmer of what seemed to be the bottom of this subterranean well. I was seized with a desire to explore this great hole running down under the ordinary bottom of the sea. I signaled to be lowered, and although my comrades were much surprised at such an order, they obeyed, and down I went to the well. The sides of this seemed rocky and almost perpendicular, but after descending about fifteen feet they receded on every side, and I found myself going down into a wide cavern, the floor of which I touched in a very short time.

Holding up my lamp, and looking about me, I found myself in a sea cave, some thirty feet in diameter, with a dome-like roof, in which, a little to one side of the center, was the lower opening of the well. I became very much excited; this was just the sort of place into which a bracelet or anything else of value might be expected to have the bad luck to drop. I walked about and gazed everywhere, but I found nothing but rocks and water.

I was about to signal to be drawn up, when above me I saw what appeared to be a flash of darkness coming down through the well. With a rush and a swirl it entered the cavern, and in a moment I recognized the fact that a great fish was swooping around and about me. Its movements were so rapid and irregular, now circling along the outer edge of the floor of the cavern, then mounting above me, until its back seemed to scrape the roof, that I could not form a correct idea of the size of the creature. It seemed to me to be at least twenty feet along. I stood almost stupefied, keeping my eyes, as far as possible, fixed upon the swiftly moving monster.

Sometimes he came quite near me, when I shuddered in every fiber, and then he shot away, but ever gliding with powerful undulations of his body and tail, around, about, and above me. I did not dare to signal to be drawn up, for fear that the terrible creature would enter the well hole with me. Then he would probably touch me, perhaps crush me against the wall, but my mind was capable of forming no plans. I only hoped the fish would ascend and disappear by the way he came.

My mind was not in its strongest condition, being much upset by a great

trouble, and I was so frightened that I really did not know what I ought to do, but I had sense enough left to feel sure that the fish had been attracted into the cavern by my lamp. Obviously, the right thing to do was to extinguish it, but the very thought of this nearly drove me into a frenzy. I could not endure to be left alone with the shark in darkness and water. It was an insane idea, but I felt that, whatever happened, I must keep my eyes upon him.

Now the great fish began to swoop nearer and nearer to me, and then, suddenly changing its tactics, it receded to the most distant wall of the cavern, where, with its head toward me, it remained, for the first time, motionless. But this did not continue long. Gently turning over on its side, it opened its great mouth, and in an instant, with a rush, it came directly at me. My light shone full into its vast mouth, glistening with teeth, and there was a violent jerk which nearly threw me from my feet, and all was blackness. The shark had swallowed my lamp! By rare good fortune, he did not take my hand also.

Now I frantically tugged at my signal rope. Without my lamp I had no thought but a desire to be pulled out of the water, no matter what happened. In a few minutes I sat, divested of my diving suit, and almost insensible, upon the deck of the schooner. As soon as I was able to talk I told my astonished comrades what had happened, and while we were discussing this strange occurrence, one of them, looking over the side, saw slowly rising to the surface the body of a dead shark.

"By George," he cried, "here is the beast. He has been killed by the current from the battery."

We all crowded to the rail and looked down upon the monster. He was about ten feet long, and it was plain that he had died for making himself the connection between the poles of the battery.

"Well," said the captain pleasantly. "I suppose you are not going down again?"

"Not I," I replied. "I give up this job."

Then suddenly I cried:

"Come boys, all of you. Make fast to that shark, and get him on board. I want him."

Some of the men laughed, but my manner was so earnest that in a moment they all set about to help me. A small boat was lowered, lines were made fast to the dead fish with block and tackle, and we hauled him on deck. I then got a butcher's knife from the cabin and began to cut him open.

"Look here, Tom!" exclaimed the captain, "that's nonsense. Your lamp's all smashed to pieces, and if you get it out, it will never be any good to you."

"I don't care for the lamp," I answered, working away energetically, "but an idea has struck me. It's plain that this creature had a fancy for shining things. If

he swallowed a lamp, there is no reason why he should not have swallowed anything else that glittered."

"Oho!" cried the captain, "you think he swallowed the bracelet, do you?"

And instantly everybody crowded more closely about me.

I got out the lamp. Its wires were severed as smoothly as if they had been cut by shears. Then I worked on. Suddenly there was a cry from every man. Something glimmered in the dark interior of the fish. I grasped it and drew it out. It was not a bracelet, but a pint bottle which glimmered like a glow-worm. With the bottle in my hand, I sat upon the deck and gazed at it. I shook it. It shone brighter. A bit of oiled silk was tied tightly over the cork, and it was plain to see that it was partly filled with a light colored oil, into which a bit of phosphorous had been dropped, which, on being agitated, filled the bottle with a dim light.

But there was something more in the bottle than phosphorus and oil. I could see a tin tube, corked at each end, and the exposed parts of the corks spreading enough to prevent the tin from striking the glass. We all knew that this was one of those bottles containing a communication of some sort, which are often thrown into the sea, and float about until they are picked up. The addition of the oil and phosphorus was intended to make it visible by night as well as by day, and this was plainly the reason why it had been swallowed by a light-loving shark.

I poured out the oil and extracted the tube. Wiping it carefully, I drew out the corks, and then, from the little tin cylinder, I pulled a half sheet of note paper, rolled up tightly. I unrolled it, and read these words:

Before I jump overboard, I want to let people know that I killed John Polhemus. So I have fixed up this bottle. I hope it may be picked up in time to keep Jim Barker from being hung. I did think of leaving it on the steamer, but I might change my mind about jumping overboard, and I guess this is the best way. The clothes I wore and the hatchet I did it with are under the woodshed, back of Polhemus's house.

Henry Ramsey.

I sprang to my feet with a yell. Jim Barker was my brother, now lying in prison under sentence of death for the murder of Polhemus; all the circumstantial evidence, and there was no other, had been against him. The note was dated eight months back. Oh! cruel fool of a murderer.

The shark was thrown overboard, and we made best speed to port, and before the end of the afternoon I had put Ramsey's note into the hands of the lawyer who had charge of my brother's case.

Fortunately he was able to identify the handwriting and signature of Ramsey, a man who had been suspected of the crime, but against whom no

evidence could be found. The lawyer was almost as excited as I was by the contents of this note, and early the next morning we started together for the house of the Polhemus family. There, under the woodshed, we found carefully buried a bloodstained shirt and vest, and the hatchet.

My impulse was to fly to my brother, but this my lawyer forbade. He would take charge of the affair, and no false hopes must be excited, but he confidently assured me that my brother was as good as free.

Returning to the city, I thought I might as well make my report to Signora Rochita. The lady was at home and saw me. She showed the most intense interest in what I told her, and insisted upon every detail of my experiences. As I spoke of the shark, and the subterranean cave, she nearly fainted from excitement, and her maid had to bring her smelling salts. When I had finished, she looked at me steadily for a moment, and then said:

"I have something to tell you, but I hardly know how to say it. I never lost my bracelet. I intended to wear it at the captain's dinner, but when I went to put it on I found the clasp was broken, and, as I was late, I hurried to the table without the bracelet, and thought of it no more until, when we were all waving and cheering, I glanced at my wrist and found it was not there. Then, utterly forgetting that I had not put it on, I thought it had gone into the sea. It was only this morning that, opening what I supposed was the empty box, I saw it. Here it is."

I never saw such gorgeous jewels.

"Madame," said I, "I am glad you thought you lost it, for I have gained something better than all these."

"You are a good man," said she, and then she paid me liberally for my services. When this business had been finished, she asked:

"Are you married?" I answered that I was not.

"Is there any one you intend to marry?"

"Yes," said I.

"What is her name?" she asked.

"Sarah Jane McElroy."

"Wait a minute," said she, and she retired into another room. Presently she returned and handed me a little box.

"Give this to your ladylove," said she; "when she looks at it, she will never forget that you are a brave man."

When Sarah Jane opened the box, there was a little pin with a diamond head, and she gave a scream of delight. But I saw no reason for jumping or crying out, for after having seen the Signora's bracelet, this stone seemed like a pea in a bushel of potatoes.

"I don't need anything," she said, "to remind me that you are a brave man.

I am going to buy furniture with it."

I laughed, and remarked that "every little helps."

When I sit, with my wife by my side, before the fire in our comfortable home, and consider that the parlor carpet, and the furniture and the pictures, and the hall and stair carpet, and all the dining-room furniture, with the china and the glass and the linen, and all the kitchen utensils, and two bedroom suits on the second story, both hardwood, and all the furniture and fittings of a very pleasant room for a single man, the third story front, were bought with the pin that the signora gave to Sarah Jane, I am filled with profound respect for things that glitter. And when I look on the other side of the fire and see Jim smoking his pipe just as happy as anybody, then I say to myself that, if there are people who think that this story is too much out of the common, I wish they would step in here and talk to Jim about it. There is a fire in his eyes when he tells you how glad he is that it was the shark instead of him, that is very convincing.

A Lion and a Lioness

Joaquin Miller

1837-1913

I DOUBT if you will find either profit or pleasure in reading this incident of my third voyage up the Nile. It is really not worth reading. I have written it down merely for a few friends who know something of the facts; and also to escape the annoyance of having to tell it over as one of the features of my four years' travel in the Orient. But to begin. Wearying of the Levant, I was resting a time in Rome, when I was formally invited, as well as specially urged, to witness the marriage ceremony between the Grand Duchess Alexandria and the Duke of Edinburgh. Let us pass over these wasteful follies, the waste of time, the waste of sense, of soul! I have only mentioned the reason for my presence in St. Petersburg; have only mentioned the fact of my being there, because I saw a face in that gathering of people that could not be forgotten. It was the face of a tall, dark, and serenely silent Dolores; a young woman who had surely met and made the acquaintance of sorrow early in the morning of life. I sometimes wonder if I could ever have known or cared to know any one who had not sorrowed deeply. And yet I now know very well that, in whatever guise that woman could have come, there could have been no two roads for us from the day of her coming to the day of her going.

Let me be a little confidential right here. I knew, I had always known, I should meet this woman. I had waited for her; worked hard, built up the battlements and the fortress of my soul so that I might receive her into it; and defend her well against my baser self when she should come. And now tell me—have you never had a thought, a conviction like this? A certainty in your own heart that your other and better self would come to you complete and entire some day, soon or late, so soon as you might have the fortress ready? The doctors said she was dying. She had been trying to stand between the Czar and the Jews. She may not have been of that "peculiar people," but I think she had the money of Rothschilds and Sir Moses Montefiore behind her.

There had been attempts at assassination, followed by executions. Some of the condemned were women. It was as if this woman herself had been condemned to death. I think she suffered more than all the others put together; she was so very, very sensitive to the pain and sorrow of others.

There are souls like that. But there is a good God. The soul that suffers keenly can and shall enjoy keenly. You can, if you care to persist in it, make yourself, as the centuries wheel past, more than an entire nation in this.

We had common ground to work on in the cause of the condemned

people. It was on this ground that we first met; as two swift streams that flow in the same direction and so finally unite forever. All that could be done was done speedily; for "the law's delay," whatever else must be laid to the door of Russia, is not one of her sins.

As summer took flight we went south with the birds. For she surely felt that she was dying. Besides, she had been impressed with the idea of restoring Jerusalem and having this homeless race re-established in the holy city. Her religion? I think it was all religions. I saw her kneel in the Kremlin at Moscow, cross herself in St. Peter's at Rome, and bend low at prayer in the Synagogue at Alexandria. I think she would have done the same in a mosque. As stated before, I had, previous to meeting her, been all over Syria. And so, whenever she referred to her cherished idea, as she so often did, of forming Jewish settlements in and about Jerusalem and restoring Israel, I took occasion to explain how impossible and impractical it all was.

I remember telling her how that in a whole day's ride from Babylon toward Jerusalem I had seen no living thing save a single grasshopper! I explained to her that the path of civilization had been in the track of the setting sun ever since the dawn of history, and that it was not in the power of man to reverse this course. I attempted to show that the tide of population would pour upon the salubrious and fertile shores of the farthest west till the heart of civilization would beat right there. I explained to her that wherever the great strong heart of commerce beat strongest, there would be found the strongest and best of these people whom she hoped to help; while the weak and helpless of that race would remain stranded by the waters of the Levant, as in Russia now.

"Why not, then, let us anticipate this and build the city of refuge by your great sea in the path of this civilization which you say will so surely come?"

Like the golden doors of dawn was the great earnest idea to me as she spoke. But of course I know, as I said before, that the "peculiar people" could not be induced to brave the desert. They do not seek rest, but action—employment in the marts. They would rest but a single night even by the sweet waters of Jacob's well.

ii

AS WINTER CAME on and Egypt began to be oppressively full of tourists, it was decided that we should make our escape up the Nile and haunt the ruin of Kamak and other places until the outgoing tide set in. Once fairly on our way, it did not take long to persuade me that she was not only gaining strength each day in body but in soul. We had been more than a month on the Nile; a tattered palm tree here tossing in the wind and sand; a gaunt, clay-colored

camel yonder, all legs and hair; beggars, disease, despair all around us; a land to fly from, fit place for tombs, jackals, and famishing lions!

But she was stronger, there were roses in her face. Her glorious black hair had not the dampness of death in it now, but was luxuriously sensate with renewed life and health and possible happiness.

One warm sunset, as the boat lay with its prow in the yellow sand that seemed to stretch away into infinity, she proposed that she and I should ascend to the top of the tall ruins on a hill a little distance back from the river, and there wait and watch and listen for the coming day.

It was a dreadful place. I had already walked a little way out, but on seeing a shriveled black hand stretching up from the sand, I had turned back; only to stumble over the head of a mummy which I had afterward seen one of our servants gather up and take to his Arab camp for firewood. Still, we had been pent up in the boat much; and then would not she be with me?

Two Arabs were taken with us to carry a bottle of water and the rugs and robes. The hill was steeper than it at first seemed; and the ascent through the sand heavy. I was having an opportunity to test her strength and endurance. I might also have an occasion to test her courage before the break of morning, for as we entered between two towering columns of red granite, one of the Arabs dropped on a knee and spread his hand as wide as he could in the sand. But wide as he spread it, he could not more than half cover the fresh foot-print of a huge lion.

The clamber to the top was steep and hard. Yet it was not nearly so steep and hard as I could have wished it, when I reflected that very likely before midnight a lion might pass that way.

We found that these wonderful columns of granite were coped with great slabs of granite. These granite slabs were of astonishing breadth and thickness. This temple, as it is called, had probably been a tomb. I took good care to see that there was no other means of ascent to the place where we had chosen to spend the night than the one by which we had ascended. And I remember how eagerly I wished for a crowbar in order that I might break down a little of the *débris*, so that the ascent might be less easy for prowling beasts.

But as there was nothing of the sort at hand, I dismissed the two Arabs and resolved to be as brave, if possible, as the singularly brave and beautiful woman who had come here to hear the voices of desolation.

The sky was rimmed with yellow; yellow to the east, yellow to the west; a world of soft and restful yellow that melted away by gradations as the eye ascended from the desert. It was like melody in its serene harmonies and awful glory.

And she at my side partook of it all; she breathed it, absorbed it, literally

became a part of it. I saw her grow and glow. Soul and body I saw her dilate and expand till she was in absolute harmony with the awe and splendor that encompassed us. I felt that she had been in the midst of, even a part of, this tawny desolation ages and ages before. Perhaps her soul had been born here, born before the pyramids.

iii

WITH MY OWN HANDS I spread her couch of skins and rugs in the remotest corner of a great stone slab that still lifted its unbroken front, in defiance of time, high above the tawny sands of the desert. The night was very sultry, even here on this high and roomy summit. The broad, deep slab of granite was still warm with sunshine gone away, and gave out heat like a dying furnace. The steep and arduous ascent had taxed her strength, and unloosing her robe as I turned to examine more minutely our strange quarters on the top of this lofty tomb, or temple, she sank to rest, half reclining on her arm, her chin in her upturned palm, her face lifted away toward the rising moon.

Half a dozen paces to the right I saw two tall and ponderous columns of granite standing in line with those that supported the great slab on which she rested. Evidently these grand and solitary columns had also once been topped by granite slabs. But these had fallen to the ground under the leveling feet of many centuries, and now lay almost swallowed up in the sea of yellow sands below. I put out my foot carefully, trying to reach the broad top of the nearest column of granite, but it was beyond me. Stepping back a couple of paces and quietly removing my boots, I gathered up my strength and made a leap, landing almost in the center of the column's top. A half step backward, another leap—who could resist the challenge of that lone and kingly column that remained? I landed securely as before, then turned about. Her face had not lifted an instant from the awful majesty of the Orient.

Slowly, wearily, the immense moon came shouldering up through the seas of yellow sand. These billows of sand seemed to breathe and move. The expiring heat of the departed sun made them scintillate and shimmer in a soft and undulating light. And yet it was not light; only the lone and solemn ghost of a departed day. Yellow and huge and startling stood the moon at last, full grown and fearful in its nearness and immensity on the topmost lift of yellow sands in the yellow seas before us. Distance seemed to be annihilated. The moon seemed to have forgotten her place and all proportion. Looking down into the sullen Nile, it seemed a black and bottomless chasm. And it seemed so far away! And the moon so very near.

Black as blackest Egypt rolled the somber Nile down and on and on through

this world of yellow light; this light that was not light. Silence, desolation, death lay on all things below, about, above. The west was molten yellow gold, faint and fading, it is true: but where the yellow sands left off and the yellow skies began no man could say or guess, save by the yellow stars that studded the west with an intense yellow.

Yellow to the right and yellow to the left, yellow overhead and yellow underfoot; with only this endless chasm of Erebus cleaving the yellow earth in halves with its bottomless pit of endless and indissoluble blackness.

After a time—and all the world still one sea of softened yellow, torn in two by Charon's chasm of black waters—I silently leaped back, replaced my boots on my feet and then held my breath. For I had seen, or perhaps felt, an object move on the lifted levels of sand between us and the moon.

Cautiously I sank down on my breast and peered low and long up the horizon. I saw, heard nothing. Glancing around to where my companion lay, I saw that she still had not stirred from the half reclining position she had first taken, with half lifted face in her upturned palm.

Then she had seen nothing, heard nothing. This, however, did not argue much. Her life had not been of the desert. She had spent her years in the study of men and women. I had spent mine with wild beasts. I could trust her to detect motives in men, give the warning note of danger from dangerous men; but the wild beasts and wilder men of the border were mine to watch and battle with, not hers.

She had seen nothing; evidently she feared nothing, and so was resting, resting in mind as in body. And as I glanced again over my shoulder and saw how entirely content she seemed, I was glad. Surely she depended entirely on me; on my watchfulness and my courage. And this made me more watchful and more resolute and stout of heart. A man likes to be trusted. A true man likes a true woman's trust, much indeed. A strong man likes to be leaned upon. It makes him stronger, braver, better. Let women never forget this. Admit that she, too, has her days of strength and endurance; and admit that she, too, has her peculiar fortress of strength and courage, and these also man respects and regards with piteous tenderness. But man, incapable of her finer and loftier courage and endurance, resents her invasion of his prerogative.

It is only a womanly man who can really love a manly woman. But to continue: Looking up a third time to this woman at my side, I saw that she had let her head sink low on her leaning arm. She was surely sleeping. How I liked her trust and her faith in me? And how I liked her courage, too, and her high quality of endurance. It was her courage that had brought me up here this night to the contemplation of awful and all-glorious Africa. Silently and without lifting a finger, she had shown me a world of burnished gold. I had surely seen

God through her. We stood nearer together now than ever before. This single hour of indescribable glory should forever stand as an altar in the desert. Our souls had melted and flown and tided on, intermingled like molten gold in the golden atmosphere and the yellow scene that wrapped us round about, and no word had been said. When God speaks so audibly let man be silent.

I must have looked longer on the sleeping and trustful woman at my side than I ought to have looked, for on turning my eyes again to the horizon, there distinctly on the yellow sand and under the yellow moon moved, stealthily as a cat, yet graceful and grand, the most kingly beast I ever beheld. He did not look right nor left, but moved along with huge head in the air, slow and stately, and triumphant in his fearful symmetry and strength.

iv

I HALF AROSE and felt for a trusty six-shooter. This pistol was not one that had been purchased for this or any other occasion, as the worthless pistols of the time are usually purchased, but it had been my companion from boyhood.

As I half arose the lion suddenly halted. He lifted his proud head higher still in the air, and to my consternation half turned about and looked straight in my direction. Then a sidewise and circuitous step or two with his long reach of hinder leg, his wide and deep and flexible flank; slow and kingly; splendid to see!

I sank down again, quite willing to let him interview the land of Arabs in the black chasm below. They had spears and guns and everything down there, everything but courage to face a lion with; and I was not going to interfere with a fight which at the first had promised to be entirely their own.

But this new movement of mine only accentuated his graceful motion. The head now turned in the air, like the head of a man. I had time to note, and I record it with certainty, that the massive head and the tumbled mane towered straight above the shoulder. In fact, the lower parts of the long mane looked most like the long shaggy beard of a man falling down upon his broad breast. This I noted as he still kept on in his sidewise circuit above us and around us on the yellow sand and under the yellow moon. At times he was almost indistinct. But the carriage of that head! There was a fine fascination in the lift and the movement and the turn of that stately head that must ever be remembered, but can never be described.

As he came nearer—for his sidewise walk was mainly in our direction—I saw that he, too, was yellow, as if born of this yellow world in this yellow night; but his was a more ponderous yellow; the yellow of red and rusty old gold. At times he seemed almost black; and all the time terrible.

In half a minute more he would be too close for comfort, and I decided to arouse my companion. She wakened fully awake, if I may be allowed to express a fact so awkwardly. You may know that there are people like that.

"What is it?"

"A lion."

"Are you sure?"

"Certain."

"Where?"

"Right before your eyes."

"Why, I see nothing."

She had looked and was still looking far out against the yellow horizon where her eyes had rested when she fell asleep. And as she looked, or rather before I ventured to point her to the spot almost under the tomb where the lion strode, he passed on and was by this time perhaps almost quite under the great slab of granite where we rested.

I was about to whisper the fact in her ear when I fancied I felt the whole tomb tremble! Then it seemed to shake, or rather rumble again. Then again it rumbled. Then again! Then there was a roar that literally shook the sand. I heard the sand sift and rattle down like drops of rain from where it lay in the crevices as I listened to find whether or not he was moving forward toward the place by which we had ascended. He was surely moving forward. I felt rather than heard him move. I assert—and I must content myself for the present with merely asserting—that you can *feel* the movements of an animal under such circumstances. And I assert further that an animal, especially a wild beast, can *feel* your movements under almost any circumstances. The undeveloped senses deserve a book by themselves. But just now, with the largest lion I ever saw coming straight upon me, is hardly the time or place to write such a treatise.

Pistol in hand I sprang to the steep and rugged passage. And not a second too soon. His mighty head was almost on a level with the granite slab. And he was half crouching for a bound and a spring upward, which would perhaps land him in our faces. I could see—or did I feel—that his huge hinder feet were spread wide out and sunken in the sand with preparation to bend all their force toward bearing him upward in one mighty bound.

I fired! fired right into his big red mouth, between two hideous pickets of ugly yellow teeth. He fell back, and then, gathering his ferocious strength, he bounded up and forward again; this time striking his left shoulder heavily against a projecting corner of the granite slab. Fortunately the ascent was slightly curving, so that the distance could not be made at a single bound without collision, else had we both surely been destroyed.

Again the supple and comely beast, disdaining to creep or crawl, made a mighty leap upward. But only to strike the rounding corner of the great granite slab and fall back as before.

But I knew he would reach us in time! And if ever man did wish for fitting arms to fight with and defend woman it was I at that time. True, I had five shots left; but what were they in the face of this furious king of beasts? I began to fear that they would only serve to enrage him.

Still, he should have all I had to give. Death is, has been, and will be. The best we can make of it all is to try and see that we shall not die ingloriously.

The woman had been by my side all this time. And now, as the lion paused as if to gather up the broken thunderbolts of his strength, she laid a hand on my arm, never so gently, and said: "Let me go down and meet him face to face. I think he will not harm me."

"Madam," I exclaimed impetuously, "you will meet him up here, and face to face, soon enough, I think."

"No, that will not do. You must trust the lion; as Daniel did."

I pushed her back, as she tried to pass down, almost violently.

"There!" I cried as I wheeled about and forced her before me for an instant, "if you have real courage leap to the head of yonder column, then on to the next! Quick! be brave enough to save yourself and——"

"No! I will not run away and leave you to die."

"For God's sake you will run away and save me."

"Why? How?"

"I will join you there, go! Quick, or it will be too late!"

Another leap of the lion! Bang! Bang!

This time he did not fall back, but held on by sheer force of his powerful arms; his terrible claws tearing at the granite slab as they hung and hooked over its outer edge.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The last shot. I hurled my revolver in his face, for he had not flinched or given back a single grain. His breath and my breath were mingled there in the smoke of my pistol. I heard—or did I feel—his great hinder feet fastening in the steep earth under him for his final struggle to the top?

I turned, saw that she had reached the farther column; and with three leaps and a bound I had crossed the granite slabs and stood erect on the nearer one! Not a moment had I left. The lion, with great noise of claws on the granite, came tearing to the surface. I crouched down out of breath on the outer edge of my column, so as to be surely out of reach of his ponderous paws. I expected him to decide the matter at once, to reach us or give it up instantly. But he seemed in no haste now. He scarcely advanced at all, for what

seemed to me to be a long time. Finally, jerking his tail like the swift movement of a serpent, he strode along the farthest edge of the granite slab and seemed to take no notice of us whatever. Blood was dripping from his mouth, but he did not seem to heed it.

Once more he strode with his old majesty, and seemed ashamed that he should have descended to the indignity of a struggle to gain the place where he now stood sullen and triumphant. Enraged? He was choking, dying with rage; and yet this kingly creature would not even condescend to look in our direction.

Why, I could feel his fearful rage as he now walked on and around the edge of that granite slab. At length he came opposite to where I lay crouching on the farther edge of my column. He passed on without so much as turning his eyes in my direction. And yet I felt, I felt and knew, as distinctly as if he could have talked and told me, that he was carefully measuring the distance.

When the lion, in his stately round, came to the narrow pass by which he had ascended he paused an instant, and half lowered his head.

Ah, how devoutly I did pray that he would be generous enough to descend to the sands and gracefully present us with his absence.

