PAST MASTERS 160

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PAST MASTERS 160

Produced and Edited by Terry Walker from short stories in magazines, newspapers and other sources, and all in the Life + 70 years public domain.

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1: Run of the Cards

Percival Wilde

1887-1953

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AS this story has to do with card cheating the scene should be laid in the West. Literary tradition insists that every card game commenced on the other side of the Mississippi must culminate in a display of bowie knives and six-shooters, and must not end until one of the players— preferably the bad man— is made ready for the ministrations of the undertaker by a neatly drilled perforation, caliber .45, in the neighborhood of the heart. But life, as so often, disagrees with literary tradition. A card game in Oregon, California— or even in Texas— may be a tame affair, conducted strictly according to Hoyle; while a similar game in Massachusetts, New York, or Connecticut may provide the sharper with an opportunity to profit by his cunning. And the Easterner takes such episodes with appropriate calm. If he has been victimized— and knows it, which is rare— he reflects that he has been unwise to play with persons whose ancestors did not come over with his in the Mayflower, and he resolves to commit no more such errors. To this praiseworthy resolution the average Easterner may stick for a month; the exceptional Easterner for a year; to break it only when some particularly impressive individual invites him into another and an even more disastrous game.

Then more resolutions— and more broken resolutions.

When Bill Parmelee, professional gambler and card sharp, after drifting about the country for six checkered years, drifted back to the home in the East from which he had begun his wanderings, he had immediately been given an opportunity to demonstrate his' skill. His father, Puritan and. card player— inconsistent, with the inconsistency of life— had invited him to hazard everything upon a game of poker, had boldly suggested that they settle, by the luck of the cards, the all-important question of whether Bill remained or whether he continued upon his wanderings. Bill had accepted the proposal gleefully, had, for a few brief minutes, gloated in the vision of how adroitly he would manipulate the cards, had rejoiced in the prospect of taking advantage of every trick in his remarkably complete assortment.

Then, to his utter astonishment, he had found himself quite unable to cheat. The sight of the hickory switch facing him at the fireplace had overpowered him with the memories of childhood. Looking at it, some force superior to himself had mastered him, had compelled him, for the first time in many years, to play a scrupulously honest game. Bill was only twenty-four— and childhood was not so far behind. The switch, ridiculously puny, ridiculously

slight, had seemed to gaze at him warningly, had commanded, "Play fair!"— and Bill had obeyed.

He had played poker which would have been a disgrace to a beginner— an honest beginner— and had been wiped out in short order; and then his incomprehensible father, glowing with pride in the son whose background was such that he could not cheat against him, had opened his arms and had invited Bill to remain. That invitation had been accepted. With the same intense energy that had characterized his life as a gambler Bill plunged into the myriad of details connected with the management of a farm. He had wasted six years in mastering every device known to the card sharp, but he was young, and, to his utter surprise, he found himself taking an amazing interest in Holsteins and Jerseys, in pure-bred Durocs, in Leghorns and Brahmas and Orpingtons. His acquaintances of the road, gentlemen who lived upon their wits, would have laughed at him. But Bill, settling down close to the soil for the first time, found himself curiously, incomprehensibly happy.

He was conscious, after a month, that he had not touched a card— and had not missed them. Rising with the sun, busy until dark, he found the diversions to which he had been accustomed oddly unattractive when evening came. It was so much more satisfactory to crank up the little roadster, to roll gently— as gently as it would allow him— through the clean-smelling country, to compare notes with neighboring farmers, to bow to old-time friends, occasionally to celebrate wildly by taking in the movies.

It had taken Bill Parmelee six years to find himself; but that he had done so there could be no possible doubt. He might never again have touched a card; never again have taken part in a game of chance, had it not been for Tony Claghorn, Tony's pretty wife, and a sleek individual who, for the time being, passed under the name of Sutliffe.

ii

TONY Claghorn was an otherwise sane young man who believed implicitly in the laws of chance. If the run of the cards was bad to-day, it might be expected to be good to-morrow— odds two to one— and if, by some mischance, to-morrow brought disappointment, then the day after to-morrow was morally sure to make up for it— odds four to one. Mathematics, high, low, and middling, certified to the correctness of his theory, and Tony backed it unhesitatingly by doubling his bets on the second day and quadrupling them on the third day. To be strictly consistent he should have continued doubling them on each succeeding occasion: it was eight to one that he would win on

the fourth day, and sixteen to one that he would win on the fifth day. But three consecutive sessions never failed to exhaust Tony's available cash.

On the first of every month a fat check came tumbling into Tony's bank. It financed him until eleven p. m. on the evening of the third. At eleven-one Tony's mathematical investigations usually came to a temporary end.

For twenty-seven days thereafter he lived on his credit, which was excellent, and paid off the accumulated bills on the first of the following month. But the surplus, which was often considerable, had an expectation of life of something under seventy-two hours. At the end of that time, for Tony, it had ceased to exist.

Mrs. Tony Claghorn was a very charming person who might have been more useful to her husband had she not loved him so much. For her, Tony was right— even if he was wrong. Solemnly Tony would explain to her just why he could not lose; or why, in spite of his rosy predictions, he had lost after all. And Mrs. Claghorn, thrilling at the sight of her strong, handsome husband, rejoicing in the thought that he was hers— all hers— would murmur, "Yes, dear," at appropriate intervals, would nod her pretty head, and would decide that last year's dress, made over, might do for the present season.

"Pulled a bone last night," Tony would admit. "When he stood pat I should have known he had a full house. I had no right to call him."

Thereupon Mrs. Claghorn, having understood only the first phrase, would wonder how her clever husband could do such a thing and would overflow with sympathy. "Never mind, Tony," she would assure him, "you'll make up for it to-night."

"You bet!" Tony would declare, and would wander in, stripped clean, around midnight, to explain that things had gone wrong once again. Had Mrs. Claghorn loved her husband less she might have insisted that her occasional needs take precedence over the insatiable poker game. But the thought never entered her head. It would mean opposing Tony, and that was quite beyond her.

She reflected sometimes that in the days before Tony had met the clever Mr. Sutliffe the cards had not been so uniformly disastrous. He had played at the club, had won and had lost, but had usually finished the month with a small balance on the right side of the ledger. Poker had been a diversion: not an obsession. Then Mr. Sutliffe had come into the picture and almost at once everything had changed. Pursing her small mouth, wrinkling her innocent forehead, Mrs. Claghorn gazed blankly at the wall and wondered. Most of all she wondered why Mr. Sutliffe, who, by his own modest confession, was many times a millionaire, found it worth his while to play cards with Tony Claghorn.

Many times a millionaire: to be precise, eight times. Sutliffe, as he was never tired of recounting, had owned a small patch of land in Texas. "Just a little patch," he would explain; "three or four thousand acres—hardly knew I had it. And then— what do you think?— one day they started drilling on it, and zip! the biggest well this side of kingdom come blew the derrick to smithereens and ruined all the grain for miles around. Yes siree sir! Since then," the millionaire would conclude modestly, "I've just been drawing royalties, and salting 'em away against a rainy day. How much? Oh, maybe eight millions— maybe nine." He would smile gently: "I can't tell you within half a million what I'm worth."

A successful man, Sutliffe, a singularly successful man. Six months ago he had been telling a very similar story to a group of acquaintances in Chicago. He had owned a little patch of land in Colorado— "just a little patch, coupla thousand acres. And then— what do you think?— one day a fellow sunk a shaft in it, and zip! if he didn't open up the biggest gold mine this side of kingdom come! Yes siree sir! Why, you could just walk into that mine and pick up nuggets with both hands. Since then," and again the modest smile would creep over his shrewd countenance, "I've just been drawing royalties, and salting 'em away against a rainy day. Eight millions— maybe nine."

Success had followed the remarkable man throughout his life. Out of the mail-order business he had made eight millions— maybe nine; and out of an invention which the government had bought from him with great secrecy; and out of a little flyer in the stock market, when he had cornered United States Steel; but it must have been his modesty which prevented him from recounting more than one story to a single group of listeners. Whatever he had touched had turned to money. What more natural that when he turned to cards the winning combinations came to him with almost monotonous regularity? What more logical that with remarkable judgment he should sense the presence of four aces in an opponent's hand and decline to bet on four kings?

Sometimes he mentioned that he had spent a winter down South. His address had been the Federal prison at Atlanta, though he did not allude to that detail. Sometimes he referred to his summer up North. Once again, he was vague concerning his whereabouts. He was a poor boy who had risen to the top of the ladder. Indeed, some months before falling in with Claghorn he had been reduced to the expedient of pawning his few valuables. By a remarkable coincidence they had reappeared on his person shortly after he and Tony had commenced their mathematical investigations.

The Claghorns had decided to spend the summer at a little hotel in the Berkshires. Rather than be separated from his newly found friends Mr. Sutliffe

had volunteered to spend a few days each month— by preference, the first, second, and third— with them.

iii

BILL Parmelee, clothed in overalls, leaned on the fence and gazed at the dusty road. It had not rained in some weeks; the sun was merciless overhead, and Bill, half closing his eyes, could see waves of heated air writhing upward in quivering layers. The fields were parched and dry. The earth was hot underfoot.

"If this keeps up," reflected Bill, "potatoes will be high next winter."

A heavy sedan whizzed around the turn of the road, climbed the hill with cut-out wide open, and vanished out of sight around another turn.. A column of dust, twenty feet high and so dense that Bill could not see the other side of the road through it rose from the ground over which it had passed.

Bill inhaled, suffocated, and shook his fist at the departed car. "They ought to jail fellows like you!" he declared. Then, gazing into the cloud, he saw a smaller car, a roadster, wriggling valiantly through it. From side to side of the road it slued, as if suddenly blinded, and Bill, remembering the two-foot ditch, cried out a warning. Even as he called he knew he was too late. The car, careening dizzily, swung to the side of the road, two wheels went over with a thump, and the bumper fetched up with a crash against a telegraph pole.

Bill raced to the rescue. The car, perilously inclined, had not turned over, and in the driver's seat a young woman, pale, but with compressed lips, was already cranking the stalled engine and shifting the gears into reverse.

Bill flung open the door. "Get out!" he commanded the lone occupant.

"I'm going to."

"I mean, get out of the car!"

"Not till I get it back on the road." She let in the clutch with a jerk.

The car teetered dangerously for a second, a rear wheel spun convulsively, and the engine stalled a second time.

"That was a close squeak!" ejaculated Bill.

In silence the woman driver placed her foot on the starting pedal again.

"You'll kill yourself!" Bill warned.

"Not if I know it."

There are times when actions speak louder than words; when brute force is more effective than argument. Bill reached quietly into the car and shut off the ignition.

"How dare you?" demanded the young woman. Her protest ended in a shrill squeak as a powerful arm gripped her about the waist and lifted her

bodily to the road. "How dare you?" she repeated. Then, suddenly, she became limp and collapsed into the strong arms which held her.

Bill smiled down into her face. "Nerve! Grit! Spunk! You've sure got plenty! But this here's a man-sized job!" He half lifted, half supported the quivering girl to the side of the road, made her comfortable against the fence, and noted that the color which had ebbed so swiftly in her cheeks was beginning to return.

Young Mrs. Claghorn attempted to stand.

"I'm all right," she insisted. "I got into this mess and I'm going to get out of it."

"Sure you're all right," agreed Bill, "only you're going to watch the show from a ringside seat. Stay outside of the ropes."

He fetched planks and a shovel, enlisted the assistance of two or three farm hands, and cautiously backing the car inch by inch, brought it back to the road again. He opened the door with a flourish, and descended. '"She's not hurt a bit. Your bumper saved you. Now, if you want to, you can drive on again."

Pretty Mrs. Claghorn did want to— did want to very much— but her nerves had been strained to the breaking point. She seated herself at the wheel, placed her hand upon the lever, and broke down altogether. "I— I just can't," she stammered. "Won't you— won't you do it?"

Bill Parmelee gravely occupied the seat as she slid into that adjoining. With equal gravity he let in the gears and piloted the car over the brow of the hill. The young woman, he had noticed, wore a wedding ring. That reassured him. Had her left hand been unadorned Bill might not have risen to the emergency with such self-possession. She was pretty; she was charming; she was attractive, and the courage which she had just displayed did not lessen her appeal. But she was married and Bill was safe. "Where to?" he inquired.

"Anywheres; oh, anywheres, till I pull myself together a little bit."

For over a mile they followed the winding road in silence, threading in and out between the gently rounded hills that encompassed them on all sides. Bill knew every inch of the country, and loved it. It was hot, but the heat was whisked away with the motion of the car. Suddenly he was conscious that his companion was speaking.

"I think we ought to introduce ourselves,' she was saying. "I am Mrs. Claghorn— Mrs. Anthony Claghorn. My husband and I are stopping at the hotel."

Bill nodded. "My name is Parmelee— Bill Parmelee," he vouchsafed.

"I haven't thanked you yet," said the girl.

"It isn't necessary."

"But I do thank you," she insisted. "I don't know what would have happened if you hadn't been there, Mr. Parmelee. It was insane for me to try to back out, and it was wonderful for you not to let me."

"Now, now—" interrupted Bill.

"It's the first time— the very first time— that such a thing has happened to me. I've been driving for years and years, ever since I was a child, and never once, before to-day, have I been in real trouble."

Bill grinned. "Never is a long time," he asseverated. "Now I remember once, out West, sitting at a roulette table, and watching the ball drop into the red sixteen times in succession. But the black came on the seventeenth spin. It was bound to come sooner or later."

"Oh, have you played roulette?" inquired Mrs. Claghorn with sudden interest.

"A little," admitted the ex-gambler with a grin. "I remember a faro game," he went on reflectively, "where the bank won for half an hour without a break."

"So you've played faro also?"

"A little of everything," admitted Bill.

"Poker too?"

"Poker most of all."

Had the two met in orthodox fashion their conversation would certainly have consisted of small talk. To one of her own set young Mrs. Claghorn could not have unburdened herself as to this: raw-boned, lanky farmer. But there was something in Bill's frank blue eyes, something in his quiet, attentive manner, that emboldened her to continue. She had met him by accident. In all probability. she would never meet him again. She told him the whole unhappy story as frankly as if she had been talking to the grass-covered hills.

Only once did Bill interrupt her. "This man Sutliffe,' he inquired, "what do you know about him?"

"He's a millionaire; many times a millionaire. He's worth eight millions— maybe nine." The words sounded oddly familiar.

"Eight millions—maybe nine," repeated Bill thoughtfully. Then the gates of memory opened. "I know now!" he ejaculated. "He made it out of gold— a gold mine in Colorado."

"No," corrected Mrs. Claghorn, "out of oil— an oil well in Texas."

"Oh?"

"He owned a few thousand acres— worthless, everybody thought— and then they struck oil. Since then he's been living on his royalties."

Bill smiled. "I think I place him now," he said.

"Have you met him?"

"No. But I've heard a lot about him." He swung the roadster around a final curve and headed toward the hotel. "If I understand you correctly he'll be up to-morrow— the first of the month— for a little poker."

"Yes."

Bill gazed thoughtfully into the distance. "If your husband would take it kindly, I'd like to watch that game a little while."

"I think it could be arranged."

"I might learn something," soliloquized the man who had lived on his knowledge of the cards for six years, "with two such fine players. I could hardly fail to pick up some good tips."

"Don't play, though," warned Mrs. Claghorn, a little frightened at the eagerness with which the simple farmer had invited himself into the game; "the stakes are very high— and you might lose more than you can afford."

"Its very kind of you to tell me!" admitted Bill. "If I should play I'll try not to lose."

"That's what my husband always says," lamented Mrs. Claghorn.

Bill smiled brightly. "Maybe," he ventured, "maybe— if I do play— I'll have beginner's luck."

iv

POKER, according to its definition, is a card game which may be played by a variable number of persons. It may be played by two or it may be played by half a dozen. But as Tony Claghorn and his parasite, Sutliffe, played the national game, it was two-handed, no matter how many were seated about the table. The others might have been described as among those present; they had little to say about the game.

Tony qualified as a liberal— a more than liberal player. If his hand were good he would support it as a good hand deserved. If it were middling he would support it even better, displaying unlimited confidence in the draw, and in his supposed ability to bluff -his opponents. If his hand were poor he was not one to lay it down and wait for a new deal. His cheerful disposition required him to string along; to discard everything but a lone ace— for some deep, unfathomable reason aces seem to hypnotize certain players— and to draw four cards in the hope that they might contain pairs or even triplets.

Searing, and Mackenzie, and Trainor, who, along with Sutliffe, made up the game at the hotel, were not slow in learning Tony's weakness. They attempted to profit by it. Theoretically they should have called every bluff, and should have won in the long run. Practically their own hands did not always justify

calling. As the size of the pots increased, so did their nervousness, and Tony, whatever his other shortcomings, was never visibly nervous. Searing and Mackenzie and Trainor observed the careless assurance with which he pushed his chips into the pot; observed, hesitated, and were lost.

A fine poker player is a dangerous antagonist. A bad player, well supplied with cash, and tempted to bet high by one other person in the game, is often even more dangerous. Tony fell into this latter category. Betting extravagantly, it was always expensive to call him; and just often enough to make it still more expensive his bluff turned out to be no bluff at all.

Upon such latter occasions, Sutliffe, invariably, was not among those contributing. Smiling gently, he would decline to draw to his cards; would watch the play and would congratulate Tony upon its conclusion. But upon other occasions Sutliffe showed himself a player of boundless enterprise. Tony might feel inclined to bet high. Sutliffe would encourage him to do so. Then, after the other players had dropped, and when the battle had narrowed down into a combat between the two, Sutliffe's hand, on the call, proved just good enough to take the pot. If the oil millionaire; reflected Bill Parmelee, a close observer at the game, did not possess second sight he was endowed with something quite as satisfactory. It was camouflage poker, decided Bill: Tony, not Sutliffe, was the spectacular player. Tony, not Sutliffe, drew the fire of the opposition. Yet Sutliffe was the big winner and the only winner.

After an hour Tony had consumed his stack and was halfway through a second. Searing and Mackenzie and Trainor, losing slowly but steadily, changing their tactics, and changing back again, prayed for a change of luck—and prayed in vain.

With lofty condescension Sutliffe turned to Bill Parmelee, a lone spectator at the opposite side of the table. "Learning anything, Mr. Parmelee?" he inquired affably.

"Lots," admitted Bill. He nodded emphatically. "Lots," he repeated.

"For instance?" encouraged Sutliffe.

Bill smiled. He might have commented on the uncanny judgment which Sutliffe had displayed a few minutes earlier when he had declined to draw to three queens. But as Sutliffe had carefully shuffled his hand into the discard and as Bill was supposed to be unaware of its contents he felt it wise not to allude to that episode. He contented himself with a safer remark. "I'm learning that you're a very good player," he said.

The possessor of eight millions— maybe nine— bowed his gratification. "Its all in the run of the cards," he deprecated.

"Yes; I've noticed that they've been running nicely— for you."

Sutliffe shrugged his shoulders. "The game's still young. My luck may not hold." He waved a nicely manicured hand, adorned with a heavy gold ring. "How would you like to come in, Mr. Parmelee?"'

Bill rose with obvious dismay. "Not tonight," he pleaded, "I've got to be up early to-morrow morning. I've got chores to do."

"We won't keep you long," urged Sutliffe. Despite the other's countrified clothes; despite his unpromising exterior, something whispered to the oil millionaire that money— real money— might be in the offing. Claghorn was the principal victim: but as many others as offered themselves were welcome. "We'll try to give you action," he promised.

"I've had enough action just sitting here and watching," declared Bill. "I never knew that the game had so many fine points." He glanced at his nickel-plated watch. "It's after nine. I guess I'll be going." He circled the table and shook hands with grave formality. When he came to Sutliffe he was particularly cordial. He inclosed the millionaire's hand in both of his own. "I'm immensely obliged to you; immensely!"

"Then perhaps you'll play to-morrow?"

"Oh, to-morrow's Sunday."

"Then Monday night?'

Bill's frank blue eyes gazed into Sutliffe's. "It's a date," he promised.

On the veranda he found Mrs. Claghorn gazing pensively at the moon and patiently awaiting reports from the front. "Through already?" she inquired in surprise.

"Bedtime," explained Bill.

Mrs. Claghorn laughed. "Then you're not broke?"

"Not even bent. I didn't play. I was just getting the lay of the land."

"And what did you find out?"

Bill's level glance met hers. "All that I wanted to." Once more he offered his hand. "I think I'll be saying good night."

Had the light been brighter Mrs. Claghorn might have detected a minute, freshly made scratch across the ex-gambler's palm. As it was, she shook his hand cordially, and was surprised, some minutes later, to find a drop of blood adhering to her fingers.

V.

IN A country town— particularly in a New England country town— news travels swiftly. On Sunday morning, at ten o'clock, Sutliffe casually asked the hotel clerk if he knew one Bill Parmelee. At eleven o'clock the information that he had done so reached Bill. En route the news had passed from the clerk to a

bell boy, to the postmaster, to his wife, to a farm-hand and thus to its destination. It completed the circuit in fifty-eight minutes, elapsed time.

At three, the same afternoon, Sutliffe returned to the clerk with a fresh series of questions. "This Parmelee," he ventured, "how long have you known him?"

"Ever since we were boys together."

"What's he do?"

"What do you mean?"

"Is he a farm hand or does he own his own farm?"

"He works for his father, a mile down the road." Properly encouraged, the clerk volunteered the information that Parmelee, senior, was affluent, even rich.

Sutliffe grunted "Um," and walked away.

This conversation, unexpurgated, was relayed to Bill in one hour and fourteen minutes. He smiled but made no comment.

On Monday, after an exceptionally successful session with Tony Claghorn the evening before, Sutliffe returned to the attack. "Look here," he asked the clerk, after preparing the ground by the gift of a cigar, "how big a check would you cash for Bill Parmelee?"'

The clerk could not conceal his surprise. "Has he asked you to cash any?" he countered.

"No; no," explained the multimillionaire patiently, "I'm just asking."

The clerk scratched his head. "Well," he hazarded, "I'd cash his check for a hundred."

"Would you cash it for five hundred?"

"If I had that much money in the safe, yes."

"For a thousand?"

"Yes."

"For ten thousand?"

"What would he want with ten thousand?"

"I'm just supposing."

The clerk laughed. "I don't know what you're getting at, Mr. Sutliffe, but I'd cash Bill Parmelee's check for more money than I ever hope to own."

Sutliffe smiled. "That's exactly what I wanted to know," he admitted.

This conversation reached Bill in record-breaking time, for the clerk, puzzled, immediately telephoned his friend and supplied him with full details. "Bill," he asked in bewilderment, "do you know what to make of it?"

"Yes," said Parmelee.

"Then for Heaven's sake let me into the secret!"

Bill laughed. "Did you ever sell a hog to the butcher?"

"No."

"If you had," said Bill cryptically, "you'd know that the first question the butcher asks is 'What does he weigh?' "

He chuckled as he cranked up the roadster, and made his way to the hotel in the evening. It was clear to him that Sutliffe, a true artist, did not propose to waste his skill on small game. With admirable foresight he had satisfied himself that Bill, his prospective victim, was good for enough to make a display of his talents worth while.

Bill threw back his head and laughed aloud. Then the laugh vanished as another thought flashed upon him. Sutliffe's elaborate preparations could mean only one thing: Claghorn had been cleaned out twenty-four hours ahead of schedule.

Mrs. Claghorn's greeting verified his suspicions. "As a special favor to me," she begged, "don't play to-night."

"Why not?"

"If Tony can't beat Mr. Sutliffe, you can't."

"But I thought that Tony— Mr. Claghorn— could beat him."

"Tony thought so too," assented Mrs. Claghorn sadly. "He changed his mind last night— around midnight. If he had changed it one minute earlier— but what's the use of talking? To-night Tony is going to be a spectator."

Bill gazed at Tony's pretty young wife and felt a sudden hatred for Sutliffe overmastering him. ''Ma'am," he assured her, "don't worry about me. I can take care of myself."

"But if I ask you not to as a special favor—"

Bill took her little hand in both of his. "To-night," he promised, "I'm going to do you a bigger favor than you have any idea of."

vi

THE GAME, with Tony sitting helpfully behind Bill's chair, began slowly. "I haven't played in some time," Bill confessed truthfully. "I'm going to take it easy." He did so.

It required only a few deals for Tony to decide that Bill was a novice. Like himself, Bill was willing to come in on a pair of fives. Like himself, Bill was hypnotized by a lone ace. But unlike himself, a single white chip seemed to satisfy the farmer's gambling propensities.

In a whisper, Tony protested.

Bill smiled. "You've got to remember," he whispered back, "there may be better hands out than mine."

"They may only be bluffing!" foamed Tony.

"Just wait. I'll try some bluffing too."

He was as good as his word. On the next deal he staked five whites on a four-flush and lost ignominiously. "You see?" he pointed out ruefully; "it doesn't always work."

"I didn't tell you to bet on a four-flush!" hissed Tony.

"No," admitted Bill, "but you didn't tell me what to bet on."

"I'll tell you next time," Tony promised. He prodded Bill vigorously when a deal brought him three kings, and when the subsequent draw made them part of a full house. To his horror, Bill promptly called the only other player who had not dropped, and raked in a small pot.

Tony foamed at the mouth. "I didn't tell you to call!" he whispered.

"What's the difference? I won."

"But you should have raised him first! You should have let him call you! You could have made the pot ten times as big!"

Bill scratched his head in perplexity. "I don't see it,' he admitted.

"Don't see a full house with kings up?"

"The other fellow might have been aces up."

"But he wasn't!"

Bill turned innocent orbs upon his counselor. "Now, how under the sun was I to know that?" he demanded. He indicated his stack of chips, neither larger nor smaller than it had been an hour earlier. "I haven't lost anything— you can look for yourself. Honest, I don't see anything wrong with my game."

"There's not a thing wrong with it!" boomed Sutliffe from the other side of the table. "All you need is more confidence."

"You see?" challenged Bill.

Sutliffe leaned forward ingratiatingly. "Since you're winning," he ventured, "how about raising the limit a little? It'll give you a chance to win faster."

"Limit?" echoed Bill; "limit? I didn't know there was a limit."

Sutliffe laughed. "There isn't any from now on, if you say so." He gazed questioningly about the table. Searing and Mackenzie and Trainor, the hopeful trio, agreed cordially. Poker such as Bill was demonstrating had not come to their notice previously. They might profit by it. They need hardly fear a loss.

A second hour of the Parmelee brand of poker brought Tony to the verge of hysterics. Bill turned calmly to his mentor. "I'm not doing badly," he commented. "Look: I've got two more white chips than I started with." During the hour he had actually gathered in two pots.

"Not doing badly!" foamed Tony. "Not doing badly! Why, you should have won everything in sight! I've never seen such a run of cards in my life and you're just murdering them! That's what you're doing: you're murdering them! If I'd ever had such cards I'd have cleaned up! Nobody on earth could have

stopped me! And what are you doing? In two hours you've won two white chips!"

"More confidence," adjured Sutliffe from the other side of the table, "more confidence, Mr. Parmelee!"

Searing and Mackenzie and Trainor, the hopeful trio, smiled. For the first session in three they were nearly even.

Bill hung his head like a whipped dog. "Sorry," he murmured, "real sorry. I'll try and do better." He dealt the cards slowly, inspected his hand, and for the first time a gleam of enthusiasm flickered in his eyes.

Searing had opened. The rest of the trio had come in. Sutliffe had followed suit. Bill gravely pushed a whole stack of chips toward the center of the table.

Tony gazed at him aghast. "Do you know what you're doing?" he challenged.

"Yes."

"You're raising before the draw."

"Yes,"

"You're advertising that you've got a good hand. Nobody will come in."

Indeed, the trio had already dropped. But Sutliffe smiled from across the table. "I 'm coming in," he announced; "I'm even raising him back."

Bill turned triumphantly to his adviser. "You see?" he crowed; "it's my turn now and I'm going to raise him some more."

"Let me see your hand!" snapped Tony. The pot contained over a thousand dollars, and the sweat stood out on his forehead.

Bill deliberately spread his cards face down on the table, and placed both hands over them. "I'd rather not," he pleaded.

"I insist!"

Bill's jaw stiffened. "That's not in the rules!" he retorted. "Anybody that sees this hand has got to pay good money to do it!"

"Good for you!" boomed Sutliffe. "And now, just to show you what I think of it, I'm going to do a little raising myself." With one hand he pushed his remaining chips into the pot and with the other he extracted a bulky wallet from an inside pocket. He picked out a thousand-dollar bill, and added it to the collection. "There you are, Mr. Parmelee," he challenged.

Bill gazed about helplessly. "I don't carry thousand-dollar bills in my clothes," he confessed, "but I'd like to make that pot a little bigger."

"How about a check?" suggested Sutliffe.

"Good idea!" assented Bill. He drew a neat check book from a hip pocket.

In desperation Tony seized him by the shoulder. "Parmelee!" he begged, "Parmelee, don't make a fool of yourself! Stop before it's too late! You haven't gone crazy, have you?"

"I'm afraid I have," smiled Bill.

What followed always impressed Tony as partaking of the character of a nightmare. Bill drew checks— while Sutliffe exhausted the wallet. It had contained but a single thousand-dollar bill; it disgorged bills of smaller denomination, and topped the heap with the checks which Tony had written on previous evenings.

Mackenzie felt moved to protest. ''Look here, Sutliffe,' he remonstrated, "this isn't right! Parmelee doesn't know the first thing about the game 4

"He's twenty-one, isn't he?' interrupted Sutliffe.

"I'm twenty-four!' corrected Bill

"Exactly. He's of age and he knows what he's doing."

Bill flashed him a look of gratitude "You bet I know what I'm doing!" He gazed at the pile in the center of the table and poised his pen over a blank check. "Any more raising, Mr. Sutliffe?"'

The millionaire shook the empty wallet. "I'm through," he declared, "I haven't got another cent on me."

Bill smiled at him brightly. "If that's so," he said, "I'll call."

Sutliffe laughed loudly. "You can't call! We haven't drawn yet!"

Bill nodded. "You're right," he admitted.

He took up the pack gravely. "How many?"

"Just one." With appropriate solemnity he discarded a single card.

Slowly Bill passed the uppermost card to his opponent. "I'll stand pat," he announced.

"You must have a pretty good hand," taunted Sutliffe.

"I think so."

"But mine is going to be just the least little bit better!" Smilingly he took up the card which Bill had passed him. Smilingly he glanced at it. Then the smile vanished, his lips paled, a greenish hue crept into his cheeks, and his eyes protruded. He gazed at the card as if he could not believe his vision, gazed, gasped, seemed in an instant to shrink and become suddenly a smaller man.

"Well?" murmured Bill.

"What have you got?" gasped Sutliffe.

In silence Bill displayed his cards: three queens, a jack, and a deuce.

Sutliffe gazed at them, tore his own cards across, and stumbled from the room.

"Which means," said Bill, "I win."

IT WAS Tony who regained the use of his tongue first. "You mean to say," he sputtered, "you mean to say you bet like that on three queens?"

Bill smiled. "Look what he bet on."

From the floor they collected three jacks, a queen, and a ten-spot.

"What did he discard?" gasped Mackenzie.

"An ace." Bill turned the card face upward on the table.

Searing seized his head in both hands. "I've played poker, man and boy, for thirty years, but this gets me. Triplets! Nothing but triplets! And look at the pot they staked on it! Lunatics, both of 'em! Lunatics! I can understand how Parmelee did it— but Sutliffe!"

Bill raked in the pot and began to separate it into neat piles. "Suppose you call in Mrs. Claghorn," he suggested. "I'll explain."

But Tony's pretty wife did not need to be called. She burst excitedly in the door. "What's gone wrong?" she demanded, "I just saw Mr. Sutliffe running out of the hotel. He didn't wait for his hat or coat. He was headed for the station."

Bill laughed aloud. "Nothing's gone wrong,' he assured her. "Sutliffe's gone broke— that's all."

"But he was worth eight millions!" This from Tony.

"Eight millions my eye! There's his eight millions on the table! Sutliffe's a card sharp— just as I used to be."

"What?"

" 'Eight millions— maybe nine'— that's how I knew the man. He's got more names than the Prince of Wales, and he changes his name every six months, but his story is always the same: in gold, in oil, in the mail-order business he's always made eight millions— maybe nine. But his real business is gambling. Why, he was working Kansas City when I was working St. Joe."

Trainor swallowed two or three times. "But I don't understand it yet," he admitted.

"It was easy," said Bill. "It took me only a few minutes to find out that he was using marked cards."

"But we always started with a fresh deck!"

"It didn't take him long to mark them." From his finger he drew a seal ring, armed with a minute needle point. "Look at this: he was wearing one like it. I made sure of that when I scratched my palm shaking hands with him two nights ago. All you do is prick the corner of the card and you can read the back as easily as you can read the face. He didn't bother with the suits, and he didn't mark anything smaller than a ten-spot, but look at the picture cards— just look! This is an ace. Do you see where he put the mark? This is a king. This is a queen. This is a ten. Get it?"

Mackenzie's deep voice boomed through the silence. "Damnable! Utterly damnable!"

"But how could you beat such a game?" demanded Trainor.

"I gave him a dose of his own medicine. I had to string him along for two hours till I was ready for the killing. I couldn't do it more than once: the second time he'd be on to it. So I waited for my chance and then I dealt him this hand."

"Dealt him?" echoed Searing; "Dealt him?"

"Just a little legerdemain," admitted Bill. "I put up the cards while he was arguing with Claghorn. I dealt him three jacks, a queen, and an ace. I dealt myself three queens, a jack, and a deuce."

"But what in time made him bet on three jacks?"

"Well," drawled Bill, "when I spread my cards face down on the table he read the three queens all right. He knew I couldn't draw four, because he had the fourth in his own hand."

"But three queens are enough. Three queens beat three jacks!"

"They don't beat four jacks! The card on top of the deck— Sutliffe knew it was coming to him on the draw, and he looked at the back before he bet— was a ten-spot, only I gave it an extra prick and promoted it to be a jack. Sutliffe was expecting four jacks— nothing less."

Again Mackenzie's deep voice punctuated the silence. "The fourth jack was in your hand."

"Just to be safe."

"Why didn't he read that?"

Bill smiled. 'You know," he admitted, "I had a sneaking suspicion he would, so I gave it two extra pricks and promoted it to be a king." He extracted his own checks from the gigantic pot and waved his hand toward the exceedingly substantial remains of it. "He collected this from you fellows. I don't want a cent of it. Take back what you lost. If there's any left over I guess Mrs. Claghorn will know what to do, with it."

viii

SAID Mrs. Claghorn: "I haven't understood a word you said, but I think you're just wonderful!"

Said Tony: "And to think that I tried to teach you to play!"

Said Searing: "Look here: suppose Sutcliffe had discarded the ace and the queen?"

"It would have told everybody that he had bet sky high on nothing more than three of a kind. He didn't dare do that."

"But suppose," persisted Searing. "Suppose he had done what a straight player would have done: discarded and drawn two. He might have licked you! He might have drawn a full house!"

"He would have drawn a full house," corrected Bill. "I gave him his chance. Only a crook wouldn't take it."

Gently he turned over the card which rested on what remained of the deck.

It was another ten-spot.

2: Diplomacy

Erle Cox

1873-1950

The Lone Hand, 1 June 1908

Australian Author of the pioneering science fiction classic "Out of the Silence" (1919) , and numerous non-sf short stories

WHEN a man is almost daily gibbeted by a section of the press as a heartless plutocrat, it may be safely assumed that he has enough of worry in his working life to compensate for its absence from the domestic circle. But—

The very first letter I opened was a polite note from Trent, my private secretary, intimating his desire to resign. I swore quietly, but fluently, at the almanac on the table. As a lightning conductor the almanac is very efficient. I had caught Trent as a callow youth of eighteen, and then patiently moulded him until now, after eleven years of his constant attendance to my requirements, I knew I would miss my right hand as much as my faultless Trent— faultless except for an obtrusive conscience that sometimes disturbed the remnants of mine. And now the young ass wanted to leave me.

When together we waded through the morning's correspondence, I held my peace as to his letter; but in the afternoon I decided to fathom the mystery, as few men of his age. and sense throw up a certain per annum without fairly strong reasons.

"Now, look here, Trent," I began, "what's all this about? " And I tapped the offending letter.

"I'm sorry, sir, but I'm afraid it's unavoidable," he answered, quietly.

"Salary?" I queried.

"You know well it could not be that, sir."

"Got anything better?"

"No, worse luck; I guess anything better doesn't exist."

"Then why, in the name of Satan, do you wish to leave me? Great Scott, man ! there is an explanation somewhere, and I am entitled to it." I was beginning to feel irritated, and Trent knew the symptoms.

"I'm sorry, sir, but there can be no explanation."

I take it to my credit that I didn't say what I thought, but toned it down to an enquiry as to the sanity of his antecedents. Now I hate being left in the dark when there is information available that I am anxious to obtain, and so for half an hour Trent squirmed in his chair as I slowly and scientifically probed for his real motive, till at last it came out with a jump that startled me.

"The fact is, Mr. Carson," he gulped out at last, with crimson face, "the fact is I've fallen in love with Miss Millicent. I couldn't help it," he added, as a sort of extenuation.

"You've what?" I gasped.

Now, there was nothing strange in the fact of a man falling in love with Millie. If rumors that occasionally came my way were to be believed, that had occurred a score of times.

But Trent had known Millie as a rebellious school-girl in short frocks, and I strongly believe had suffered grievous wrongs from her reckless pranks, and even until now I thought there was nothing but open warfare between them, I knew she chaffed him without mercy, but that stands for nothing with a woman.

I liked the sterling John Walter Trent. I knew his habits. I knew how he had got his brother out of an ugly mess. I knew how he had so carefully staved off the attentions of Mrs. Desmond, since divorced and disappeared, what time that somewhat enterprising dame went after his scalp; and I felt sorry for him. I knew that for quality he was miles ahead of any of the gilt-edged young cubs that followed in Millie's train ; and out of these thoughts grew a sudden resolve to keep my secretary— that is, if that little imp, Millie, knew what was good for her.

"Have you spoken to my daughter?" I asked.

"Well, considering our positions, I think that question rather unnecessary."

"One way of looking at it," was my comment, as I paused to consider the situation. After a while I went on:

"Look here, Trent, my boy, suppose you do speak to her."

In a second he was on his feet, staring at me with incredulous eyes.

"You don't mean—" he gasped.

"Why not? "

The light in his eyes died out, and he shook his head: "I'm afraid it's no use, sir. I don't think she cares a little bit."

"Find out."

He hesitated a moment, and then ventured to remark that perhaps Mrs. Carson would have other views.

For the first time the effect of the suggestion on my better half crossed my mind. Gertrude is all that a wife should be, and more ; but the astute Trent knew as well as I did that, although at the moment a socialistic fit possessed her, it would be by no means likely to affect her ideas as to Millie's future partner. I can manage a discontented meeting of shareholders, but somehow I did not fancy a head-on collision with Gertrude, especially on such a matter. However, I had chosen a course, and decided to keep it.