But no! Lifting his huge head even higher in the air than before, he now passed on hurriedly, came on around to where in his stately majesty he stood with quivering flank and flashing eye almost within reach of me. Yet he still disdained to even so much as look at me. His head was far above me as I crouched there on the farther edge of my column; his flashing eyes were lifted and looking far above me and beyond me. Maybe he was on the lookout over the desert for the coming of his companion.

Soon, however, he set his huge paws on the very edge of the great slab on which he stood, and then suddenly threw his right paw out toward me and against the edge of my column with the force and velocity of a catapult!

I heard the sharp, keen claws strike and scrape on the granite as if they had been hooks of steel.

Then he threw himself on his breast, and hitching himself a little to one side, he threw his right paw so far that it landed full in the center of my column's top and tore a bit of my coat sleeve. Then he hitched his huge body a little farther on over the edge and again threw his huge paw right at my face. It fell short of its mark only a few inches, as it seemed to me. But, having hastily gathered in my garments, his claws did not find anything to fasten on and they drew back empty.

At this point three dusky etchings stood out against the golden east on the yellow sands, and looked intently at us with their enormous heads high in the air. And now the beast slowly arose and moved on. A lion's head seems always

disproportionately large, but when he is exercising for an appetite to eat you it looks large indeed.

The monster who was occupying the platform with us surely saw his followers; indeed, he must have seen them long before; but his unbending dignity seemed to forbid that he should take any heed of them.

The new-born hope that he would descend and join his followers died as he came on around.

And now something strange and notable transpired. This one incident is my excuse for thus elaborating this otherwise passive and tediously dull sketch of this night. I had risen to my feet, and as the lion came on around, this woman, with a force that was irresistible, sprang to my side, thrust me behind her, and stepping forward with a single spring, she stood on the edge of the column nearest to the lion.

I would have followed, but that same force, which I can now understand was a mental force and not at all a physical force, held me hard and fast to where I stood.

She had let her robe fall as she sprang forward and now stood only as the hand of God had fashioned her; a snow-white silhouette of perfect comeliness against the terrible and bloody mouth and tossing mane of the lion. She leaned forward as he came on around and close to the edge of his slab. She looked him firmly and steadily in the face, her wondrous eyes, her midnight eyes of all Israel, the child of the wilderness, had once more met the lion of the desert as of old.

Who was this woman here who stepped between death and me and stood looking a wounded lion in the face? Was this Judith again incarnate? Or was this something more than Judith? Was it the Priestess and the Prophetess Miriam, back once more to the banks of the Nile? Was it the old and forgotten mastery of all things animate which Moses and his sister knew that gave her dominion over the king of the desert? Or was her name Mary? "That other Mary," if you will, who won all things to her side, God in heaven, God upon earth, by the sad, sweet pity of her face, and the story of holy love that was written there? The lion's head for a moment forgot its lofty defiance as she leaned a little forward. Then the tossed and troubled mane rose up and rolled forward like an inflowing sea. It never seemed so terrible. He was surely about to spring! And she, too! Her right foot settled solidly back, her left knee bent like a bow, her shapely and snowy shoulders, under their glory of black hair, bowed low. Her dauntless and defiant spirit had already precipitated itself forward and was smiting the imperious beast full in his blazing eyes. I knew that her body would follow her spirit in an instant more.

Face to face! Spirit to spirit! Soul to soul! A second only the combat lasted.

The awful ferocity and force of the brute was beaten down, melted like lofty battlements of snow before the burning arrows of the sun, and he slowly, surlily, shrank in size, in spirit, in space. A paw drew back from the edge of the block, the eyes drooped, the head dropped a little, and the terrible mane seemed terrible no more, as slowly, doggedly, mightily, aye doggedly and majestically, too, at the same time, this noble creature forced himself sidewise and back a little.

Then he hesitated. Rebellion was in his mighty heart. He turned suddenly and looked her full in the face once more. All the beast that was in him rose up. The terrible mane now seemed more terrible than before. With great head tossed, tail whipped back, and teeth in the air, talons unsheathed and legs gathered under him, he was about to bound forward.

But the woman was before him! With eyes still fastened on his face, she with one long leap forward drove not only her shining soul but her snowy body right against his teeth. Or rather, she had surely done so had not the lion, half turned about, shrank back as she leaped forward. Then slowly, looking back with his blazing but cowering eyes, feeling back with his spirit still defiant, if but to see whether her courage failed her in the least or her mighty spirit was still in battle armor; and then he passed. His companions had drawn back and into a depression in the desert where he slowly and sullenly joined them.

One, two, three, four dim yet distinct black silhouettes against the yellow east; then but a single confused black etching; away, away, smaller and smaller, gone!

I gathered up her robe, crossed over, and letting it fall on her shoulders where she still stood, looking down and after the beast. I picked up my pistol from where it had fallen, a few feet below, and as she turned about, carefully reloaded it from cartridges by chance in my vest pocket.

Returning to the summit, I found her again resting on her couch at the corner of the huge slab, tranquilly as if we had not been disturbed. I did not speak. Not a single word had been uttered all this time.

I sat down at the feet of this woman—not at her side, as before—and let my own feet dangle down over the edge on the side farthest away from the isolated columns. Neither of us spoke; nor did she move hand or foot till morning.

———————————

The Cheated Juliet

"Q."

A. T. Quiller-Couch, 1863-1944

Extracted from the Memoirs of a Retired Burglar.

THE HOUSE in question was what Peter the Scholar (who corrects my proof-sheets) calls one of the rusinurby sort—the front facing a street and the back looking over a turfed garden with a lime tree or two, a laburnum, and a lawn-tennis court marked out, its white lines plain to see in the starlight. At the end of the garden a door, painted dark green, led into a narrow lane between high walls, where, if two persons met, one had to turn sideways to let the other pass. The entrance to this lane was cut in two by a wooden post about the height of your hip, and just beyond this, in the high road, George was waiting for us with the dog-cart.

We had picked the usual time—the dinner-hour. It had just turned dark, and the church-clock, two streets away, was chiming the quarter after eight, when Peter and I let ourselves in by the green door I spoke of and felt along the wall for the gardener's ladder that we knew was hanging there. A simpler job there never was. The bedroom window we had marked on the first-floor stood right open to the night air; and inside there was the light of a candle or two flickering, just as a careless maid will leave them after her mistress has gone down to dinner. To be sure there was a chance of her coming back to put them out; but we could hear her voice going in the servants' hall as we lifted the ladder and rested it against the sill.

"She's good for half a hour yet," Peter whispered, holding the ladder while I began to climb; "but if I hear her voice stop, I'll give the signal to be cautious."

I went up softly, pushed my head gently above the level of the sill, and looked in.

It was a roomy place with a great half-tester bed, hung with curtains, standing out from the wall on my right. The curtains were of chintz, a dark background with flaming red poppies sprawling over it; and the further curtain hid the dressing-table, and the candles upon it and the jewel-case that I confidently hoped to stand upon it also. A bright Brussels carpet covered the floor, and the wall-paper, I remember—though for the life of me I can't tell why—was a pale grey ground, worked up to imitate watered silk, with sprigs of gilt honeysuckle upon it.

I looked round and listened for half a minute. The house was still as death up here—not a sound in the room or in the passages beyond. With a nod to

Peter to hold the ladder firm I lifted one leg over the sill, then the other, dropped my feet carefully upon the thick carpet and went quickly round the bed to the dressing-table.

But at the corner, and as soon as ever I saw round the chintz curtain, my knees gave way, and I put out a hand towards the bed-post.

Before the dressing-table, and in front of the big glass, in which she could see my white face, was an old lady seated.

She wore a blaze of jewels and a low gown out of which rose the scraggiest neck and shoulders I have ever looked on. Her hair was thick with black dye and fastened with a diamond star. The powder between the two candles showed on her cheek-bones like flour on a miller's coat. Chin on hand, she was gazing steadily into the mirror before her, and even in my fright I had time to note that a glass of sherry and a plate of rice and curry stood at her elbow, among the rouge-pots and powder-puffs.

While I stood stock still and pretty well scared out of my wits, she rose, still staring at my image in the glass, folded her hands modestly over her bosom, and spoke in a deep tragical voice—

"The Prince!"

Then, facing sharply round, she held out her thin arms.

"You have come—at last?"

There wasn't much to say to this except that I had. So I confessed it. Even with the candles behind her I could see her eyes glowing like a dog's, and an uglier poor creature this world could scarcely show.

"Is the ladder set against the window?"

"Since you seem to know, ma'am," said I, "it is."

"Ah, Romeo! Your cheeks are ruddy—your poppies are too red."

"Then I'm glad my colour's come back; for, to tell the truth, you did give me a turn, just at first. You were looking out for me, no doubt——"

"My Prince!"—She stretched out her arms again, and being pretty well at my wits' end I let her embrace me. "It has been so long," she said. "Oh, the weary while! And they ill-treat me here. Where have you been, all this tedious time?"

I wasn't going to answer *that*, you may be sure. It appeared to me that 'twas my right to ask questions rather than stand there answering them.

"If they've been ill-treating you, ma'am," said I, "they shall answer for it."

"My love!"

"Yes, ma'am. Would it be taking a liberty if I asked their names?"

"There is Gertrude—"

"Gertrude's hash is as good as settled, ma'am."

I checked Gertrude off on my thumb.

"—that's my niece."

For a moment I feared I'd been a little too prompt. But she went on——

"And next there's Henry; and the children—who have more than once made faces at me; and Phipson."

"Phipson's in it too?"

"You know her?"

"Don't I?" It surprised me a trifle to find that Phipson was a female.

"Three times to-night she pulled my hair, and the rice she brought me—look at it! all stuck together and sodden."

"Phipson shall pay for it with her blood."

"My hero—my darling! Don't spare Phipson. She screams bitterly if a pin is stuck into her. I did it once. Stick her all over with pins."

By this I'd begun to guess what was pretty near the truth—that I was talking with a mad aunt of the family below, and that the game was in my hands if I played it with decent care. So I brought her to face the important question.

"Look here," I said, "all this shall be done when you are out of their hands. At present I'm running a considerable risk in braving these persecutors of yourn. Dearest madam, the ladder's outside and the carriage waiting. Hadn't we better elope at once?"

She gave a sob, and fell on my shoulders.

"Oh, is it true—is it true? Pinch me, that I may awake if this is but a happy dream!"

"You are ready?"

"This moment."

"There's just one other little matter, ma'am—your jewels. You won't leave them to your enemies, I suppose?"

This was the dangerous moment, and I felt a twitch of the nerves as I watched her face to see how she would take the suggestion. But the poor silly soul turned up her eyes to mine, all full of tears and confidence.

"Dearest, I am old, old. Had you come earlier, my beauty had not wanted jewels to set it off. But now I must wear them to look my best—as your bride."

She hid her face in her hands for a second, then turned to the dressing-table, lifted her jewel-case and put it into my hands.

"I am ready," she repeated: "let us be quick and stealthy as death."

She followed me to the window and looking out, drew back.

"What horrible, black depths!"

"It's as easy," said I, "as pie. You could do it on your head; look here——," I climbed out first and helped her, setting her feet on the rungs.

We went down in silence, I choking with laughter all the way at the sight of

Peter below, who was looking with his mouth open and his lips too weak to meet on the curses and wonderment that rose up from the depths of him. When I touched turf and handed him the jewel-case, he took it like a man in a trance.

We put the ladder back into its place and stole over the turf together. But outside the garden-door Peter could stand no more of it—

"I've a fire-arm in my pocket," whispered he, pulling up, "and I'm going to fire it off to relieve my feelings if you don't explain here and now. Who, in pity's name, is *she*?"

"You mug—she's the Original Sleeping Beauty. I'm eloping with her, and you've got her jewels."

"Pardon me, Jem," he says in his gentlemanly way, "if I don't quite see. Are you taking her off to melt her or marry her? For how to get rid of her else——"

The poor old creature had halted, too, three paces ahead of us, and waited while we whispered, with the moonlight, that slanted down into the lane, whitening her bare neck and flashing in her jewels.

"One moment," I said, and stepped forward to her. "You had better take off those ornaments here, my dear, and give them to my servant to take care of. There's a carriage waiting for us at the end of the lane, and when he has stowed them under the seat we can climb in and drive off——"

"To the end of the world—to the very rim of it, my hero."

She pulled the gems from her ears, hair, and bosom, and handed them to Peter, who received them with a bow. Next she searched in her pocket and drew out a tiny key. Peter unlocked the case, and having carefully stowed the diamonds inside, locked it again, handed back the key, touched his hat, and walked off towards the dog-cart.

"My dearest lady," I began, as soon as we were alone between the high walls, "if the devotion of a life——"

Her bare arm crept into mine. "There is but a little time left for us in which to be happy. Year after year I have marked off the almanack: day by day I have watched the dial. I saw my sisters married, and my sisters' daughters; and still I waited. Each had a man to love her and tend her, but none had such a man as I would have chosen. There were none like you, my Prince."

"No, I daresay not."

"Oh, but my heart is not so old! Take my hand—it is firm and strong; touch my lips—they are burning—"

A low whistle sounded at the top of the lane. As I took her hands I pushed her back, and turning, ran for my life. I suppose that, as I ran, I counted forty before her scream came, and then the sound of her feet pattering after me.

SHE MUST have run like a demon; for I was less than ten yards ahead when Peter caught my wrist and pulled me up on to the back-seat of the dog-cart. And before George could set the horse going her hand clutched at the flap on which my feet rested. It missed its grasp, and she never got near enough again. But for half a minute I looked into that horrible face following us and working with silent rage; and for half a mile at least I heard the patter of her feet in the darkness behind. Indeed, I can hear it now.

The Mystic Krewe

Maurice Thompson

1844-1901

ABOUT SEVENTY YEARS ago a young man of strong physique and prepossessing appearance arrived at New Orleans. He had come from New York, of which city he was a native, and had brought with him a considerable sum of money, supplemented by a letter of introduction to Judge Favart de Caumartin, who was then at the flood tide of his fame.

It would not be fair to call our young man ("our hero" would be the good old phrase) an adventurer, without taking pains to qualify the impression that might be produced. Hepworth Coleman had his own way of looking at life. Fifty years later he would have been a tragedian—probably a famous one, but the conditions were not favorable to awakening histrionic ambition at the time when his character, his tastes, his ambition should have been forming. What he saw that was most fascinating to him had no distinct form; it lay along the south-western horizon, a dreamy, mist-covered something not unlike the confines of romance.

Hepworth Coleman was rich, and what was, perhaps, a greater misfortune, he had no living kinsfolk for whom he cared or who cared for him. Practically speaking, he was alone in the world: moreover, he had an imagination. Scott's novels, Byron's poetry, the French romances, and I know not what else of the sort, had been his chief reading. For physical recreation he had turned to fencing and pistol practice. When I add that he was but twenty-two and unmarried, the rest might be guessed, but Coleman was not a young man of the world in the worst sense—he had not turned to evil sources of dissipation. Healthy, vigorous, full of spirit, he nevertheless had sentimental longings as indefinite as they were persistent.

Youth is the spring time when "Longen folk to gon on pilgrimages," as old Chaucer words it, and it would be hard to find the young man who has not felt the vaguely outlined yet irresistible desire to wander, to go over the horizon into a strange, new world. Hepworth Coleman, when he was taken with this longing, felt no restraint cast around him. He was absolutely free, had all the means necessary—why should he not go where he pleased? If it seems strange that he should have been attracted to New Orleans rather than to the Old World, we must remember what New Orleans was in 1820. No other city, not even Paris, could at that time compare with it as a center of genuine romance, nor was this romance unmixed with lawlessness of the most picturesque kind. Money poured into it from a hundred sources more or less illegitimate, besides the streams of wealth produced by cotton, sugar, and rice industries. Gambling

was indeed a fine art, duelling appeared more a pastime than anything else, and what went on in the gilded halls and melody-filled salles may be imagined, I suppose, though, I do not care to cast a glance that way.

Hepworth Coleman had heard much of the gay city, of its warm, odorous atmosphere, its hospitality, its social charm, the smack of reckless romance in all its ways. Somehow the desire to go there got hold of his imagination and he went.

The letter to Judge Favart de Caumartin was given to Coleman by his banker, who in handing it to him said:

"I don't know the Judge personally, never saw him; but he has done a lot of business through us. He is very rich, evidently very influential, and certainly will be of use to you. I feel that I can take the liberty of sending you to him, because—well, he is under many obligations to the bank, and is likely to want many more large favors. I fancy that you'll find him a trifle eccentric, but enthusiastically hospitable. A creole of the creoles I judge him to be, and a representative of the nabobs."

Young Coleman considered himself lucky to carry with him a document that would give him introduction to a person so renowned as Judge Favart de Caumartin, of whom he had been recently reading a good deal owing to a duel fought between the Judge and one Colonel Sam Smith, of the United States army, in which the latter had been killed. The duel had brought out history from which it appeared that Judge Favart de Caumartin had fought before, not once only, but many times, and always to the death of his antagonist. Along with these facts were disclosed numerous picturesque details of the Judge's past life, with more than hints that in his young days he had been a pirate or something of the sort. The account also made the most of his wealth, his almost reckless liberality, his eccentricity, and, most of all, the air of mystery which still hung over his business operations.

All this was rich food for an imagination already thoroughly saturated with the spirit of romantic adventure, and during the voyage from New York to New Orleans Hepworth Coleman found deep satisfaction in anticipating what he felt was in store for him. In every fiber of his frame he felt the assurance that he was on the way to new and strange experiences.

His banker had sent a letter to precede his arrival by a few days, asking a friend to secure suitable apartments for Mr. Hepworth Coleman, gentleman, the consequence being that a dark young man, small but well-built and handsome, met him at the landing to conduct him to his suit of elegant rooms on Royal Street.

"Is you Meestu Coleman, sah?" inquired this young stranger in a musical and respectful tone of voice. "I look fo' zat ma' at prayson."

"Yes, sir, that is my name," said Coleman briskly, at the same time he showed by his look that he would like to know whom he was meeting.

"Varee glad you come, Meestu Coleman; varee glad, sah, indeed. Got your rooms all prepare fo' you, sah. Yes, sah, zey is beautifu' an' sharming rooms."

"Thank you; I am much indebted. Are you the gentleman to whom Mr. Cartwright, the banker, wrote in my behalf?"

"Nah, sah, not any banker write to me; I been told to meet you at zis place at prayson. Happy to see you. Mist Coleman; varee happy."

There was an elegant carriage at hand waiting for our friend. A negro driver in livery and a small black footman stood by.

Coleman entered the vehicle, followed closely by the young creole who had met him on the landing. He saw his baggage hoisted into a little wagon to come after the carriage.

For some reason not exactly explained this whole proceeding affected Coleman peculiarly; he felt a sort of vague uneasiness, as if he were passing into an atmosphere of mystery, if not of danger.

As he was whirled through the narrow streets he caught glimpses of queer tile-covered houses with curious hanging galleries. High walls and gloomy courts flanked these, and here and there a dusky palm or a bright orange tree flung up its foliage. Blooming magnolia clumps filled the air with a heavy, languid odor.

But what most attracted the attention of Coleman was a company of four or five young men dressed like dandies, swaggering along on one of the *banquettes* (sidewalks) and singing a drinking song at the top of their voices. One of these hilarious fellows made a lasting impression on our young friend's imagination. He was a tall, olive-skinned, handsome man, apparently about twenty-five, strikingly dressed in a plaid coat, a vest of red and black velvet, gray trousers, and a profusely ruffled shirt. Evidently he was the leading spirit of the party. At all events he was somewhat in front, with his black cap set well back on his shapely head, while his jet black hair fell in shining curls over his strong shoulders. He was shouting forth the French drinking carol in a voice as sweet as it was loud, and at the same time waving in the air a small cane. The entire group looked the worse for wine, their faces flushed and their eyes brilliant.

"Who is that strange-looking man in front?" inquired Coleman of his creole companion, as they passed them by.

"Zat ge'man ees ze goozh Favart de Caumartin," was the answer that fairly startled the interrogator.

Coleman actually grew red in the face and exclaimed:

"*That* Judge Favart de Caumartin! Surely, sir, you are mistaken."

"Beg pahdon, sah, zat ees Monsieur le Juge Favart de Caumartin. I him know varee well myself at prayson."

Coleman turned and stared back through the window at the strutting youthful figure leading the noisy rout.

How could that be the celebrated duellist, the guardian pirate!

"It cannot be," he muttered aloud. "It is impossible."

"Varee well, Meestu Coleman," said the young Creole dryly; "but I mus' inqui yo' pahdon, sah. Monsieur le Juge Favart de Caumartin ees to me well acquainted. I wemark to you, sah, zat zare ees not any mistake."

"Oh certainly, sir; I beg a thousand pardons!" exclaimed Coleman, pulling himself together and seeing his breach of etiquette. "Of course you were right; but I was so surprised to see the Judge looking so young. I had supposed he was an aged man. I am astonished."

"Oh, Monsieur le Juge ees not so young—not so varee—hees hair not much gray." While they were still discussing this matter the carriage stopped in front of a square, heavy-looking house, which, painted a dull red and projecting its upper gallery over the *banquette*, flung out on either side a heavy brick wall on whose top was a jagged dressing of broken bottles and jags. It looked more like a convent than like an apartment-house.

Hepworth Coleman found his suit of rooms admirable in every respect, large, airy, luxuriously furnished. His creole conductor parted with him at the door without giving his name or address and without any explanation whatever of his connection with the matter of securing these elegant apartments or with making his arrival easy and pleasant.

Some silent and obsequious negro servants were at hand to do his bidding; but he soon dismissed them; while he flung himself upon a sofa and lit his pipe. Altogether incomprehensible to him were the suggestions of secrecy and mystery connected with his reception; scarcely less so was the youthful, nay, boyish appearance of Judge Favart de Caumartin.

As if the mysterious atmosphere meant to continue growing denser, it was while he lay along the luxuriant scarlet sofa, smoking, resting, and meditating, that a beautiful girl came and stood for a moment in the doorway of his chamber. She blushed sweetly at sight of him, recoiled violently, and then slipped swiftly away, leaving behind her a rustle of fine stuff, a sparkle of rare jewels, and a lingering bouquet of violets and roses.

Coleman felt the delicious shock of her magnetic beauty thrill through him. A sort of shimmering outline of her body wavered or appeared to waver in the door after she had gone, so dazzling had been the effect of her fresh, pure, flower-like, yet intensely human, beauty. He heard her feet tap swiftly and lightly along the hall. Involuntarily and with unpardonable curiosity he sprang

up and, hurrying to the door, looked out, but she was not in sight. For the first time in his life, he felt his heart beating unnaturally.

ii

EVENING WAS drawing on, sending a soft twilight into the room, when Coleman's dinner was brought in by a shy and silent old colored woman. He had not ordered the meal, nor had he felt the need of it. Doubtless the stimulus afforded by the unusual character of his surroundings held his sense of hunger in abeyance.

The old woman retired as soon as she had arranged the repast on a round mahogany table. Coleman found the oysters, the wine, the broiled fish, the French bread, and the black coffee excellent to such a degree that he ate almost everything before him; then leaning far back in his chair he began to study the silver set from which all those good things had been taken. The platter was in the form of a flounder, the sugar bowl was a frog, the cream pitcher a heron, the coffee-pot a pelican. These curious pieces were exquisitely carved, and on each was cut the name Favart de Caumartin in plain, bold letters. Even on the five-armed silver candle-stick in which burned fragrant myrtle wax tapers appeared that striking inscription. He surveyed the room now with a more critical eye, discovering at once that the pictures, the curtains, the carpets, and indeed all the articles of furniture were costly and beautiful beyond anything he had ever seen before. Evidently he was in Judge Favart de Caumartin's house.

The moon was shining brilliantly when Coleman went forth for a short walk in the street. Not many people were abroad, it being the dinner-hour, but certain cafés were crowded with men and women who were drinking champagne and discussing the dishes on well-spread tables.

At the door of one these gorgeous rooms Coleman met the young man whom a few hours before he had seen leading the singers in the street. It occurred to him that now was as good as any time to present his letter to the Judge, so he forthwith stepped near him and said, lifting his hat:

"I believe I have the honor of meeting Judge Favart de Caumartin?"

The gentleman stared at him a moment very deliberately, then, with just a suspicion of a smile and with a courteous dignity wholly inimitable and indescribable, doffed his queer little black cap as he spoke:

"And who does me the honor of addressing me?"

"I am Hepworth Coleman of New York?"

"Ah!"

"I hold a letter to you from Mr. Phineas Cartwright, of the firm of

Cartwright & Vanderveer, bankers."

"Indeed! I feel honored."

Coleman produced the letter and tendered it: but not without a vague feeling of insecurity of some sort. He had not expected this peculiar reserve and caution on the part of the Judge. Could it be that he was to be treated as an infliction to be borne for mere policy's sake. His distrust and doubt, however, were of short duration, for the Judge had no sooner read the epistle, which was much longer than any mere letter of introduction, than his whole manner changed. He held out his hand.

"I am charmed, delighted, sir," he said, with a slight creole accent that made his voice very pleasing. "I am proud to see you. I hope you find your rooms agreeable."

Coleman clasped his hand and felt that measure of relief which comes when one is suddenly lifted out of a very awkward situation.

The Judge read the banker's letter over again with great deliberation and apparently with much concentration of mind, while Coleman, who could not remove his eyes from his fascinating dark face, stood waiting for an opportunity to say:

"You do me infinite honor, Judge, in quartering me in your own house. I had not expected and could not expect such hospitality."

The Judge hesitated, then with a calm smile remarked that whatever he could do for so distinguished a visitor would be but a small expression of the greater hospitality that he would like to bestow were he able.

"And now," he presently continued, "come with me to my own private apartments, where we can have some quiet conversation and a smoke."

Coleman could not fail to see that the Judge was still somewhat touched with wine, though the mood of wild hilarity had passed off.

They passed along the street until they reached a narrow blind alley into which the moonlight fell but dimly between dusky walls.

To Coleman's surprise the Judge led the way into this, then up a flight of winding and rather rickety stairs to a dark hall, along which they passed to what seemed a great distance. At the end the Judge fumbled for some time, and by some means opened a low, heavy door leading into a room that reeked with the odor of tobacco and the fumes of wine. Passing across this by the light of a dim dormer window they reached a close passageway which led to another prison-like door, which the Judge managed to open after a great deal of trouble. The room that they now entered was exceedingly small—a mere cell in extent, as Coleman felt rather than saw, the walls, damp and grimy, being almost within reach on either hand.