"Well, Trent," I said, "there can be no harm in trying, I won't interfere, but at the same time I absolutely forbid you, in the event of either success or failure, to allow Millicent to know that I am aware of your intentions."

"But, sir—"

"There is no 'But, sir' about it. Mrs. Carson and I are going out presently, and I think I heard Millie say she was going to the boatshed to sketch. Take my advice and study Art. It's a fine afternoon."

He seemed about to argue, but on the moment, Gertrude, cloaked and veiled for a spin, announced that the car was waiting. Her entrance effectually sealed his mouth, and I left him still standing, the figure of perplexity.

For quite fifteen minutes, as the car hummed over the level roads, I sat silently, revolving a plan of campaign, and scarcely heard a word of Gertrude's chatter, until her somewhat vexed voice asked if I had lost my temper, or only become suddenly deaf.

"Only worried, Gert. I'm sorry."

"Drop the worries overside, Dick. What's the latest?"

"Trent," I answered, shortly.

"Well, do you know when I went into the study just now, I thought you two had been rowing," and she turned to look enquiringly at me.

"I'm going to get rid of him," I went on. "He seems to think he owns me."

"Oh, Dick; you won't do that!"

"Indeed I will."

"But you can never fill his place, you big goose."

"I'll try, anyhow."

I saw my wife purse up her lips— a distinct danger signal.

"Well, Richard." (Richard always indicates stormy weather.) "All I can say is that you will deserve all that you get by it."

"Perhaps, but anyhow I don't altogether fancy Trent as a son-in-law."

She straightened up for a moment, and I saw the shot had got home somewhere.

"You are talking absolute nonsense, Richard."

I let the idea sink in before I ventured to remark that I thought young Collett was a remarkably fine young man.

"Upon my word, Richard, you sometimes make me wonder where your reputation for judgment was gained. I think George Collett is an insufferable puppy. Mr. Trent is at least a gentleman."

I thought it needless to remind my wife that the last opinion I had heard from her anent Collett was distinctly different. But she had taken up the parable, and for the next few miles I learned that Millicent was to be depended upon to use her own judgment; that anything between that erratic damsel and my secretary existed only in my disordered imagination; that there was not a man in the Commonwealth fit to look at Millie; and lastly, in one expansive breathless sentence, I was told that excursions into matters outside my province were fraught with danger to all concerned, and I was only putting ideas into both their heads that never existed.

I accepted all this in silence, a most effectual weapon against a woman who wants to argue, and, as I have found, the most exasperating one. Besides, I had said enough to rouse sufficient opposition for the present. So I played "Brer Rabbit " for the rest of the drive, and chuckled inwardly at the frigid bow with which my wife returned the salutation of the estimable Collett, whom we afterwards met.

That evening at dinner I observed two things. Firstly, that with deliberate intent my wife three times made reference to Trent, by which Millie refused deftly to be drawn. Again, the appetite of that self-possessed young lady had fallen considerably below par, as too had her usually lively chatter. Twice I caught her surveying me with unusual interest, and each time I noticed an alteration of color. So two-and-two in this instance made me conclude that matters had moved. L am prepared to swear, too, that there was bribery in the good-night kiss I received.

The minx!!

Trent was waiting in my study next morning when I got down. A blind man could have read his news.

"How went the sketching?"

"I think I would like to devote myself entirely to Art." I must say that he looked it too. John Trent had not forgotten how to blush.

"So far so good, my boy. Now listen to me. Although I fully approve, I am going to be the stern parent. Your resignation is accepted and you leave here this afternoon. I absolutely forbid you to write to Millie, or see her before you go. I have my reasons for this. But, John, supposing you write to me, and I find an unaddressed letter enclosed, I might find time to leave it where it might be

found. But only on condition that Millie will understand that I strongly disapprove of you."

He eyed me with wrinkled forehead, and confessed that my idea was unintelligible to him ; also that it was not fair to Millie.

"You see," I went on, "I don't profess to know much about womenkind, but I do know that taking a strong stand on a matter will often bring about stronger opposition. Now Mrs. Carson—"

"Ah!" And here John Trent whistled long and softly, and then begged my pardon.

"I think, sir," he said, after reflection, "that should I write to you after I leave, I will type your address on the envelope, as my handwriting might be recognised."

"You're a conspiring reprobate, John Trent," I said. "There is a boat leaving for Adelaide at 2 p.m."

He caught that boat.

"A pest on it," I thought, as I went into luncheon. "It's lucky Millie was away this morning. I fear I'm going to have an evil time."

Never did prophecy materialise into accomplished fact more readily. At 3.30 exactly, the sacred grounds of my study were invaded by a Millie who looked six feet high, in spite of being only five feet four, and for the first time I awoke to the fact that she was no longer a girl, and as such to be accounted for. She held a crumpled letter in her hand and asked some twenty vehement questions without waiting for an answer to one. Her peroration was to the effect that she would marry John Trent and no other. Also I was inconceivably brutal, and would I give her his address?

My demand that she should on no account communicate with the disgraced John was received with cold scorn and the door banged behind her.

At 3.45 came Gertrude to know whatever had happened to Millie. It is not often that I can surprise my wife, but the bald statement that Trent had proposed and been accepted, and therefore dismissed in disgrace, certainly shook her out of her usual calm.

I think that, considering her ambitions for Millie, my prompt dealing with the situation might have received warmer approval from my wife, but she wore a somewhat thoughtful look as she left me, remarking that it was a pity that Jack was impossible.

Now, I don't know how John Walter Trent enjoyed the following four weeks, but I am prepared to affirm that the ways of the conspirator are hard. Apart from the unveiled hostility of Millie, and the reproachful look in her eyes, I noticed that Gertrude's manner was often more frigid than the position warranted. My papers, too, got into the most hopeless muddle.

The worst trouble, however, was supplied by Trent himself. I firmly believe that he wrote to Millie for twelve hours out of the twenty-four, and seven times a week, and the danger of getting those infernal budgets to their proper destination without detection almost bereft me of my few remaining grey hairs. At first I managed to slip them into Millie's room.

Once, in placing one under her pillow I found the photo of the forbidden man, which gave proof of the obedience of Australian children.

Two narrow escapes from discovery scared me into more devious paths. I slipped them under her door in the small hours of the morning, and all the time the little minx gave no sign that she knew of Trent's existence, much less his whereabouts.

Nemesis however overtook me. One afternoon I had invaded her studio to dispose of the latest despatch, and I found myself confronting a flashing-eyed daughter with the proof of my guilt in my hand.

I had to bow to a torrent of her wrath before I made a clean breast of my nefarious designs. Then, oh, what a change! I was called a dear, fat, old Cupid, a horrid schemer, and for the first time in three weeks Millie nestled on my knee and then demanded an explanation for my unseemly conduct.

"To think how I have been in fear and trembling that you should know that I was getting letters, and wondering all the time how Jack had been clever enough to get them through to me. Oh! dad, I'm shocked. Why did you do it, you old darling?"

"Did it ever strike you, lassie, that your mother might not approve, and that I wanted to keep my secretary very much, and I also highly approve of that same young man."

"Dad! that's worse than ever."

"Now, lassie, you must appeal to your mother; but remember I'm relentless, I'm adamant."

"You are a dear old fraud."

I let it go at that and made my escape.

Next day, Millie, in coming to search my letters for pickings of interest, informed me that her mother had said that John was out of the question, at present, at any rate ; so I bade the minx to mope and lose her appetite for a few days. Mope she did, but (I heard in a burst of confidence) she raided the pantry at every opportunity. Later, I suggested quietly to Gertrude that she should take Millie to the Blue Mountains, and invite young Collett's people and a few others to stay with them— a suggestion negatived by one vote.

My usually placid wife stated that Collett was a donkey, and, as an afterthought, remarked that there were others, too. The ambiguity of the latter remark gave me food for thought.

Then I heard that Millie was out of sorts, and positively would eat nothing. As a fictionist I recognised that my daughter was a success. She certainly drooped gracefully, per medium, as I afterwards learned, of a judicious use of powder. This droop my wife duly pointed out to me was my fault for not seeing what was going on. So like a woman!

Certainly the domestic barometer indicated stormy weather, and, with the exception of meal times I stuck to my study, to try and straighten out the chaos that reigned there, but kept a wary eye for the coming outbreak.

It lingered until just four weeks after Trent left, when I announced that the best thing for Millie was a long sea voyage, and that there were matters in London that required attention. We should all leave immediately, as I had secured an excellent successor for Trent. Millie hurriedly left the room, and I did not look at her, but I had my suspicions as to the real reason of the audible catch in her breath as she fled. But my wife claimed too much of my attention to indulge in idle speculation. I know she calls the medium "force of character" by which she attains her ends, but to my mind it is force of verbosity; and for the next fifteen minutes I was in an excellent position to judge.

Millicent was breaking her heart. My attitude was almost barbarous. It was not a matter of money, but the child's happiness. When the storm had passed, the stern parent had repented and went to smoke in solitary satisfaction.

Two days after, Trent reigned again, and peace was declared. But I made those two young people promise not to betray me.

My wife and I were alone at last after the crowd had left on the day of the wedding.

"Dick," she announced, "I've a confession to make now. It's this. Quite two years ago I made up my mind that Jack was the only man fit for Millie. I

knew you would be unreasonable, but I really didn't think you would give in in the short time you did. You see, dear old boy, for the sake of appearances I had to side with you at first; but I managed you in the end, didn't I?"

I think it was my wife's sense of justice that made her overlook the one small, emphatic word that came to my lips. But I do hope that she will never know the truth. However, I have lost my secretary, after all. But he will make a first-class partner ultimately.

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3: The Prophet in the Dock

Ernest O'Ferrall

(as by "Kodak")

1882-1925

The Lone Hand, 1 June 1911

Ernest Francis O'Ferrall

WHEN Jim Sheedy received his sentence of five years for his share in the North Shore burglary he looked his Judge in the eye and said, with terrible earnestness, "This will do you no good later on!"

"Remove the prisoner!" snarled his Honor; and Jim was hustled away to the cells.

Mick Donovan got up and walked quietly out of the stifling court into the sunshine. He and Sheedy had been partners in the job; but Sheedy had been a bit clumsy, with the result that an athletic householder, with a revolver, had cornered him. Jim had a prejudice against the useful "squirt," and never carried one; so the householder had had an easy job. Mick wondered savagely, as he went towards Woolloomooloo, if Jim would have the same Peace Society ideas about firearms in 1916. Meanwhile, he realised he was without the necessary pair of helping hands he wanted for the revengeful raid he had planned on his Honor's own house that very night.

Half-way to the 'Loo, he turned down a dusty side-street and dived into a third-rate pub, where a flash barmaid was serving drinks to a rowdy group of three.

As soon as she could get away from her customers, the girl hurried along to the quiet end of the counter where Mick was waiting, and, leaning across, whispered anxiously, "What luck, Mick?"

"Five years!"

"Oh, my God!"

"Cheer up, Nell," said Mick grimly; "the old boy was in a rotten humor, and I thought he was going to get seven. Give us a beer."

Mechanically the dazed girl drew it for him, and took the coin.

"Any of the lads about, Kid?"

She shook her head miserably.

"Waiting, Miss!" shouted the man who was paying for the next round.

The girl hurried to serve them, and Mick took his drink over to a cool corner. The old clock over the door gave a preliminary wheeze and struck three slow, rasping strokes. Mick looked up at it where it hung ticking with immense deliberation, and cursed softly. He realised with fresh force that five years was a big stretch out of a young man's life.

"Going anywhere to-night, Miss?" The youngest of the three drinkers flung the query at the barmaid as she drew the last beer.

She whitened, and took the shilling without a word.

Mick, from his corner, watched her as she hit up the amount on the cash register and passed over the change.

"Poor old Kid," he muttered. "Poor old Kid! It's d —d hard on you!"

The swing doors opened, and a blear-eyed wreck of a man fell in and stood peering about him. The barmaid adopted an air of virtuous hostility.

"Don't you let the boss see you in here, or you'll be sorry! You know quite well you were told not to come in here any more!"

"*I'm* orright! Don' *you* worry!" retorted the wreck, with an attempt at dignity.

"Leave him alone, Nell," said Mick quietly. Then, to the despised, "Mac, get Nell to give you a beer, and bring it over here. I want to talk to you."

"Right you are!" gurgled the wreck delightedly. "Come on, Nellie, my girl! Give us a long 'un!"

The beer was drawn and handed over with a bad grace; and the newcomer seized it and carried it carefully to the corner, where Mick gave him the threepence wherewith to recompense the house. The debt honorable paid, the grateful guest waved his drink in the air and sucked half of it down with his best respects to his host. Then he seated himself easily beside him and beamed on all— including his sworn enemy, the barmaid.

"How are you getting on, Mac?"

The wreck's face clouded slightly.

"I regret to say—"

"Pretty bad, eh?"

"Rotten, my boy! Rotten!"

Mick produced a packet of cigarettes and passed it along. "I was up at Darlinghurst this morning, Mac."

Mac finished lighting his cigarette before he replied lightly, "I trust no friend of yours was in difficulty, Mick."

"Jim Sheedy got five years over that North Shore case."

"Outrageous!" cried the man who had once been a gentleman. He started to storm, "Blast me if I can understand how any jury—"

'"Shut whispered the other fiercely; and the wreck subsided.

Evidently Mick did not expect sympathetic indignation in return for his hospitality. He waited patiently until it should please his benefactor to speak again.

"Mac, I want you to give me a hand to-night with a job. Are you on?"

The ex-gentleman looked thoughtfully at his broken boots. "Perhaps you want me to fill the place of—"

"That's it."

"What is the business, Michael?" with a keen glance at the drinking group.

"I want to take possession of some property— that's been left for me."

"Ah-h!" The ex-gentleman sat back in the corner seat and regarded the bottle-laden shelves with deep interest for a moment or two before he returned to the subject.

"And what share do I take in the enterprise?" he enquired at length.

Mick explained. It was simple, but entailed some risk.

His guest looked at his broken boots again and considered gloomily, "D—d if I ever thought I would come to this!" he remarked, half to himself. "I suppose I *have* come to it, though. "

"Anything wrong, Mac?"

"I was wondering, Mick, if the game was worth the candle."

"How much candle have *you* got left?"

"D —d little, and tha's a fact! Still, mind you, I wouldn't have done it *once*!"

"Oh, I daresay! Will you do it now, though?"

"Yes, I will!"

Mick rose. "Right-o! Now finish that beer of yours and let's walk down the street."

The derelict seized his glass and drained it.

"This job is a bit out of the ordinary run," confided Mick, as they walked towards the tram-line. " I've been chewing it over ever since the trial. You know that old cow was d—d rough on Jim; and I want to get back on him. I thought you would lend me a hand if I asked you to."

"Quite right, my boy. I owe friend Jim more than one good turn."

"Did you ever hear that the old boy is one of these coin collectors?"

"I think I have read it somewhere."

"Well, to-night I'm going to take his blanky collection and dump it into the harbor. None of the D's will ever get it back for him once I get clear of the house. It ought to be dead easy to do the trick. The house is that big green one on the Point. We will row down there from the bay about three in a skiff, land at the house jetty, and collect the goods without any trouble. What do you think of it?"

"Seems delightfully simple," muttered the broken gentleman. "I daresay we shall do very well if there are no light sleepers in the household. The thought of it gives me the same sort of thrill that orchard-robbing used to years ago. I perceive that there is a certain fascination about piracy even when one is past middle-age. When and where am I to meet you?"

"Oh, you and me will knock round this afternoon and I go up to one of the shows to-night to fill in time. I don't want the thing to be messed up at the last minute through your appointments. Here's a tram coming. Let us ride into town; I want to see a chap about the boat."

A WATERY moon was hurrying through a waste of scattered white clouds when the skiff slid up to the private jetty of the Judge's house and made fast.

"Hadn't we better take her into the pool?" whispered the rower.

"No! It's handier for a bolt here. Got your lamp?"

"Yes."

"Well, come on. Be careful!"

One of the paddles rolled ever so slightly as the rower stepped out.

"Look out!"

They went swiftly across the lawn and through the tennis court to a flight of steps. A shadow glow of light from Mick's electric pocket lamp to show the way, and they crept up like shadows. Then along a fern-bordered walk to a French window. A swift glance round, and Mick was at it. It yielded weakly to his magician-like touch within the minute; the pocket-lamp glowed again, and he disappeared inside.

Mac stood, staring stupidly.

"Come on! What are you waiting for?"

The amateur stepped fearfully into the room; it smelt of cigar smoke and roses.

"Stand where you are for a second !"

Mac stood, listening intently. Somewhere close handy there was the occasional faint suggestion of a snore. Mick's lamp glowed once in the corner. Then there was the faint click of an electric light switch and the filament of a shaded lamp on the table glowed red and blossomed into a white flower of light. They were in the library.

Mick pointed to the chair in front of the writing table. "Sit down," he whispered. "The lock of this cabinet will take me a few minutes. Better have a rest!" He opened his handbag like a surgeon, and, selecting a drill, knelt in front of the collector's steel treasure-chest.

Mac sank gratefully into the cushioned chair; his knees felt strangely weak. Slight as were the noises made by Mick, they seemed to him to be echoing through the house. And the sleeper whoever he was seemed hideously near. The clock on the mantelpiece ticked on sedately. Mac's eyes roved round in search of something to take his mind off his peril.

An oil portrait of a buxom woman in evening dress hung on the opposite wall. He leant forward in his chair and peered at it with his bloodshot eyes. It interested him; he got up out of his chair with infinite caution and tip-toed across the room. For a minute he stared at it; then turned and began a swift, systematic search for something. Mick worked steadily at the Judge's cabinet....

"My God! It's Sarah!"

Mick wheeled savagely from his work to find his assistant holding an open photograph album on his thread-bare knees.

"What the devil's the matter with you? What are you shouting about?"

"Sarah!" hissed the derelict incredulously.

"Sarah who?"

The derelict tapped the album and pointed with grimy forefinger at the picture.

"My wife!" he breathed. "Good God ! I thought she was dead... Last saw her in London in '87.... Wonder when she married him—"

He staggered up out of the chair and stood before the full-length portrait of the Judge in his robes.

The clock ticked on remorselessly. Mick, his cabinet still unopened, got slowly to his feet and looked at him hopelessly. "What are you going to do, Mac?" he whispered at last.

The husband turned slowly from the survey of the Judge's portrait and gripped the burglar's shoulder.

"Never mind about his coins now, my boy. Pack up your things and get away. I am going to stay to breakfast."

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4: How We Got Possession of the Tuilleries.

Anonymous

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, April, 1848

*The February 1848 Revolution (*Révolution de février*) in France resulted in the collapse of the Monarchy of Louis Phillipe, and the establishment of the Second Republic. It was big news when this story was written, and this amusing but anonymous satirical tale is a result.*

1: Heads or Tails?

I LIKE political ovations. It is a very pleasant thing to perambulate Europe in the guise of a regenerator, sowing the good seed of political economy in places which have hitherto been barren, and enlightening the heathen upon the texture of calico, and the blessings of unreciprocal free-trade. I rather flatter myself that I have excited considerable sensation in certain quarters of Europe, previously plunged in darkness, and unillumined by the argand lamp of Manchester philosophy. Since September last, I have not been idle, but have borne the banner of regeneration from the Baltic to the shores of the Bosphorus.

As the apostle of peace and plenty, I have every where been rapturously greeted. Never, I believe, was there a sincerer, a more earnest wish prevalent throughout the nations for the maintenance of universal tranquillity than now; never a better security for that fraternisation which we all so earnestly desire; never a more peaceful or unrevolutionary epoch. Such, at least, were my ideas a short time ago, when, after having fulfilled a secret mission of some delicacy in a very distant part of the Continent, I turned my face homewards, and retraced my steps in the direction of my own Glaswegian Mecca. In passing through Italy, I found that country deeply engaged in plans of social organisation, and much cheered by the sympathising presence of a member of her Britannic Majesty's cabinet. It was delightful to witness the good feeling which seemed to prevail between the British unaccredited minister and the scum of the Ausonian population,— the mutual politeness and sympathy exhibited by each of the high contracting parties,— and the perfect understanding on the part of the Lazzaroni, of the motives which had induced the northern peer to absent himself from felicity awhile, and devote the whole of his vast talents and genius to the cause of foreign insurrection. I had just time to congratulate Pope Pius upon the charming prospect which was before him, and to say a few hurried words regarding the superiority of cotton to Christianity as a universal tranquillising medium, when certain unpleasant rumours from the frontier forced their way to the Eternal City, and convinced me of the propriety of continuing my retreat towards the land of my nativity.

Not that I fear steel, or have any abstract repugnance to grape, but my mission was emphatically one of peace; I had a great duty to discharge to my country, and that might have been lamentably curtailed by the bullet of some blundering Austrian.

Behold me, then, at Paris— that Aspasian capital of the world. I had often visited it before in the character of a tourist and literateur, but never until now as a politician. True, I was not accredited: I enjoyed neither diplomatic rank, nor the more soothing salary which is its accompaniment. But, in these times, such distinctions are rapidly fading away. I had seen with my own eyes a good deal of spontaneous diplomacy, which certainly did not seem to flow in the regular channel; and, furthermore, I could personally testify to the weight attached abroad to private commercial crusades. I needed no official costume; I was the representative of a popular movement; I was the champion of a class; and my name and my principles were alike familiar to the ears of the illuminati of Europe. Formerly I had been proud of associating with Eugène Sue, Charles Nodier, Paul de Kock, and other characters of ephemeral literary celebrity; I had wasted my time in orgies at the Café de Londres, or the Rocher de Cancale, and was but too happy to be admitted to those little parties of pleasure in which the majority of the cavaliers are *feuilletonists*, and the *dames,* terrestrial stars from the constellation of the *Théatre des Variétés*. Now I looked back on this former phase of my existence with a consciousness of having wasted my energies. I had shot into another sphere— was entitled to take rank with Thiers, Odillon Barrot, Crémieux, and other champions of the people; and I resolved to comport myself accordingly. I do not feel at liberty to enter into the exact details of the public business which detained me for some time in Paris. It is enough to say, that I was warmly and cordially received, and on the best possible terms with the members of the extreme gauche.

One afternoon about the middle of February, I was returning from the Chamber of Deputies, meditating very seriously upon the nature of a debate which I had just heard, regarding the opposition of ministers to the holding of a Reform banquet in Paris, and in which my friend Barrot had borne a very conspicuous share. At the corner of the Place de la Concorde, I observed a tall swarthy man in the uniform of the National Guard, engaged in cheapening a poodle. I thought I recognised the face— hesitated, stopped, and in a moment was in the arms of my illustrious friend, the Count of Monte-Christo, and Marquis Davy de la Pailleterie!

"Capdibious!" cried the author of *Trois Mousquetaires*— "Who would have thought to see you here? Welcome, my dear Dunshunner, a thousand times to Paris. Where have you been these hundred years?"

"Voyaging, like yourself, to the East, my dear Marquis," replied I.

"Ah, bah! That is an old joke. I never was nearer Egypt than the Bois de Boulogne; however, I did manage to mystify the good public about the baths of Alexandria. But how came you here just now? *Dix mille tonnerres*! They told me you had been made *pair d'Angleterre*."

"Why, no; not exactly. There was some talk of it, I believe. But jealousy— jealousy, you know—"

"Ah, yes,— I comprehend! *Ce vilain* Palmerston, *n'est-ce pas*? But that is always the way; ministers are always the same. You will hardly credit it, my dear friend, but I— I with my ancient title— and the most popular author of France, am not even a member of the Chamber of Deputies!"

"You amaze me!"

"Yes— after all, you manage better in England. There is that little D'Israeli— very clever man— Monceton Milles, Bourring, *bien mauvais poètes*, and Wakeley, all in the legislature; while here the literary interest is altogether unrepresented."

"Surely, my dear Marquis, you forget— there's Lamartine."

"Lamartine! a mere sentimentalist— a nobody! No, my dear friend; France must be regenerated. The daughter of glory, she cannot live without progression."

"How, Marquis? I thought that you and Montpensier—"

"Were friends! True enough. It was I who settled the Spanish marriages. There, I rather flatter myself, I had your perfidious Albion on the hip. But, to say the truth, I am tired of family alliances. We want something more to keep us alive— something startling, in short— something like the Pyramids and Moscow, to give us an impulse forward into the dark gulf of futurity. The limits of Algeria are too contracted for the fluttering of our national banner. We want freedom, less taxation, and a more extended frontier."

"And cannot all these," said I, unwilling to lose the opportunity of converting so remarkable man as the Count of Monte-Christo to the grand principles of Manchester— "Cannot these be attained by more peaceful methods than the subversion of general tranquillity? What is freedom, my dear Marquis, but an unlimited exportation of cotton abroad, with double task hours of wholesome labour at home? How will you diminish your taxation better, than by reducing all duties on imports, until the deficit is laid directly upon the shoulders of a single uncomplaining class? Why seek to extend your frontier, whilst we in England, out of sheer love to the world at large, are rapidly demolishing our colonies? Did you ever happen," continued I, pulling from my pocket a bundle of the Manchester manifestos, "to peruse any of these glorious epitomes of reason and of political science? Are you familiar

with the soul-stirring tracts of Thompson and of Bright? Did you ever read the Socialist's scheme for universal philanthropy, which Cobden—"

"*Peste*!" replied the illustrious nobleman, "what the deuce do we care for the opinions of Monsieur Tonson, or any of your low manufacturers? By my honour, Dunshunner, I am afraid you are losing your head. Don't you know, my dear fellow, that all great revolutions spring from us, the men of genius? It is we who are the true rousers of the people; we, the poets and romancers, who are the source of all legitimate power. Witness Voltaire, Rousseau, De Beranger, and— I may say it without any imputation of vanity— the Marquis Davy de la Pailleterie!"

"Yours is a new theory!" said I, musingly.

"New! Pray pardon me— it is as old as literature itself! No revolution can be effectual unless it has the fine arts for its basis. Simple as I stand here, I demand no more time than a month to wrap Europe in universal war."

"You don't say so seriously?"

"On my honour."

"Give me leave to doubt it."

"Should you like a proof?"

"Not on so great a scale, certainly. I am afraid the results would be too serious to justify the experiment."

"Ah, bah! You are a philanthropist. What are a few thousand lives compared with the triumph of mind?"

"Not much to you, perhaps, but certainly something to the owners. But come, my dear friend, you are jesting. You don't mean to insinuate that you possess any such power?"

"I do indeed."

"But the means? Granting that you have the power— and all Europe acknowledges the extraordinary faculties of the author of Monte-Christo— some time would be required for their development. You cannot hope to inoculate the mind of a nation in a moment."

"I did not say a moment— I said a month.

"And dare I ask your recipe?"

"A very simple one. Two romances, each in ten volumes, and a couple of melodramas."

"What! of your own?"

"Of mine," replied the Marquis de la Pailleterie.

"I wish to heaven that I knew how you set about it. I have heard G. P. R. James backed for a volume a month, but this sinks him into utter insignificance."

"There is no difficulty in explaining it. He writes,— I never do.

"You never write?"

"Never."

"Then how the mischief do you manage?"

"I compose. Since I met you, I have composed and dictated a whole chapter of the *Memoirs of a Physician*."

"Dictated?"

"To be sure. It is already written down, and will be circulated throughout Paris to-morrow."

"Monsieur le Marquis— have I the honour to hold an interview with Satan?"

"*Mon cher, vous me flattez beaucoup*! I have not thought it necessary to intrust my experiences to the sympathising bosom of M. Frédéric Soulié."

"Have you a familiar spirit, then?" said I, casting a suspicious glance towards the poodle, then vigorously engaged in hunting through its woolly fleece.

The Marquis smiled.

"The ingenuity of your supposition, my dear friend, deserves a specific answer. I have indeed a familiar spirit— that is, I am possessed of a confidant, ready at all times, though absent, to chronicle my thoughts, and to express, in corresponding words, the spontaneous emotions of my soul. Nay, you need not start. The art is an innocent one, and its practice, though divulged, would not expose me in any way to the censures of the church."

"You pique my curiosity strangely!"

"Well, then, listen. For some years I have paid the utmost attention to the science of animal magnetism, an art which undoubtedly lay at the foundation of the ancient Chaldean lore, and which, though now revived, has been debased by the artifices and quackery of knaves. I need not go into details. After long search, I have succeeded in finding a being which, in its dormant or spiritual state, has an entire affinity with my own. When awake, you would suppose Leontine Deschappelles to be a mere ordinary though rather interesting female, endowed certainly with a miraculous sensibility for music, but not otherwise in any way remarkable. But, when asleep, she becomes as it were the counterpart or reflex of myself. Every thought which passes through my bosom simultaneously arises in hers. I do not need even to utter the words. By some miraculous process, these present themselves as vividly to her as if I had bestowed the utmost labour upon composition. I have but to throw her into a magnetic sleep, and my literary product for the day is secured. I go forth through Paris, mingle in society, appear idle and *insouciant*; and yet all the while the ideal personages of my tale are passing over the mirror of my mind, and performing their allotted duty. I have reached such perfection in the art,

that I can compose two or even three romances at once. I return towards evening, and then I find Leontine, pale indeed and exhausted, but with a vast pile of manuscript before her, which contains the faithful transcript of my thoughts. Now, perhaps, you will cease to wonder at an apparent fertility, which, I am aware, has challenged the admiration and astonishment of Europe."

All this was uttered by Monte-Christo with such exemplary gravity, that I stood perfectly confounded. If true, it was indeed the solution of the greatest literary problem of the age; but I could hardly suppress the idea that he was making me the victim of a hoax.

"And whereabouts does she dwell, this Demoiselle Leontine?" said I.

"At my house," he replied: "she is my adopted child. Poor Leontine! sometimes when I look at her wasted cheek, I feel a pang of regret to think that she is paying so dear for a celebrity which must be immortal. But it is the fate of genius, my friend, and all of us must submit!"

As the Marquis uttered this sentiment with a pathetic sigh, I could not refrain from glancing at his manly and athletic proportions. Certainly there was no appearance of over-fatigue or lassitude there. He looked the very incarnation of good cheer, and had contrived to avert from his own person all vestige of those calamities which he was pleased so feelingly to deplore. He might have been exhibited at the *Frères Provençaux* as a splendid result of their nutritive and culinary system.

"You doubt me still, I see," said De la Pailleterie. "Well, I cannot wonder at it. Such things, I know, sound strange in the apprehension of you incredulous islanders. But I will even give you a proof, Dunshunner, which is more than I would do to any other man— for I cannot forget the service you rendered me long ago at the Isle de Bourbon. You see this little instrument,—put it to your ear. I shall summon Leontine to speak, and the sound of her reply will be conveyed to you through that silver tube, which is in strict rapport with her magnetic constitution."

So saying, he placed in my hand a miniature silver trumpet, beautifully wrought, which I immediately placed to my ear.

Monte-Christo drew himself up to his full height, fixed his fine eyes earnestly upon vacuity, made several passes upwards with his hand, and then said,

"My friend, do you hear me? If so, answer."

Immediately, and to my unexpected surprise, there thrilled through the silver tube a whisper of miraculous sweetness.

"Great master! I listen— I obey!"

"May St Mungo, St Mirren, St Rollox, and all the other western saints, have me in their keeping!" cried I. "Heard ever mortal man aught like this?"

"Hush— be silent!" said the Marquis, "or you may destroy the spell. Leontine, have you concluded the chapter?"

"I have," said the voice: "shall I read the last sentences?"

"Do," replied the adept, who seemed to hear the response simultaneously with myself, by intuition.

The voice went on. "At this moment the door of the apartment opened, and Chon rushed into the room. 'Well, my little sister, how goes it?' said the Countess. 'Bad.' 'Indeed!' 'It is but too true.' 'De Noailles?' 'No.' 'Ha! D'Aiguillon?' 'You deceive yourself.' 'Who then?' 'Philip de Taverney, the Chevalier Maison-Rouge!' 'Ha!' cried the Countess, 'then I am lost!' and she sank senseless upon the cushions."

"Well done, Leontine!" exclaimed De la Pailleterie; "that is the seventh chapter I have composed since morning. Are you fatigued, my child?"

"Very— very weary," replied the voice, in a melancholy cadence.

"You shall have rest soon. Come hither. Do you see me?"

"Ah! you are very cruel!"

"I understand. Cease to be fatigued— I will it!"

"Ah! thanks, thanks!"

"Do you see me now?"

"I do. Oh, how handsome!"

The Marquis caressed his whiskers.

"Where am I?"

"At the corner of the Place de la Concorde, near the Tuilleries' gardens. Ah, you naughty man, you have been smoking!"

"Who is with me?"

"A poodle-dog," replied the voice. "What a pretty creature! he is just snapping at a fly. Come here, poor fellow!"

The poodle gave an unearthly yell, and rushed between the legs of Monte-Christo, thereby nearly capsizing that extraordinary magician.

"Who else?" asked the Marquis.

"A tall man, with sandy-coloured hair. *La*, how funny!"

"What now?"

"I am laughing."

"At what?"

"At his dress."

"How is he dressed?"

"In a blue coat with gilt buttons, a white hat, and such odd scarlet-and-yellow trowsers!"

I stood petrified. It was quite true. In a moment of abstraction I had that morning donned a pair of integuments of the M'Tavish tartan, and my legs were of the colour of the flamingo.

"Is he handsome?"

I did not exactly catch the response.

"That will do, my dear Marquis," said I, returning him the trumpet. "I am now perfectly convinced of the truth of your assertions, and can no longer wonder at the marvellous fertility of your pen— I beg pardon— of your invention. Pray, do not trouble your fair friend any further upon my account. I have heard quite enough to satisfy me that I am in the presence of the most remarkable man in Europe."

"Pooh! this is a mere bagatelle. Any man might do the same, with a slight smattering of the occult sciences. But we were talking, if I recollect right, about moral influence and power. I maintain that the authors of romance and melodrama are the true masters of the age: you, on the contrary, believe in free-trade and the jargon of political economy. Is it not so?"

"True. We started from that point."

"Well, then, would you like to see a revolution?"

"Not on my account, my dear Marquis. I own the interest of the spectacle, but it demands too great a sacrifice."

"Not at all. In fact, I have made up my mind for a bouleversement this spring, as I seriously believe it would tend very much to the respectability of France. It must come sooner or later. Louis Philippe is well up in years, and it cannot make much difference to him. Besides, I am tired of Guizot. He gives himself airs as an historian which are absolutely insufferable, and France can submit to it no longer. The only doubt I entertain is, whether this ought to be a new ministry, or an entire dynastical change."

"You are the best judge. For my own part, having no interest in the matter further than curiosity, a change of ministers would satisfy me."

"Ay, but there are considerations beyond that. Much may be said upon both sides. There is danger certainly in organic changes, at the same time we must work out by all means our full and legitimate freedom. What would you do in such a case of perplexity?"

Victor Hugo's simple and romantic method of deciding between hostile opinions, as exemplified in his valuable drama of Lucrèce Borgia, at once occurred to me.

"Are you quite serious," said I, "in wishing to effect a change of some kind?"

"I am," said the Marquis, "as resolute as Prometheus on the Caucasus."

"Then, suppose we toss for it; and so leave the question of a new cabinet or dynasty entirely to the arbitration of fate?"

"A good and a pious idea!" replied the Marquis de la Pailleterie. "Here is a five-franc piece. I shall toss, and you shall call."

Up went the dollar, big with the fate of France, twirling in the evening air.

"Heads for a new ministry!" cried I, and the coin fell chinking on the gravel. We both rushed up.

"It is tails!" said the Marquis devoutly. "Destiny! thou hast willed it, and I am but thine instrument. Farewell, my friend; in ten days you shall hear more of this. Meantime, I must be busy. Poor Leontine! thou hast a heavy task before thee!"

"If you are going homewards," said I, "permit me to accompany you so far. Our way lies together."

"Not so," replied the Marquis thoughtfully. "I dine to-day at Véfour's, and in the evening I must attend the Théatre de la Porte St Martin. I am never so much alone as in the midst of excitement. O France, France! what do I not endure for thee!"

So saying, Monte-Christo extended his hand, which I wrung affectionately within my own. I felt proud of the link which bound me to so high and elevated a being.

"Ah, my friend!" said I, "ah, my friend! there is yet time to pause. Would it not be wiser and better to forego this enterprise altogether?"

"You forget," replied the other solemnly. "Destiny has willed it. Go, let us each fulfil our destiny!"

So saying, this remarkable man tucked the poodle under his arm, and in a few moments was lost to my view amidst the avenues of the garden of the Tuilleries.

2: The Ides of March.

SEVERAL DAYS elapsed, during which Paris maintained its customary tranquillity. The eye of a stranger could have observed very little alteration in the demeanour of the populace; and even in the *salons*, there was no strong surmise of any coming event of importance. In the capital of France one looks for a revolution as quietly as the people of England await the advent of "the coming man." The event is always prophesied— sometimes apparently upon the eve of being fulfilled; but the failures are so numerous as to prevent inordinate disappointment. In the Chamber there were some growlings about the Reform banquet, and the usual vague threats if any attempt should be

made to coerce the liberties of the people; but these demonstrations had been so often repeated, that nobody had faith in any serious or critical result.

Little Thiers, to be sure, blustered; and Odillon Barrot assumed pompous airs, and tried to look like a Roman citizen, at our small patriotic cosmopolitan reunions; but I never could believe that either of them was thoroughly in earnest. We all know the game that is played in Britain, where the doors of the ministerial cabinet are constructed on the principle of a Dutch clock. When it is fair weather, the ambitious figure of Lord John Russell is seen mounting guard on the outside— when it threatens to blow, the small sentry retires, and makes way for the Tamworth grenadier. Just so was it in Paris. Guizot, if wheeled from his perch, was expected to be replaced by the smarter and more enterprising Thiers, and slumbrous Duchatel by the broad-chested and beetle-browed Barrot.

At the same time, I could not altogether shut my eyes to the more active state of the press. I do not mean to aver that the mere political articles exhibited more than their usual vigour; but throughout the whole literature of the day there ran an under-current of revolutionary feeling which betokened wonderful unanimity. Less than usual was said about Marengo, Austerlitz, or even the three glorious days of July. The minds of men were directed further back, to a period when the Republic was all in all, when France stood isolated among the nations, great in crime, and drunken with her new-won freedom. The lapse of half a century is enough to throw a sort of halo around the memory of the veriest villain and assassin. We have seen Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard exhumed from their graves to be made the heroes of modern romance; and the same alchemy was now applied to the honoured ashes of Anacharsis Clootz, and other patriots of the Reign of Terror.

All this was done very insidiously, and, I must say, with consummate skill. Six or seven simultaneous romances reminded the public of its former immunity from rule, and about as many melodramas denounced utter perdition to tyranny. I liked the fun. Man is by nature a revolutionary animal, especially when he has nothing to lose; and it is needless to remark that a very small portion indeed of my capital was invested in the foreign funds.