"Stand here for one moment, please," said the Judge, touching Coleman's

arm, "until I call a servant."

Then he stepped briskly back through the doorway and drew the solid shutter to with a hollow clang. Some strange echoes went wandering away as if from distance to distance, above, below, around, followed by absolute silence. A faint flicker of light came from above, but it seemed a reflection rather than a direct beam from the moon, and the air was close, heavy, atrociously bad.

Coleman stood amazed for a few moments before going to the door, which he found immovable. He groped around the wall only to discover that there was no other outlet.

iii

JUDGE FAVART DE CAUMARTIN'S residence was a large, rambling structure, more like a hotel than like a private house. Considering that his wife was dead and that he had but one living child, a daughter of seventeen, it was strange that he kept up such an extensive establishment, in which, perhaps, twenty rooms stood richly furnished but unoccupied. It was his pleasure, however, and his pleasure was law.

Mlle. Olympe de Caumartin was greatly surprised when by merest chance she discovered Hepworth Coleman making himself quite at home in a remote room of the house. We have seen how she showed her confusion as she stepped into the doorway and found herself face to face with the young man. The glance that passed between them wrought a wonder in the heart of each. I shall not say that they fell in love at first sight. Love cannot be so accurately traced that its origin can be exactly found out in any particular case. It is enough to record that Mlle. Olympe de Caumartin caught something new, something sweet from that momentary gaze, and shut it up in her heart involuntarily, with a thrill that never again quite left her breast. She was back through halls and rooms to her own boudoir, her cheeks and lips rosy with excitement, and a gentle tremor in her limbs.

That evening in the library the Judge told his daughter that he had given a suit of rooms in the farthest wing of the mansion to a wealthy young gentleman from New York.

"I have had letters from Mr. Cartwright, my banker there, asking me to take care of him, and this seemed the best I could do under the circumstances. I did not see my way to bringing him any nearer to us. We don't care to have another member added to our family, eh, Olympe, dear?"

Mlle. de Caumartin blushed. She may have felt a touch of guilt because she could not muster courage to tell her father that she had already visited Mr.

Coleman.

"I have not seen him yet," continued the Judge; "I thought it best to let him have some rest before calling upon him. Cartwright advises me that he is of an excellent family—a man to be given the greatest attention, and for my banker's sake, if for nothing else, I must meet the demand upon my hospitality. He came a fortnight earlier than I expected; but I had Jules watching for him, and you know Jules never fails."

"But you should have told me before, father dear," said Mlle. Olympe. "Only a while ago, while wandering through the distant wing of the house, I invaded this young gentleman's apartment. It surprised him evidently as much as it abashed me."

"The obvious moral of which is," replied the Judge quickly, "that you are hereafter to be more careful about what rooms you are stumbling into." As he spoke his dark oval face, with its fine, grave smile, was almost like a boy's. The flush that lay under the skin shone through with a suggestion of some repressed stimulus, as if a great passion had forced it up. In his eyes an underglow, so to call it, smoldered with fascinating vagueness.

Mlle. Olympe sat for a moment on his knee and stroked his long black hair.

"You will stay with me to-night, father, dear," she presently murmured, coaxingly; "you will not go out to-night."

"I must be gone a little while," he said, rising at once, "but just a little while."

She clung close to him.

"Not this night, please," she urged, with a touching tremor in her voice. "Oh! you remember this night a year ago you had that dreadful adventure in the dark room. You must not go out; please, for my sake, do not."

An expert observer could have seen while this was going on a strange, half-worried, almost fiercely concentrated expression in the Judge's eyes. It was as if he mightily wished to remain with his child, but could not by any effort resist some powerful temptation tugging at him and drawing him away.

He kissed her tenderly, pushed her gently from him and went out.

The girl cast herself upon a sofa and buried her face in her hands, as a vision of that night one year before came up before her eyes.

Some strange masked men had brought her father home far in the night, white as a ghost, helpless, speechless, apparently dead. They put him down there in the room and vanished.

He had no wound, no bruise, no mark of any violence. But he recovered very slowly, and he never told what had befallen him.

Mlle. Olympe knew of her father's frequent duels, and if he had been brought in dead or badly off on account of pistol ball or rapier thrust she would

not have been surprised beyond measure, but this mysterious performance of the masked men and the unaccountable condition of the Judge were taken hold upon by her imagination and raised to the highest power of romantic meaning.

A year had passed, and she might not have recalled the exact anniversary but for the prattle of an old servant to the effect that she had seen her master, the Judge, marching at the head of a company of masked men, himself wearing an "invisible" mask and a queer black velvet cap.

Mlle. Olympe observed that her father was flushed as if with wine, and his bearing was indicative of some subtile and indescribable excitement within him. When he went away she felt that something startling was going to happen soon.

iv

WHEN HEPWORTH COLEMAN suddenly found himself a prisoner in that close, dark room, he did not at first suspect any treachery on the part of Judge Favart de Caumartin. He expected that gentleman to return in the course of a few minutes, but this favorable impression was soon removed by certain startling events that crowded one upon another.

First a low, rumbling, clanging sound, like the beating of metallic gongs in the distance, came through the walls and filled the cell. Then as this died away to utter silence he heard tumultuous whispering all around, above, below. The thousand voices all seemed to be saying the same thing, which presently he made out to be the words: "The Krewe is coming; make ready for the Krewe!" When the whispering ended little purple lights began to flash here and there, but so mysteriously glinted that he could not locate them, and these were followed by phantom faces, wan, waxen, faintly luminous, appearing and fading instantly, succeeded by intense darkness.

Now, Hepworth Coleman was a man of iron nerve, an athlete in body and spirit, who, although full of romantic and poetic impulses, was at the base of his character as brave and steadfast as a lion. Still, even the best courage has its moment of faltering, and just at the point when one whole wall of his cell was withdrawn, so that he stood in the full glare of twenty brilliant chandeliers that lighted a large, gorgeously decorated hall, he felt the blood grow stiflingly heavy on his heart. Before him stood a file of fantastic figures, men oddly clad and strangely armed, who clashed their brazen shields together and pointed their swords at his breast. On the walls of the spacious room hung weird-looking trophies, skulls, pictures of dead men, ghastly and livid, pistols, swords, and strange banners. The floor was carpeted with heavy Persian

tapestry, thickly padded underneath.

Coleman stood gazing while the file of armed men—perhaps platoon would be more correct—went through some silent but intricate evolutions after beating their shields together and threatening him with their swords. When the movements were ended one of the masters came up to him and struck him lightly with the flat of his weapon across the cheek, saying in a loud whisper:

"Beware! you are in imminent danger."

Coleman took him at his word and instantly let go a blow from the shoulder. His close-set fist met the masker's jaw with a sound of crushing pasteboard, and down went the man outstretched at full length on the floor, his shield and sword giving forth a muffled clang as they crossed upon the soft carpet.

Quick as a cat Coleman leaped forward and picked up the sword, a beautiful rapier, and, assuming a defensive attitude, cried out boldly:

"Come one at a time and I will fight you all!"

The fantastic figures looked at one another with evident questioning, though not a word was said.

Meantime the fallen one scrambled to his feet and swore two or three bitter French oaths. The leader rebuked him with gestures.

"Come one at a time, you cowardly villains," repeated Coleman, "and I'll soon finish you all. Come on, the first one, if you dare meet a man!"

He was terribly angry, but his voice was steady and even.

There was a space of silence. Then the leader said something to one of the men, who immediately cast aside his shield and advanced with his rapier.

It was a short conflict. Coleman disarmed his antagonist with ease in less than a minute.

Another man came on and shared the same fate, with the addition of a prick through the wrist of the sword-arm.

This was exhilarating to Coleman in his exasperation at being made the butt of some mysterious trick.

"Come next," he cried; "I want the best of you—and the best is a coward. Come on!"

Evidently the mystic band now felt the gravity that the occasion was assuming. The maskers looked to their leader.

"Don't stand there afraid," sneered Coleman; "come on and get your turn. Who's next?"

One after another responded, only to fare badly. As yet, however, all had escaped without deadly hurt, when the leader himself made ready to fight. Those who had come to grief were quietly cared for by others, and all seemed to treat the proceedings as by no means startling or even unusual.

When the leader threw aside his shield and took off his tall plume-covered hat, Coleman was able to recognize Judge Favart de Caumartin, more by his form and bearing than by any disclosure of his features.

As the Judge handled his rapier, all the company of maskers, even the sorely-wounded ones, came forward to look on with eager expectation. His was steel that never yet had failed to find the vitals of his opponent. But, on the other hand, there stood Coleman, steadfast and alert, the very picture of strength and will, and the embodiment of quickness and certainty, his sword bearing at its point a tiny red clot of blood.

They looked with straining eyes and did not feel sure of the result even with their captain as their champion.

"Come on, sir, and take your punishment, you cowardly leader of cowards!" exclaimed Coleman in a most exasperating tone. "Don't stand there dreading it. Pluck up a little nerve and come on!"

It is useless to say that Judge Favart de Caumartin needed no bullying of this sort to urge him into combat. With beautiful swiftness and grace he sprang forward and at once took the offensive. Then followed sword play that was amazing to look at. Each combatant showed that mastery of the fencing art which makes the weapon appear to be a part of the man. So swiftly leaped the shining shafts of steel that the eye saw only fine symmetrical figures shimmering between the fighters, while spangles of fire leaped from the crossing edges. Coleman felt at once that he had met his match; the Judge tingled with the discovery that here at last was a master.

From the first it was a fight to the death if possible. Neither could hope to disarm the other, nor was there probability of any mere disablement ending the contest. The watchers, looking on in breathless suspense, heard with intensely straining ears the almost magically rapid clinking of the blades.

Coleman fought as if with the energy of all the accumulated romance of his recent experiences, half recognizing, as he parried and thrust and feinted and recovered guard, the vivid picturesqueness, the melodramatic unreality, and yet the deadly intensity of the situation. He did not know where he was or why he had been brought there. The whole affair had mystery enough in it to have destroyed the will power of any weaker man; but to him, while the strangeness affected his imagination, there was nothing in the matter to make him falter or to weaken the force of his arm. A fine glow of enthusiasm flashed indeed into his blood, and with it an access of cunning grace and swift certainty of hand and eye. The feeling prevailed that he had in some strange way stepped out of the real world into the world of romance, and as he fought, the charm of heroism fell upon him, and, like the knights of old, he felt the strength of a glorious desperation. All round him the vague spirit of dreamland seemed to

hover, though the hideous pictures of skeletons and cadavers gleamed real enough in the glare of the chandeliers. What inspired him most, however, was the knowledge that he was trying his force with that of the greatest duellist in the world, and one who had always killed his man.

There was something more that gave spirit and courage to Coleman: he was in some indirect way remembering the beautiful girl who had appeared at the door of his room, and he half imagined that he was doing battle for the right to know more of her. Youth is a mystery in itself, and love knows no law of origin or of progress. By some cerebral slight, some trick of thinking under a thought, so to say, Coleman was making a love dream keep time to the ringing strokes of his sword. A girl whose name he did not know, whose voice he had never heard, was inspiring him as he strained every nerve.

As the combat proceeded, the lookers-on saw that Coleman's play was new to the Judge, who found great difficulty in meeting and parrying certain eccentric movements that invariably ended in a thrust of lightning quickness. Presently the Judge tore off his mask with his left hand. He had to do this at the risk of his life, for he could not breath freely with it on. But his great skill saved him even then; nay, more, it came near giving him the victory. As Coleman lunged, the agile creole leaped aside and returned quickly with a wicked thrust that barely reached his adversary's breast, piercing it to the depth of a half inch.

Now the fight took on more of passion and less of grace, as if the men felt that it was to be a test of strength at last. Round and round, back and forth, this way and that, they leaped, and recoiled, and advanced; their faces—one dark and beautiful as a southern night, the other fair and magnetic as a New England June day—fixed and staring, the white froth gathering on their lips.

When the end came it was like nothing ever before witnessed in a New Orleans duel. How it happened not one of the observers could tell; but the two men appeared to rush into each other's arms, and then it was seen that each had run the other through.

That broke the charm. The masked men sprang forward and separated the combatants, and all began to speak at once.

v

JUDGE FAVART DE CAUMARTIN and Hepworth Coleman were, by order of the Judge himself, taken to the Judge's mansion, where their wounds were examined by physicians and surgeons quickly summoned.

Mlle. Olympe de Caumartin found herself nursing two almost dying patients at the same time. Although she suspected that this was the result of a

duel between her father and the young stranger, she was not told the secret of the affair until long afterward.

Strange to say, although the Judge was much the older man, and was wounded much nearer the heart, he recovered and was walking about in his house before Coleman had even taken a turn for the better. The first thing he did was to order his daughter to cease her nursing of the young man.

"It is not proper," he said, "for a young girl to be the nurse of a man who is a stranger."

Mlle. Olympe blushed scarlet, and was so much confused that she could not find a word to say. It had been a great pleasure to her to wait upon Coleman, who, though for the greater part of the time quite insensible of her presence, seemed to respond better to her care than to the treatment of the doctors. She had been having her sweet dream, was in love with him, indeed, and the command of her father struck her like a blow.

Judge Favart de Caumartin suspected the truth about his daughter, and was not slow in making up his mind in the matter. He gave strict orders that the hall between Coleman's rooms and the rest of the mansion should be kept at all times locked and barred.

Love laughs at such precautions. Hepworth Coleman, during his convalescence, lay on his back and thought of nobody but Mlle. Olympe, and when at last he was able to get up he sent for her. It so chanced that the Judge, having got well in a measure, was gone up to Natchez on business.

Mlle. Olympe did not go to see the young man; but she wrote him a note explaining her father's wishes.

"But he has never forbidden you to come to see me when you are able to walk so far as to the library," she added very frankly, "and I see no reason why you should stay away."

When the Judge returned it was too late to interfere, as he soon discovered, and he had to bow to the inevitable.

The mystery of the adventure with the masked men in that secret *salle* has never been further explained. Judge Favart de Caumartin would not consent to his daughter's marriage until he had exacted a promise from Coleman that he would never divulge what he knew.

The truth was that Coleman knew very little. He tried to discover the blind alley into which the Judge had led him on that eventful evening, but there was no such alley to discover. The whereabouts of the mysterious hall cannot be pointed out to-day, although from that memorable Tuesday in the spring of 1820 up to the Mardi-Gras of 1891, every anniversary of the Mystic Krewe has been duly celebrated by a fantastic band that at a certain hour of the night parades the streets of New Orleans. I do not refer to the regular carnival

societies. These are but playful imitations of mystery. The genuine Krewe, as weirdly, strange and mysterious as ever, may be seen only on Royal Street, a small band headed by a tall, slender, dark man, who wears an invisible mask and a quaint black velvet cap. Where they come from nobody has ever been able to discover. Who they are is not known even to the great Rex, the king of the Carnival.

Hepworth Coleman and Mlle. Olympe de Caumartin were married in due time and lived on Royal Street all their lives. Every year on the evening of Mardi-Gras, they were called upon to give dinner to the Mystic Krewe, thirteen in number, who ate in silence with their masks on. The last of these dinners was in 1860. That year saw the twain, who for forty years had been happy together, laid in their tomb side by side.

Strangely enough there is no record whatever of Judge Favart de Caumartin's death; indeed, there is a tradition to the effect that he it is who still leads the Mystic Krewe.

Strange Adventures of a Million Dollars

Ingersoll Lockwood

1841-1918

OLD NEW YORKERS may remember Dingee's famous Club House in lower Greene Street. From 1800 to 1850 it was the most fashionable gambling house in the metropolis, its founder, Alphonse Dingee, having been the first to introduce *roulette* and *rouge et noir* into the new world. It was in 1850 or a little later that ill health obliged his son Cyrill to sell the business out. He retired to his country seat at Bricksburg, quite a palatial residence for those days, where he died shortly after, leaving a round million dollars and one child, a daughter, Daisy. Spite of the fact that she was popularly known throughout the country as the "gambler's daughter," there were several respectable young men in the place who would have been only too happy to administer an estate worth a round million with Daisy thrown in for better or worse.

But Daisy Dingee knew what she wanted, and it was nothing more nor less than an alliance with the most aristocratic family in the country, to wit: the Delurys, whose large white mansion at the other end of the town was as tumble-down and shabby looking as Daisy's was neat, fresh, and well kept. Miss Dingee, therefore, proceeded to throw herself at the head of one Monmouth Delury, mentally and physically a colorless sort of an individual, who, for want of sufficient intellect to make an honest living, passed his time going to seed with the thousand or so acres of land belonging to him and his maiden sisters, Hetty, Prudence, and Martha, three women who walked as stiff as they talked, although they never were known to discuss any subject other than the Delury family.

When Daisy's proposition was made known to them they tried to faint, but were too stiff to fall over, and were obliged to content themselves with gasping out:

"What! Daisy Dingee marry our brother, the head of the Delury family!"

But it was the first idea that had ever entered the brother's head, and he clung to it with a parent's affection for his first born. In a few months Mr. and Mrs. Monmouth Delury set out for Paris with that proverbial speed with which Americans betake themselves to the French capital when occasion offers. They found it a much pleasanter place than Bricksburg. Delury improved rapidly and Daisy fell quite in love with him, made her will in his favor, contracted the

typhoid fever and died.

Whereupon the really disconsolate widower sent for his three sisters to join him. They had but one objection to going, that was to part company with the dear old homestead, but they overcame it the day after receiving Monmouth's letter, which happened to be a Friday, and took the Saturday's steamer.

To confess the truth, the Delurys had been so land-poor that their spare aristocratic figures were rather the result of necessity than inclination. Six months of Paris life under the benign protection of Dingee's round million made different women of them. It was wonderful what a metamorphosis Parisian dressmakers and restaurateurs effected in their figures. They became round and plump. They stopped talking about Bricksburg, signed themselves the Misses Delury of New York, enrolled themselves as patrons of art, gave elegant dinners, and in a very short time set up pretensions to being the leaders of the American colony.

But remorseless fate was at their heels. *Figaro* unearthed the secret of old Dingee's million, and the Delurys suddenly found themselves the sensation of Paris, the butt of ridicule in the comic papers. Monmouth had been in poor health for several months, and this killed him.

Dingee's million was now in the eye of the law divided up among his three sisters, but fate willed it otherwise, for the following year Hetty, the eldest, died of Roman fever, and six months later Prudence fell a victim to rat poison in a small hotel at Grasse, City of Delightful Odors, in the south of France, whither she had gone in search of balmy air for her sister Martha, who had suddenly developed symptoms of consumption.

Left thus alone in the world with old Dingee's million and an incurable ailment, Martha's only ambition was to reach Bricksburg and die in the old white Delury mansion. It seemed to her that its great spacious rooms would enable her to breathe more easily and to fight death off for possibly another year.

But it was not to be. She got as far as Paris when old Dingee's million again changed hands, going this time by will to Martha's only relatives, twin brothers, John and William Winkletip, produce dealers in Washington street, New York.

The will was a peculiar one, as was to be expected:

I give, devise, and bequeath all the property popularly known as the "Dingee Million" to my cousins John and William Winkletip, produce dealers of New York, as joint tenants for their lives and the life of each of them, with remainder over to the eldest son of the survivor, his heirs and assigns forever; provided, that said remainder man shall be of full age at the time of his father's

decease, and shall thereupon enter the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church and devote his life and the income of this estate to the encouragement of legislative enactment throughout the United States for the suppression of gambling and wager laying.

In default of such male heir, the Dingee million was to be divided up among certain religious and eleemosynary institutions.

When the cablegram from Paris informing them of their extraordinary luck reached the Winkletip Brothers, they were down in the cellar of the old tenement which served as their place of business, with their long jean coats on, busily engaged in sorting onions. As the Winkletips were only a little past fifty, and as strong as hickory knobs, their families were quite satisfied to get only a life estate in the Dingee million, for, barring accidents, the brothers had twenty-five or thirty years to live yet.

True, Brother John had a son, Cyrus, who would soon be of age, but he was a worthless wight, whose normal condition was alcoholic stupor, barely characterized with sufficient lucidity to enable him to distinguish rotten vegetables from sound.

"He will die years before his father," every one remarked, "and then the gambler's money will go where it ought to go."

There had been a fire next door to the Winkletips about the time the good news had arrived from Paris; a huge warehouse had burned down, leaving a brick wall towering sixty feet above the old wooden tenement in which the brothers did business. They had given notice to the authorities; but the inspectors had pronounced the wall perfectly safe. So the two brothers continued to come and go, in their best Sunday clothes, however, for they were only engaged in settling up the old business.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, the huge wall fell with a terrific crash upon the wooden tenement, crushing it like an egg-shell. When the two brothers were taken out from the ruins, John was pronounced dead and a coroner's permit was given to remove him to a neighboring undertaker's establishment. William lived six hours, conscious to the last and grateful to an all-wise Providence that his worthless nephew would now be excluded from any control over the Dingee million.

John Winkletip was a grass widower, his wife, an Englishwoman, having abandoned him and returned to England, and for many years he had made his home with his only other child, a widowed daughter, Mrs. Timmins, who was openly opposed to many of her father's peculiar notions, as she termed them, one of which was his strong advocacy of cremation; he being one of the original stockholders and at the time of his death a director of the Long Island Cremation Society.

Consequently Mrs. Timmins gave orders that immediately after the coroner's inquest, her father's body should be removed to her residence in Harlem, but as the officers of the Cremation Society held the solemnly executed direction and authorization of their late friend and associate to incinerate his remains, they were advised by the counsel of their corporation that such an instrument would justify them in taking possession of the remains at the very earliest moment possible and removing it to the crematory.

Warned by the undertakers of Mrs. Timmins' threatened interference, they resolved not to risk even the delay necessary to procure a burial casket; in fact it would be a useless expense, anyway, and consequently John Winkletip began his last ride on earth lying in the cool depths of the undertaker's ice box.

As Mrs. Timmins's cab turned into Washington Street she met a hearse, but not until she had reached the undertaker's establishment was her suspicion transformed into certainty by being told that her father's body was already on its way to the crematory.

Mrs. Timmins was a long-headed woman. She knew the uncertainties of cab transportation through the crowded streets below Canal, and dismissing her cab at the Chambers Street station of the Third Avenue Elevated, she was soon speeding on her way to the Long Island City ferry.

This she reached just as a boat was leaving the slip. Misfortune number one. When she finally reached the Long Island side, she threw herself into the carriage nearest at hand, crying out:

"To the crematory! Five dollars extra if you get me there in time!"

It was not many minutes before Mrs. Timmins became aware of the fact that the horse was next to worthless, and could scarcely be lashed into a respectable trot. Mrs. Timmins was nearly frantic. Every minute her head was thrust out of the window to urge the hackman to greater speed. There was but one consoling thought—the hearse itself might get blocked or might have missed a boat!

As again and again her head was thrust out of the carriage window her hair became disheveled, for she had removed her hat, and the superstitious Hibernian on the box was upon the point of abandoning his post at sight of the wild and crazed look presented by Mrs. Timmins. Was she not some one's ghost, making this wild and mysterious ride?

But the promise of an extra five dollars kept the man at his post.

Suddenly a cry of joy escaped Mrs. Timmins's lips. The hearse was just ahead of them; but its driver had the better horses, and half suspecting that something was wrong, he whipped up vigorously and disappeared in a cloud of dust. Mrs. Timmins's horse was now as wet as if he had been dipped into the river, and she expected every minute to see him give out; but, strange to say,

he had warmed up to his work, and now, in response to the driver's urging, broke into a run.

Again Mrs. Timmins caught a glimpse of the black coach of death in the dust clouds ahead of her. The race became every instant more exciting. It was a strange sight, and instinctively the farmers, in their returning vegetable wagons, drew aside to let them pass. Once more the hearse disappeared in the dust clouds. This was the last Mrs. Timmins saw of it until she drew up in front of the crematorium. There it stood, with its black doors thrown wide open. She had come too late! Her father's body had already been thrust into the fiery furnace.

The antagonism of Winkletip's family to his views concerning the cremation of the dead was an open secret with every attaché of the society, and the men in charge were determined that the society should come out the winner. They were on the lookout for the body. Everything, to the minutest detail, was in readiness. The furnace had been pushed to its greatest destroying power, and hence was it that haste overcame dignity when the foam-flecked and panting horses of the undertaker drew up in front of the entrance of the crematory.

The ice-chest was snatched from the hearse, borne hurriedly into the furnace-room, set upon the iron platform, wheeled into the very center of the white flames, whose waving, curling, twisting tongues seemed reaching out to their fullest length, impatient for their prey, and the iron doors slammed shut with a loud, resounding clangor.

At that instant a woman, hatless and breathless, with disheveled hair, burst into the furnace-room.

"Hold! Hold!" she shrieked, and then her hands flew to her face, and staggering backward and striking heavily against the wall, she sank, limp and lifeless, in a heap on the stone floor of the furnace-room.

But the two men in charge had neither eyes nor ears for Mrs. Timmins. As the doors closed they sprang to their posts of observation, in front of the two peep-holes, and stood watching the effect of the flames upon the huge ice-chest.

Its wooden covering parted here and there with a loud crack, laying bare the metal case, from the seams of which burst fitful puffs of steam. Now came a sight so strange and curious that the two men held their breath as they gazed upon it! By the vaporizing of the water from the melted ice the flames were pushed back from the chest, and it lay there for an instant, as if protected by some miraculous aura.

Then happened something which caused the men to reel and stagger as if their limbs were paralyzed by drink, and which painted their faces with as deep a pallor as death's own hand could have laid upon them.

From the furnace depths came forth a dull, muffled cry of "Help! Help!"

Making a desperate effort, the men tore open first the outer and then the inner doors of the fire chamber. As the air rushed in, the lid of the metal chest burst silently open. Again the cry of "Help!" rang out, and two hands quivered for an instant above the edge of the chest, then with a loud and defiant roar the flames closed in upon it, and began to lick it up ravenously. The doors were banged shut, and John Winkletip had his way.

But the Dingee million seemed to draw back instinctively from the touch of the worthless Cy Winkletip.