I saw little of my friend the Marquis, beyond meeting him at the usual promenades, and bowing to him at the theatres, where he never failed to present himself. A casual observer would have thought that De la Pailleterie had no other earthly vocation than to perambulate Paris as a mere votary of pleasure. Once or twice, however, towards evening, I encountered him in his uniform of the National Guard, with fire in his eye, haste in his step, and a settled deliberation on his forehead; and I could not help, as I gazed upon him, feeling transported backwards to the period of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis.

At length I received the expected billet, and on the appointed evening rendered myself punctually at his house. The rooms were already more than half filled by the company.

"Are the Ides of March come?" said I, pressing the proffered hand of Monte-Christo.

"Come— but not yet over," he replied. "You have seen the new play which has produced such a marked sensation?"

"I have. Wonderful production! Whose is it?"

A mysterious smile played upon the lip of my friend.

"Come," said he, "let me introduce you to a countryman, a sympathiser; one who, like you, is desirous that our poor country should participate in the blessings of the British loom. Mr Hutton Bagsby— Mr Dunshunner."

Bagsby was a punchy man, with a bald head, and a nose which betokened his habitual addiction to the fiery grape of Portugal.

"Servant, sir!" said he. "Understand you're a free-trader, supporter of Cobden's principles, and inclined to go the whole hog. Glad to see a man of common understanding here. Damme, sir, when I speak to these French fellows about calico, they begin to talk about fraternity; which, as I take it, means eating frogs, for I don't pretend to understand their outlandish gibberish."

"Every nation has its hobby, you know, Mr Bagsby," I replied. "We consider ourselves more practical than the French, and stick to the main chance; they, on the other hand, are occupied with social grievances, and what they call the rights of labour."

"Rights of labour!" exclaimed Bagsby. "Hanged if I think labour has got any rights at all. Blow all protection! say I. Look after the interests of the middle classes, and let capital have its swing. As for those confounded working fellows, who cares about them? We don't, I can answer for it. When I was in the League, we wanted to bring corn down, in order to get work cheaper; and, now that we've got it, do you think we will stand any rubbish about rights? These French fellows are a poor set; they don't understand sound commercial principles."

"Ha! Lamoricière!" said our host, accosting a general officer who just then entered the apartment; "how goes it? Any result from to-day's demonstration at the Chamber?"

"Ma foi! I should say there is. The banquets are forbidden. There is a talk about impeaching ministers; and, in the meantime, the artillery-waggons are rumbling through the streets in scores."

"Then our old friend Macaire is likely to make a stand?"

"It is quite possible that the respectable gentleman may try it," said the commandant, regaling himself with a pinch. "By the way, the National Guard must turn out to-morrow early. The *rappel* will be beat by daybreak. There is a stir already in the Boulevards; and, as I drove here, I saw the people in thousands reading the evening journals by torch-light."

"Such is liberty!" exclaimed a little gentleman, who had been listening eagerly to the General. "Such is liberty! she holds her bivouac at nightfall by the torch of reason; and, on the morrow, the dawn is red with the brightness of the sun of Austerlitz!"

A loud hum of applause followed the enunciation of this touching sentiment.

"Our friend is great to-night," whispered Monte-Christo; "and he may be greater to-morrow. If Louis Philippe yields, he may be prime minister— if firing begins, I have a shrewd notion he won't be any where. Ah, Monsieur Albert! welcome from Cannes. We have been expecting you for some time, and you have arrived not a moment too soon!"

The individual thus accosted was of middle height, advanced age, and very plainly dressed. He wore a rusty gray surtout, trousers of plaid check, and the lower part of his countenance was buried in the folds of a black cravat. The features were remarkable; and, somehow or other, I thought that I had seen them before. The small gray eyes rolled restlessly beneath their shaggy pent-house; the cheek-bones were remarkably prominent; a deep furrow was cut on either side of the mouth; and the nose, which was of singular conformation, seemed endowed with spontaneous life, and performed a series of extraordinary mechanical revolutions. Altogether, the appearance of the man impressed me with the idea of strong, ill-regulated energy, and of that restless activity which is emphatically the mother of mischief.

Monsieur Albert did not seem very desirous of courting attention. He rather winked than replied to our host, threw a suspicious look at Bagsby, who was staring him in the face, honoured me with a survey, and then edged away into the crowd. I felt rather curious to know something more about him.

"Pray, my dear Marquis," said I, "who may this Monsieur Albert be?"

"Albert! Is it possible that you do not— but I forget. I can only tell you, mon cher, that this Monsieur Albert is a very remarkable man, and will be heard of hereafter among the ranks of the people. You seem to suspect a mystery? Well, well! There are mysteries in all great dramas, such as that which is now going on around us; so, for the present, you must be content to know my friend as simple Albert, *ouvrier*."

"Hanged if I haven't seen that fellow in the black choker before!" said Mr Bagsby; "or, at all events, I've seen his double. I say, Mr Dunshunner, who is the chap that came in just now?"

"I really cannot tell, Mr Bagsby. Monte-Christo calls him simply Mr Albert, a workman."

"That's their fraternity, I suppose! If I thought he was an operative, I'd be off in the twinkling of a billy-roller. But it's all a hoax. Do you know, I think he's very like a certain noble—"

Here an aide-de-camp, booted and spurred, dashed into the apartment.

"General! you are wanted immediately: the *émeute* has begun, half Paris is rushing to arms, and they are singing the Marseillaise through the streets!"

"Any thing else?" said the General, who, with inimitable *sang froid*, was sipping a tumbler of orgeat.

"Guizot has resigned."

"Bravo!" cried the little gentleman above referred to—and he cut a caper that might have done credit to Vestris. "Bravo! there is some chance for capable men now."

"I was told," continued the aide-de-camp, "as I came along, that Count Molé had been sent for."

"Molé! bah! an imbecile!" muttered the diminutive statesman. "It was not worth a revolution to produce such a miserable result."

"And what say the people?" asked our host.

"*Cela ne suffira pas*!"

"*Ah, les bons citoyens*! *Ah, les braves garçons*! Je les connais!" And here the candidate for office executed a playful pirouette.

"Nevertheless," said Lamoricière, "we must do our duty."

"Which is?" interrupted De la Pailleterie.

"To see the play played out, at all events," replied the military patriot; "and therefore, messieurs, I have the honour to wish you all a very good evening."

"But stop, General," cried two or three voices: "what would you advise us to do?"

"In the first place, gentlemen," replied the warrior, and his words were listened to with the deepest attention, "I would recommend you, as the streets are in a disturbed state, to see the ladies home. That duty performed, you will probably be guided by your own sagacity and tastes. The National Guard will, of course, muster at their quarters. Gentlemen who are of an architectural genius will probably be gratified by an opportunity of inspecting several barricades in different parts of the city; and I have always observed, that behind a wall of this description, there is little danger from a passing bullet. Others, who are fond of fireworks, may possibly find an opportunity of

improving themselves in the pyrotechnic art. But I detain you, gentlemen, I fear unjustifiably; and as I observe that the firing has begun, I have the honour once more to renew my salutations."

And in fact a sharp fusillade was heard without, towards the conclusion of the General's harangue. The whole party was thrown into confusion; several ladies showed symptoms of fainting, and were incontinently received in the arms of their respective cavaliers.

The aspiring statesman had disappeared. Whether he got under a sofa, or up the chimney, I do not know, but he vanished utterly from my eyes. Monte-Christo was in a prodigious state of excitement.

"I have kept my word, you see," he said: "this may be misconstrued in history, but I call upon you to bear witness that the revolution was a triumph of genius. O France!" continued he, filling his pocket with macaroons, "the hour of thine emancipation has come!"

Observing a middle-aged lady making towards the door without male escort, I thought it incumbent upon me to tender my services, in compliance with the suggestions of the gallant Lamoricière. I was a good deal obstructed, however, by Mr Hutton Bagsby, who, in extreme alarm, was cleaving to the skirts of my garments.

"Can I be of the slightest assistance in offering my escort to madame?" said I with a respectful bow.

The lady looked at me with unfeigned surprise.

"Monsieur mistakes, I believe," said she quietly. "Perhaps he thinks I carry a fan. Look here"— and she exhibited the butt of an enormous horse-pistol. "The authoress of *Lélia* knows well how to command respect for herself."

"George Sand!" I exclaimed in amazement.

"The same, monsieur; who will be happy to meet you this evening at an early hour, behind the barricade of the Rue Montmartre."

"O good Lord!" cried Mr Hutton Bagsby, "here is a precious kettle of fish! They are firing out yonder like mad; they'll be breaking into the houses next, and we'll all be murdered to a man."

"Do not be alarmed, Mr Bagsby; this is a mere political revolution. The people have no animosity whatever to strangers."

"Haven't they? I wish you had seen the way the waiter looked this morning at my dressing case. They'd tie me up to the lamp-post at once for the sake of my watch and seals! And I don't know a single word of their bloody language. I wish the leaders of the League had been hanged before they sent me here."

"What! then you are here upon a mission?"

"Yes, I'm a delegate, as they call it. O Lord, I wish somebody would take me home!"

"Where do you reside, Mr Bagsby?"

"I don't know the name of the street, and the man who brought me here has just gone away with a gun! Oh dear! what shall I do?"

I really felt considerably embarrassed. By this time Monte-Christo and most of his guests had departed, and I knew no one to whom I could consign the unfortunate and terrified free-trader. I sincerely pitied poor Bagsby, who was eminently unfitted for this sort of work; and was just about to offer him an asylum in my own apartments, when I felt my shoulder touched, and, turning round, recognised the intelligent though sarcastic features of Albert the ouvrier.

"You are both English?" he said in a perfectly pure dialect. "Eh bien, I like the English, and I wish they understood us better. You are in difficulties. Well, I will assist. Come with me. You may depend upon the honour of a member of the Institute. Workman as I am, I have some influence here. Come—is it a bargain? Only one caution, gentlemen: remember where you are, and that the watchwords for the night are *fraternité, égalité*! You comprehend? Let us lose no time, but follow me."

So saying, he strode to the door. Bagsby said not a word, but clutched my arm. But as we descended the staircase, he muttered in my ear as well as the chittering of his teeth would allow:—

"It is *him*— I am perfectly certain! Who on earth would have believed this! O Lord Harry!"

3: The Barricades

THE STREETS were in a state of wild commotion. Every where we encountered crowds of truculent working fellows, dressed in blouses and armed with muskets, who were pressing towards the Boulevards. Sometimes they passed us in hurried groups; at other times the way was intercepted by a regular procession bearing torches, and singing the war-hymn of Marseilles. Those who judge of the physical powers of the French people by the specimens they usually encounter in the streets of Paris, are certain to form an erroneous estimate. A more powerful and athletic race than the workmen is scarcely to be found in Europe; and it was not, I confess, without a certain sensation of terror, that I found myself launched into the midst of this wild and uncontrollable mob, whose furious gestures testified to their excitement, and whose brawny arms were bared, and ready for the work of slaughter.

Considering the immense military force which was known to be stationed in and around Paris, it seemed to me quite miraculous that no effective demonstration had been made. Possibly the troops might be drawn up in some

of the wider streets or squares, but hitherto we had encountered none. Several bodies of the National Guard, it is true, occasionally went by; but these did not seem to be considered as part of the military force, nor did they take any active steps towards the quelling of the disturbance. At times, however, the sound of distant firing warned us that the struggle had begun.

Poor Bagsby clung to my arm in a perfect paroxysm of fear. I had cautioned him, as we went out, on no account to open his lips, or to make any remarks which might serve to betray his origin. The creature was quite docile, and followed in the footsteps of Monsieur Albert like a lamb. That mysterious personage strode boldly forward, chuckling to himself as he went, and certainly exhibited a profound knowledge of the topography of Paris. Once or twice we were stopped and questioned; but a few cabalistic words from our leader solved all difficulties, and we were allowed to proceed amidst general and vociferous applause.

At length, as we approached the termination of a long and narrow street, we heard a tremendous shouting, and the unmistakable sounds of conflict.

"Here come the Municipal Guards!" cried M. Albert, quickly. "These fellows fight like demons, and have no regard for the persons of the people. Follow me, gentlemen, this way, and speedily, if you do not wish to be sliced like blanc-mange!"

With these words the ouvrier dived into a dark lane, and we lost no time in following his example. I had no idea whatever of our locality, but it seemed evident that we were in one of the worst quarters of Paris. Every lamp in the lane had been broken, so that we could form no opinion of its character from vision. It was, however, ankle-deep of mud— a circumstance by no means likely to prolong the existence of my glazed boots. Altogether, I did not like the situation; and, had it not been for the guarantee as to M. Albert's respectability, implied from his acquaintance with Monte-Christo, I think I should have preferred trusting myself to the tender mercies of the Municipal Guard. As for poor Bagsby, his teeth were going like castanets.

"You seem cold, sir," said Albert, in a deep and husky voice, as we reached a part of the lane apparently fenced in by dead walls. "This is a wild night for a Manchester weaver to be wandering in the streets of Paris!"

"O Lord! you know me, then?" groaned Bagsby, with a piteous accent.

"Know you? ha, ha!" replied the other, with the laugh of the third ruffian in a melodrama; "who does not know citizen Bagsby, the delegate— Bagsby, the great champion of the League— Bagsby, the millionnaire!"

"It's not true, upon my soul!" cried Bagsby; "I am nothing of the kind. I haven't a hundred pounds in the world that I can properly call my own."

"The world wrongs you, then," said Albert; "and, to say the truth, you keep up the delusion by carrying so much bullion about you. I should say, now, that the chain round your neck must be worth some fifty louis."

Bagsby made no reply, but clutched my arm with the grasp of a cockatoo.

"This is a very dreary place," continued Albert, in a tone that might have emanated from a sepulchre. "Last winter, three men were robbed and murdered in this very passage. There is a conduit to the Seine below, and I saw the bodies next morning in the Morgue, with their throats cut from ear to ear!"

From a slight interjectional sound, I concluded that Bagsby was praying.

"These," said the *ouvrier*, "are the walls of a slaughter-house: on the other side is the shed where they ordinarily keep the guillotine. Have you seen that implement yet, Mr Bagsby?"

"Mercy on us, no!" groaned the delegate. "Oh, Mr Albert, whoever you are, do take us out of this place, or I am sure I shall lose my reason! If you want my watch, say so at once, and, upon my word, you are heartily welcome."

"Harkye, sirrah," said Monsieur Albert: "I have more than half a mind to leave you here all night for your consummate impertinence. I knew you from the very first to be a thorough poltroon; but I shall find a proper means of chastising you. Come along, sir; we are past the lane now, and at a place where your hands may be better employed for the liberties of the people than your head ever was in inventing task-work at home."

We now emerged into an open court, lighted by a solitary lamp. It was apparently deserted, but, on a low whistle from Monsieur Albert, some twenty or thirty individuals in blouses rushed forth from the doorways and surrounded us. I own I did not feel remarkably comfortable at the moment; for although it was clear to me that our guide had merely been amusing himself at the expense of Bagsby, the apparition of his confederates was rather sudden and startling. As for Bagsby, he evidently expected no better fate than an immediate conduct to the block.

"You come late, *mon capitaine*," said a bloused veteran, armed with a mattock. "They have the start of us already in the Rue des Petits Champs."

"Never mind, *grognard*! we are early enough for the ball," said M. Albert. "Have you every thing ready as I desired?"

"All ready— spades, levers, pickaxes, and the rest."

"Arms?"

"Enough to serve our purpose, and we shall soon have more. But who are these with you?"

"Fraternisers—two bold Englishmen, who are ready to die for freedom!"

"*Vivent les Anglais*, *et à bas les tyrans*!" shouted the blouses.

"This citizen," continued Albert, indicating the unhappy Bagsby, "is a Cobdenist and a delegate. He has sworn to remain at the barricades until the last shot is fired, and to plant the red banner of the emancipated people upon its summit. His soul is thirsting for fraternity. Brothers! open to him your arms."

Hereupon a regular scramble took place for the carcass of Mr Hutton Bagsby. Never surely was so much love lavished upon any human creature. Patriot after patriot bestowed on him the full-flavoured hug of fraternity, and he emerged from their grasp very much in the tattered condition of a scarecrow.

"Give the citizen delegate a blouse and a pickaxe," quoth Albert, "and then for the barricade. You have your orders— execute them. Up with the pavement, down with the trees; fling over every omnibus and cab that comes in your way, and fight to the last drop of your blood for France and her freedom. Away!"

With a tremendous shout the patriots rushed off, hurrying Bagsby along with them. The unfortunate man offered no resistance, but the agony depicted on his face might have melted the heart of a millstone.

Albert remained silent until the group were out of sight, and then burst into a peal of laughter.

"That little man," said he, "will gather some useful experiences to-night that may last him as long as he lives. As for you, Mr Dunshunner, whose name and person are well known to me, I presume you have no ambition to engage in any such architectural constructions?"

I modestly acknowledged my aversion to practical masonry.

"Well, then," said the ouvrier, "I suppose you are perfectly competent to take care of yourself. There will be good fun in the streets, if you choose to run the risk of seeing it; at the same time there is safety in stone walls. 'Gad, I think this will astonish plain John! There's nothing like it in his Lives of the Chancellors. I don't want, however, to see our friend the delegate absolutely sacrificed. Will you do me the favour to inquire for him to-morrow at the barricade down there? I will answer for it that he does not make his escape before then; and now for Ledru Rollin!"

With these words, and a friendly nod, the eccentric artisan departed, at a pace which showed how little his activity had been impaired by years. Filled with painful and conflicting thoughts, I followed the course of another street which led me to the Rue Rivoli.

Here I had a capital opportunity of witnessing the progress of the revolution. The street was crowded with the people shouting, yelling, and huzzaing; and a large body of the National Guard, drawn up immediately in

front of me, seemed to be in high favour. Indeed, I was not surprised at this, on discovering that the officer in command was no less a person than my illustrious friend De la Pailleterie. He looked as warlike as a Lybian lion, though it was impossible to comprehend what particular section of the community were the objects of his sublime anger. Indeed, it was rather difficult to know what the gentlemen in blouses wanted. Some were shouting for reform, as if that were a tangible article which could be handed them from a window; others demanded the abdication of ministers— rather unreasonably I thought, since at that moment there was no vestige of a ministry in France; whilst the most practical section of the mob was clamorous for the head of Guizot. Presently the shakos and bright bayonets of a large detachment of infantry were seen approaching, amidst vehement cries of "*Vive la Ligne*!" They marched up to the National Guard, who still maintained their ranks. The leading officer looked puzzled.

"Who are these?" he said, pointing with his sword to the Guard.

"I have the honour to inform Monsieur," said Monte-Christo, stepping forward, "that these are the second legion of the National Guard!"

"*Vive la Garde Nationale*!" cried the officer.

"*Vive la Ligne*!" reciprocated the Marquis.

Both gentlemen then saluted, and interchanged snuff-boxes, amidst tremendous cheering from the populace.

"And who are these?" continued the officer, pointing to the blouses on the pavement.

"These are the people," replied Monte-Christo.

"They must disperse. My orders are peremptory," said the regular.

"The National Guard will protect them. Monsieur, respect the people!"

"They must disperse," repeated the officer.

"They shall not," replied Monte-Christo.

The moment was critical.

"In that case," replied the officer, after a pause, "I shall best fulfil my duty by wishing Monsieur a good evening."

"You are a brave fellow!" cried the Marquis, sheathing his sabre; and in a moment the warriors were locked in a brotherly embrace.

The effect was electric and instantaneous. "Let us all fraternise!" was the cry; and regulars, nationals, and blouses, rushed into each others' arms. The union was complete. Jacob and Esau coalesced without the formality of an explanation. Ammunition was handed over by the troops without the slightest scruple, and in return many bottles of *vin ordinaire* were produced for the refreshment of the military. No man who witnessed that scene could have any doubt as to the final result of the movement.