With loud cries of joy, the various beneficiaries under Martha Delury's will now discovered that Cyrus Winkletip was born on the 11th day of August, and that as his father had departed this life on the 10th day of August, the son was not of full age when his father died. But the law put an end to this short-lived joy by making known one of its curious bits of logic, which so often startle the layman.

It was this: The law takes no note of parts of a day, and therefore as Cyrus Winkletip was of age on the first minute of his twenty-first birthday, he was also of age on the last minute of the day before—consequently on the first minute of the day before he was twenty-one!

This gave the Dingee million to Cy Winkletip!

Under constant and stringent surveillance and tutelage, Cy Winkletip was, after several years of as close application as was deemed safe in view of his weak mental condition, admitted to the ministry in accordance with the provisions of Miss Delury's will.

At last the wicked Dingee million seemed safely launched upon its task of undoing the wrong it had done; but Cy Winkletip's mind ran completely down in five years and he died a wretched slavering, idiot.

Mrs. Timmins was inclined to warn off the Dingee million with a gesture of horror; but, yielding to the solicitation of her friends, she consented to take title in order that she might create a trust with it for some good and noble purpose. To this end, by a last will and testament she created and endowed the American Society for the Suppression of Gambling and Wager-laying, and then died.

The trustees at once began to erect the buildings called for, but before the society had had an opportunity to suppress a single gaming establishment, the lawyers, at the prayer of Mrs. John Winkletip, Mrs. Timmin's mother, fell tooth and nail upon the trust, which was declared too "vague, shadowy, and indefinite to be executed," and the Dingee million, its roundness now sadly shrunken, made its way across the ocean to Mrs. John Winkletip, of Clapham Common, London.

She died last year and with her the wanderings of the Dingee million came to an end. She willed it to trustees for building and maintaining a Hospital for Stray Dogs and Homeless Cats, and those learned in the law say that the trust will stand.

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A Lost Day

Edgar Fawcett

1847-1904

"MY FAMILY," John Dalrymple would say, "have the strange failing (that is, nearly all of them except myself, on the paternal side) of—"

And then somebody would always try to interrupt him. At the Gramercy, the small but charming club of which he had been for years an honored member, they made a point of interrupting him when he began on his family failing. Not a few of them held to the belief that it was a myth of Dalrymple's imagination. Still, others argued, all of the clan except John himself had been a queer lot; there was no real certainty that they had not done extraordinary acts. Meanwhile, apart from his desire to delve among ancestral records and repeat tales which had been told many times before, he was a genuine favorite with his friends. But that series of family anecdotes remained a standing joke.

They all pitied him when it became known that his engagement to the pretty winsome widow, Mrs. Carrington, was definitely broken. He was past forty now, and had not been known to pay serious court to any woman before in at least ten years. Of course Mrs. Carrington was rich. But then her money could not have attracted Dalrymple, for he was rich himself, in spite of his plain way of living there in that small Twenty-second Street basement house.

But the widow's money had doubtless lured to her side the gentleman who had cut poor Dalrymple out. A number of years ago, when this little occurrence which we are chronicling took place, it was not so easy as it is now to make sure of a foreigner's credentials and antecedents. The Count de Pommereul, a reputed French nobleman of high position, had managed to get into the Gramercy as a six-months' member, and had managed also to cross the thresholds of numerous select New York drawing-rooms. At the very period of his introduction to Mrs. Carrington her engagement with Dalrymple had already become publicly announced. Then, in a few weeks, society received a shock. Dalrymple was thrown over, and it transpired that the brilliant young widow was betrothed to the Count.

Dalrymple, calm and self-contained, had nothing to say on the subject of why he had received such shabby treatment, and nobody ventured to interrogate him. Some people believed in the Count, others thought that there was a ring of falsity about him, for all his frame was so elegantly slender and supple, for all his mustache was so glossily dark, and his eyes so richly lustrous. Dalrymple meanwhile hid his wound, met the Count constantly at the Club, though no longer even exchanging bows with him, and—worked at his revenge

in secret as a beaver works at the building of his winter ranch. He succeeded, too, in getting superb materials for that revenge. They surprised even himself when a few relatives and friends in Paris mailed him appalling documentary evidence as to what sort of a character this Count really was. There is no doubt that he now held in his hand a thunderbolt, and had only to hurl it when he pleased.

He did not tell a single soul what he had learned. The thought of just how he should act haunted him for several days. One evening he went home from the club a little earlier than usual, and tossed restlessly for a good while after going to bed. When sleep came it found him still irresolute as to what course he should take.

It seemed to him that he had now a succession of dreams, but he could recall none of them on awaking. And he awoke in a peculiar way. There was yet no hint of dawn in the room, and only the light from his gas, turned down to a very dim star. He was sitting bolt upright in bed, and feverish, fatigued sensations oppressed him. "What have I been dreaming?" he asked himself again and again. But as only a confused jumble of memories answered him, he sank back upon the pillows, and was soon buried in slumber.

It was past nine o'clock in the morning when he next awoke. He felt decidedly better. Both the feverishness and the fatigue had left him. He went to the club and breakfasted there. It was almost empty of members, as small clubs are apt to be at that hour of the morning. But in the hall he met his old friend Langworth and bowed to him. Langworth, who was rather near-sighted, gave a sudden start and a stare. "How odd," thought Dalrymple, as he passed on into the reading-room, "I hope there's nothing unexpected about my personal appearance." Just at the doorway of the room he met another old friend, Summerson, a man extremely strict about all matters of propriety. Summerson saw him and then plainly made believe that he had not seen. As they moved by one another Dalrymple said lightly, "Good-morning, old chap. How's your gout?"

Summerson, who was very tall and excessively dignified, gave a comic squirm. Then his eyelids fluttered and with the tips of his lips he murmured, "Better," as he glided along.

"Pooh," said Dalrymple to himself. "Getting touchy, I suppose, in his old age. How longevity disagrees with some of us mortals."

He nearly always took a bottle of seltzer before breakfast, and this morning old Andrew (a servant who had been in the club many years) poured it out for him.

"I hope you're all right again this mornin', sorr," said Andrew with his Celtic accent and in an affable half whisper.

"All right, Andrew," was the reply. "Why, you must be thinking of some one else. I haven't been ill. My health has been excellent for a long time past."

"Yes, sorr," said Andrew, lowering his eyes and respectfully retiring.

That last "Yes, sorr," had a dubious note about its delivery that almost made Dalrymple call the faithful old fellow back and further question him. "All right again?" As if he had ever been all wrong! Oh, well, poor Andrew was ageing; others had remarked that fact months ago.

A different servant came to announce breakfast. There were only about five men in the dining-room as Dalrymple entered it. All of them gazed at him in an unusual way, or had late events led him to think that they did so? At the table nearest him sat Everdell, one of the jolliest men in the club, a person whose face was nearly always wreathed in smiles.

"Good-morning!" said Dalrymple, as he caught Everdell's eye!

"Good-morning!" The tones were replete with mild consternation, and the look that went with them was smileless to the degree of actual gloom. Then Everdell, who had just finished his breakfast, rose and drew near to Dalrymple.

"'Pon my word," he said, "I'm delighted to see you all right again so soon."

"All right again so soon?" was the reply. "What in mercy's name do you mean?"

"Oh, my dear old fellow," began Everdell, fumbling with his watch-chain, "it was pretty bad, you know, yesterday."

"Pretty—bad—yesterday?"

"I saw you in the morning, and for an hour or so in the afternoon. Perhaps no one would have noticed it if you hadn't stayed here all day, and poured those confidences into people's ears about De Pommereul. You didn't appear to have drank a drop in the club; there's the funny part of it. You went out several times, though, and came back again. All that you had to drink (except some wine here at dinner, you remember) you must have got outside. I wasn't here at ten o'clock when De Pommereul came in. I'm glad I wasn't. You must have been dreadful. If Summerson and Joyce hadn't rushed in between you and the Count, heaven knows what would have happened. As it is——"

At this point Dalrymple broke in with cold harshness: "Look here, Everdell, I always disliked practical jokes, and I've known for a number of years that you're given to them. You've never attempted to make me your butt before, however, and you'll have the kindness to discontinue any such proceeding now."

Everdell drew back for a moment, frowned, shrugged his shoulders, and then muttering, "Oh, if you're going to put it in that way," strode quickly out of the dining-room.

Dalrymple scarcely ate a morsel of breakfast. After he had gulped down

some hot coffee he repaired to the reading-room. As he re-entered it a waiter handed him several letters. One, which he opened first, was marked "immediate," and had been sent him from his own house by an intelligent and devoted woman servant there, who had been for a long period in his employ. This letter made poor Dalrymple's head swim as he read it. Written and signed by Mr. Summerson himself, as chairman of the house committee of the club, it ordered him to appear that same evening before a meeting of the governors and answer to a charge of disorderly conduct on the previous night. Then it went on to state that he (Dalrymple) had been seen throughout the previous day at the club in a state of evident intoxication, and had, finally, between the hours of 10 and 11 P. M., accosted and grossly insulted the Count de Pommereul in the main drawing-room of the Gramercy.

"Disorderly conduct," "evident intoxication," "grossly insulted the Count de Pommereul." These words were trembling on Dalrymple's lips as he presently approached Summerson himself, the very gentleman who had signed the letter, and who stood in the hall, arrayed for the street.

"What—what does it all mean?" gasped Dalrymple. "I—I never was intoxicated in my life, Lawrence Summerson; you ought to know that! I played euchre last night, up in the card-room, from nine o'clock till twelve, with Ogden and Folsom and yourself. If there's any practical joke being got up against me, for God's sake——"

"Wait a minute, please," said Summerson. He went back into the coat-room, disarrayed himself of his street wraps, and finally joined Dalrymple. His first words, low and grave, ran thus: "Can it be possible you don't recollect that our game of euchre was played the night before last and not last night?" Then he went with Dalrymple into a corner of the reading room, and they talked together for a good while.

Dalrymple went back to his home that day in a mental whirl. It still wanted a number of hours before the Governing Committee would meet. He had lost a day out of his life—there could be no doubt of that. If he had moved about the Club at all yesterday with a drunken manner, reviling De Pommereul to everybody who would lend him an ear—if he had afterward met De Pommereul in the Club and directed toward him in loud and furious tones a perfect torrent of accusation—he himself was completely, blankly ignorant.

For a good while he sat quite still and thought. Then he summoned Ann, the elderly and very trustworthy Ann, who had been his dear mother's maid, and was now his housekeeper. He questioned Ann, and after dismissing her he pondered her answers. Three times yesterday she had seen him, and regarding his appearance Ann had her distinct opinions.

Suddenly a light flashed upon Dalrymple while he sat alone and brooded.

He sprang up and a cry, half of awe, half of gladness, left his lips. The baffling problem had been solved!

That evening he presented himself before the Governing Committee. All assembled were sorry for him. Of course, punishment must be dealt, but for an old and popular member like Dalrymple it must not be expulsion. The general feeling of the Club had indeed already been gauged, and it was in favor of suspension for six months or a year at the farthest.

Dalrymple, however, was determined that he should be visited with no punishment at all. And he meant to state why.

The judges, as he faced them, all looked politely grim. The President, after a few suave preliminaries, asked Dalrymple if he had anything to say concerning the charges preferred against him. Dalrymple then proceeded to speak with a clear voice and composed demeanor.

His first sentences electrified his hearers. "I have no possible recollection of yesterday," he began, "and it is precisely as much of a lost day to me as though I had lain chloroformed for twenty-four hours. On Wednesday night I returned home from this club and went to rest. I never really woke until Friday, possibly a little while after midnight, and then within my own bed. On Thursday morning I must have risen in a state of somnambulism, hypnotism, mental aberration, whatever you please, and not come to myself until Thursday had passed, and I had once more retired. Of what yesterday occurred I therefore claim to have been the irresponsible agent, and to have become so through no fault of my own. I am completely innocent of the misdemeanors charged against me, and I now solemnly swear this, on my word of honor as a gentleman."

Here Dalrymple paused. The members of the committee interchanged glances amid profound silence. On some faces doubt could be read, but on others its veriest opposite. The intense stillness had become painful when Dalrymple spoke again.

"I had hoped that I should escape throughout my own lifetime all visitations of this distressing kind. My grandfather and two of my uncles not only walked in their sleep to an alarming degree, but were each subject to strange conditions of mind, in which acts were performed by them that they could not possibly remember afterward." Here the speaker paused, soon continuing, however, in a lower and more reflective tone:

"Yes, my family have had the strange failing (that is, nearly all of them except myself, on the paternal side) of——"

But he said no more. The tension was loosened, and a great roar of laughter rose from the whole committee. How often every man there had joked him about that marvelous budget of stories which he infallibly began one

way and one way only! And when the familiar formula sounded forth, it was all the funnier to those who heard it because of the solemn, judicial circumstances in which it again met their hearing.

The plaintiff was honorably acquitted. As for De Pommereul, as every word that Dalrymple had said concerning his past life in France happened to be perfectly true, the Count never reappeared at the Gramercy. His engagement with Mrs. Carrington was soon afterward broken off by the lady herself, and for a good while it was rumored that this lady had repentantly made it optional with Dalrymple whether he should once more become her accepted sweetheart.

But Dalrymple remained a bachelor. He is quite an old man now, yet he may be found in the card-room of the Gramercy nearly every evening. He is very willing to tell you the story of his "lost day" if you ask him courteously for it, and not in any strain of fun-poking; but he attempts no more voluntary recitals on the subject of his "family's" maladies or mishaps.

A Tragedy of High Explosives

Brainard Gardner Smith

1846-1930

IN THE COURSE of my work last year I had occasion to go over a file of old Liverpool newspapers, and thus came upon a remarkable paragraph in the ship news. Translated out of the language of commerce, it was to the effect that the good ship *Empress*, just arrived from Australia, reported that while rounding the Cape of Good Hope she had been driven southward far out of her course by a storm; and that away down in the Southern Atlantic had sighted a vessel drifting aimlessly about. The first mate boarded her, and, returning, reported that the derelict was the ship *Albatross*. That she had been abandoned was plain, for all the boats were gone, and so were the log and the ship's instruments. On the deck, close by the companion hatch, lay two bodies, or rather skeletons, clad in weather-rotted garments, that showed them to have been man and woman. These bodies were headless, but the heads were nowhere to be found on the deserted deck. The mate found on the cabin table an open book, with writing on its pages. A pen lay on the table, and a small inkstand, in which the ink had evidently long since dried. The book was evidently a journal or diary, so the mate reported, and he put it in his pocket, meaning to carry it aboard the *Empress;* but when he was getting down into his small boat the book slipped from his pocket, dropped into the water and sunk. The *Albatross* was badly water-logged, and, he thought, could not have floated much longer. To this report the editor of the paper added a note saying that the readers would all doubtless remember that the *Albatross* had sailed from Liverpool several years before, bound for Australia, and it was thought to have gone down with all on board, as no news of her had since been received.

That was the substance of the remarkable paragraph. What was almost as remarkable to me, a newspaper man, was that the Liverpool paper had evidently made no effort to learn the owners of the *Albatross*, the name of her captain and crew, or whether or not she carried any passengers. I carefully searched files to see if there was any further reference to the case. There was none. After the manner of his kind, the editor of the paper had, so it seemed, taken it for granted that his intelligent readers "would remember" all the particulars that they wanted to know.

I was much impressed by the paragraph. My professional instinct told me that there was a good newspaper story there, and I was disgusted that any editor could let it go untold. I also experienced more than usual curiosity to know how those headless bodies came there, or rather, why they should lie

there on the deck headless. Then there was that journal that had been found lying open on the cabin table, as though the writer had been interrupted in the writing which had never been finished. What light might that little book not throw on the mystery? And now it was lying fathoms deep in the Southern Atlantic. Of what use to speculate over the matter. Thanks to the careless mate and the stupid editor, that mystery would remain forever unsolved. But in spite of reason I did speculate considerably over the matter, and, try as I did, could not banish the story from my mind.

A few weeks after that I went into Northern Vermont to report the Benton murder trial, which was attracting much more than local attention. I was pleased to find that the prosecuting attorney was an old classmate of mine, George Judson. I had known him pretty well as a hard-working and remarkably bright man, with a curious streak in his mental make-up that led him to investigate every new "ism" that appeared. We used to call him a Spiritualist, and, had the word been in use, I am sure would have called him a crank. He was five years older than I, had married immediately after graduating, had prospered as a lawyer, and now had a good home for his wife and two children. He seemed much pleased to renew the acquaintance of college days, and insisted that I should make his house my home during my stay in the town.

One Saturday evening as we sat in his comfortable library smoking after dinner, Judson said, with some apparent hesitation:

"There's going to be a show here this evening that may interest you."

"Yes?"

"Yes. There's a woman living here who does some remarkable things when in a trance. There are a few of us who are curious about such things, and I've asked her and them here to my house this evening."

"What is it?" I asked lightly; "the cabinet act?"

Judson looked a trifle hurt. "Yes," he answered, slowly, "she's a medium, and you newspaper men have said that she's a fraud. But I've seen manifestations that I can't explain on any theory other than that they were the work of higher powers, and I'm going to look into it further."

The same old Judson, I thought. He was evidently more in earnest than his assumed indifference indicated. I marveled that the shrewd, successful lawyer could be so easily deluded, for I was sure that he was deluded. I had attended many a séance, and had helped to expose more than one medium, and knew that the whole matter of manifestations was nothing but a more or less clumsy juggle. But I kept my thoughts to myself—experience had taught me that when it was known that there was present at a séance a pronounced unbeliever in that phase of Spiritualism, the "conditions" were usually "unfavorable" for a "manifestation." So I said that I should be glad to see the "show," as he called

it. Then I encouraged Judson to talk, and he talked well. From mediums and cabinets, and manifestations and the ways of spirits generally, our conversation drifted to the marvelous and the mysterious, and finally I told the story of the *Albatross* and the headless skeletons. Judson was much impressed by the story. He joined me in anathematizing the careless mate of the *Empress* and the stupid editor of the Liverpool paper. His lifelong habit of seeking to know the unknowable, re-enforced by the detective instinct that is developed in every good lawyer as well as newspaper man, made him unnaturally anxious to solve the mystery. The thought came to me just then that if Spiritualism was good for anything it would be in such a case. What I said was, "I have often wondered whether the peculiar power of the trance medium might not be employed in such cases. Now, is it impossible that that journal found on the *Albatross*, and which I believe contains the solution of our mystery, should be materialized for us here?"

Judson jumped at the idea. "Yes, yes," he said hurriedly, "it shall be—it must be. How fortunate!" He spoke with such earnestness and confidence that I showed my surprise in my face. I also voiced it.

"You talk as though the thing were already accomplished. My experience with mediums has led me to consider them a trifle unreliable, but you seem to be sure of this one."

"Not of the medium but of myself. I had better tell you now what but one other living person knows—that I have a very peculiar power. I don't attempt to explain it, but it is no less a fact. I seem to be able, by mere force of will, to control certain persons. This medium is one of them. I have never been able to produce any results unaided, but more than once have I thought into visible form those who had long before died."

The same old story you see. Judson was apparently an out-and-out Spiritualist, ready to be humbugged by the first shrewd trickster that came along. He went on:

"Now, this evening you will see a remarkable woman; I have been able to control her in a remarkable way. I confess that I had never thought of seeking the materialization of an inanimate object. But I believe that it can be done. It shall be done. We shall have that journal this night."

I was almost convinced by my friend's absolute confidence; then saddened by the thought that this usually hard-headed, keen young lawyer had such a weak spot in his brain. He was the last man you would expect to be deluded by the tricks of the medium. At the same time I found myself, in spite of my skepticism, wondering what would come of it all. That evening I was seated in Judson's large parlor, one of about twenty persons of the sort usually seen at such séances; the Spiritualists of the place, I thought. The room had been

arranged after the fashion customary. There was an improvised cabinet in one corner, chairs in a semi-circle in front of it, not too near. Judson seemed a sort of master of ceremonies, passing in and out, greeting newcomers, whispering a word here and there. He was pale, I thought, and seemed rather pre-occupied. We waited perhaps a quarter of an hour, and then Judson ushered into the room a tall, slender woman, middle-aged, gray-haired, with rather strongly marked features and dark eyes that had a tired look. She seemed a person of nerves. A trifle above the average medium in appearance of intelligence and refinement, and with rather less of the self-assertive boldness usually displayed by the women who make a business of communing with spirits. There was no preliminary nonsense. She entered the cabinet in a business-like way. Judson turned the gas down low, so that we were in the dimmest sort of a dim religious light—just the light, I have always observed, that seemed most congenial to spirits, or, rather, that aided most effectually in the tricks played by the mediums. Then he sat down by my side and said: "Let us all clasp hands."

I grasped with my left the fat hand of a large woman next to me, and Judson seized my right with his left hand. It was quite cold, and I thought trembled a little. He leaned over me and whispered in my ear: "I am determined to see that journal to-night. If will can do it, it shall be done. Join your will with mine. You are a man of will. Let us force the powers to yield to our combined wills."

I was startled by the intensity of his manner more than by the words. In spite of my half disgust at the whole proceedings, that were such an exact repetition of more than one humbugging séance, I was forced into a respectful attitude of mind, and at once became an interested assistant, where a moment before I had been an unbelieving, critical observer. I nodded my head, and Judson's grasp of my hand became firm.

Then there was complete silence for many moments. I bent all my mind to the one thought that I would see that journal wherever in the large world it might be. At first my thoughts would wander, but then it seemed to me that Judson's grasp tightened and drew the desultory thought back to the one subject of his own thoughts. I have considered this a good deal since and conclude that Judson did, for the time at least, possess some extraordinary power, possibly pure force of will. At all events, I grew more and more determined to have my will done. Then there came a calm voice from behind the curtain of the cabinet.

"What is your wish?"

No one spoke for a moment, and then a weak voice at my left said something about a desire to see a child that had died, and another voice

expressed the wish to look upon the form of a departed husband. I was too much occupied with my own thoughts to notice then that this was the same old scene, enacted as at all the other séances. Again there was perfect silence; it seemed interminable. I could hear the breathing of the fat woman on my left. I could hear my watch ticking in my pocket. I thought that I could hear my heart beat, but all the time there was the firm pressure of the cold hand of my friend, and the constant thought, now shaped into words and the words into a sentence, and that sentence continually repeating itself until I seemed to hear that too: "I will see that journal to-night."

And still that strange silence. The air in the room became close. Every door and window had been carefully closed, and the breathing of twenty or more persons had made large drafts on the oxygen. Suddenly a breath fanned my cheek, then a stronger draught, and then a steady current of air set against my face. I felt it move my hair, and it smelled of the sea. It was salty. Yes, undoubtedly a strong, steady sea breeze was in that room, and it brought with it the smell of a ship, tar and oakum and pitch—the odor that arises when the sun beats hotly down upon the unprotected deck and the boards shrink and the great pine masts feel the fierce heat. But there was no heat; only at first that cool sea breeze and then the patter of rain, seemingly on the floor of the room in which we sat.

Then a low moan came from behind the curtains of the cabinet, and then the sound of a heavy fall. At this some of the women shrieked weakly. There was a general letting go of hands, and Judson sprang to the cabinet and disappeared behind its folds. After an instant of silence we heard his voice: "More light." I hastened to turn on the gas. Judson pulled aside the curtains, and we saw that the woman was lying outstretched on the floor.

"She has fainted," said Judson, calmly. "That is all. I believe that she is subject to such attacks. I doubt, my friends, if we shall have any manifestations to-night. May I ask you all to consider the meeting adjourned? I will give our friend here all medical attention."

He spoke so calmly and with such authority that without a word the little company passed out of the room and out of the house. Judson and I raised the woman to a couch, and he brought water and bathed her face. She opened her eyes, sighed deeply, and then sat up. There was a strange scared look on her face.

"Where is it?" she asked faintly.

"Here," said Judson, and he drew from beneath his coat a small book and handed it to her. She turned away with a shudder.

"No, no. Take it away. Take it away."

Judson handed it to me. "Will you kindly take this book to the library," said

he; "I will join you in a moment."

I obeyed mechanically. Before going into the library I stepped to the broad piazza and looked out into the night. The snow lay white on the ground, stars twinkled in the frosty sky, it was very cold, and I could hear the snow creak under the feet of passers-by, and yet I had felt that sea breeze and heard the patter of rain. What did it mean? I shivered, entered the warm house, turned the light high in the library, shut the door, and not till then looked at the book in my hand. It was a small blankbook about six inches long and four inches wide, well bound in leather and thoroughly water-soaked. I opened it. The leaves were wet and discolored, and I could see that the pages were covered with writing. I turned to the fly-leaf and there read these words:

"Arthur Hartley's journal. Begun on board the ship *Albatross*, March 7, 1851."

I stood in a daze, glaring at the written words, utterly confounded. The door opened and Judson entered hurriedly. His cheeks were now flushed, his eyes fairly blazed with light, his face was bright with a smile of triumph. "I knew it! I knew it!" he said loudly. "What a victory! What a victory! Even Nature yields to the power of Will!"

He paced back and forth rapidly, showing no desire to see the book that had come to us so strangely. Then he threw himself into a big chair, lighted a cigar, puffed at it vigorously a moment, then became quiet, looked intently at the glowing coals in the grate, and said calmly:

"Well, let's see what Mr. Hartley has to say for himself. Read the journal, please."