Presently, however, a smart fusillade was heard to the right. The cry arose, "They are assassinating the people! to the barricades! to the barricades!" and the whole multitude swept vehemently forward towards the place of contest. Unfortunately, in my anxiety to behold the rencontre in which my friend bore so distinguished a part, I had pressed a little further forwards than was prudent, and I now found myself in the midst of an infuriated gang of workmen, and urged irresistibly onwards to the nearest barricade.

"Thou hast no arms, comrade!" cried a gigantic butcher, who strode beside me armed with an enormous axe; "here—take this;" and he thrust a sabre into my hand; "take this, and strike home for *la Patrie*!"

I muttered my acknowledgments for the gift, and tried to look as like a patriot as possible.

"*Tête de Robespierre*!" cried another. "This is better than paying taxes! *A bas la Garde Municipale*! *à bas tous les tyrans*!"

"*Tête de Brissot*!" exclaimed I, in return, thinking it no unwise plan to invoke the Manes of some of the earlier heroes. This was a slight mistake.

"*Quoi*? Girondin?" cried the butcher, with a ferocious scowl.

"*Non; corps de Marat*!" I shouted.

"*Bon*! *embrassez-moi donc, camarade*!" said the butcher, and so we reached the barricade.

Here the game was going on in earnest. The barricade had been thrown up hastily and imperfectly, and a considerable body of the Municipal Guard—who, by the way, behaved throughout with much intrepidity— was attempting to dislodge the rioters. In fact, they had almost succeeded. Some ten of the insurgents, who were perched upon the top of the pile, had been shot down, and no one seemed anxious to supply their place on that bad eminence. In vain my friend the butcher waved his axe, and shouted "En avant!" A considerable number of voices, indeed, took up the cry, but a remarkable reluctance was exhibited in setting the salutary example. A few minutes more, and the passage would have been cleared; when all of a sudden, from the interior of a cabriolet, which formed a sort of parapet to the embankment, emerged a ghastly figure, streaming with gore, and grasping the *drapeau rouge*. I never was more petrified in my life— there could be no doubt of the man— it was Hutton Bagsby!

For a moment he stood gazing upon the tossing multitude beneath. There was a brief pause, and even the soldiers, awed by his intrepidity, forebore to fire. At last, however, they raised their muskets; when, with a hoarse scream, Bagsby leaped from the barricade, and alighted uninjured on the street. Had Mars descended in person to lead the insurrection, he could not have done better.

"*Ah, le brave Anglais*! *Ah, le député intrépide*! *A la rescousse*!" was the cry, and a torrent of human beings rushed headlong over the barricade.

No power on earth could have resisted that terrific charge. The Municipal Guards were scattered like chaff before the wind; some were cut down, and others escaped under cover of the ranks of the Nationals. Like the rest, I had leaped the embankment; but not being anxious to distinguish myself in single combat, I paused at the spot where Bagsby had fallen. There I found the illustrious delegate stretched upon the ground, still grasping the glorious colours. I stooped down and examined the body, but I could discover no wound. The blood that stained his forehead was evidently not his own.

I loosened his neckcloth to give him air, but still there were no signs of animation. A crowd soon gathered around us—the victors were returning from the combat.

"He will never fight more!" said the author of the Mysteries of Paris, whom I now recognised among the combatants. "He has led us on for the last time to victory! Alas for the adopted child of France! *Un vrai héros*! *Il est mort sur le champ de bataille*! Messieurs, I propose that we decree for our departed comrade the honours of a public funeral!"

4: The Tuilleries.

"HOW do you feel yourself to-day, Mr Bagsby?" said I, as I entered the apartment of that heroic individual on the following morning; "you made a very close shave of it, I can tell you. Eugène Sue wanted to have you stretched upon a shutter, and carried in procession as a victim through all the streets of Paris."

"Victim indeed!" replied Bagsby manipulating the small of his back, "I've been quite enough victimised already. Hanged if I don't get that villain Albert impeached when I reach England, that's all! I worked among them with the pickaxe till my arms were nearly broken, and the only thanks I got was to be shot at like a popinjay."

"Nay, Mr Bagsby, you have covered yourself with glory. Every one says that but for you the barricade would inevitably have been carried."

"They might have carried it to the infernal regions for aught that I cared," replied Bagsby. "Catch me fraternising again with any of them; a disreputable set of scoundrels with never a shirt to their back."

"You forget, my dear sir," said I: "Mr Cobden is of opinion that they are the most affectionate and domesticated people on the face of the earth."

"Did Cobden say that?" cried Bagsby: "then he's a greater humbug than I took him to be, and that is saying not a little. He'll never get another testimonial out of me, I can tell you. But pray, how did I come here?"

"Why, you were just about to be treated to a public funeral, when very fortunately you exhibited some symptoms of resuscitation, and a couple of hairy patriots carried you to my lodgings. Your exertions had been too much for you. I must confess, Mr Bagsby, I had no idea that you were so bloodthirsty a personage."

"Me bloodthirsty!" cried Bagsby, "Lord bless you! I am like to faint whenever I cut myself in shaving. Guns and swords are my perfect abomination, and I don't think I could bring myself to fire at a sparrow."

"Come, come! you do yourself injustice. I shall never forget the brilliant manner in which you charged down the barricade."

"All I can tell you is, that I was deucedly glad to hide myself in one of the empty coaches. But when a bullet came splash through the pannel within two inches of my ear, I found the place was getting too hot to hold me, and scrambled out. I had covered myself with one of their red rags by way of concealment, and I suppose I brought it out with me. As to jumping down, you will allow it was full time to do that, when fifty fellows were taking a deliberate aim with their guns."

"You are too modest, Mr Bagsby; and, notwithstanding all your disclaimers, you have gained a niche in history as a hero. But come; this may be a busy day, and it is already late. Do you think you can manage any breakfast?"

"I'll try," said Bagsby; and, to do him justice, he did.

Our meal concluded, I proposed a ramble, in order to ascertain the progress of events, of which both of us were thoroughly ignorant. Bagsby, however, was extremely adverse to leaving the house. He had a strong impression that he would be again kidnapped, and pressed into active service; in which case he positively affirmed that he would incontinently give up the ghost.

"Can't you stay comfortably here," said he, "and let's have a little bottled porter? These foreign chaps can surely fight their own battles without you or me; and that leads me to ask if you know the cause of all this disturbance. Hanged if I understand any thing about it!"

"I believe it mainly proceeds from the King having forbidden some of the deputies to dine together in public."

"You don't say so!" cried Bagsby: "what an old fool he must be! Blowed if I wouldn't have taken the chair in person, and sent them twelve dozen of champagne to drink my health."

"Kings, Mr Bagsby, are rarely endowed with a large proportion of such sagacity as yours. But really we must go forth and look a little about us. It is past mid-day, and I cannot hear any firing. You may rely upon it that the contest has been settled in one way or another— either the people have been appeased, or, what is more likely, the troops have sided with them. We must endeavour to obtain some information."

"You may do as you like," said Bagsby, "but my mind is made up. I'm off for Havre this blessed afternoon."

"My dear sir, you cannot. No passports can be obtained just now, and the mob has taken up the railroads."

"What an idiot I was ever to come here!" groaned Bagsby. "Mercy on me! must I continue in this den of thieves, whether I will or no?"

"I am afraid there is no alternative. But you judge the Parisians too hastily, Mr Bagsby. I perceive they have respected your watch."

"Ay, but you heard what that chap said about the slaughter-house lane. I declare he almost frightened me into fits. But where are you going?"

"Out, to be sure. If you choose to remain—"

"Not I. Who knows but they may take a fancy to seek for me here, and carry me away again! I won't part with the only Englishman I know in Paris, though I think it would be more sensible to remain quietly where we are."

We threw ourselves into the stream of people which was rapidly setting in towards the Tuilleries. Great events seemed to have happened, or at all events to be on the eve of completion. The troops were nowhere to be seen. They had vanished from the city like magic.

"*Bon jour, Citoyen Bagsby*," said a harsh voice, immediately behind us. "I hear high accounts of your valour yesterday at the barricades. Allow me to congratulate you on your first revolutionary experiment."

"I turned round, and encountered the sarcastic smile of M. Albert the *ouvrier*. He was rather better dressed than on the previous evening, and had a tricolored sash bound around his waist. With him was a crowd of persons evidently in attendance.

"Should you like, Mr Bagsby, to enter the service of the Republic? for such, I have the honour to inform you, France is now," continued the *ouvrier*. "We shall need a few practical heads—"

"Oh dear! I knew what it would all come to!" groaned Bagsby.

"Don't misapprehend me— I mean heads to assist us in our new commercial arrangements. Now, as free-trade has succeeded so remarkably well in Britain, perhaps you would not object to communicate some of your experiences to M. Crémieux, who is now my colleague?"

"Your colleague, M. Albert?" said I.

"Exactly so. I have the honour to be one of the members of the Provisional Government of France."

"Am I in my senses or not?" muttered Bagsby. "Oh, sir, whoever you are, do be a good fellow for once, and let me get home! I promise you, I shall not say a word about this business on the other side of the Channel."

"Far be it from me to lay any restraint upon your freedom of speech, Mr Bagsby. So, then, I conclude you refuse? Well, be it so. After all, I daresay Crémieux will get on very well without you."

"But pray, M. Albert—one word," said I. "You mentioned a republic—"

"I did. It has been established for an hour. Louis Philippe has abdicated, and in all probability is by this time half a league beyond the barrier. The Duchess of Orleans came down with her son to the Chamber of Deputies, and I really believe there would have been a regency; for the gallantry of France was moved, and Barrot was determined on the point. Little Ledru Rollin, however, saved us from half measures. Rollin is a clever fellow, with the soul of a Robespierre; and, seeing how matters were likely to go, he quietly slipped to the door, and admitted a select number of our friends from the barricades. That put a stop to the talking. You have no idea how quiet gentlemen become in the presence of a mob with loaded muskets. Their hearts failed them; the deputies gradually withdrew, and a republic was proclaimed by the sovereign will of the people. I am just on my way to the Hotel de Ville, to assist in consolidating the government."

"*Bon voyage*, M. Albert!"

"Oh, we shall do it, sure enough! But here we are near the Tuilleries. Perhaps, gentlemen, you would like to enjoy the amusements which are going on yonder, and to drink prosperity to the new Republic in a glass of Louis Philippe's old Clos Vougeot. If so, do not let me detain you. *Adieu*!" And, with a spasmodic twitch of his nose, the eccentric ouvrier departed.

"Well! what things one does see abroad, to be sure!" said Bagsby: "I recollect him quite well at the time of the Reform Bill—"

"Hush, my dear Bagsby!" said I, "This is not the moment nor the place for any reminiscences of the kind."

Certainly the aspect of what was going forward in front of the Tuilleries was enough to drive all minor memories from the head of any man. A huge bonfire was blazing in the midst of the square opposite the Place du Carrousel, and several thousands of the populace were dancing round it like demons. It was fed by the royal carriages, the furniture of the staterooms, and every combustible article which could in any way be identified with the fallen dynasty. The windows of the palace were flung open, and hangings, curtains, and tapestries of silk and golden tissue, were pitched into the square amidst

shouts of glee that would have broken the heart of an upholsterer. It was the utter recklessness of destruction. Yet, with all this, there was a certain appearance of honesty preserved. The people might destroy to any amount they pleased, but they were not permitted to appropriate. The man who smashed a mirror or shattered a costly vase into flinders was a patriot,— he who helped himself to an inkstand was denounced as an ignominious thief. I saw one poor devil, whose famished appearance bore miserable testimony to his poverty, arrested and searched; a pair of paste buckles was found upon him, and he was immediately conducted to the gardens, and shot by a couple of gentlemen who, five minutes before, had deliberately slit some valuable pictures into ribbons! Every moment the crowd was receiving accession from without, and the bonfire materials from within. At last, amidst tremendous acclamations, the throne itself was catapulted into the square, and the last symbol of royalty reduced to a heap of ashes.

The whole scene was so extremely uninviting that I regretted having come so far, and suggested to Bagsby the propriety of an immediate retreat. This, however, was not so easy. Several of the citizens who were now dancing democratic polkas round the embers, had been very active partisans at the barricade on the evening before, and, as ill-luck would have it, recognised their revivified champion.

"*Trois mille rognons*!" exclaimed my revolutionary friend the butcher, "here's the brave little Englishman that led us on so gallantly against the Municipal Guard! How is it with thee, my fire-eater, my stout swallower of bullets? Art thou sad that there is no more work for thee to do? Cheer up, citizen! we shall be at the frontiers before long; and then who knows but the Republic may reward thee with the baton of a marshal of France!"

"*Plus de maréchaux*!" cried a truculent chiffonier, who was truculently picking a marrow-bone with his knife. "Such fellows are worth nothing except to betray the people. I waited to have a shot at old Soult yesterday, but the rascal would not show face!"

"Never mind him, citizen," said the butcher, "we all know Père Pomme-de-terre. But thou lookest pale! Art thirsty? Come with me, and I will show thee where old Macaire keeps his cellar. France will not grudge a flask to so brave a patriot as thyself."

"Ay, ay! to the cellar— to the cellar!" exclaimed some fifty voices.

"Silence, *mes enfans*!" cried the butcher, who evidently had already reconnoitred the interior of the subterranean vaults. "Let us do all things in order. As Citizen Lamartine remarked, let virtue go hand in hand with liberty, and let us apply ourselves seriously to the consummation of this great work. We have now an opportunity of fraternising with the world. We see amongst

us an Englishman who last night devoted his tremendous energies to France. We thought he had fallen, and were about to give him public honours. Let us not be more unmindful of the living than the dead. Here he stands, and I now propose that he be carried on the shoulders of the people to the royal— peste!— I mean the republican cellar, and that we there drink to the confusion of all rank, and the union of all nations in the bonds of universal brotherhood!"

"Agreed! agreed!" shouted the mob; and for the second time Bagsby underwent the ceremony of entire fraternisation. He was then hoisted upon the shoulders of some half-dozen patriots, notwithstanding a melancholy howl, by which he intended to express disapprobation of the whole proceeding. I was pressed into the service as interpreter, and took care to attribute his disclaimer solely to an excess of modesty.

"Thou also wert at the barricade last night," said the butcher. "Thou, too, hast struck a blow for France. Come along. Let us cement with wine the fraternity that originated in blood!"

So saying, he laid hold of my arm, and we all rushed towards the Tuilleries. I would have given a trifle to have been lodged at that moment in the filthiest tenement of the Cowcaddens; but any thing like resistance was of course utterly out of the question. In we thronged, a tumultuous rabble of men and women, through the portal of the Kings of France, across the halls, and along the galleries, all of them bearing already lamentable marks of violence, outrage, and desecration. Here was a picture of Louis Philippe, a masterpiece by Horace Vernet, literally riddled with balls; there a statue of some prince, decapitated by the blow of a hammer; and in another place the fragments of a magnificent vase, which had been the gift of an emperor. Crowds of people were sitting or lying in the state apartments, eating, drinking, smoking, and singing obscene ditties, or wantonly but deliberately pursuing the work of dismemberment. And but a few hours before, this had been the palace of the King of the Barricades!

Down we went to the cellars, which by this time were tolerably clear, as most of the previous visitors had preferred the plan of enjoying the abstracted fluid in the upper and loftier apartments. But such was not the view of Monsieur Destripes the butcher, or of his friend Pomme-de-terre. These experienced bacchanals preferred remaining at headquarters, on the principle that the séance ought to be declared permanent. Bagsby, as the individual least competent to enforce order, was called to the chair, and seated upon a kilderkin of Bordeaux, with a spigot as the emblem of authority. Then began a scene of brutal and undisguised revelry. Casks were tapped for a single sample, and their contents allowed to run out in streams upon the floor. Bottles were smashed in consequence of the exceeding scarcity of cork-screws, and the

finest vintage of the Côte d'Or and of Champagne, were poured like water down throats hitherto unconscious of any such generous beverage.

I need not dwell upon what followed— indeed I could not possibly do justice to the eloquence of M. Pomme-de-terre, or the accomplishments of several *poissardes*, who had accompanied us in our expedition, and now favoured us with sundry erotic ditties, popular in the Faubourg St Antoine. With these ladies Bagsby seemed very popular: indeed, they had formed themselves into a sort of body-guard around his person.

Sick of the whole scene, I availed myself of the first opportunity to escape from that tainted atmosphere; and, after traversing most of the state apartments, and several corridors, I found myself in a part of the palace which had evidently been occupied by some of those who were now fleeing as exiles towards a foreign land. The hand of the spoiler also had been here, but he was gone. It was a miserable thing to witness the desolation of these apartments. The bed whereon a princess had lain the night before, was now tossed and tumbled by some rude ruffian, the curtains were torn down, the gardes-de-robe broken open, and a hundred articles of female apparel and luxury were scattered carelessly upon the floor. The setting sun of February gleamed through the broken windows, and rendered the heartless work of spoliation more distinct and apparent. I picked up one handkerchief, still wet, it might be with tears, and on the corner of it was embroidered a royal cypher.

I, who was not an insurgent, almost felt that, in penetrating through these rooms, I was doing violence to the sanctity of misfortune. Where, on the coming night, might rest the head of her who, a few hours before, had lain upon that pillow of down? For the shelter of what obscure and stifling hut might she be forced to exchange the noble ceiling of a palace? This much I had gathered, that all the royal family had not succeeded in making their escape. Some of the ladies had been seen, with no protectors by their side, shrieking in the midst of the crowd; but the cry of woe was that day too general to attract attention, and it seemed that the older chivalry of France had passed away. Where was the husband at the hour when the wife was struggling in that rout of terror?

I turned into a side passage, and opened another door. It was a small room which apparently had escaped observation. Every thing here bore token of the purity of feminine taste. The little bed was untouched: there were flowers in the window, a breviary upon the table, and a crucifix suspended on the wall. The poor young inmate of this place had been also summoned from her sanctuary, never more to enter it again. As I came in, a little bird in a cage raised a loud twittering, and began to beat itself against the wires. The seed-

box was empty, and the last drop of water had been finished. In a revolution such as this, it is the fate of favourites to be neglected.

The poor thing was perishing of hunger. I had no food to give it, but I opened the cage and the window, and set it free. With a shrill note of joy, it darted off to the trees, happier than its mistress, now thrown upon the mercy of a rude and selfish world. I looked down upon the scene beneath. The river was flowing tranquilly to the sea; the first breezes of spring were moving through the trees, just beginning to burgeon and expand; the sun was sinking amidst the golden clouds tranquilly— no sign in heaven or earth betokened that on that day a mighty monarchy had fallen. The roar of Paris was hushed; the work of desolation was over; and on the morrow, its first day would dawn upon the infant Republic.

"May Heaven shelter the unfortunate!" I exclaimed; "and may my native land be long preserved from the visitation of a calamity like this!"

5: Two Provisional Governments.

I AWOKE upon the morrow impressed with that strange sensation which is so apt to occur after the first night's repose in a new and unfamiliar locality. I could not for some time remember where I was. The events of the two last days beset me like the recollections of an unhealthy dream, produced by the agency of opiates; and it was with difficulty I could persuade myself that I had passed the night beneath the roof of the famous Tuilleries.

"After all," thought I, "the event may be an interesting, but it is by no means an unusual one, in this transitory world of ours. Louis XVI., Napoleon, Charles X., Louis Philippe, and Dunshunner, have by turns occupied the palace, and none of them have had the good fortune to leave it in perpetuity to their issue. Since abdication is the order of the day, I shall even follow the example of my royal predecessors, and bolt with as much expedition as possible; for, to say the truth, I am getting tired of this turmoil, and I think, with Sir Kenneth of Scotland, that the waters of the Clyde would sound pleasant and grateful in mine ear."

A very slight toilet sufficed for the occasion, and I sallied forth with the full intention of making my immediate escape. This was not so easy. I encountered no one in the corridors, but as I opened the door of the Salle des Trophées, a din of many voices burst upon my ears. A number of persons occupied the hall, apparently engaged in the discussion of an extempore breakfast. To my infinite disgust, I recognised my quondam acquaintances of the cellar.

"Aha! thou art still here then, citizen?" cried Monsieur Destripes, who was inflicting huge gashes upon a ham, filched, probably, from the royal buttery.

"By my faith we thought thou had'st given us the slip. Never mind— we are not likely to part soon; so sit thee down and partake of our republican cheer."

"I am afraid," said I, "that business requires my presence elsewhere."

"Let it keep till it cool then," replied the other. "Suffice it to say, that no man quits this hall till the whole of us march out *en masse*. Say I right, brother Pomme-de-terre?"

"Just so," replied the chiffonier, tossing off his draught from an ornament of Venetian glass. "We have built up a second barricade, and have sworn never to surrender."

"How is this, gentlemen?" said I.

"You must know, sir," replied a meagre-looking personage, whom I afterwards ascertained to be a barber, "that the liberty of the people is not yet secure. Last night, when we were in the cellar, a large body of the National Guard came, by orders of the Provisional Government, and ejected the whole of our compatriots from the upper stories of the Tuilleries. This we hold to be a clear infraction of the charter, for all public buildings are declared to be the property of the people. Fortunately we escaped their notice, but being determined to reassert the rights of France, we have barricaded the staircase which leads to this hall, and are resolved to maintain our post."

"Bravely spoken, old Saigne-du-nez!" cried the butcher; "and a jollier company you won't find any where. Here are ladies for society, wine for the drinking, provisions to last us a week; and what would you wish for more? *Cent mille haches*! I doubt if Louis Philippe is enjoying himself half so much."

"But really, gentlemen—"

"Sacre, no mutiny!" cried the butcher; "don't we know that the sovereign will of the people must be respected? There is thy friend there, as happy as may be; go round and profit by his example."

Sure enough I discovered poor Bagsby extended in a corner of the hall. The orgies of last evening were sufficient to account for his haggard countenance and blood-shot eyes, but hardly for the multitudinous oaths which he ejaculated from time to time. Beside him sat a bloated poissarde, who was evidently enamoured of his person, and tended him with all that devotion which is the characteristic of the gentler sex. As it was beyond the power of either to hold any intelligible conversation, the lady contrived to supply its place by a system of endearing pantomime. Sometimes she patted Bagsby on the cheek, then chirupped as a girl might do when coaxing a bird to open its mouth, and occasionally endeavoured to insinuate morsels of garlic and meat between his lips.

"Oh, Mr Dunshunner! save me from this hag!" muttered Bagsby. "I have such a splitting headach, and she will insist on poisoning me with her

confounded trash! Faugh, how she smells of eels! Oh dear! oh dear! is there no way of getting out? The barricades and the fighting are nothing compared to this!"

"I am afraid, Mr Bagsby," said I, "there is no remedy but patience. Our friends here seem quite determined to hold out, and I am afraid that they would use little ceremony, did we make any show of resistance."

"I know that well enough!" said Bagsby: "they wanted to hang me last night, because I made a run to the door: only, the women would not let them. What do you want, you old harridan? I wish you would take your fingers from my neck!"

"*Ce cher bourgeois*!" murmured the *poissarde*: "*c'est un méchant drôle, mais assez joli*!"

"Upon my word, Mr Bagsby, I think you have reason to congratulate yourself on your conquest. At all events, don't make enemies of the women; for, heaven knows, we are in a very ticklish situation, and I don't like the looks of several of those fellows."

"If ever I get home again," said Bagsby, "I'll renounce my errors, turn Tory, go regularly to church, and pray for the Queen. I've had enough of liberty to last me the rest of my natural lifetime. But, I say, my dear friend, couldn't you just rid me of this woman for half an hour or so? You will find her a nice chatty sort of person; only, I don't quite comprehend what she says."

"Utterly impossible, Mr Bagsby! See, they are about something now. Our friend the barber is rising to speak."

"Citizens!" said Saigne-du-nez, speaking as from a tribune, over the back of an arm-chair— "Citizens! we are placed by the despotism of our rulers in an embarrassing position. We, the people, who have won the palace and driven forth the despot and his race, are now ordered to evacuate the field of our glory, by men who have usurped the charter, and who pretend to interpret the law. I declare the sublime truth, that, with the revolution, all laws, human and divine, have perished! (Immense applause.)

"Citizens! isolated as we are by this base decree from the great body of the people, it becomes us to constitute a separate government for ourselves. Order must be maintained, but such order as shall strike terror into the breasts of our enemies. France has been assailed through us, and we must vindicate her freedom. Amongst us are many patriots, able and willing to sustain the toils of government; and I now propose that we proceed to elect a provisional ministry."

The motion was carried by acclamation, and the orator proceeded.

"Citizens! amongst our numbers there is one man who has filled the most lofty situations. I allude to Citizen Jupiter Potard. Actor in a hundred

revolutions, he has ever maintained the sublime demeanour of a patriot of the Reign of Terror. Three generations have regarded him as a model, and I now call upon him to assume the place and dignity of our President."

Jupiter Potard, a very fine-looking old man, with a beard about a yard long,— who was really a model, inasmuch as he had sat in that capacity for the last thirty years to the artists of Paris,— was then conducted, amidst general applause, to a chair at the head of the table. Jupiter, I am compelled to add, seemed rather inebriated; but, as he did not attempt to make any speeches, that circumstance did not operate as a disqualification.

The remainder of the administration was speedily formed. Destripes became Minister of the Interior: Pomme-de-terre received the Portfolio of Justice. A gentleman, who rejoiced in the sobriquet of Gratte-les-rues, was made Minister of War. Saigne-du-nez appointed himself to the Financial Department, and I was unanimously voted the Minister of Foreign Affairs. These were the principal offices of the Republic, and to us the functions of government were confided. Bagsby, at the request of the *poissardes*, received the honorary title of Minister of Marine.

A separate table was ordered for our accommodation; and our first decree, countersigned by the Minister of the Interior, was an order for a fresh subsidy from the wine-cellar.

Here a sentry, who had been stationed at a window, announced the approach of a detachment of the National Guard.

"Citizen Minister of War!" said Saigne-du-nez, who, without any scruple, had usurped the functions of poor old Jupiter Potard, "this is your business. It is my opinion that the provisional government cannot receive a deputation of this kind. Let them announce their intentions at the barricade without."

Gratte-les-rues, a huge ruffian with a squint, straightway shouldered his musket, and left the room. In a few minutes he returned with a paper, which he cast upon the table.

"A decree from the Hotel de Ville," he said.

"Is it your pleasure, citizen colleagues, that this document should now be read?" asked Saigne-du-nez.

All assented, and, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, the following document was placed in my hands. It was listened to with profound attention.

"Unity is the soul of the French nation; it forms its grandeur, its power, and its glory; through unity we have triumphed, and the rights of the people have been vindicated.

"Impressed with these high and exalted sentiments, and overflowing with that fraternity which is the life-blood of our social system, the Provisional Government decrees:—

"I. That the Tuilleries, now denominated the Hôpital des Invalides Civiles, shall be immediately evacuated by the citizens who have so bravely wrested it from the tyrant.

"II. That each patriot, on leaving it, shall receive from the public treasury the sum of five francs, or an equivalent in coupons.

"III. The Minister of the Interior is charged with the execution of this decree.

"Liberté—Fraternité—Égalité.

(Signed)
Dupont, (de l'Eure.)
Lamartine.
Garnier Pages.
Arago.
Marie.
Ledru Rollin.
Cremieux.
Louis Blanc.
Marrast.
Flocon.
Albert, (ouvrier.)"

"Sang de Mirabeau!" cried Destripes, when I had finished the perusal of this document, "do they take us for fools! Five francs indeed! This is the value which these aristocrats place upon the blood of the people! Citizen colleagues, I propose that the messenger be admitted and immediately flung out of the window!"

"And I second the motion," said Pomme-de-terre.

"Nay, citizens!" cried Saigne-du-nez,— "no violence. I agree that we cannot entertain the offer, but this is a case for negotiation. Let the Minister of Foreign Affairs draw up a protocol in reply."

In consequence of this suggestion I set to work, and, in a few minutes, produced the following manifesto, which may find a place in some subsequent collection of treaties.

"France is free. The rights of every Frenchman, having been gained by himself, are sacred and inviolable; the rights of property are abrogated.

"Indivisibility is a fundamental principle of the nation. It applies peculiarly to public works. That which the nation gave the nation now resumes.

"We protest against foreign aggression. Satisfied with our own triumph, we shall remain tranquil. We do not ask possession of the Hotel de Ville, but we are prepared to maintain our righteous occupation of the Tuilleries.

"Impressed with these high and exalted sentiments, the Provisional Government of the Tuilleries decrees:

"I. That it is inexpedient to lessen the glory of France, by entrusting the charge of the Tuilleries to any other hands, save those of the brave citizens who have so nobly captured it.

"II. That the Provisional Government do not recognise coupons as a national medium of exchange.

"III. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is charged with the execution of this decree.
"*Mort aux tyrans*!
(Signed)
Potard.
Dunshunner.
Saigne-du-nez.
Pomme-de-terre.
Gratte-les-rues.
Destripes.
Bagsby (*tisserand*.)"

This document was unanimously adopted as the true exponent of our sentiments; and I was highly complimented by my colleagues on my diplomatic ability. I took occasion, however, to fold up the following note along with the despatch.

"If Citizen Albert has any regard for his English friends, he will immediately communicate their situation to the citizen Monte-Christo. Here, affairs look very ill. The public tranquillity depends entirely upon the supply of liquor."

This business being settled, we occupied ourselves with more industrial duties. The finance was easily disposed of. There were but four francs, six sous, leviable among the whole community; but Gratte-les-rues, with instinctive acuteness, had discovered the watch and chain of the unfortunate Minister of Marine, and these were instantly seized and confiscated as public property.

On investigation we found that the larder was but indifferently supplied. Due allowance being made for the inordinate appetite of the poissardes, of whom there were about ten in our company, it was calculated that our stock of food could not last for more than a couple of days. On the other hand, there was a superabundance of wine.

We then proceeded to adjust a scheme for the future regulation of labour throughout France; but I do not think that I need trouble my readers with the detail. It did not differ materially from that propounded by M. Louis Blanc, and the substance of it might shortly be stated as— three days' wage for half-a-day's labour. It was also decreed, that all servants should receive, in addition to their wages, a proportion of their master's profits.

After some hours of legislation, not altogether harmonious—for Destripes, being baulked in a proposition to fire the palace, threatened to string up old Jupiter Potard to the chandelier, and was only prevented from doing so by the blunderbuss of Saigne-du-nez— we grew weary of labour, and the orgies commenced anew. I have neither patience nor stomach to enter into a description of the scene that was there and then enacted. In charity to the human race, let me hope that such a spectacle may never again be witnessed in the heart of a Christian city.

Poor Bagsby suffered fearfully. The affection of the poissarde had gradually augmented to a species of insanity, and she never left him for a moment. The unhappy man was dragged out by her to every dance; she gloated on him like an ogress surveying a plump and pursy pilgrim; and at the close of each set she demanded the fraternal salute. He tried to escape from his persecutor by dodging round the furniture; but it was of no use. She followed him as a ferret follows a rabbit through all the intricacies of his warren, and invariably succeeded in capturing her booty in a corner.

At length night came, and with it silence. One by one the revellers had fallen asleep, some still clutching the bottle, which they had plied with unabated vigour so long as sensibility remained, and the broad calm moon looked on reproachfully through the windows of that desecrated hall. There was peace in heaven, but on earth— oh, what madness and pollution!

I was lying wrapped up in some old tapestry, meditating very seriously upon my present precarious situation, when I observed a figure moving amidst the mass of sleepers. The company around was of such a nature, that unpleasant suspicions naturally occurred to my mind, and I continued to watch the apparition until the moonlight shone upon it, when I recognised Bagsby. This poor fellow was a sad incubus upon my motions; for although I had no earthly tie towards him, I could not help feeling that in some measure I had been instrumental in placing him in his present dilemma, and I had resolved not to escape without making him the partner of my flight. I was very curious to know the object of his present movements, for the stealthy manner in which he glided through the hall betokened some unusual purpose. I was not long left in doubt. From behind a large screen he drew forth a coil of cord, formerly attached to the curtain, but latterly indicated by Destripes as the implement for Potard's apotheosis; and approaching a window, he proceeded to attach one end of it very deliberately to a staple. He then gave a cautious glance around, as if to be certain that no one was watching him, and began to undo the fastenings of the window. A new gleam of hope dawned upon me. I was about to rise and move to his assistance, when another figure glided rapidly through the moonshine. In an instant Bagsby was clutched by the throat, and a low voice hissed out—

"*Ah traître*! *monstre*! *polisson*! *vous voulez donc fuir*? *Vous osez mépriser mon amour*!"

It was the poissarde. Nothing on earth is so wakeful as a jealous woman. She had suspected the designs of the wretched Minister of Marine, and counterfeited sleep only to detect him in the act of escaping.

Not a moment was to be lost. I knew that if this woman gave the alarm, Bagsby would inevitably be hanged with his own rope, and I stole towards the couple, in order to effect, if possible, a reconciliation.

"Ah, citizen, is it thou?" said the *poissarde* more loudly than was at all convenient. "Here is thy fellow trying to play me a pretty trick! Perfidious monster! was this what thou meant by all thy professions of love?"

"For heaven's sake, take the woman off, or she will strangle me!" muttered Bagsby.

"Pray, hush! my dear madam, hush!" said I, "or you may wake some of our friends."

"What care I," said the *poissarde*; "let them wake, and I will denounce the villain who has dared to trifle with my affections!"

"Nay, but consider the consequences!" said I. "Do, pray, be silent for one moment. Bagsby, this is a bad business!"

"You need not tell me that," groaned Bagsby.

"Your life depends upon this woman, and you must appease her somehow."

"I'll agree to any thing," said the terrified Minister of Marine.

"Yes! I will be avenged!" cried the *poissarde*; "I will have his heart's blood, since he has dared to deceive me. How! is this the way they treat a daughter of the people?"

"Citoyenne!" I said, "you are wrong— utterly wrong. Believe me, he loves you passionately. What proof do you desire?"

"Let him marry me to-morrow," said the *poissarde*, "in this very room, or I shall immediately raise the alarm."

I tried to mitigate the sentence, but the poissarde was perfectly obdurate.

"Bagsby, there is no help for it!" said I. "We are in the midst of a revolution, and must go along with it. She insists upon you marrying her to-morrow. The alternative is instant death."

"I'll do it," said Bagsby, quietly; "any thing is better than being murdered in cold blood."

The countenance of the *poissarde* brightened.

"Aha!" said she, taking the submissive Bagsby by the ear, "so thou art to be my republican husband after all, *coquin*? Come along. I shall take care that thou dost not escape again to-night, and to-morrow I shall keep thee for ever!"

So saying, she conducted her captive to the other end of the hall.

6: A Republican Wedding

"THIS is great news!" said Destripes, as we mustered round the revolutionary breakfast table. "Hast heard, citizen? Our colleague the Minister of Marine is about to contract an alliance with a daughter of the people. *Corbleu*! There is no such sport as a regular republican marriage!"

"In my early days," said Jupiter Potard, "we had them very frequently. The way was, to tie two young aristocrats together, and throw them into the Seine. How poor dear Carrier used to laugh at the fun! Oh, my friends! we shall never see such merry times again."

"Come, don't be down-hearted, old fellow!" cried Destripes. "We never can tell what is before us. I don't despair of seeing something yet which might make the ghost of Collot d'Herbois rub its hands with ecstasy. But to our present work. Let us get over the business of the day, and then celebrate the wedding with a roaring festival."

"But where are we to find a priest?" asked Saigne-du-nez. "I question whether any of our fraternity has ever taken orders."

"Priest!" cried Destripes ferociously. "Is this an age of superstition? I tell thee, Saigne-du-nez, that if any such fellow were here, he should presently be dangling from the ceiling! What better priest would'st thou have than our venerable friend Potard?"

"Ay, ay!" said Pomme-de-terre, "Potard will do the work famously. I'll warrant me, with that long beard of his, he has sate for a high-priest ere now. But look at Citoyenne Corbeille, how fond she seems of her bargain. Ventrebleu! our colleague is sure to be a happy man!"

Whatever happiness might be in store for Bagsby hereafter, there was no appearance of it just then. He sate beside his bride like a criminal on the morning of his execution; and such efforts as he did make to respond to her attentions were rueful and ludicrous in the extreme.

Breakfast over, we proceeded to council; but as we had no deputations to receive, and no fresh arrangements to make, our sitting was rather brief. Bagsby, in order, as I supposed, to gain time, entreated me to broach the topics of free-trade and unrestricted international exchange; but recent events had driven the doctrines of Manchester from my head, and somewhat shaken my belief in the infallibility of the prophets of the League. Besides, I doubted very much whether our Provisional Ministry cared one farthing for duties upon calico and linen, neither of these being articles in which they were wont exorbitantly to indulge; and I perfectly understood the danger of appearing over tedious upon any subject in a society so strangely constituted. I therefore turned a deaf ear to the prayers of Bagsby, and refused to enlighten the council at the risk of the integrity of my neck. No reply whatever had been made by the authorities without, to our communication of the previous day.

One o'clock was the hour appointed by the Provisional Government for the nuptial ceremony, which was to be performed with great solemnity. About twelve the bride, accompanied by three other poissardes, retired, in order to select from the stores of the palace a costume befitting the occasion. In the meantime, I had great difficulty in keeping up the courage of Bagsby,— indeed, he was only manageable through the medium of doses of brandy. At times he would burst out into a paroxysm of passion, and execrate collectively and individually the whole body of the Manchester League, who had sent him upon this unfortunate mission to Paris. This profanity over, he would burst into tears, bewail his wretched lot, and apostrophise a certain buxom widow, who seemed to dwell somewhere in the neighbourhood of Macclesfield. As for the French, the outpourings from the vial of his wrath upon that devoted nation were most awful and unchristian. The plagues of Egypt were a joke to the torments which he invoked upon their heads; and I felt intensely thankful that not one of our companions understood a syllable of English, else the grave would inevitably have been the bridal couch of the Bagsby.

It now became my duty to see the bridegroom properly attired; for which purpose, with permission of our colleagues, I conducted Bagsby to a neighbouring room, where a full suit of uniform, perhaps the property of Louis Philippe, had been laid out.

"Come now, Mr Bagsby," said I, observing that he was about to renew his lamentations, "we have had quite enough of this. You have brought it upon yourself. Had you warned me of your design last night, it is quite possible that both of us might have escaped; but you chose to essay the adventure single-handed, and, having failed, you must stand by the consequences. After all, what is it? Merely marriage, a thing which almost every man must undergo at least once in his lifetime."

"Oh! but such a woman— such a she-devil rather!" groaned Bagsby. "I shouldn't be the least surprised if she bites as bad as a crocodile. How can I ever take such a monster home, and introduce her to my friends?"

"I see no occasion for that, my good fellow. Why not stay here and become a naturalised Frenchman?"