I had been standing all this time by the table, with the little damp book in my hand, and watching Judson curiously. I drew up a chair, opened to the first page and began to read.

ii

MARCH 7.—I begin this journal for two reasons. First, my dear mother asked me to keep a record of my voyage and of my life, that she might read it when I got back home. She thinks that I am coming home again. I promised her to do so, but I shall never see England again. I hope the day may come when I can take my dear mother to my Australian home, but I shall never set foot on the island that holds the woman I hate, and that holds so many women like her. In the second place, I want to write down not only my impressions in this new experience, but my thoughts. I have many of them. I want to see them spread out before me. We are now well started on the voyage, five days out from Liverpool. Uncle John is still ill enough, and says that he wants to die. Captain

Raymond laughs at him, and says that a little sea-sickness will do him good. I like Captain Raymond. He is big and burly, and has a deep voice, and a heavy brown beard. He's just the typical sea captain, an interesting person to a man who saw the sea for the first time six days ago. I'm glad to find that I'm a good sailor, and can thoroughly enjoy the new experiences that present themselves in the beginning of the long voyage we have started upon. I have written the word "enjoy"; let it stand. I thought I never should have known enjoyment again, but I do. There's enjoyment in the knowledge that each hour puts miles of ocean between me and the woman that has spoiled my life. No, I won't admit that. She shan't have the satisfaction of spoiling my life. She tried hard enough, God knows. She played with my heart, much as though it were a mouse and she a cat. She is a cat. A sleek, soft, purring cat, and with claws. I could eat out my own heart when I think how she played with it. I was fair game for this experienced coquette, and now I suppose she is boasting of another conquest, telling of her victory over the simple country lad. Well, let her enjoy her conquest while she may. The country boy will one day come back with money enough to buy her and her purse-proud heart. Yes, I will go back to England and I'll humble her at my feet. What rot I'm writing. Mother, if you ever see these pages, read these words with sympathy, as the idle ravings of a man well-nigh gone mad over a woman's false beauty. I never told the story, even to you, my dear mother. I dare say you guessed much of it. You know how Helen Rankine came down from London to our quiet country home. You know how beautiful and gracious she was. How kind and loving to you; how apparently frank and friendly with me. She was the first woman I ever saw to whom I gave a second thought, save you, dear mother. We rode and drove and chatted together. She drew my very heart from me. I told her all my plans and hopes and aspirations; of my love of the art to which I had devoted my life; that I hoped to go to London and study, and then to Rome; that I wanted to become a great painter. She was so full of hearty sympathy, so kind, so womanly, that before I knew it she had me enslaved. For all the graciousness and frankness and sympathy were but the means she used in her heartlessness to enslave me. Then came a day, a day to be remembered; a day like that when, beguiled by another beautiful fiend in woman form, our first father, poor, foolish man, ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and so lost his paradise. I told Helen of my love; and how I did love that woman! And she put on an appearance of surprise, and squeezed a cold tear or two from her beautiful eyes, and said that she thought I knew and understood. And when half dazed I asked her what she meant, what it was that I was thought to have known, she had to blush, and said that she had long been engaged to her cousin, John Bruce, who was now with his regiment in

India, and that when he came home they were to be married. And then she said something about my being so young and having a great career before me, and that she should always be my friend and pray for my success. And she stretched out her hand toward me. I think she must have seen the hate in my face, for my great love turned to great hate even while she spoke, and all the wholesome currents of my being seemed poisoned by the supreme passion, and she turned pale, and her hand dropped, and I cursed her.

March 10.—A call from Uncle John interrupted me the other day, and I have had no heart to write since. My moods shame me. I wrote those words with burning cheek and throbbing heart. I have just read them without an emotion. Why can't I be a man, and not a silly, raving boy? Not that the hate that burns in my heart is abating. It can never abate. It will grow and grow, and keep me true to my purpose. No more mooning over art and the hope of a great name; but hard work and money-making. Uncle John promises us both fortunes. He feels confident that his explosive will work such wonders in Australian mines that within ten years we can go back to England rich beyond the dreams of avarice. But I shall never see England again. No matter what I may have written here. Never shall I set foot on the land that rears such women as the one I hate. Captain Raymond was almost angry when he learned that in Uncle John's innocent-looking boxes was a compound powerful enough to blow us all out of the water. But he was somewhat reassured when uncle insisted that as long as the *Albatross* floated she and we were safe; for he says that the explosive is only an explosive when wet. Captain Raymond said that he'd try and keep it dry then, and he sent men into the hole where the boxes were stored, and had them placed carefully in an unused cabin. We are the only passengers. I made sure that no woman was to be on board during the long voyage. I came near being disappointed in this, for Captain Raymond tells me that his wife was to sail with him, and had made all preparations, even to sending some boxes of clothing aboard, when the sudden death of her father prevented her from going. I'm sure I'm sorry that Mrs. Raymond's father is dead, but I'm very glad that Mrs. Raymond is not on this ship. I don't want to look on woman's face, nor hear woman's voice. There's but one woman to me in the wide world, and, dear mother, forgive me if sometimes I cannot thank her for bringing me into the world. You understand me, mother. You know what I have suffered. You can sympathize with me when I say that I exult at the thought that leagues of ocean lie between me and that other woman, who——

March 12.—A strange thing has happened since I last wrote in this book. As I was writing I heard quite a commotion on deck—cries of the sailors, sharp orders from officers, and the tramping of feet. I rushed on deck. Uncle John and the captain were standing on the poop, looking intently across the water;

the first mate was shouting orders that I couldn't understand, and the crew were lowering the long boat.

"What's the matter?" I asked, joining uncle and the captain.

"There's a little boat adrift out yonder," answered Uncle John pointing, "and the lookout says that there are a couple of bodies lying in it. There, do you see it, on the top of that wave!"

I saw it; a mere shell it seemed, poised for a moment on the top of a swell, and then sliding down into the trough of the sea, quite out of sight. The long boat was soon lowered, and, guided by the cries of the lookout, made straight for the little boat. It seemed very long before it was reached, and then we saw the sailors make it fast to the long boat and begin to pull slowly back toward the *Albatross*. It was slow and hard work towing that boat, small as it seemed, through the rather heavy sea. There was no sign of life in her. What was behind those low gunwales? What were the men bringing to us? At length they came alongside, and then we saw that there were two bodies lying there.

"A man and a woman, sir," called up the mate. "There's life in 'em both, but precious little."

It was nice work getting the two boats alongside and the bodies out of them and up to the deck; but it was done by the aid of slings, the woman being brought up first. Uncle John, by virtue of his profession, gave directions as to placing her on the deck, and then knelt by her side. I stood aloof. Why had that woman come to us in mid-ocean! Why was it? Fate?

"She is alive," cried Uncle John. "Captain, we must get her below at once."

I glanced at the woman. Thick locks of matted black hair lay around a face on which the sun and wind and the salt sea-water had done fearful work. And yet those blackened and blistered features somehow had a familiar look. Where had I seen them? I could not tell. Four sailors carried her below and I turned to look at her companion, who had been laid on the deck. Uncle John just took time to grasp his wrist and said, "He's alive, too"; then he dropped the limp hand and hurried below. Always the way. Women first. This dying man might get what attention he could. The woman must be nursed back to life to deceive the first fool that takes her fancy. I turned to the man, a common sailor evidently, brawny and bearded. The mate was by his side, and together we did what we could to nourish the spark of life that kept the pulse feebly fluttering in the big brown wrist. It was afternoon when these two waifs were found, and all night we fought with death. Now Uncle John says that he thinks that they will live. Neither of them has spoken, but each has taken a little nourishment and the pulse shows gaining strength. Captain Raymond has turned his cabin over to the woman, and as I write uncle is sitting by her side. For the time he has forgotten his wonderful explosive. The old professional air

has come back, and he is like the Dr. Hartley of the days before he gave up medicine for chemical investigation. The question continually repeats itself to me, What has brought this woman here? Reason as I may, I feel, I know, that she has come to me; to me who was happy in the thought of not seeing her kind for months. Another question asks itself, Has she come for good or ill? There can be but one answer to that question.

March 13.—The sailor whom we rescued gains strength fast. He was able to talk a little to-day. Briefly told, his story, as far as I got it, is that he was one of the crew of the *Vulture*, bound from England to India with army stores and arms, including a large consignment of powder. One day, he can't say how many days ago, the ship caught fire in the hold. There were frantic and unavailing efforts made to get at the flames and extinguish them; and then the order was given to flood the hold, but before it could be executed there was a tremendous roar, and the sailor knew nothing else until he found himself in the water clinging to a fragment of the wreckage that strewed the sea. The ship had been blown up and had sunk at once. Not far from him floated one of the quarter-boats apparently uninjured. He managed to swim to it, and clamber in. There he was able to stand up and look around him. At first he could see no sign of life, but in another moment he heard a faint cry behind him, and, turning, saw a woman clinging to a broken spar. With a bit of broken board he paddled to her and got her into the boat. Like himself, she was unharmed, save by the awful shock and fright. He paddled around and around, but saw no further sign of life. Once a man's body rose near the boat; rose slowly, turned, and sank again, and that was the last they saw of the twoscore men that but a little moment before had been full of life and vigor.

This much I heard the sailor tell, and then stopped him, for he was tired. The woman still sleeps and has showed no signs of consciousness.

March 14.—The sailor, whose name is Richard Jones, was able to crawl out on deck this morning. He completed his story. The young woman, he said, was the only passenger on the *Vulture*. He did not know her name. It had been talked among the crew that she was going out to her lover, an officer in the Indian Army who had been wounded; that she would not wait for the regular East Indiaman, but had managed to secure passage on the *Vulture*. When she realized that she and the sailor, Jones, were the only ones alive of all those that had been on the vanished ship, and that they were quite alone on the ocean, in a small boat, without oars, or sail, or food, or drink, she cried a little and wrung her hands and became very quiet. She took her place in the bow, and there she sat. Jones sat in the stern and paddled clear of the wreckage, and then, using the piece of board for a rudder, kept the boat before the wind. Luckily there was very little sea. He thought that they were in the track of Indiamen, and so

kept good hope. He tried to encourage the young woman, but she seemed to prefer silence, and so he kept still. Thus they drifted. The sun beat down upon their unprotected heads. They began to want for water. They did not think so much of food as of water. Jones doesn't know how long they were adrift. He doesn't know when the girl lost consciousness. He remembers that one day she moaned a little, and in the night he thought that he heard her whispering to herself. He thought that she was praying, perhaps. Then he began to lose consciousness. He remembers seeing a beautiful green field, with trees, and a brook running through it. He says that men suffering from thirst on the ocean often have such visions. He remembers nothing else until he opened his eyes and saw me bending over him.

Uncle John reports no change in the condition of the young woman. She lies in a stupor, apparently. The pulse daily grows stronger, he says, and she swallows freely the nourishment administered.

iii

APRIL 2.—It is more than two weeks since I wrote in my journal. I have been ill—a sort of low fever that kept me in my cabin. Nothing serious, Uncle John said, and so it has proved, except that I am very weak. Uncle has been kind, but most of his time has been devoted to that woman. He says that it is a very interesting case. She became conscious a few days ago, and has gained strength since. She will be on deck in a day or two, he thinks. I'm anxious to see her. I want to see if there really is anything familiar in her face. It's fortunate for her that clothing of Mrs. Raymond's is on board. She'd be in a plight, else. I asked Uncle John what her name was. He looked queer, and said that he didn't know. Strange that he hasn't asked her. The sailor, Jones, seems quite recovered and has taken his place among the crew. We were rather short-handed, and the captain was glad enough to have him. He can be of service. But the woman can be nothing but a trouble, to me at least, for I must see her daily, I suppose. And yet I am anxious to see her, too. This fever has left me rather childish as well as weak.

April 3.—Thank God for these pages to which I can talk, else I should go mad, I think. Could you read these words as they flow from my pen, mother, you might well wonder whether I had not indeed gone mad. But I will be quite calm while I tell of what fate, or Satan, or whatever evil power it is, has done for me. I was sitting on the deck this morning, still very weak, when I heard footsteps behind me, and Uncle John's voice saying, "Good-morning, Arthur." I turned and saw him standing near me, and leaning on his arm Helen Rankine! I write these words calmly enough now. Can you imagine what I felt when I saw

her? I staggered to my feet, muttered some incoherent words, and would have fallen had not Uncle John sprang to my side and caught me. "Why, what's the matter, Arthur? Calm yourself, my boy. Is it possible that you know this young lady?"

By a supreme effort of will, aided by the memory of that day when we last parted, I drew myself up and bowed, and I said that I had had the great honor of once knowing Miss Helen Rankine, and that I had had no idea that it was she we were fortunate enough to have rescued.

Uncle looked at me in wonder as I said these words with sneering politeness. The girl looked at me questioningly, but there was no shadow of recognition on her face.

"Then your name is Helen Rankine?" said Uncle John kindly, turning toward the girl and speaking as though to a little child.

A troubled look passed over her face, and then she said quietly, "I do not know. I cannot remember."

"Do you know this gentleman, Mr. Arthur Hartley?" he asked in the same kindly way.

Again the troubled look, an apparent effort to seize some elusive thought, and then again the voice I knew so well, but now so unnaturally calm:

"I do not know him."

I stood aghast at what seemed the consummate acting of a heartless and conscienceless woman, and yet on the instant I saw that there was no acting there. Let me stop a moment, mother, and describe her. You remember how beautiful she was, with that rich, dark beauty you once spoke of as "Italian." It was that beauty that enslaved me. You remember that I have written of her appearance as she lay on the deck the day she was saved. The days of illness and quiet in the cabin below had almost obliterated all the ravages done by wind and sun and sea. The olive cheeks were a little darker than of old, and the hands browner. The face was not quite so pure an oval as when you saw it last; the color of lip and cheek not quite so vivid. The large brown eyes had lost the sparkle and the changing light that once pierced my boyish, foolish heart. Clad in a simple gown, belted at the waist and hanging in folds to the deck, her dark hair parted across her broad forehead and confined in a simple knot, and with a strange calm on the face that once expressed her varying moods as they came and went, she seemed to me to be another, a better, an almost unearthly Helen, come to me here to atone for the great wrong that she had done me; and, for the moment, I forgot my hate.

My uncle gave his arm to Helen, and they walked the deck while I watched them. What did it mean, this failure of Helen to recognize me? Was I right in thinking the girl to be Helen Rankine. Yes; I could not be mistaken. That

graceful walk, some of its old-time spring and elasticity gone, to be sure, was the walk of Helen; the turn of the lovely neck; the pose of the head were hers. Then the story of the sailor, Jones, the fore-castle gossip that she was going out to India to join her soldier-lover; how well it tallied with what she had told me on that fatal day when she spurned my proffered love. But I would not dwell more on that. I will not now. I must force myself to forget, just for a little time, the past, that I may solve the mystery of the present. My head throbs; my brain is in a whirl.

April 4.—After writing this I threw myself into my berth and tried to think over clearly the strange occurrences of the day. I was aroused by Uncle John asking me if I felt well enough to take a turn with him on deck. I joined him at once, and we paced the deck without speaking. It was a lovely night and the stars filled the heavens. At length Uncle John said, "Arthur, here's a very remarkable case. This poor girl has lost her memory completely, and no wonder, after her terrible sufferings. She cannot remember an event that happened before she opened her eyes in the cabin below. She can talk well, reads readily, shows the breeding of a lady, but as far as the past is concerned, she might as well be a week-old baby. You say that her name is Helen Rankine. Who is Helen Rankine? Where did you meet her?"

Uncle John had never known why I was so ready to give up my dreams of artist life and join him in his Australian scheme. I told him the whole story of my infatuation for Helen and her heartless perfidy. He listened intently. When I had finished, he said:

"My boy, let me say one thing, first of all. On your own evidence, forming my opinion solely from what you have told me, I think you have done a good girl injustice. I don't believe that Helen Rankine coquetted with you. Like many a young fellow before you, you thought that the frank friendliness of a young woman who looked upon you as a boy, though perhaps not your senior in years, was encouragement to make love to her. She thought that you knew of her engagement, so she said, and felt a security that misled you. You are not the first lad that has had such an experience and cursed all women, and vowed that he'd never trust one again. I'll trot your children on my knee yet. Well, so much for the Helen of the past. Now for the Helen of the present, for we might as well call her Helen as anything else."

"But she is Helen; Helen Rankine. I can swear it," I interrupted.

"Well, well. So be it. I confess it looks so. I have taken a physician's liberty, and examined her clothing for marks. I find it marked 'H. R.'"

"Isn't that proof enough?" I asked eagerly.

"Yes. I dare say it is. Still there are other girls whose initials are H. R. You and I have our task. It is to try and lead this poor girl back to the past. The

awful experiences and sufferings of those days in the boat have affected her brain. Whether beyond cure or not I know not. Now remember, Arthur," and Uncle John looked at me seriously; "remember, that even if this girl is the girl you think has wronged you, in fact she is not the same girl. She knows no more of you than she knows of me, whom she never saw in her life before. Another thing, if she is Helen Rankine, she is engaged to John Bruce. Perhaps she wears his ring on her finger. You and I as gentlemen are bound to do what we can to deliver her to him as speedily as possible. And I pray God that we may see her meet him in her right mind, the same free-hearted English girl that he is now dreaming of."

I bowed my head, but could not say a word. Is Uncle John right, and have I been a weak, blind fool of a boy, thinking that the girl, who was merely kind, was encouraging me to love her? I feel my face burn at the thought. I can't think clearly yet, but I see my duty.

April 10.—If I lacked proof of the girl's identity, I have it now. Yesterday we sat together on the deck for hours, I trying gently to lead her back to the past. Helen Rankine used to wear several valuable rings. Now she wears but one. "You have a pretty ring," I said, pointing to her hand! How white and dimpled it used to be. How I longed to catch it to my lips, to kiss the pretty rosy-tipped fingers! Her hand! Now brown with wind and sun, but still dimpled and rosy tipped. Like a child she laid it in mine.

"Yes," she said, "it is a pretty ring."

"Where did you get it, Helen?" I asked.

"I don't remember," she said quietly.

"May I look at it?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," and she slipped it from her finger and laid it in my hand.

"What are these letters engraved within?" I asked.

"Are there letters there?" she said. "I didn't know it. So there are. To H. R., from J. B. What does that mean?"

"Don't you know?" I asked. Oh, it was hard to see that calm face, to hear that calm voice. Better the blush and silent avowal of love, even for another, than that blank gaze.

"No. I do not know what those letters mean," she answered.

"Perhaps 'H. R.' stands for your own name," said I.

She smiled like a happy child. "Yes, yes. That must be it. But the 'J. B.,' what do they stand for?"

I hesitated—who would not?

"Perhaps they stand for—for John Bruce," I said slowly, looking her steadily in the eyes. She returned the gaze with the calm confidence of a child.

"Who is John Bruce?" she asked. "I can't remember John Bruce."

My heart gave a great leap, then sank like lead. Am I then such a villain that I rejoice at the thought that Helen Rankine has no memory of her lover? Where is the hate that I boasted of? It has gone. It could not live before the calm eyes of the girl by my side. But I had my duty to do.

"John Bruce is in India, Helen," said I. "Don't you remember? And you were going to him, and when you reached him you were to marry him. He loves you dearly, and you loved him dearly. Can't you remember?"

The troubled look came to the dark eyes and ruffled the calm brow. A faint flush passed across the rich, warm cheeks. Then, like a spoiled child, she shook her head and said:

"No, no, no, no!" with a little pat of the foot and nod at the last "No." "I do not know anything about it at all. I do not know John Bruce, and of course I do not love him. How could I? But I know you, Arthur, and I love you," and she laid her hand in mine, with a pretty smile.

I wonder if I'm the same man that set sail in the *Albatross* six short weeks ago? The Arthur Hartley then was a mad, foolish boy. The Arthur Hartley now is a grave, serious man. I feel that years and years have passed, instead of weeks. How much I am changed let this prove: I held Helen's hand in mine and answered gently, "I am very glad you love me, Helen. I hope you will ever love me. I certainly love you dearly. I could not love a sister more."

She smiled at this and patted my hand, and then we sat, hand in hand, without speaking, until the shadows deepened on the deck.

May 2.—You have been much in my thoughts of late, dear mother, but you will never know it. You will never see these words. I had thought not to write in this book again, for I feel sure that it will never reach you; but I seem to be urged to keep some record of our eventful voyage. We are lying becalmed far in the Southern Atlantic, so Captain Raymond says. An awful storm that drove us at its will, and before which it seemed possible for no ship to live, has driven us here far out of our course. For six days we have been lying here motionless. The storm that raged with such terrible fury seems to have exhausted all the winds of the heavens. I never knew anything more thoroughly depressing than this calm. Even writing seems a task beyond me. But, indeed, I am not as strong as before the attack of fever. I do not seem to regain my strength. I had in mind to describe the storm. It is beyond my powers. We lost a long boat and a quantity of spars. Two sailors, one of them Richard Jones, saved but to be lost, were washed overboard and never seen again. There is no change in Helen. She is apparently perfectly happy, but it is the happiness of a contented and healthy child. She takes much pleasure in being with me, and sits by the hour with her hand in mine, while I talk of the England that we have left and of the scenes of other days. But nothing awakens the dormant memory. Uncle

John has got back to his studies, and talks explosives to any one who will listen.

May 17.—Here we lie, still becalmed. It is horrible! What will come of it all? The sailors are ready to take to the boats and quit the ship, and it requires all of Captain Raymond's firmness and kindness, for he is a kind captain, and all of Mate Robinson's sternness, to deal with the crew. The steward tells me in great confidence that the men say that the *Albatross* is bewitched, and that Helen is the witch that has done it. I can see that they follow her with black looks, in which is something of fear, as she walks the deck, singing softly to herself and happy as a bird—the only happy soul aboard. Why should she not be happy? She has no past, looks forward to no future. She lives in the present, Nature's own child. The ocean that gave her to us seems to have claimed her as its own. She loves the sea in all its moods. When the storm was at its fiercest and the huge waves swept over us, she insisted on being on deck, and clapped her hands and laughed in glee, as thoughtless of danger as one of Mother Cary's chickens. Now, when this horrible calm is drawing the very life out of us all, she sings and laughs and is merry; or, when not merry, wears a calm, passionless, almost soulless face. I don't wonder that the men think that she is a witch. She has bewitched me more than once.

iv

MAY 21.—I am sitting alone in the cabin writing. It is very late. I hear the steps of the mate as he paces the deck. The calm still holds us in its fearful clasp. Great God! What is to be the end of it all? There has been a break in the monotony of our existence to-day. Uncle John got into a hot discussion with Captain Raymond at the dinner table about the efficacy of the wonderful explosive compound. The captain seemed doubtful. Uncle John was for the instant angry.

"I'll show you, then," he said, and he rushed into the cabin where his boxes are stored, and came out shortly with two tin cans, each holding something less than a pint. He unscrewed the top of one disclosing a brownish powder. "Take care," said the captain, who seemed needlessly cautious, and almost fearful.

"Why, I thought you said it was useless," said Uncle John with a laugh, "and yet you are afraid of it. Look here." He lighted a match and held it close to the powder. A dark smoke arose that instantly extinguished the little flame, and floated off, leaving a queer smell behind. That was all.

"Perfectly harmless, captain," continued uncle, who had now recovered his usual good nature. "Perfectly harmless unless you wet it. Then look out."

The cook had made a sort of dumpling for dinner, and a great lot of it

remained. Uncle John took a mess of this dough, for it was little else, squeezed it until it was quite dry and molded it into a ball. "Come with me," he said, "and, Arthur, bring a plate of that dough with you." He took the cans and we followed him to the deck. There he carefully covered the ball of dough with the powder, and, going to the rail, threw it as far as he could out over the placid sea. As the ball struck the water there was a loud explosion and the spray was thrown high into the air. The crew, who had been hanging over the port rail forward, turned and rushed over to see what was up. Uncle John made another ball and threw it with like result.

"Oh, houly torpeter!" growled one of the men, and they turned back to their former places. Uncle John, now evidently anxious to give us thorough proof of the value of his compound, was for throwing more balls, when the boatswain, rolling aft, touched his hat, and said to the captain:

"Please, sur, there's a big shark as has showed his fin hoff the port bow, and if so be that the doctor'll wait a bit with his torpeters, we'll show 'im some fun a-catchin' of it."

"All right, bo'sun," said the captain, and we all went over to the port rail.

"There he is," said the captain, pointing to a sharp, black thing, that, rising just above the water, was cutting quietly through it. "That is his fin, and there's a big shark under it or I'm much mistaken."

The sailors had got a large hook, and had baited it with a piece of salt beef, and made it fast to a stout line with a chain that the fish couldn't bite off. This tempting morsel was flung overboard, and, as it fell with a splash into the water, we saw the fin cut toward it, and then disappear. The next instant there was a great tug at the rope.

"Hurrah! we've got 'um!" yelled the boatswain. "Walk away with 'im now, my hearties."

A dozen sailors had manned the rope, and now started to drag the big fish out of the water. There was a tremendous pull, a great splashing, and then the men tumbled in a heap on the dock, and the hook was jerked sharply over the rail.

"Cuss the luck," growled the boatswain. "The 'ook didn't 'old."

The taste of salt beef evidently suited the shark, for he was soon right alongside, cruising back and forth, looking for more. We could see him distinctly, and a tremendous fellow he was. Again the men baited the hook and dropped it overboard. We saw the big fish dart forward, turn on his side and grab the bait with a sharp snap of his terrible jaws. Again the hook would not catch, and the shark was waiting for more beef. The men were about to make a third attempt when Uncle John started.

"Wait a bit, men," he said. "I've got a hook that will hold. Give me a piece

of the meat."

The men fell back and looked eagerly. The cook handed up a big chunk of meat. "Wipe it as dry as you can," said uncle, "and tie it firmly to the rope." When this was done he sprinkled the powder from the can carefully over the meat; then he carried it cautiously to the rail. The shark was cruising back and forth. Uncle lowered the meat slowly into the water, right in front of the monster. He saw the bait and darted at it, and then there was a tremendous report, and the spray flew into our faces as we leaned over the rail. The next moment we saw the big fish floating motionless on the water.

"Blessed if 'e 'asn't blowed 'is 'ead clean hoff," said the boatswain.

It was so. That terrible compound of Uncle John's had needed only the impact of the shark's teeth to explode it with deadly effect. Uncle looked perfectly happy. The effect on Helen was strange. For the first time since she had been with us she seemed to be angry.

"I think you are very cruel," she said to Uncle John, "to kill that beautiful shark. He had not harmed you. I shall not love you any more." As she said this she stepped to my side and grasped my hand, as though she feared uncle and wanted my protection. The men heard her words and the effect was marked. They had been in high good humor over the death of the shark, the sailors' most dreaded enemy, but at these strange words they shrank away with gloomy faces, and I could hear muttered curses, and the words "witch" and "she-devil." That put an end to the good humor that for the first time in days seemed to pervade the becalmed vessel. Uncle John made one more "torpeter" with the little powder that remained in the open can. The other he carried to his cabin. When I left the deck just before beginning this writing the sailors were huddled together forward and eagerly talking, but very quietly. The sea was like a glass in which the stars of this strange southern sky were all mirrored.

AGAIN, IMPELLED by I know not what power, I come to my journal. For what strange eyes am I writing these words? I doubt whether I shall have strength to put down the record that I feel ought to be put down. Perhaps the power that impels me to write at all will give me the needed strength. I have lost the reckoning of the days, but that matters not. After writing the words with which my last entry closed I went to my little cabin and was soon asleep. I was awakened by stealthy feet without my door, followed by sounds of a struggle on deck, two or three pistol shots, curses and groans and the trampling of feet. I jumped from my bunk, threw on some clothing, and hurried out. The large cabin was in total darkness. I rushed to the companion way. As I stepped upon the deck I saw before me a struggling throng, and then there

was a crash, and I knew no more for a time. I know now that I was struck on the head by one of the crew who had been watching for me. When I recovered consciousness I was lying bound hand and foot on the deck. It was early daylight, I struggled to rise, but could not stir. I saw the crew carrying bags and casks and clothing and lowering them over the side. Two or three forms lay on the deck, but I could not see who or what they were. I recognized the boatswain's voice giving orders. He asked if there was water enough and food, if the log and chronometer and compasses had been stowed away. It was all confusion, and my brain seemed on fire; but I knew that the crew were preparing to quit the ship. Where was Uncle John, where was Captain Raymond, and where was Helen? At this I again struggled and strove to rise, and the noise I made attracted the boatswain and he came to me.

"You're fast enough, my lad," said he, smiling grimly. "Best lie quiet and listen. Th' lads 'ave 'ad enough of this bediviled ship and the witch that 'as bediviled 'er. So we're goin' to ship our cable and put hoff. You seem so fond o' the witch that we'll leave you with 'er. She'll care for thee, never fear," and he turned on his heel.

I tried to speak, but must have fainted with the effort. When I again became conscious, I was still lying on the deck, but my bonds had been cut, and I managed to stagger to my feet. I looked all around. Not a living being could I see. Just then the sun came up, and as his glowing disc showed above the quiet water, I caught, far away in the south, a faint sparkle, and then saw two small dark spots, that before my straining gaze disappeared. I doubt not that what I saw were the boats containing the crew of the *Albatross*. I turned and looked around the deck. The forms that I had seen were no longer visible, but just aft of the wheel was a piece of canvas covering something. I walked over feebly, for the blow that I had received had shaken me badly, and lifted the canvas. There lay the dead bodies of my dear uncle and Captain Raymond and big First Mate Robinson. Like a man in a dream I covered them again, and again looked about the deck. Where was Helen? Not on the deck. Had the villains taken her with them? I made my feeble way below and went to Helen's cabin. The door was shut. I tried to open it. It was locked. I examined the lock. The key was in it, and on the outside. They had locked her in. I cautiously turned the key, opened the door, and entered. There lay Helen, her dark hair streaming back over the pillow. One round cheek rested softly on her brown, dimpled hand, the other bore a lovely flush. The half-parted lips were like crimson rose-buds, and over her bosom her white nightrobe rose and fell gently. She was asleep. As I stood there she opened her eyes. When she saw me she smiled happily and said in a sweet, sleepy voice, "Is it time to get up, Arthur? Why, how pale you look. Are you ill?" And she rose on one arm and

the smile faded away.

"Yes, Helen," I said, as steadily as I could. "It's time to get up. Come into the cabin as quickly as you can. I am not at all well." And I left the little cabin, still like a man in a dream. Helen soon joined me. I asked her if she had slept well. She had. Had she heard no unusual noises in the night? No; she had not awakened once. So it was. Like a tired, healthy child, Helen had slept through all that awful tragedy. I shan't attempt to try and tell of the task I had in making her comprehend our awful situation. She did not comprehend it. She wept bitterly when I told her of the three dead bodies on the deck. She moaned over my "poor, bruised head," and with gentle hands bathed and bound it up. Then she said that she was hungry. We found the lockers in great confusion, but the crew had left food enough of one sort or another to satisfy our immediate needs. There was an awful task before us, and I explained it to Helen. We must consign those dead bodies to the sea. She shuddered at the thought, but, like an obedient child, tried to help me. How I managed to encase those silent forms in canvas I hardly know, but I did, and got them to the side of the ship. Then I got my prayer book and read the blessed burial service, while Helen looked on in troubled wonder. Then came the hardest task of all, but it was done, and the bodies, one after the other, fell with a great splash into the still sea. I had thought to bind heavy weights to the feet, and they sank at once, and Helen and I were left quite alone. I am writing this with great difficulty, for we are dying—dying of thirst. Why I write I do not know. There is no water on board. The sailors, after filling their casks from the great casks in the hold, left the water running. When we sought to draw there was not a drop left. There is a change coming over Helen. She sometimes looks at me strangely. She seems almost shy. I wonder what it is. Is memory coming back? Or has she learned that she is a woman and I a man? But she is not for me. There is John Bruce, and I vowed to take her safely to him, and I shall—. Mother, good—. I can't write more. I see that the end is....

v

THE WRITING in the little water-soaked book became entirely illegible. Indeed, the last few lines were very indistinct, and showed the failing of mental and physical strength. I sat staring at the yellow page and then looked up at Judson. He was gazing intently at me.

"Well, go on; go on," he said impatiently.

"That's all," said I.

He seized the book from my hands, and turned the leaves feverishly. "Yes, yes. That is all. Why man, we're not much wiser than we were. We've got

something, but we haven't solved the mystery of the headless skeletons."

"No, nor are we likely to," said I.

"Not likely to? We must!" said Judson, in a sharp, strained voice. He seemed to be much excited. I looked at my watch.

"It's Sunday morning," said I, and luckily Sunday, I thought. Judson wouldn't be good for much in a trial after such an evening as this. As for myself, I was tired and hungry, and I said so.

"So am I," said Judson, dropping the excited air, but with an effort. "Sit still a moment." He came back soon with a tray on which were cold meat, and bread and butter, and crackers, and Rochefort cheese, and a bottle of Macon Vieux.

"You evidently know what a hungry newspaper man wants in the middle of the night," said I.

"I know what a hungry lawyer wants," and he drew the cork.

"Now," said he, after we had taken the edge off our appetites and were enjoying the Burgundy, "we must know the rest of that story."

"Easier said than done."

"Why so? Does it seem more difficult to get a message directly from Arthur Hartley than to get that journal from the bottom of the ocean? I do not think so. This night's experience has given me a confidence in the power of will over nature that nothing can shake. There is but one obstacle that stands in the way of our success. The woman whom you call the medium was thoroughly prostrated, as you saw. She seemed badly frightened, too. She said that she had never had such an experience: that she felt that she could not live through another. As she expressed it, she felt that she had been the battle ground where two great forces had met and contended. I soothed her as best I could and sent her home. I did not tell her that I thought that she was right. She was. She was the unconscious medium through which will overcame the forces of nature. This evening she must be the medium through which, in obedience to our will, the Spirit of Arthur Hartley shall speak with us."

"Suppose she refuses."

"She will obey me, or rather my will," said Judson quietly. "It's merely a question of whether it is safe to subject her to the ordeal. But as it will be nothing compared with that she has just been through I shall attempt it, if she is at all able to bear it. I must have that mystery solved."

I slept very late that morning and joined the family at the Sunday afternoon dinner; and then went with Judson to the library to smoke.

"It's all right," he said, as soon as we were seated. "She will come this evening."

"Will all those other persons be here?" I asked.

"Oh, no. You and I and the woman only."

It was ten o'clock that evening when Judson entered the library, where I sat reading before the glowing grate, and said:

"She's here. Come into the parlor."

It was with more than ordinary emotions that I followed him. The medium was the only person in the room. The cabinet still stood where it had stood twenty-four hours before. She looked the picture of ill health. Great hollows were beneath the tired eyes, and she moved feebly. She bowed gravely to me, and entered the cabinet. Judson turned the gas down low.

"If you will remain entirely passive," he said softly, "I think we shall get the communication without trouble." There was a calm confidence in his voice, quite different from the intensity of his manner the night before. We sat quietly for many minutes, until I began to grow uneasy. I tried to think of nothing with very poor success, but while I was making the effort strenuously there came from the cabinet a clear, firm voice. Its tones were something like those in which the woman the night before had said: "What do you wish?" but as the voice proceeded it took on a manlier tone, with that indescribable accent we call "English." These were the words:

"Since you wish it, I will finish the story of my life on earth. Listen. When I ceased writing in my book on the *Albatross* it was because I had lost control of my pen, and of my mind as well. I managed to crawl to the deck. Helen was lying motionless in the shadow of the companion hatch. I threw myself down by her side. She put out her hand and grasped mine, and a flush crossed her face. I was too weak to speak, and thus hand in hand we lay for I don't know how long. Gradually I lost consciousness, perhaps in sleep. At all events, my spirit was not free. The frail body still had strength enough to retain it. I was aroused by something dropping on my face. As consciousness came back I saw that the sky had become overcast; that a cool breeze was blowing, and that a gentle rain was falling. Helen was sitting erect and with parted lips drinking in the grateful rain-laden air. I tried to rise, but could not. She was much stronger than I, and at my direction went below and brought blankets and clothes, which she spread on the deck that they might catch the falling drops. She seemed quite vigorous, and already I felt my own strength coming back. Soon she was able to squeeze water from a blanket into a small can which stood by the mast. We were in too great agony of thirst to think of small matters of neatness. She offered the can to me.

"'Drink, yourself, Helen,' I said.

"'No,' she answered, with a smile. 'No, you need it most.' And kneeling by my side, she slipped her arm under my head, and with her other hand held the water to my lips.

"I drank eagerly. The draught was life to me. Never had water such strength-giving power. I hardly noticed that it left a queer taste upon my lips. I sat erect. Helen, with her arm still around my neck, drank what remained in the can. Then she looked me full in the face. There was a new expression in the lovely eyes; the old vague, calm look had gone. A deep flush was on her brow as she spoke:

"'Arthur,' she said, and there was a tremor in the rich, deep voice. 'Arthur, my memory has come back. No, do not speak, but hear me. The past all returned the night after that awful day when we buried those dead bodies in the sea. I now remember and understand all that you and the dear doctor said to me. I remember our parting in England; I remember John Bruce; I remember why I set out for India so suddenly. I heard that he was wounded. I thought duty called me. For I did not love him, Arthur. How could I? I had not seen him since we were children, and our fathers betrothed us. But, Arthur, a higher power than hate or love has given us to each other, and I can tell you, dear, that I love you. Oh, I love you! My darling; my noble, faithful darling! Oh, Arthur, Arthur!'

"She threw herself upon my breast with burning face and streaming eyes. The blood leaped through my veins. She raised her sweet face and our lips met for the first time.

"There was an awful crash, and our freed spirits took their happy flight together. We had drank from the can that had contained Uncle John's explosive. A little of the powder had clung to the can, floated on the water, and adhered to our lips when we drank. The impact of that first ecstatic kiss had exploded the compound and our heads were blown from our shoulders. That's all. Good-by."

The Bushwhacker's Gratitude

Kirke Munroe

1850-1930

AS WE SAT OVER our after-dinner coffee and cigars in the major's cosy library, one evening last winter, I discovered my host to be in a reminiscent mood, and ventured to ask him a question that I had frequently meditated. He smiled and was silent for a moment before answering.

"Yes, I have, as you suggest, experienced a number of what may be termed adventures since entering Uncle Sam's service. Of them all, however, I have no difficulty in recalling one that stands out pre-eminently as the most thrilling experience of my life;" and then he gave this narrative:

"Shortly after the close of the war, I was ordered to a remote section of the South, not far from the Gulf coast, to investigate certain claims against the Government that involved what, for that part of the country, was a large sum of money. As, for several reasons, it was deemed advisable that my real business there should be kept secret, I assumed the rôle of a settler, took possession of a vacant tract of land, built a two-pen log cabin, engaged a negro servant, and proceeded to explore the country with a view to making the acquaintance of my neighbors.

"The place in which I was located was remote from railroads or regular routes of travel, and was about as wild and lawless a district as could well be found east of the Mississippi. It was a limestone country, abounding in sink-holes, caverns, and underground rivers, and thickly covered with a primeval growth of timber. A few clearings at long intervals marked the fields and garden patches of its widely scattered inhabitants, who were as primitive a set of people as I had ever encountered. During the war it had been a very hot-bed of bushwhacking, and its men had plundered and killed on both sides, with a slight predilection in favor of Southerners and a bitter hatred of Yankees. Although I carefully concealed my connection with the army, and was most guarded in my remarks whenever forced to allude to the war, I could not hide the fact that I was a Northern man. On that account alone I was from the first an object of suspicion and close scrutiny to my neighbors, by most of whom my friendly overtures were received with a sullen unresponsiveness that was, to say the least, discouraging.

"My nearest neighbor was a giant of a man named Case Haffner, who, as I learned before leaving Washington, was the acknowledged leader of the district and foremost in all its deeds of deviltry. He, better than any other, could furnish me with the information I wished to acquire. For this reason I had taken up my abode as near to him as the unwritten law of the country, which

forbade neighbors to live within less than a mile of each other, allowed. In vain did I strive to cultivate his acquaintance. He would have nothing to do with me. Only by stratagem did I succeed in meeting him, when he simply ignored my presence and walked away without a word. He lived alone with his son Abner, a bright, keen-witted lad of about fifteen, the pride of his father's life and the sole object of his ambitions. With this boy I also tried to scrape an acquaintance, hoping to win the father's confidence through him, but to no purpose. He either eluded me or fled like a startled deer if by chance we met. While others of the neighborhood sought my house with a view to satisfy their curiosity, with Case Haffner and his son 'Ab,' I could hold no intercourse.

"So matters stood at the end of a month, when, late one evening, on returning from an all day's ride to a remote corner of the settlement I was overtaken by a terrific thunder storm while still some distance from home. I was accompanied by Cæsar, my negro servant, and we were on horseback. Bewildered by the storm we lost our way, and after a half hour of hopeless wandering, floundering and general discomfort I was more than thankful to discover a feeble light twinkling in the window of a log cabin.

"Receiving no response to my repeated knockings at the door, I pushed it open and entered. I had not recognized the cabin and did not know until I saw Case Haffner sitting on a stool before the great mud-chinked fire-place, that it was his. The man's face was buried in his hands, and he did not look up at my entrance, nor in any way betray a consciousness of my presence. As I glanced about the rudely-furnished room in search of Abner, my eye fell upon a bed on which lay the motionless form of the boy. The light was dim, and fancying him to be asleep, I called him by name.

"At this the man by the fire sprang to his feet, and glaring at me like a wild beast, cried out with a terrible oath that his son was dead, and for me to be gone before he killed me for intruding on his misery. Instead of obeying him I stepped to the bedside. The boy was to all appearance lifeless, but disregarding the father's protest, and making a careful examination of the body, I became convinced that the vital spark had not yet fled. He had been stricken with one of the quick fevers of that country and had apparently succumbed to it. With a slight medical knowledge gained in the army, I saw that there was still a chance of saving him. Cæsar was at once dispatched to fetch my traveling medicine case, while I heated a kettle of water. Case Haffner meantime regarding my movements with an apathetic indifference. To make a long story short, I succeeded before morning in restoring the boy to life and a healthful sleep. At the end of a week, during which I visited him daily, his recovery was assured.

"In all this time, though the father watched my every movement with a

catlike intentness, he never spoke to me if he could help it nor did he express the slightest gratitude for the service I had rendered him. Thus, when the boy was so far recovered that I had no longer an excuse for visiting the Haffners' cabin, I was apparently as far from gaining their friendship or confidence as I had been before the night of the storm.

"This state of affairs continued unchanged when at the end of three months from my arrival in that place I found my business there nearly concluded. I had established the validity of the claims I had been sent to investigate, had reported upon them, and had been ordered to settle them with the money that would be forwarded to me for that purpose. At the same time I imagined that all this business had been conducted with such secrecy as to be unsuspected by a human being beside myself and my principals in the matter. Thus thinking, I went alone, and without a feeling of insecurity, to the nearest railway station, where I expected to receive the money. It did not arrive on that day; but instead I found a cipher dispatch stating that it would be sent a week later. Accepting the situation with as good grace as possible, I purchased some provisions, placed them in the canvas bag that I had provided for the money and returned to my temporary forest home.

"Late that night I was awakened from a sound sleep by a knock at the door of my room. In answer to my inquiry of 'Who's there?' came a request in the voice of my negro man, that I would give him some medicine to relieve 'de colic misery dat was like to kill him.' As he had made similar requests, with which I had complied, several times before, I unsuspiciously opened the door.

"The candle that I had just lighted gave me a glimpse of Cæsar, with ashen face and the muzzle of a revolver pressed against his head. At the same moment a pistol was leveled at my own face and I was seized and bound by two masked men. In vain did I demand the meaning of this outrage. No answer was given, and I was led outside, while a hasty but thorough search was made of every portion of the cabin. It was, of course, a fruitless one, and after a while the two men who made it rejoined the one who was guarding me.

"Now one of them spoke, and in a voice which in spite of its disguised tone I at once recognized as that of Case Haffner said, 'You mought as well give us that money, Major, fer we're bound to have it, and the quicker you surrender it the easier we'll let you off.'

"I answered that I had no money; that it had not arrived. They replied that they knew all about my business, and that being closely watched I had been seen to bring that money, which they knew I expected to receive, home from the railway station the evening before.

"Finally their leader said: 'Well, Major, ef you are bound not to own up till we force you to, we'll have to try a dose of the Black Hole, and I reckon that'll

fetch you to terms quicker'n most anything.'

"I had heard of the Black Hole, and the suggestion thrilled me with horror. It was a pit in the lime rock reputed to be of fabulous depth and was located at some distance from my cabin in one of the most impenetrable of the forest recesses. From it, so the negroes had told me, issued uncanny moanings and groans which they attributed to the ghosts of those who they declared had been flung into it by the bushwhackers when they wished to effectually remove all traces of some of their numerous deeds of blood.

"I protested and made promises, but to no purpose. My money or the Black Hole was the only answer I received, as I was hurried away through the forest. No other word was spoken, and, left to my own bitter reflections, I took no note of the direction in which we were going, nor of the distance traversed. When we at length halted I became conscious of a hollow moaning sound that seemed to come from the earth at my feet.

"Once more the question was asked, 'Will you give in, Major, and tell us where the money is, or shall we drop you into the back door of hell?'

"I answered, 'For God's sake, gentlemen, believe me when I say that I have received no money. If I had I would gladly give it as the price of my life.'

"A mocking laugh was their only reply. In another moment a slender rope was knotted under my pinioned arms and a sudden push left me swinging helplessly in the mouth of the awful pit beside which we had halted.

"'We'll wait here just one hour, Major,' came to me in Case Haffner's voice, 'and give you a chance to consider the situation. If you decide to let us have the money inside of that time, jest holler, and we'll pull you up. If you decide to go to hell and take the greenbacks with you, why, we'll jest have ter bid you good-by, that's all.'

"Then I was slowly lowered down, down, down, through the blackness. So slow was my descent that I seemed to be suspended for hours and to sink miles into the heart of the earth. The pain of the slender cord cutting into my flesh was well-nigh intolerable, and I bear livid evidences of it to this day; with each moment the moaning, gurgling, and groaning from the unknown depths into which I was sinking became more distinct and horrible.

"Suddenly, those above let go of the rope and with a yell of despair I dropped, I do not know how far, into water that closed above my head. As I rose to the surface, choking and gasping for breath, I felt that I was being swept forward by a powerful current, and as I again sank my feet touched bottom. A moment later I stood in water up to my shoulders and again breathed freely. For some time I was confused beyond the power of thought by the hollow roar of the black waters rushing through those awful caverns. All surrounding space seemed filled with snarling, formless monsters, cautiously

advancing and making ready to spring at me. Even now I often awake at night with the horror of that moment strong upon me. It was so unendurable that I resolved to end it. It was with great difficulty that I maintained my footing. I could not do so much longer. Why should I attempt to? There was absolutely no hope of escape. I tried to pray 'Oh, Lord Jesus, receive my soul.' Then my muscles relaxed and I was swept away by the rushing torrent.

"I have no idea how far I was carried before my feet again touched bottom, this time in water that was not above my waist. I had closed my eyes. Now I opened them. A bright light was swinging to and fro not a hundred feet from me. I stared at it blankly and with little interest, only wondering with a languid curiosity what sort of a subterranean *ignis fatuus* it might be, when suddenly my bewildered senses were startled into renewed activity by the sound of a shout. It was a human voice uttering a long-drawn 'Hello-o-o!' that echoed and reechoed weirdly through the cavernous depths about me. I essayed to answer, but could not. Then I slowly made my way through the shoaling water toward the light.

"In another minute I stood beside a boy, the one whose life I had saved two months before, and as he cut the thongs that bound my arms he said cheerily:

"'It's all right, Major. Paw'lowed you'd be coming along this yere way 'bout this time o' night, en' telled me to shorely be on hand to meet up with yer. Now, ef yo'll foller me, we'll be outen this direckly.'

"The boy was standing in the mouth of a narrow passage, that, free from water, led away almost at right angles to the main channel of the underground river. It ended at a well-like opening in which stood a rude ladder, climbing this, we emerged through a well concealed trap door into the very room where Abner Haffner had laid at the point of death two months before."

"Is that all?" I asked, as the major paused and lighted a fresh cigar.

"Yes, it's all of that story. I could not cause the arrest of the gang, even had I known who composed it, without causing that of their leader, and from the moment that blessed light illumined the black waters of that underground river I would not have harmed Case Haffner for anything the world holds best worth having. No; by daylight I was well out of that section of country, nor have I ever since set foot in it."

"Have you ever heard again from that boy?"

"Who, Abner? Well, I should say I had. I put him through college, and he is in Congress to-day. If I should tell you his real name you would instantly recognize it as that of one of the smartest men ever sent to Washington from the far South."

The End of All

Nym Crinkle

Andrew Carpenter Wheeler, 1835-1903

THE DIFFICULTY that I experience in complying with your request, dear spirit, springs from the terrestrial limitations of thought and expression, from which, as you may well know, I have not been long enough with you to free myself.

I shall, however, give you a plain narrative of the events attending the extinction of life on our planet, asking you only to remember that I am doing it just as I would have done it, were it possible, for a fellow human being while on earth, using the phraseology and the terrestrial time divisions with which I am most familiar.

The circumstance which at our last intercourse I was trying to explain to you was simply this: In the early summer of the year 1892 a sudden interruption of navigation occurred on the Pacific coast, which, curiously enough, attracted very little attention outside of scientific circles. I was living at the house of my wealthy friend, Judge Brisbane, in Gramercy Park. To tell you the truth, I was in love with his beautiful daughter, of whom I shall have to speak more fully to you, for she was intimately associated with me in the appalling scenes which you desire me to describe.

I was sitting in the Judge's library on the night of June 25. His daughter was present, and I had been conversing with her in an undertone while the Judge read the evening papers. He suddenly laid down the paper, took off his spectacles, and, turning round in his chair, said to me: "Did you see the brief dispatch in the morning papers two days ago from San Francisco, saying that all the eastern-bound vessels were overdue on that coast?"

I replied at once that I had not noticed it.

"It is astonishing," he said, "that in our present system of journalism the most important events connected with the welfare of mankind receive the slightest attention from the newspapers, and the trivialities of life are most voluminously treated. A movement in the iron trade that affects millions of homes gets a brief paragraph in small type, and the quarrel of a ballet girl with her paramour receives illuminated attention down whole columns. Here is something taking place in the Pacific Ocean of surpassing interest to the race, and nobody pays the slightest attention to it except, perhaps, the consignees and shipping clerks."

"What is it?" we both asked, with the languid interest that young people, having an overmastering personal affair on hand, would be apt to take in matters of national or universal importance.

The Judge got up, and going to a side table, where he kept his papers piled in chronological order, pulled out a recent issue of a morning journal, and after looking it over searchingly a moment, said:

"Here. I should think you would notice such a paragraph as this." Then he read, as I recollect, a telegraphic dispatch to this effect:

"San Francisco, June 23.—Considerable anxiety is felt here in commercial circles by the non-arrival of any eastward-bound vessels for a week. The steamship Cathay of the Occidental Line is overdue four days. An unusual easterly wind has been blowing for twenty-four hours. Weather mild.

"That dispatch, you will perceive," said the Judge, "was sent two days ago. Now here, on the 25th, I read in the evening paper another dispatch from San Francisco, hidden away at the bottom of a column of commercial news. Listen to this:

"San Francisco, June 25.—The entire suspension of travel from the West continues to excite the gravest apprehensions. Nothing but coastwise vessels have come in during the past eight days. The U. S. cruiser Mobile left Honolulu three weeks ago for this coast. There is no official intimation of a storm in the Chinese seas."

The Judge laid the paper down, and regarded us both a moment in silence, as if expecting to hear some remark that indicated our suddenly awakened curiosity.

I don't think we responded with any adequate interest to the occasion. Miss Brisbane did, indeed, stare at her father in her dreamy, abstracted way a moment, and then got up, and, going to the open window, began to arrange the curtains, as if relinquishing whatever problem there was to the superior acumen of the masculine mind.

I think I said that it looked as if there had been a cyclone somewhere, and if there had we should in all probability get the accounts of it soon enough.

"But, young man," replied the Judge, with his majesterial emphasis, "cyclones do not extend from the fiftieth degree of north latitude to the fortieth degree of south latitude, and vessels are due at San Francisco from Melbourne and Japan."

"What, then, other than a storm at sea could have caused a detention of all these vessels?" I asked, and I must have unwittingly betrayed in the tone of my voice, or the expression of my face, that considerate superciliousness with which youth regards the serious notions of mature philosophers, for the Judge, putting his gold spectacles upon his nose, and regarding me over the top of them a moment, said rather severely:

"Other than the known and regular phenomena of this planet do not interest young men. If I could answer your question there would be no special

interest in the matter."

I mention these trivial incidents because, insignificant as they may seem, they were the first ripples of that disaster which was soon enough to overwhelm us all, and to show you what were the only premonitions the world had of the events which were to follow.

On June 26, the subject did not occur to me. A hundred other things of far more immediate consequence to me occupied my attention. A young man who is preparing to get married is not apt to take somber views of anything. Nor is he very apt to allow the contumacy of age in his prospective father-in-law to aggravate him. It was a pardonable freak, I thought, in a man who had retired in most respects from the active world, to dogmatize a little about that world now that he judged it through his favorite evening paper. When, therefore, on the night of the 26th, while at the tea-table, the Judge broke out again about the meteorological wave on the Pacific coast, his daughter Kate and I exchanged a rapid but furtive glance which said, in the perfect understanding of lovers, "There comes the old gentleman's new hobby again, and we can well afford to treat it leniently."

The Judge had the damp evening paper in his hand, and he disregarded the steaming cup of tea which his daughter had poured for him.

"Well," he said, with a toss of self-satisfied import. "Now the newspapers are waking up to the significance of the California news." He then read from the paper, as nearly as I can recollect, something like the following:

San Francisco, June 26.—There is an intense and growing anxiety on this coast with respect to the non-appearance of any eastward-bound vessels. The breeze from the east continues, and is unprecedented.

"Now, I should like to know," said the Judge, as he laid down the paper and took up his tea-cup, "why a breeze from the east in California should be unprecedented."

"Because," I ventured to remark, "it usually blows from the sea at this season."

"Nonsense," exclaimed the Judge with vigor. "A variation for a few days in wind or weather is a common occurrence everywhere. Fancy a message sent all over the world from the West Indies that the trade winds were six days late, or a telegram from Minnesota that the winter frosts had been interfered with for a week by pleasant sunshine. No, sir. The event of importance to the Californian at this moment is the mysterious something that has happened out at sea, and there is no excuse for his associating a summer breeze from the east with it, except that there is something peculiar about that breeze that associates it in the mind with the predominant mystery."

I smiled. "You will pardon me, Judge, but it seems to me," I said, "that you

are trying to invest the whole affair with an occult significance that is subjective. I suppose that in a few hours the matter will be explained and forgotten."

In a moment we were in one of those foolish little wrangles in which, so far as argument is concerned, the younger man is at a great disadvantage, when the elder, however unreasonable his claims, enforces them with the advantage of age and position. I remember that the desire to convince Kate on the one hand that I was free from what I conceived to be her father's unreasonableness, and sustain my independence of views on the other hand, led me to say much more than was polite, for I exasperated the old gentleman, and with a curt and not altogether complimentary remark he got up and left the room.

The moment he was gone I turned to the daughter and laughingly said: "Well, my dear, I am afraid I have offended your father without intending it, but you at least understand me, and are free from his superstition."

To my surprise she regarded me with a serious air, and replied: "I do not know what you mean by superstition. My father believes that something has happened, and I feel that he is right."

"You do not mean to tell me," I said, "that you believe anything has happened that can concern us?"

She made no reply. I looked at her with some astonishment, and wondered if I had offended her by opposing her father's childish views.

"Perhaps," I persisted, "you, too, think I am stupidly unreasonable because I will not consent to be dishonestly chimerical."

I well remember the look of sad reproach with which she silently regarded me, and I well remember, too, the thought that came into my mind. I said to myself: "This is the same obduracy that her father has shown. Odd it is that I never noticed the trait in her before." Then I added, with an equal obduracy that I was not conscious of:

"Perhaps you, too, have discovered some peculiarity of good sense in me that is offensive, and you are afraid that something will happen if we——"

Here she interrupted me in her quiet, resolute, and reproachful way.

"Something has happened," she said.

I was amazed. If I had suddenly discovered that the woman I loved was unfaithful to me it could not have produced, in my frame of mind at that moment, a greater shock. It seemed to me then that the wooing of months, the confidence and affection of a year, were to be sacrificed in a moment of infatuated stubbornness. The very thought was so unnatural that it produced a revulsion in my own feelings.

"My darling," I said, as I went toward her impulsively, "we are playing the

unworthy part of fools. Nothing can ever happen that will make us love each other less, or prevent you from being my wife."

I put my arm around her in the old familiar way. She was passive and irresponsive. She stood there, limply holding the curtain, with one white arm upraised, her beautiful head bent over and her eyes cast down so that I could not look into her face. This stony obduracy was so new and unlike her that I withdrew my arm and stepped back a little to regard her with astonishment, not unmingled with pique. At that moment she lifted her head slowly, and as she looked at me with a dreamy and far-away pathos I saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"It seems to me," she said, with a voice that sounded as if it was addressed to an invisible phantom way beyond me. "It seems to me that I shall never be your wife!"

I must have stared at her several seconds in silence. Then I said:

"You are ill. You are not yourself. When you have recovered your normal condition I will come back."

I snatched a kiss from her lips, that were strangely cold, and rushed from the house.

It was not till the next morning, when I woke up after a short and disturbed sleep, that my mind reverted to the cause of all this purely sentimental disagreement, and I felt a strong desire to have events prove that the Judge was slightly monomaniacal, and that I was right. I went to Riccadonnas' for my breakfast and got all the morning papers, as usual, but this time with a distinct confidence that the news would be the best vindication of my good sense, and that I should yet have a good laugh at the Judge.

I opened the paper as I sipped my coffee, and the first thing my eyes fell on were the headlines of a dispatch from St. Louis. I read them with an inexplicable sense of something sinking in me. As I recall them they ran as follows:

"Strange news from the West. All communication west of Salt Lake City ceases. Meteorological puzzle. What is the matter with the wires?"

Then followed the dispatch, which I have not forgotten:

St. Louis, June 26, 8 P. M.—A dispatch received here from Yuma on the Texas Pacific announces that no eastern-bound train has come in since morning, and all attempts to open communication by telegraph with points west of that place have failed. It is the opinion of railroad men that a great storm is raging in California. Weather here pleasant, with a steady, dry wind from the east blowing.

Immediately following this was another news item which I can quote from memory:

Denver, June 26, 9 P. M.—Intelligence from Cheyenne is to the effect that railway travel and telegraphic communication west of Pocatello on the Union Pacific and Ogden and on the Central Pacific have been interrupted by a storm. The telegraph wires are believed to be in good condition, but up to nine o'clock there has been no return current.

I read these paragraphs over three or four times. Ordinarily I should have passed them by and given my attention to other and more congenial news. But now a dull fear that events were conspiring to widen the breach between myself and the Brisbanes focussed my interest on them. There was that easterly wind blowing again; was I, too, growing superstitious? I turned over all the papers. The news was the same in all, but there was not an editorial paragraph of comment in any of the sheets, which, indeed, teamed with all the details of active commercial, political, and social life.

I went down town after eating my breakfast and found that the intelligence had not awakened any public attention that was observable. The two or three persons to whom I spoke with regard to it treated it as one of the passing sensations of the hour that would be explained sooner or later. It was not till the evening papers of the 27th came out that the matter began to be discussed. The dispatches in these papers were of a nature to arouse widespread anxiety. It was very obvious from their construction and import that the feeling west of the Mississippi was more intense than had up to this time been suspected. The columns of the papers were filled with brief but rather startling telegrams from various points. Denver, El Paso, Salt Lake City, Cheyenne, St. Paul, St. Louis, and Chicago sent anxious sentences which had a thrill of trepidation in their broken phrases. And it was easy to see that this feeling of deep concern increased with each dispatch from a point further west.

Telegrams sent to St. Louis, Chicago, and St. Paul represented the condition of anxiety in Ogden and Pocatello to be bordering on excitement. Fears were entertained, the dispatches said, of a "meteorological cataclysm," and thousands who had friends either on the coast or in transit were besieging the telegraph offices in vain.

The hurried comments of the evening papers on the news were singularly unsatisfactory and non-committal. "The unprecedented storm that is now raging on the Pacific slope," I read, "and which has temporarily cut off communications with the far West, will by its magnitude fill the country with the most serious apprehensions." "The earliest news from California, which shall give us the details of the storm," said another paper, "will be looked for with eagerness, and will be promptly and fully furnished to our readers."

As curious as anybody could be to know what kind of a storm it was that

had stopped railroad travel from Idaho to Mexico, and remarking with surprise that the Signal Office utterly refused to recognize a great storm anywhere, I dismissed the subject from my mind with the reflection that there would in all probability be explanatory news in the morning, and resolved to make my usual visit to the Brisbane family.

To my surprise, Kate received me cordially, and with no other allusion to the unpleasantness of the night before than a demure remark that she was afraid she had offended me.

"Let us not refer to it at all," I said, "and thus avoid making idiots of ourselves."

"I am glad you came to-night," she remarked, after a moment's silence, "for I wanted to tell you of the change we are going to make."

A little pang darted through me. It was said so seriously.

"What is it, my dear," I asked, trying to be as affectionate as if the conditions had not changed.

"My father and I have determined to go to Europe."

"To Europe!" I repeated, aghast. "You surely do not mean it?"

"Yes," resolutely. "He wanted to consult you about it, but was afraid you would disagree with his plans."

"And when did he make up his mind to take this sudden move?"

"This morning."

"And you intend to go with him?"

"Yes, and I was going to ask you to go, too."

"When do you propose to go?"

"Immediately."

It was evident to my mind now that this old man was a panic-stricken monomaniac, and had infected his daughter with his fears.

"Kate," I said, as I took her by her hands and pulled her to the sofa beside me, "you are running away from something; it is not from me, is it?"

"I want you to go with us," she answered.

"But you knew when you asked me that I could not go so suddenly. You expected me to refuse."

"No," she said, "I expect you to consent."

"Be careful. In a moment of bravado I may take you at your word, at any cost!"

She caught hold of me. "Do," she said, tremulously, and I felt a little shiver in her hand. "Do, do."

"I would rather go with you than lose you," I said at a hazard, "and if you are determined to go, I believe I will accompany you if your father will consent."

"We are determined," she calmly replied.

"But I must put my affairs in order," I suggested.

"How many hours will it take you?"

"Hours?" I repeated. "You would not like to start to-night, surely?"

"Yes," she answered, "I would gladly start to-night."

My patience was giving way very fast at this imperturbable obduracy. "Perhaps," I said, "you will give me some adequate reason for a haste that I cannot comprehend."

She did not answer. She was listening, with her head averted, and she held up her hand for me to listen also, as if that were her answer. Then there came through the open window the hoarse cry of a distant newsboy who was bellowing an "extra."

There was something weird in her attitude and action, connecting, as they did, her motives with that discordant, ominous cry.

"It's an extra," I said, as unconcernedly as possible. "I'll get a copy. There may be some good news for you," and I made a move toward the window.

"Don't," she said, quietly. "We were talking about going to Europe. Pa is not familiar with the business of securing passages, and you are. You could relieve him of a great deal of worry, and if you would go with us——"

"Kate," I said, "do you want me to go?"

"Yes, I do," she replied. "I do not want to leave you here."

"Then," I said, "I will go. I will see your father in the morning and tell him that I will attend to the whole business of securing passages. I will set about arranging my affairs at once."

She then let me plague her a little about her timidity, and after a half hour of playful badinage on my part I came away, with a parting promise on my lips to lose no delay in making the arrangements for our departure.

Such, however, was not my intention. I felt sure that the Judge and his daughter would change their minds if I could only manage to delay matters a few days. To go running off to Europe at a moment's notice would be utter folly for me.

As I left the house I heard the voices of the newsboys in various keys still calling the extras. I bought a paper and read it under the gaslight of the church on Twentieth Street. "Display" headlines announced, "As Silent as the Grave; Nothing Heard from the Pacific. Great Excitement in Chicago and St. Louis." I must have stood there ten minutes poring over the strange news. An expedition in a special train had been sent west from Yuma that day, with railroad men and doctors. It had left at 3 P. M. The train reached Mesquite in less than an hour, and word was sent back from that station, "All right here; track clear; will reach the springs at 9 P. M." A dispatch from Yuma sent at 10

o'clock and received at St. Louis said, "Nothing further heard from the special." News from Chicago, where the excitement appeared to be momentarily growing, reflected intelligence from Denver, St. Paul, and Kansas City, and it was vain to ignore the fact that the entire West was in an alarming condition of anxiety. A special train was fitting out at Cheyenne under Government orders to start in the morning with a corps of Signal Service men, army officers, and electricians. It was to go provided with every scientific appliance, and to carry an insulated cable to be paid out from the car. The accounts said that the people were all on the streets in Cheyenne, and an enormous mob surrounded the station where the preparations were making.

For the first time I felt, as I threw the paper away, what I can only call a sense of misgiving. As I walked up the deserted avenue this feeling grew upon me, and when I reached Twenty-third Street, on my way to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, a sudden and entirely new reflection made me stop unconsciously as I turned it over in my mind. "If this strange news has affected Judge Brisbane and his daughter so seriously, why may it not be affecting millions of other people similarly? If there is at this moment a panic in the West, how long will it take the reflex wave to reach New York?"

The next morning events, or at least the publication of them, had reached that condition which arrests public attention everywhere. The news from the West swamped all else in the morning journals. The editors, by their work, now acknowledged that the mysterious silence on the Pacific Slope was by far the most important subject for consideration before the world. The moment I glanced at the sheets I saw that there was but one theme in the journalistic mind.

Two days had passed, and the silence was unbroken. Never before in the history of the world had the absence of news become such important news. Public attention was now mainly centered on the attempt to get a train of observation through from Cheyenne.

There was a hopeful spirit to most of the accounts, as if it was believed that science would unravel the mystery. But there was nothing from any quarter of the globe that as yet afforded the feeblest gleam of comfort. The Government train was to start early on this, the morning of the 28th, and the papers were only able to furnish details of the preparation and reports of the public excitement in Cheyenne and Denver. The officers on the train were to send dispatches from every station west of Pocatello. They were sagacious, experienced men, and the expedition was under the direction of the well-known engineer, General Albert Carrall.

I felt as I read the accounts that these men would probably clear up the mystery, and I resolved to delay engaging the passages on the ocean steamer

until the next day. So I wrote a carefully worded note to Judge Brisbane, informing him that I would attend to the matter immediately. Had I then had the slightest knowledge of the cumulative rapidity with which a panic moves I would not have taken this risk. But my whole object was to gain time, with the hope that something would occur to change the minds of my two timid friends.

On the night of the 28th I avoided the Brisbane establishment, although my desire drew me in that direction. I resolved to wait until the morrow, and if nothing happened to change the determination of the Judge to go to Europe, to then make my arrangements to go with him and Kate. That night there was a visible change in the metropolis. The theaters were deserted, men and women were congregated at the corners and were walking in the roadways—a sure indication in a great city of some popular disturbance. The bulletins and news centers were crowded, and the mystery of the great silence was being discussed by everybody. One thing struck everybody with a vague terror, and it was the accounts of the strange wind that was now blowing at Cheyenne and Denver. One special correspondent at Cheyenne said "that it seemed to him that the atmosphere of the earth, influenced by some incomprehensible suction, was all rushing to an unseen vortex. It was not in any sense a disturbance of the atmosphere that we usually call a wind, but a steady, silent draught. And the spectacle of trees bent over and held all day by the pressure, but unfluttered and unrelieved by fluctuant variations, filled them with wonder and dread."

I got up early on the morning of the 29th, for I had slept lightly and fitfully. To my surprise I found that almost everybody else was up. It made me realize, as I had not done before, the feverish tension of public expectation. The news, if news it can be called, was startling. Let me try and repeat it to you just as it was presented to my sense. The special train, upon which the eyes of the whole country were fixed, had been heard from. It had gone west from Cheyenne and passed through Pocatello without interruption. Then followed the dispatches received from it at Cheyenne as it passed the stations beyond Pocatello. They were in this order and to this effect:

Michano, 10 A. M.—All right. Instruments working well. Track clear. Inhabitants appear to be moving east. No intelligence of a definite character obtained. Shoshone 108 miles west. Expect to make it in four hours.

Bannock, 2:30 P. M.—Conditions unchanged. Passed moving settlers all the way. They are going east with chattels. Wind from the east has the pressure without the violence of a gale. Party in good spirits.

Sunshine, 3:15.—Vast herds of wild cattle now impeding progress. Wind increasing. Road otherwise clear.

American Falls, 4:40.—Signs of the exodus decreasing. Country strewn with household goods. Reports here that all the teams that went out on the roads west have not returned. Expect to hear something definite from Minidoka.

Minidoka, 6:10.—Electrical and barometrical indications unchanged. Signs of life disappearing. Party in excellent spirits, and eager to reach the facts.

The next dispatch was from Cheyenne, and was sent at eight o'clock. It simply said, "Nothing further heard from Government party. Wire in good order."

Then followed two telegrams of gruesome brevity and significance:

Pocatello, 9 P. M.—Nothing here.

Cheyenne, 10 P. M.—Nothing has come over the special wire up to this hour. Microphonic tests at Pocatello indicate that the train is still moving. Electrical tests indicate that the current is unbroken.

Finally there was a special message from the New York *Star's* correspondent at Cheyenne, dated 11 P. M. It was about to this effect:

The current on the Government wire was broken at 10:40. Delicate tests show that the wire is now grounded. The dire conclusion of experts here is that the train ran from some point west of Minidoka from about 6:15 to 10:40 without human control, and then met with an accident. At the rate at which it was moving the train must have reached Shoshone. Terrible excitement here.

My keen sense detected in the newspaper itself certain infallible little signs that the news had disturbed the precision and routine of the office. Lines of type were in the wrong place, and typographical errors made it difficult to get the exact sense. Dispatch after dispatch, all bearing the same import of panic, was huddled into the column. From St. Louis the announcement was:

An unprecedented excitement here over the news from Cheyenne. The authorities appear to have lost their heads, and are unable to preserve order. Eastward-bound trains are carrying away people at a mob rate. We are in the midst of chaos.

From Chicago the intelligence was similarly appalling. "A panic prevails here," said the dispatch. "Impelled by a senseless apprehension of disaster, people have lost their reason. The Mayor has just issued a call upon the best citizens to assist him in preserving order."

It required no news expert to see that all the issues of life were temporarily suspended by the tremendous and growing interest in this stupendous mystery. Channels of news worn smooth by the placid streams of everyday platitudes began to show the roll of this new freshet. A dispatch from Washington was unintentionally significant. It read like this: "The only explanation forwarded by Colonel Sandford of the abandonment of the Pike's Peak signal station by himself and party is that of a coward. He says the wind pressure indicated that the place would speedily become untenable."

I turned over the sheet in which these disheartening facts were presented and looked at the editorial page. There was a double-leaded leader, evidently written late at night, and its conclusions were more gruesome than the facts, for while the facts could be interpreted in various ways according to the reader's condition of mind, there was no mistaking the official tone of the editor whose business it was to weigh and estimate the public value of news. It seemed to me that this umpire to whom we instinctively looked for opinions had thrown up the sponge, so to speak. Let me recall his words as they were impressed upon me that morning:

That a grave crisis has arrived in the conditions of life on this planet, it would be folly and is impossible any longer to deny. It is not our province nor is it within our power to offer any solution of the stupendous mystery that is now enveloping a part of our continent. It is only imperative upon us, as brave agents in the dispensing of truth, to say, with all the candor that we can summon, that the effort of the Government to open communication with the vast region west of what must now be known as the Meridian of Silence has dismally failed, and it is the conviction of the maturest judgment, based upon all the facts of the attempt that are obtainable, that it failed because the explorers themselves ceased to exist when they had passed a certain pretty well-defined line which we now know extends north and south from Helena in Montana to Yuma on the borders of Mexico.

I found myself standing by my breakfast table reading this. I had risen unconsciously. My breakfast was unheeded. An ungovernable impulse to go anywhere seized me. To sit still with this crushing uncertainty was impossible. I found myself in a coupé. Where I got it I do not distinctly remember. But I do remember that it was by means of an extraordinary offer to the driver, who, like all his fellows, was dashing through the streets at a headlong pace. And I also have a very clear recollection of the strange nervous effect produced upon me by seeing the people along the curbs on Broadway watching the flying vehicles with a mute terror, as if the very recklessness of the drivers afforded

them a palpable distraction from the unintelligible weight of their own fears. I speedily noticed that the stream of humanity on the streets was tending down town, and almost immediately I understood that it was heading, like myself, for the news centers. I could get no farther than Chambers Street, owing to the block of people and vehicles, and the driver rudely refused to take the risk of a jam. I looked at the City Hall clock. It was only eight. My heart was beating rapidly, and I knew enough of the effect of emotion on the cardiac system to understand that it was caused by suspense. A thousand new terrors were in the air of which the experience and the sagacity of man were ignorant. I forced my way with the greatest difficulty across the park, which was full of restless but strangely mute people, and got near enough to the newspaper bulletins to read the painted lines. They were feverishly indicative of the cross currents of excitement in the country, and were in short, decisive sentences like this: "The President asked to appoint a day of humiliation and prayer immediately. The Governor of Colorado, crazed by the excitement, commits suicide. Mob rule in Chicago. Rioting in Denver. Breakdown of the Alton & Chicago road. Unparalleled scenes at El Paso. Fanaticism in New Orleans. The Christian pastors of this city will meet at Cooper Union at ten o'clock, irrespective of sect. Panic in Milwaukee."

Held by a numbing sort of fascination, I read these sentences over and over. Across Printing House Square, on another bulletin, in big black letters I saw the line, "It baffles the world. Has annihilation set in!" There was something weird in the use of the pronoun IT. It seemed to be man's last effort in language to express a mystery that was specific and yet incomprehensible, and I found that by the common consent of ignorance men were referring to the phenomenon as IT. I looked at the strained, anxious faces of the mob, and a great fear fell upon me. With it came an awful reproach. I would go instantly and redeem my word to Kate by securing passages to Europe. I had to fight my way by inches out of the stolid and frightened crowd to the steamship office on lower Broadway, and there I found another jam. The street was full of private carriages, and it was impossible to get anywhere near the entrance to the office. I saw a policeman who was on the outside of the press, and who was walking up and down in a restless and unofficial manner. "What is the matter here?" I asked him. He looked me all over, as if he suspected that I had fallen out of the clouds. Then he said: "Tryin' to get tickets for Europe! Where d' you come frum?" and then, after a restless turn or two he added as he passed me, "But it ain't no use, 'cause there ain't steamships enough in the world!"

Then it was, I think, that the whole terrible truth first lit my consciousness like the sudden upflaring of a bale fire. The inhabitants were fleeing from the

country. They were all affected as had been the Brisbanes. I was the only dolt and idiot and liar who had no instincts of danger, and who had failed to rescue the woman I loved when she had appealed to me.

Then I plunged wildly out into the street with a feeling of desperation and that sinking of the spirits that comes only in the worst crises and when one begins to comprehend how helpless man is. I saw that in the brief time that had elapsed a change had taken place in the aspect of the crowds. When I got to Broadway again it was with the utmost difficulty that I could make my way at all against the surging mass of people that seemed momentarily to swell. It was utterly unlike any crowd in numbers and disposition that I had ever encountered. It was made up of all classes. It had lost that American characteristic of good-humor, which had been swallowed up in a dire personal and selfish instinct of self-preservation. It was animated by a vague terror, and disregarded every consideration but that of personal safety. A horrible conviction seized me that the ordinary restraints of society were breaking down, and that speedily panic would mount to chaos. I saw that this dread was adding to the terror of everybody, aside from the fear of IT. Like an assemblage in a burning building, the fear of each other was more subtile and operative than the fear of the elements. By indefatigable labor I got off the main thoroughfare and reached Hudson Street, and here in the crowd I learned the latest news and discovered the cause of the rapidly increasing excitement. I had run against an intimate friend and associate, by accident. His first words were, as he wiped the perspiration out of his eyes, "Well, this is awful, eh?"

"What's the news?" I asked.

"The latest is that The Death Line has moved. The Thurbers have a private wire, and I just heard that Denver is cut off now! It looks as if it was every man for himself."

So terrible was this announcement, and so engrossed was I with the despairing thoughts that it gave rise to, that I took little heed of what was going on about me until I reached Canal Street. The one dull conviction that it was useless to fight against now was that annihilation had set in; that some destroying wave had started out to encircle the globe and that the race was doomed. Something, God alone knew what, had happened to our planet, and humanity was to be swept away in one of those cataclysms with which soulless Nature prepares for a new order of existence.

I was rudely awakened from this reverie of wretchedness by the crowd which surged against me with a blind, unvindictive violence. My one desire was to get uptown to the woman I loved and had neglected, and I saw that every minute was adding to the difficulty.

How I reached the Brevoort House I do not know. But there I found a

number of citizens who had not utterly lost their heads, and who had come together for counsel. There was a private wire in the house, and they were receiving intelligence from several central points in the city. The looks of these men, who were huddled into the parlor, were enough to dismay the most resolute observer. Their pale faces and painfully set mouths indicated the sense of an awful crisis which wisdom did not know how to meet or avoid. A well-known citizen read the dispatches to them as they were received, and torn as I was by impatience, my curiosity held me there to hear. It was now about half-past eleven in the morning. The rapidity with which events had moved since I got up was made startlingly apparent by the information here furnished. The authorities, together with a number of influential citizens, had come together as if by a common instinct at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. The Mayor, the Police and Fire Commissioners, several wealthy bankers, and a number of prominent clergymen were holding some kind of council and sending out appeals for co-operation and addresses to the public, which latter were entirely unheeded. As I forced myself into the room I saw and heard a venerable and majestic gentleman, evidently a clergyman, addressing those present in an impassioned manner. There were tears in his eyes and an awful sadness in his voice. "Men and brethren," he said, "it is appointed unto all men once to die. If it be appointed unto us who remain to die together, let us die like Christians who still retain our faith in eternal justice and eternal mercy, and not like wild beasts that devour each other."

A report came that the fatal east wind was blowing. And at this there was a general movement of those present, as if the time were too short to waste in longer listening. I came up Lafayette Place to Astor Place with the intention of reaching Fourth Avenue. Both spaces were choked with people, and on Eighth Street I saw a woman on the steps of a private residence, wildly calling on the mob, which paid no attention to her, to repent, for the day of judgment was at hand. Her white hair was blown over her face and her arms were frantically gesticulating. Into the great hall of the Cooper Union a mass of religious people had flocked, and a number of speakers were making addresses and offering up prayers. When I passed the woman who was exhorting the crowd I had noticed the manner in which her hair, which was of soft, flossy white, streamed out straight in front of her, but it did not occur to me until I reached the square in front of the Cooper Union that this was caused by the peculiar and ominous draft of wind from the east of which I had heard so much, for it was there that I saw a crowd pointing up to the roof of the vast building known as the Bible House, which appeared to be covered with people. Some of them were holding flags and drapery, and the material floated out westward without any of the undulating motion which always marks a flag in a disturbed current. These

extemporized pennants stood out as if they were starched. I could see that this sign produced a dumb sort of terror in the crowd. It seemed to me then that all emotion of which I was capable was centered in the one desire to get to the woman I loved and die with her. A crushing and at the same time an animating remorse, as if somehow I had been responsible for her death at least, in disregarding her warnings, and somehow doubly guilty in mistrusting her motives, unmanned me and inflamed me. It was with something of the same disregard of everybody but oneself that I had seen in others that I fought my way to Twenty-first Street. What brutalities I committed need not be recounted. That hour remains with me an acute and jangled memory of frenzy. I reached the steps of Judge Brisbane's house torn and bleeding. The terrible scenes were in my eyes, and the dreadful, monotonous tumult of human desperation—that vast sigh of doomed humanity, pierced here and there by the wails and shrieks of despair and the cries of innocence for help, was in my ears. The celerity with which it had all come on left no chance for cool reason. An invisible phantom was at the heels of the community and we were part of a mighty stampede. After fumbling for an instant at the bell and pushing back several ghastly creatures who were on the steps, I must have applied my shoulder to the door and pushed it in. Some one appeared to be resisting on the other side, but it gave way and I half fell into Judge Brisbane's vestibule. An instant later we were looking into each other's faces, I, bloody and soiled and ragged and wild with the frenzy of fear and impatience; he, pale as death, but resolute, and holding an enormous bar over me.

"Quick!" he said. "Help me fasten this door!"

That sudden call of duty struck something habitual in me, and, without knowing exactly what I was doing, I found myself assisting him in barricading the door. The endeavor somewhat changed the current of my thoughts from the danger that was unseen to the danger that was storming under our windows. I must have muttered some kind of excuse for my conduct to the Judge, for he said: "No time for apologies or recriminations now. The house is full of my neighbors, who have come here for protection. Go upstairs and look after the women. The best and only thing we can do is to preserve a quiet place to die in, and not be trampled to pieces. Are you armed?"

I dashed up the broad staircase, and found the upper rooms occupied by women, some of whom, in morning attire hastily thrown on, were sitting around with their heads in their hands, while others were huddled at the windows, staring with strained looks of terror at the crowds on the street. Walking up and down the room, wringing his hands, a middle-aged man was giving expression to the most terrible irony and cowardice, without reference to his listeners.

I ran my eye over the huddled groups of frightened women. The one I sought was not there. I flew through the groaning figures on the stairway up to her chamber. I knocked loudly, and called her by name passionately. Then I listened. I heard nothing but the dull sounds of the human tumult that came through the open casement, and the sighing tones of the telegraph wires as the steady draft from the east swept through them. I shook the door, and abjured her to come to me. Then in my madness I burst it in. She was on her knees at the bed, with her hands on her ears, and her head buried in the bedclothes. I fell down on my knees beside her, and put my arm around her. "Kate," I said, "we will die together. Look up. Love at least is eternal." She was cold. I caught her head between my hands, and turned her beautiful face toward me. My God, she was dead! Dead, with her staring eyes full of terror, and her beautiful mouth set in hard and ghastly lines. Then it was that I felt rise up within me for the first time the rebellious bitterness of the natural man. Need I tell you that at such moments man is little better than an animal, save in his free agency that enables him to defy? I passed hours there—moaning, cursing, bewailing. When at last the force of the paroxysm had expended itself, I shook my fist in the face of heaven, with the obduracy of Pagan Greek, and said: "Come on now, you envious Fates, and do your worst speedily, or I will be too quick for you!"

Judge Brisbane found me there, raving.

"Do you know?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "and I am grateful. She is spared much that we must endure."

"And so," I said, "life, love, and the vaunted future of the race end in mockery."

"It seems so," he replied. "But we cannot be sure. Come with me."

We ascended to the roof. The spectacle that greeted us was indescribable. The tops of all the houses were black with people, who were staring mutely and with childish terror into the West. The steady, subdued organ tone of the rushing atmosphere could now be heard above all else. We stood there in silence a few moments, and then I said, "It's terrible. What do you suppose is taking place?"

"I suppose," replied the Judge, "that we are losing our atmosphere. Reeling it off, so to speak, slowly, as we revolve. Our planet has entered some portion of the ethereal space where the conditions are sucking us dry of oxygen. As it recedes from the earth the water disappears, and we shall be left to revolve like the moon, without air and without liquid, and consequently without life."

He said this meditatively, less as if he were answering my question than if he were formulating his own fears.

"Then," I remarked, "if this takes place gradually, the millions have got to struggle and writhe and fight together in suffocation. We can at least blow our brains out and cheat such a fate."

"I should hate," said the Judge, "to think that the man who was to marry Kate had not the bravery to face his destiny."

That was all that was said. We came down, and some ripples of intelligence reached us during the afternoon from one or two persons who made their way into the house. We learned that in the frenzy of fear the populace were committing the most extraordinary excesses. The shore line of the Atlantic was crowded with people, many of whom plunged into the ocean in the vain attempt to get away. The scenes in the city were too revolting to narrate, for a large class of the community, released from all restraint of moral and civil law, were bent on securing all the lawless pleasures that force could command, during the few hours that was left to them. And the line was steadily coming East. Chicago was cut off at twelve o'clock. And at four intelligence had ceased coming from Buffalo. At this time the sound of the winds was like the roar of the sea. I had torn myself away from the window where I had been staring at the now packed and struggling masses of people, and had locked myself in the room with the dead body of Kate. There was a vial of opium on her table that had been used for neuralgia; I swallowed it, and sat down by the bedside. I know not how long I remained there. But a loud report, as of a discharged cannon, roused me. I remember staggering and panting in the dark, with a semi-consciousness that the end had come, and I now know that report was occasioned by the bursting of the drums of my ears.

I remember nothing more. I have given you a plain statement of my experiences in that crisis, and I dare say they are uneventful enough by the side of the experiences of millions.

Shall He Marry Her?

Anna Katherine Green.

1846-1935

WHEN I MET TAYLOR at the club the other night, he looked so cheerful I scarcely knew him.

"What is it?" cried I, advancing with outstretched hand.

"I am going to be married," was his gay reply. "This is my last night at the club."

I was glad, and showed it. Taylor is a man for whom domestic life is a necessity. He has never been at home with us, though we all liked him and he, in his way, liked us.

"And who is the fortunate lady?" I inquired; for I had been out of town for some time and had not as yet been made acquainted with the latest society news.

"My intended bride is Mrs. Walworth, the young widow——"

He must have seen a change take place in my expression, for he stopped.

"You know her, of course," he added, after a short study of my face.

I had by this time regained my self-possession.

"Of course," I repeated, "and I have always thought her one of the most attractive women in town. Another shake upon it, old man?"

But my heart was heavy and my mind perplexed, notwithstanding the forced cordiality of my tones, and I took an early opportunity to withdraw by myself and think over the situation.

Mrs. Walworth! She was a pretty woman, and what was more, she was, to all appearance, a woman whose winning manners bespoke a kindly heart. "Just the person," I contemplated, "whom I would pick out for the helpmate of my somewhat exacting friend, if——" I paused on that if. It was a formidable one, and grew none the smaller or less important under my broodings. Indeed, it seemed to dilate until it assumed gigantic proportions, worrying me and weighing so heavily upon my conscience that I at last rose from the newspaper at which I had been hopelessly staring, and looking up Taylor again, asked him how soon he expected to become a Benedict.

His answer startled me. "In a week," he replied, "and if I have not asked you to the ceremony, it is because Helen is not in a position to——"

I supposed he finished the sentence, but I did not hear him. If the marriage was so near, of course it would be folly on my part to attempt to hinder it. I drew off for the second time.

But I could not remain easy. Taylor is a good fellow, and it would be a

shame to allow him to marry a woman with whom he could never be happy. He would feel any such disappointment so keenly, so much more keenly than most men. A lack of principle or even of sensibility on her part, would make him miserable. Anticipating heaven, it would not take a hell to make him wretched, a purgatory would do it. Was I right, then, in letting him proceed in his intentions regarding Mrs. Walworth, when she possibly was the woman who——I paused and tried to call up her countenance before me. It was a sweet one and possibly a true one. I might have trusted her for myself, but I do not look for perfection and Taylor does, and will certainly go to the bad if he is deceived in his expectations. But in a week! It is too late for interference—only it is never too late till the knot is tied. As I thought of this, I decided impulsively, and perhaps you may say unwisely, to give him a hint of his danger, and I did it in this wise.

"Taylor," said I, when I had him safely in my own rooms, "I am going to tell you a bit of personal history, curious enough I think to interest you even upon the eve of your marriage. I do not know when I shall see you again, and I should like you to know how a lawyer and a man of the world can sometimes be taken in."

He nodded, accepting the situation good-humoredly, though I saw by the abstraction with which he gazed into the fire, that I should have to be very interesting to lure him from the thoughts that engrossed him. As I meant to be very interesting, this did not greatly concern me.

"One morning last spring," I began, "I received in my morning mail a letter, the delicate penmanship of which at once attracted my attention and awakened my curiosity. Turning to the signature, I read the name of a young lady friend of mine, and, somewhat startled at the thought that this was the first time I had ever seen the handwriting of one I knew so well, I perused the letter with an interest that presently became painful as I realized the tenor of its contents. I will not quote the letter, though I could, but confine myself to saying that after a modest recognition of my friendship for her—quite a fatherly friendship, I assure you, as she is only eighteen and I, as you know, am well on toward fifty—she proceeded to ask, in an humble and confiding spirit, for the loan—do not start—of fifty dollars. Such a request coming from a young girl, well connected, and with every visible sign of being generously provided for by her father, was certainly startling to an old bachelor of settled ways and strict notions, but remembering her youth and the childish innocence of her manner, I turned over the page and read as her reason for proffering such a request, that her heart was set upon aiding a certain poor family that stood in immediate need of food, clothes, and medicines, but that she could not do what she wished because she had already spent all the money allowed

her by her father for such purposes, and dared not go to him for more, as she had once before offended him by doing this, and feared if she repeated her fault he would carry out the threat he had then made of stopping her allowance altogether. But the family was a deserving one and she could not see any member of it starve, so she came to me, of whose goodness she was assured, convinced I would understand her perplexity and excuse her—and so forth and so forth, in language quite childlike and entreating, which, if it did not satisfy my ideas of propriety, at least touched my heart, and made any action which I could take in the matter extremely difficult.

"To refuse her request would be at once to mortify and aggrieve her; to accede to it and give her the fifty dollars she asked—a sum, by the way, I could not well spare—would be to encourage an action, easily pardoned once, but which if repeated would lead to unpleasant complications, to say the least. The third course of informing her father of what she needed I did not even consider, for I knew him well enough to be sure that nothing but pain to her would be the result. I therefore compromised the affair by enclosing the money in a letter in which I told her that I comprehended her difficulty and sent with pleasure the amount she needed, but that as a friend I must add that while in the present instance she had run no risk of being misunderstood or unkindly censured, that such a request made to another man and under other circumstances might provoke a surprise capable of leading to the most unpleasant consequences, and advised her if she ever again found herself in such a strait to appeal directly to her father, or else to deny herself a charity which she was in no position to bestow.

"This letter I undertook to deliver myself, for one of the curious points of her communication had been the entreaty that I would not delay the help she needed by trusting the money to any hand but my own, but would bring it to a certain hotel down town, and place it at the beginning of the book of Isaiah in the large Bible I would find lying on a side table in the small parlor off the main one. She would seek it there before the morning was over, and so, without the intervention of a third party, acquire the means she desired for helping a poor and deserving family.

"I knew the hotel she mentioned, and I remembered the room, but I did not remember the Bible. However, it was sure to be in the place she indicated, and though I was not in much sympathy with my errand, I respected her whim, and carried the letter down town. I had reached Main Street, and was in sight of the hotel designated, when suddenly, on an opposite corner of the street, I saw the young girl herself. She looked as fresh as the morning, and smiled so gayly I felt somewhat repaid for the annoyance she had caused me; and, gratified that I could cut matters short by putting the letter directly in her

hand, I crossed the street to her side. As soon as we were face to face, I said:

"'How fortunate I am to meet you. Here is the amount you need sealed up in this letter. You see I had it all ready.'

"The face she lifted to mine wore so blank a look that I paused astonished.

"'What do you mean?' she asked, her eyes looking straight into mine with such innocence in their clear blue depths I was at once convinced she knew nothing of the matter with which my thoughts were busy. 'I am very glad to see you, but I do not in the least understand what you mean by the amount I need,' and she glanced at the letter I held out with an air of distrust mingled with curiosity.

"I could not explain myself. If she had been made the victim of a conspiracy to procure money from me, it would not help to preserve that sweet innocence of hers to know it. So, with a laugh, I put the letter in my pocket, saying:

"'You cut me short in my efforts to do a charitable action. I heard, no matter how, that you were interested just now in a destitute family, and took this way of assisting you in their behalf.'

"Her blue eyes opened wider. 'The poor are always with us,' she replied; 'but I know of no special family just now that requires any such help as you intimate. If I did, papa would give me what assistance I needed.'

"I was greatly pleased to hear her say this, for I am very fond of my young friend, but I was deeply indignant also against the unknown person who had taken advantage of my regard for this young girl to force money from me. I, therefore, did not linger at her side, but, after due apologies, hastened immediately here, where there is a man employed who, to my knowledge, had once been a trusted member of the police.

"Telling him no more of the story than was necessary to insure his co-operation in the plan I had formed to discover the author of this fraud, I extracted the bank-notes from the letter I had written, and put in their place stiff pieces of manilla paper. Taking the envelope so filled to the hotel already alluded to, I placed it at the opening chapters of Isaiah in the Bible as described. There was no one in either of the rooms when I went in, and I encountered only a bell-boy as I came out; but at the door I ran against a young man whom I strictly forbore to recognize, but whom I knew to be my improvised detective coming to take his stand in some place where he could watch the parlor, and note who went into it.

"At noon I returned to the hotel, passed immediately to the small parlor, and looked into the Bible. The letter was gone. Coming out of the room, I was at once joined by my detective.

"'Has the letter been taken?' he eagerly inquired.

"I nodded.

"His brows wrinkled and he looked both troubled and perplexed.

"'I don't understand it,' he remarked, 'I've seen every one who has gone into that room since you left it, but I do not know now any more than before who took the letter. You see,' he continued, as I looked at him sharply, 'I had to remain out here. If I had gone even into the large room the Bible would not have been disturbed nor the letter either, so in the hope of knowing the rogue at sight, I strolled about this hall and kept my eye constantly on that door, but——'

"He looked embarrassed and stopped.

"'You say the letter is gone?' he suggested, after a moment.

"'Yes,' I returned.

"He shook his head. 'Nobody went into that room or came out of it,' he went on, 'whom you would have wished me to follow. I should have thought myself losing time if I had taken one step after any one of them.'

"'But who did go into that room?' I urged, impatient at his perplexity.

"'Only three persons this morning,' he returned. 'You know them all.' And he mentioned first Mrs. Couldock."

Taylor, who was lending me the superficial attention of a pre-occupied man, smiled frankly at the utterance of this name. "Of course she had nothing to do with such a debasing piece of business," he observed.

"Of course not," I repeated. "Nor does it seem likely that Miss Dawes could have been concerned in it either. Yet my detective told me that she was the next person who went into the parlor."

"I do not know Miss Dawes so well," remarked Taylor carelessly.

"But I do," said I, "and I would as soon suspect my sister of a dishonorable act as this noble, self-sacrificing woman."

"The third person?" suggested Taylor.

I got up and crossed the floor. When my back was to him I said quietly:

"Was Mrs. Walworth."

The silence that followed was very painful. I did not dare to break it, and he doubtless found himself unable to do so. It must have been five minutes before either of us spoke, then he suddenly cried:

"Where is that detective, as you call him? I want to see him."

"Let me see him for you," said I. "I should hardly wish Sudley, discreet as I consider him, to know you had any interest in this affair."

Taylor rose and came to where I stood.

"You believe," said he, "that she, the woman I am about to marry, is the one who wrote you that infamous letter?"

I faced him quite frankly. "I do not feel ready to acknowledge that," I

replied. "One of those three women took my letter from out the Bible where I placed it; which of them wrote the lines that provoked it, I do not dare conjecture. You say it was not Mrs. Couldock. I say it was not Miss Dawes, but——"

He broke in upon me impetuously.

"Have you the letter?" he asked.

I had and showed it to him.

"It is not Helen's handwriting," he said.

"Nor is it that of Mrs. Couldock or Miss Dawes."

He looked at me for a moment in a wild sort of way.

"You think she got some one to write it for her?" he cried. "Helen! my Helen! But it is not so; it cannot be so. Why, Huntley, to have sent such a letter as that over the name of an innocent young girl, who but for the happy chance of your meeting her as you did, might never have had the opportunity of righting herself in your estimation, argues a cold and calculating selfishness closely allied to depravity. And my Helen is an angel—or so I have always thought her."

The depth to which his voice sank in the last sentence showed that for all his seeming confidence he was not without his doubts. I began to feel very uncomfortable, and not knowing what consolation to offer, I ventured upon the suggestion that he should see Mrs. Walworth and frankly ask her whether she had been to the hotel on Main Street on such a day, and if so, if she had seen a letter addressed to Miss N. lying on the table of the small parlor. His answer showed how much his confidence in her had been shaken.

"A woman who, for the sake of paying some unworthy debt, or of gratifying some whim of feminine vanity, could make use of a young girl's signature to obtain money, would not hesitate at any denial. She would not even blanch at my questions."

He was right.

"I must be convinced in some other way," he went on. "Mrs. Couldock or Miss Dawes do not either of them possess any more truthful or ingenuous countenance than she does, and though it seems madness to suspect such women——"

"Wait," I broke in, "let us be sure of all the facts before we go on. You lie down here and close your eyes; now pull the rug up so. I will have Sudley in and question him. If you do not turn toward the light he will not know who you are."

Taylor followed my suggestion and in a few moments Sudley stood before me. I opened upon him quite carelessly.

"Sudley," said I, throwing down the newspaper I had been ostensibly

reading. "You remember that little business you did for me in Main Street last month? Something I've been reading made me think of it again."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you never had a conviction yourself as to which of the three ladies you saw go into the parlor took the letter I left hid in the Bible?"

"No, sir. You see, I could not. All of them are well known in society here and all of them belong to the most respectable families. I wouldn't dare to choose between them, sir."

"Certainly not," I rejoined, "unless you had some good reason for doing so, such as having been able to account for the visits of two of the ladies to the hotel and not of the third."

"They all had good pretexts for being there. Mrs. Couldock gave her card to the boy before going into the parlor and left as soon as he returned with word that the lady she called to see was not in. Miss Dawes gave no card but asked for a Miss Terhune, I think, and did not remain a moment after she was informed that that lady had left the hotel."

"And Mrs. Walworth?"

"She came in from the street adjusting her veil, and upon looking around for a mirror, was directed to the parlor, into which she at once stepped. She remained there but a moment and when she came out passed directly into the street."

These words disconcerted me; the mirror was just over the table in the small room, but I managed to remark nonchalantly:

"Could you not tell whether any of these ladies opened the Bible?"

"Not without seeming intrusive."

I sighed and dismissed the man. When he was gone I approached Taylor.

"He can give us no assistance," I cried.

My friend was already on his feet, looking very miserable.

"I know of but one thing to do," he remarked. "To-morrow I shall call upon Mrs. Couldock and Miss Dawes and entreat them to tell me if for any reason they undertook to deliver a letter mysteriously left in the Bible of the ——Hotel one day last month. They may have been deputed to do so, and be quite willing to acknowledge it."

"And Mrs. Walworth? Will you not ask her the same question?"

He shook his head and turned away.

"Very well," said I to myself, "then I will."

ACCORDINGLY, the next day I called upon Mrs. Walworth. She lived, as I already knew, in a small and unpretentious house just on the verge of our most fashionable quarter. But there was great taste displayed in the furnishing of

that house, and I was not at all surprised to see evidences here and there of a poverty which the general effect tended to make you forget. I was fortunate enough to find her in, and still more fortunate to find her alone, but my courage fell as I confronted her, for she has one of those appealing faces that equally interest and baffle you, making you feel that unless your errand be one of peace and comfort, you had better not confront so tremulous a mouth and so tender a hazel eye. But I had steeled myself against too much sympathy when I entered her presence, so barely pausing to make my most ingratiating bow, I took her by the hand, and gently forcing her to stand for a moment where the light from the one window fell full upon her face, I said:

"You must pardon my intrusion upon you at a time when you are naturally busy, but there is something you can do for me that will rid me of a great anxiety. You remember being in —— Hotel one morning last month?"

She was looking quietly up at me, her lips parted, her eyes smiling and expectant, but at the mention of that hotel I thought—and yet I may have been mistaken—that a slight change took place in her expression, if it was only that the glance grew more gentle and the smile more marked.

But her voice when she answered was the same as that with which she had uttered her greeting.

"I do not remember," she replied, "yet I may have been there; I go to so many places. Why do you ask?" she inquired.

"Because if you were there on that morning—and I have been told you were—you may be able to solve a question that is greatly perplexing me."

Still the same gentle inquiring look on her face, only now there was a little furrow of wonder or interest between the eyes.

"I had business in that hotel on that morning," I continued. "I had left a letter for a young friend of mine in the Bible that lies on the small table of the inner parlor, and as she never received it, I have been driven into making all kinds of inquiries, in hope of finding some explanation of the fact. As you were there at the time, you may have seen something that would aid me. Is it not possible, Mrs. Walworth?"

Her smile, which had faded, reappeared on the lips which Taylor so much admired, a little pout became visible and she looked quite enchanting.

"I do not even remember being at that hotel at all," she protested. "Did Mr. Taylor say I was there?" she inquired, with just that added look of exquisite naïveté which the utterance of a lover's name should call up on the face of a prospective bride.

"No," I answered gravely, "Mr. Taylor, unhappily, was not with you that morning."

She looked startled.

"Unhappily," she repeated. "What do you mean by that word?" And she drew back looking very much displeased.

I had expected this and so was not thrown off my guard.

"I mean," I proceeded calmly, "that if you had had such a companion with you on that morning I should now be able to put my question to him, instead of taking up your time and interrupting your affairs by my importunities."

She lost her look of anger and acquired one of doubt. Did she survey me so closely because she was anxious to know if I had compromised her in the eyes of her intended husband? Or was her expression merely that natural to innocence equally startled and perplexed? I could not determine.

"You will tell me just what you mean?" said she earnestly.

I was equally emphatic in my reply. "That is only just. You ought to know why I trouble you with this matter. It is because this letter of which I speak was taken from its hiding place by some one who went into the hotel parlor between the hours of half past ten and twelve, and to my certain knowledge only three persons crossed its threshold on that especial morning at that especial time. I naturally appeal to each of them in turn for an answer to the problem that is troubling me. You know Miss N. Seeing by accident a letter addressed to her lying in a Bible in a strange hotel, you might think it your duty to take it out and carry it to her. If you did and if you lost it——"

"But I didn't," she interrupted warmly. "I know nothing about any such letter, and if you had not declared so positively that I was in that hotel on that especial day, I should be tempted to deny that, too, for I have no recollection of going there last month."

"Not for the purpose of rearranging a veil that had been blown off?"

"Oh!" she said, but as one who recalls a forgotten fact, not as one who is tripped up in an evasion.

I began to think her innocent and lost some of the gloom which had been oppressing me.

"You remember now," said I.

"Oh, yes, I remember that."

Her manner so completely declared that her acknowledgments stopped there, I saw it would be useless to venture further. If she were innocent she could not tell more, if she were guilty she would not; so feeling that the inclination of my belief was in favor of the former hypothesis, I again took her hand and said:

"I see that you can give me no help. I am sorry, for the whole happiness of a man, and perhaps that of a woman also, depends upon the discovery as to who took the letter from out the Bible where I had hidden it on that unfortunate morning." And making her another low bow, I was about to take

my departure when she grasped me impulsively by the arm.

"What man?" she whispered, and in a lower tone still, "What woman?"

I turned and looked at her. "Great heaven!" thought I, "can such a face hide a selfish and intriguing heart?" and in a flash I summoned up in comparison before me the plain, honest, and reliable countenance of Mrs. Couldock and that of the comely and unpretending Miss Dawes, and knew not what to think.

"You do not mean yourself?" she continued as she met my look of distress.

"No," I returned; "happily for me, my welfare is not bound up in the honor of any woman," and leaving that shaft to work its way into her heart if that heart was vulnerable, I took my leave, more troubled and less decided than when I entered.

For her manner had been absolutely that of a woman surprised by insinuations she was too innocent to rate at their real importance; and yet if she did not take away that letter who did? Mrs. Couldock? Impossible. Miss Dawes? The thought was untenable even for an instant. I waited in great depression of spirits for the call which I knew Taylor would not fail to make me that evening.

When he came I saw what the result of my revelations was likely to be as plainly as I see it now. He had conversed frankly with Mrs. Couldock and with Miss Dawes and was perfectly convinced as to the utter ignorance of them both in regard to the whole affair. In consequence, Mrs. Walworth was guilty in his estimation, and being held guilty could be no wife for him, much as he had loved her and urgent as may have been the causes for her act.

"But," said I, in some horror of the consequences of an interference for which I was almost ready to blame myself now, "Mrs. Couldock and Miss Dawes could have done no more than deny all knowledge of this letter. Now Mrs. Walworth does that, and——"

"You have seen her? You have asked her——"

"Yes, I have seen her and I have asked her, and not an eyelash drooped as she affirmed a complete ignorance of the whole affair."

Taylor's head fell.

"I told you how that would be," he murmured at last. "I cannot feel that it is any proof of her innocence. Or rather," he added, "I should always have my doubts."

"And Mrs. Couldock and Miss Dawes?"

"Ah!" he cried, rising and turning away. "There is no question of marriage between either of them and myself."

I was therefore not astonished when the week went by and no announcement of his wedding appeared. But I was troubled and I am troubled still, for if mistakes are made in criminal courts and the innocent sometimes

through the sheer force of circumstantial evidence are made to suffer for the guilty, might it not be that in this letter question of morals, Mrs. Walworth has been wronged, and that when I played the part of arbitrator in her fate, I only succeeded in separating two hearts whose right it was to be made happy? It is impossible to tell. Nor is time likely to solve the riddle. Must I then forever blame myself, or did I only do in this matter what any honest man would have done in my place? Answer me, some one, for I do not find my lonely bachelor life in any wise brightened by the doubt, and would be grateful to any one who would relieve me of it.

END