"Here? I'd as soon think of staying in a lunatic asylum! Indeed I may be in one soon enough, for flesh and blood can't stand this kind of torture long. But I say," continued he, a ray of hope flashing across his countenance, "they surely can't make it a real marriage after all. Hanged if any one of these blackguards is a clergyman; and even if he was, they haven't got a special license."

"Don't deceive yourself, Mr Bagsby," said I; "marriage in France is a mere social contract, and can be established by witnesses, of whom there will be but too many present."

"Then I say they are an infernal set of incarnate pestiferous heathens! What! marry a man whether he will or not, and out of church! It's enough to draw down a judgment upon the land."

"You forget, Mr Bagsby. You need not marry unless you choose; it is a mere question of selection between a wedding and an execution,— between the lady and a certain rope, which, I can assure you, Monsieur Destripes, or his friend Gratte-les-rues, will have no hesitation in handling. Indeed, from significant symptoms, I conclude that their fingers are itching for some such practice."

"They are indeed two horrid-looking blackguards!" said Bagsby dolefully. "I wish I had pluck enough to be hanged: after all, it could not be much worse than marriage. And yet I don't know. There may be some means of getting a divorce, or she may drink herself to death, for, between you and me, she seems awfully addicted to the use of ardent spirits."

"Fie! Mr Bagsby; how can you talk so of your bride upon the wedding-day! Be quick! get into those trousers, and never mind the fit. It may be dangerous to keep them waiting long; and, under present circumstances, it would be prudent to abstain from trying the temper of the lady too severely."

"I never thought to be married this way!" sighed Bagsby, putting on the military coat, which, being stiff with embroidery, and twice too big for him, stuck out like an enormous cuirass. "If my poor old mother could see me now, getting into the cast-off clothes of some outlandish Frenchman—"

"She would admire you exceedingly, I am sure. Do you know you look quite warlike with these epaulets! Come now— on with the sash, take another thimble-ful of brandy, and then to the altar like a man!"

"I daresay you mean well, Mr Dunshunner; but I have listened to more pleasant conversation. I say— what is to prevent my getting up the chimney?"

"Mere madness! The moment you are missed they will fire up it. Believe me, you have not a chance of escape; so the sooner you resign yourself to your inevitable destiny the better."

Here a loud knocking was heard at the door.

"Citizen Minister of Marine, art thou ready?" cried the voice of Pomme-de-terre. "Thy bride is waiting for thee, the altar is decked, and Père Potard in his robes of office!"

"Come, then," said I, seizing Bagsby by the arm. "Take courage, man! In ten minutes it will all be over."

Our colleagues had not been idle in the interim. At one end of the hall they had built up an extempore altar covered with a carpet, behind which stood Jupiter Potard, arrayed in a royal mantle of crimson velvet, which very possibly in former days might have decorated the shoulders of Napoleon. Indeed the

imperial eagle was worked upon it in gold, and it had been abstracted from one of the numerous repositories of the palace. Jupiter, with his long beard and fine sloping forehead, looked the perfect image of a pontiff, and might have been appropriately drawn as a principal figure in a picture of the marriage of Heliogabalus.

Gratte-les-rues and Pomme-de-terre, being of bellicose temperament, had encased themselves in suits of armour, and stood, like two champions of antiquity, on each side of the venerable prelate. Destripes, who had accepted the office of temporary father to Demoiselle Corbeille, appeared as a patriot of the Reign of Terror. His brawny chest was bare; his shirt-sleeves rolled up to the shoulder; and in his belt was stuck the axe, a fitting emblem alike of his principles and his profession.

At his right hand stood the bride, bedizened with brocade and finery. From what antiquated lumber-chest they had fished out her apparel, it would be utterly in vain to inquire. One thing was clear, that the former occupant of the robes had been decidedly inferior in girth to the blooming poissarde, since it was now necessary to fasten them across the bosom by a curious net-work of tape. I am afraid I have done injustice to this lady, for really, on the present occasion, she did not look superlatively hideous. She was a woman of about forty-five, strong-built, with an immense development of foot and ancle, and arms of masculine proportion. Yet she had a pair of decidedly fine black eyes, betokening perhaps little of maiden modesty, but flashing with love and triumph; a *nez retroussé*, which, but for its perpetual redness, might have given a piquant expression to her countenance; a large mouth, and a set of prodigious teeth, which, to say the truth, were enough to justify the apprehensions of the bridegroom.

"Silence!" cried Jupiter Potard as we entered; "let the present august solemnity be conducted as befits the sovereignty of the people! Citizen Saigne-du-nez, advance!"

Saigne-du-nez was clad in a black frock, I suppose to represent a notary. He came forward:—

"In the name of the French nation, one and indivisible, I demand the celebration of the nuptials of Citizen Hutton Bagsby, adopted child of France, and Provisional Minister of her Marine in the department of the Tuilleries, and of *Citoyenne* Céphyse Corbeille, *poissarde*, and daughter of the people."

"Is there any one here to gainsay the marriage?" asked Jupiter.

There was no reply.

"Then, in the name of the French nation, I decree that the ceremony shall proceed. Citizen Minister of Marine, are you willing to take this woman as your lawful wife?"

A cold sweat stood upon the brow of Bagsby, his knees knocked together, and he leaned the whole weight of his body upon my arm, as I interpreted to him the demand of Jupiter.

"Say any thing you like," muttered he; "it will all come to the same thing at last!"

"The citizen consents, most venerable President."

"Then nothing remains but to put the same question to the citoyenne," said Potard. "Who appears as the father of the bride?"

"*Chûte de la Bastille*! that do I," cried Destripes.

"Citizen Destripes, do you of your own free will and accord—"

Here a thundering rap was heard at the door.

"What is that?" cried Destripes starting back. "Some one has passed the barricade!"

"In the name of the Provisional Government!" cried a loud voice. The door was flung open, and to my inexpressible joy, I beheld the Count of Monte-Christo, backed by a large detachment of the National Guard.

"Treason! treachery!" shouted Destripes. "Ah, villain, thou hast neglected thy post!" and he fetched a tremendous blow with his axe at the head of Gratte-les-rues. It was fortunate for that chief that his helmet was of excellent temper, otherwise he must have been cloven to the chin. As it was, he staggered backwards and fell.

The National Guard immediately presented their muskets.

"I have the honour to inform the citizens," said Monte-Christo, "that I have imperative orders to fire if the slightest resistance is made. Monsieur, therefore, will have the goodness immediately to lay down that axe."

Destripes glared on him for a moment, as though he meditated a rush, but the steady attitude of the National Guard involuntarily subdued him.

"This is freedom!" he exclaimed, flinging away his weapon. "This is what we fought for at the barricades! Always deceived— always sold by the aristocrats! But the day may come when I shall hold a tight reckoning with thee, my master, or I am not the nephew of the citizen Samson!"

"Pray, may I ask the meaning of this extraordinary scene?" said Monte-Christo, gazing in astonishment at the motley group before him. "Is it the intention of the gentlemen to institute a Crusade, or have we lighted by chance upon an assemblage of the chivalry of Malta?"

"Neither," I replied. "The fact is, that just as you came in we were engaged in celebrating a republican marriage."

"Far be it from me to interfere with domestic or connubial arrangements!" replied the polite Monte-Christo. "Let the marriage go on, by all means; I shall be delighted to witness it, and we can proceed to business thereafter."

"You will see no marriage here, I can tell you!" cried Bagsby, who at the first symptom of relief had taken shelter under the shadow of the Marquis. "I put myself under your protection; and, by Jove, if you don't help me, I shall immediately complain to Lord Normanby!"

"What is this?" cried Monte-Christo. "Do I see Monsieur Bagsby in a general's uniform? Why, my good sir, you have become a naturalised Frenchman indeed! The nation has a claim upon you."

"The nation will find it very difficult to get it settled then!" said Bagsby. "But I want to get out. I say, can't I get away?"

"Certainly. There is nothing to prevent you. But I am rather curious to hear about this marriage."

"Why," said I, "the truth is, my dear Marquis, that the subject is rather a delicate one for our friend. He has just been officiating in the capacity of bridegroom."

"You amaze me!" said Monte-Christo; "and which, may I ask, is the fair lady?"

Here Demoiselle Céphyse came forward.

"Citizen officer," she said, "I want my husband!"

"You hear, Monsieur Bagsby?" said Monte-Christo, in intense enjoyment of the scene. "The lady says she has a claim upon you."

"It's all a lie!" shouted Bagsby. "I've got nothing to say to the woman. I hate and abhor her!"

"*Monstre*!" shrieked the poissarde, judging of Bagsby's ungallant repudiation rather from his gestures than his words. And she sprang towards him with the extended talons of a tigress. Bagsby, however, was this time too nimble for her, and took refuge behind the ranks of the National Guard, who were literally in convulsions of laughter.

"I will have thee, though, *polisson*!" cried the exasperated bride. "I will have thee, though I were to follow thee to the end of the world! Thou hast consented to be my husband, little *tisserand*, and I never will give thee up."

"Keep her off! good, dear soldiers," cried Bagsby: "pray, keep her off! I shall be murdered and torn to pieces if she gets hold of me! Oh, Mr Dunshunner! do tell them to protect me with their bayonets."

"Be under no alarm, Mr Bagsby," said Monte-Christo; "you are now under the protection of the National Guard. But to business. Which of the citizens assembled is spokesman here?"

"I am the president!" hiccupped Jupiter Potard, who, throughout the morning, had been unremitting in his attentions to the bottle.

"Then, you will understand that, by orders of the Provisional Government, all must evacuate the palace within a quarter of an hour."

"Louis Philippe had seventeen years of it," replied Jupiter Potard. "I won't abdicate a minute sooner!"

"And I," said Pomme-de-terre, "expect a handsome pension for my pains."

"Or at least," said Saigne-du-nez, "we must have permission to gut the interior."

"You have done quite enough mischief already," said Monte-Christo; "so prepare to move. My orders are quite peremptory, and I shall execute them to the letter!"

"Come along, then, citizens!" cried Destripes. "I always knew what would come of it, if these rascally *bourgeoisie* got the upper hand of the workmen. They are all black aristocrats in their hearts. But, by the head of Robespierre, thou shalt find that thy government is not settled yet, and there shall be more blood before we let them trample down the rights of the people!"

So saying, the democratic butcher strode from the apartment, followed by the rest of the Provisional Government and their adherents, each retaining the garb which he had chosen to wear in honour of the nuptials of Bagsby. The poissarde lingered for a moment, eying her faithless betrothed as he stood in the midst of the Guard, like a lioness robbed of her cub: and then, with a cry of wrath, and a gesture of menace, she rushed after her companions.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Bagsby, dropping on his knees, "the bitterest hour of my whole existence is over!"

7: Adieu, Sweet France!

"AND SO you received the message from M. Albert?" said I to Monte-Christo, as we walked together to the Hotel de Ville,

"I did; and, to say the truth, I was rather apprehensive about you. Revolutions are all very well: but it is a frightful thing when the dregs of the population get the upper hand."

"I am glad to hear you acknowledge so much. For my part, Marquis, having seen one revolution, I never wish to witness another."

"We could not possibly avoid it," said Monte-Christo. "It was a mere question of time. No one doubts that a revolutionary spirit may be carried too far."

"Can't you contrive to write it down?" said I.

"Unfortunately, the majority of gentlemen with whom you have lately been associating, are not strongly addicted to letters. I question whether M. Destripes has even read *La Tour de Nêsle*."

"If he had," said I, "it must have tended very greatly to his moral improvement. But how is it with the Provisional Government?"

"Faith, I must own they are rather in a critical position. Had it not been for Lamartine— who, I must confess, is a noble fellow, and a man of undaunted courage— they would have been torn to pieces long ago. Hitherto they have managed tolerably by means of the National Guard; but the atmosphere is charged with thunder. Here we are, however, at the Hotel de Ville."

Not the least curious of the revolutionary scenes of Paris was the aspect of the seat of government. At the moment I reached it, many thousands of the lower orders were assembled in front, and one of the Provisional Government, I believe Louis Blanc, was haranguing them from a window. Immense crowds were likewise gathered round the entrance. These consisted of the deputations, who were doing their very best to exhaust the physical energies, and distract the mental powers, of the men who had undertaken the perilous task of government.

Under conduct of my friend, I made my way to the room where the mysterious *ouvrier* was performing his part of the onerous duty. He greeted me with a brief nod and a grim smile, but did not pretermit his paternal functions.

The body which occupied his attention at this crisis of the commonwealth, was a musical deputation, which craved sweet counsel regarding some matter of crochets or of bars. It is not the first time that music has been heard in the midst of stirring events. Nero took a fancy to fiddle when Rome was blazing around him.

I could not but admire the gravity with which Albert listened to the somewhat elaborate address, and the dexterity with which he contrived to blend the subjects of pipes and patriotism.

"Citizens!" he said, "the Provisional Government are deeply impressed with the importance of the views which you advocate. Republican institutions cannot hope to exist without music, for to the sound of music even the spheres themselves revolve in the mighty and illimitable expanse of ether.

"At this crisis your suggestions become doubly valuable. I have listened to them with emotions which I would struggle in vain to express. Oh, that we may see the day when, with a glorious nation as an orchestra, the psalm of universal freedom may rise in a swell of triumphant jubilee!

"And it will come! Rely upon us. Return to your homes. Cherish fraternity and music. Meantime we shall work without intermission for your sake. Harmony is our sole object: believe me that, in reconstituted France, there shall be nothing but perfect harmony!"

The deputation withdrew in tears; and another entered to state certain grievances touching the manufacture of steel beads. I need not say that in this,

as in several other instances, the *ouvrier* comported himself like an eminent member of the Society of Universal Knowledge.

"That's the last of them, praise be to Mumbo Jumbo!" said he, as the representatives of the shoeblacks departed. "Faith, this is work hard enough to kill a horse. So, Mr Dunshunner! you have been getting up a counter-revolution at the Tuilleries, I see. How are Monsieur Potard and all the rest of your colleagues?"

"I am afraid they are finally expelled from paradise," said I.

"Serve them right! a parcel of democratic scum. And what has become of Citizen Bagsby?"

"I have sent him to my hotel. He was in reality very near becoming an actual child of France." And I told the story of the nuptials, at which the *ouvrier* nearly split himself with laughter.

"And now, Mr Dunshunner," said he at length, "may I ask the nature of your plans?"

"These may depend a good deal upon your advice," said I.

"I never give advice," replied the *ouvrier* with a nasal twitch. "Sometimes it is rather dangerous. But tell me—what would you think of the state of the British government, if Earl Grey at a cabinet-council were to threaten to call in the mob, and if Lord Johnny Russell prevented him by clapping a pistol to his ear?"

"I should think very badly of it indeed," said I.

"Or if Incapability Wood should threaten, in the event of the populace appearing, to produce from the Earl's pocket a surreptitious order on the treasury for something like twelve thousand pounds?"

"Worse still."

"Well, then; I don't think you'll find *that* sort of thing going on in London, at all events."

"Have you any commands for the other side of the Channel?"

"Oh, then, you are determined to leave? Well, perhaps upon the whole it is your wisest plan. And— I say— just tell them that if things look worse, I may be over one of these fine mornings. Good-bye."

And so, with a cordial pressure of the hand, we parted.

"Monte-Christo," I said, as that very evening I bundled Bagsby into a *fiacre* on our way to the railroad station— "Monte-Christo, my good fellow, let me give you a slight piece of advice, which it would be well if all of our craft and calling would keep in memory,— '*Think twice before you write up another revolution*.' "

———————

5: Particeps Criminis

H. Bedford-Jones

1887-1949

Blue Book April 1927

Henry Bedford-Jones

"JAMES GRAY— That man again!"

A startled light shot into the blue eyes of Diana Corinth, as she looked at the card her maid handed her. Then she nodded.

"Have him wait; I'll be down in a moment. No, I'll not need you."

The maid departed. Diana laid the card on her dressing-table and examined her fresh, trim beauty in the mirror; then her eyes flitted back to the card, with a glance of mingled apprehension and uneasiness and curiosity. They were not ordinary blue eyes. They were quite dark blue, under level black brows, and they were very capable, direct and uncompromising, as good Irish eyes should be.

The card bore the simple words: "James Gray— Agent." Nothing to cause any fear; for that matter, any resident of Detroit would have laughed at the idea of anything causing fear to Diana Corinth— heiress, sportswoman, social favorite, beauty. If she flouted conventions, she could well afford to do so. To her had fallen Huron Manor, the big house on Jefferson Avenue; the yachts, the motors, the properties, the money, and above all the character of her father, Michael Corinth. There had been a brother, but he was forgotten now— a scapegrace, disinherited, blown by the winds of folly into the limbo of lost things. More than one hungry gentleman had tried to trim the Corinth roll when it fell into the hands of a girl, and had learned a lesson. . Diana could take care of herself and her own.

Into the solemn reception-parlor of the mansion she swept, and came smiling, with extended hand, to the man who waited. He was a large young man, but one forgot the square shoulders and rather heavy build in the still

squarer and heavier face above; despite its twinkling smile that face conveyed an impression of grim and stubborn determination which lingered long.

"So you haven't forgotten me?" he asked, laughing a little.

"Not likely!" she returned, and settled herself in a chair, facing him. "What's this agent business? You were the star reporter on the *News* when the fat Mrs. Morris lost her string of beads and we worked out the society thief stuff between us."

HE nodded. It was only six weeks previously that a social affair had shaken Detroit and had landed a rather distinguished gentleman in the penitentiary— thanks to a diamond necklace and Jimmy Gray of the *News*, and other factors. "If it hadn't been for you, I'd never have pulled off that affair," he said. "I haven't forgotten how you helped me, Miss Corinth; I don't know much about women, and—"

"All the wise ones say that," she said, laughing. "Besides, you don't need much help!"

"I do, though," he returned gravely. "And just now I'm in over my ears. I've quit the paper and gone into more lucrative if more chancy work— it was John May, the diamond importer, who tipped me off to taking advantage of that Morris affair and doing it. In plain words, detecting. Otherwise, as an agent to investigate things that don't want publicity."

"So," she observed, "you are now a detective, to put it bluntly?"

"Yes. And first crack out of the box, I've run into a snarl and got tangled up. I've called to ask whether you'd consider a loud and plaintive holler for help, or whether you'd rather not get mixed up in such lowlife doings."

His eyes were twinkling now; like his name, they were gray— a warm and lively gray. His brown, red-shot hair waved back from his forehead crisply, and much of a man can be told from his hair, as movie actors will some day discover to their embarrassment.

She considered him gravely, concealing the abrupt flood of relief which had come over her at his words.

"Hm!" she said. "I suppose John May has quietly spread the word that you're reliable, clever, resourceful and have some pull in some quarters, and that any of our idle rich who put a foot into the mud might do worse than call you into wipe it clean! Eh?"

He nodded.

"Well," she said, "set that cigarette stand between us and we'll talk business."

RATHER bewildered, Jimmy Gray rose, brought over a little smoking-stand from the wall, and lighted a match for her cigarette and his own. He sat down again, and waited. She studied him for a minute, then smiled. "T like you," she said frankly. "You and I are brutally blunt in our words, and positive in our reactions, and we regard each other and the world around us with some common sense— which is devilish rare these days. Am I right?"

"You are right," he said. "Were not hypocrites."

"Then I'll make you a proposition," she said. "Partnership. You take the money and credit, and I take the fun. I thought I'd go to Europe for the summer and raise a little havoc among the lounge lizards and fortune-hunters— but if you agree, I stay here and go to work. But, Jimmy, I don't mean any halfway, namby-pamby partnership! I mean full fifty-fifty on the dirty stuff and clean, murder and robbery, bootleggers and morgues. If you feel how terrible it would be to shock a poor woman, then lay off."

JIMMY GRAY laughed. "You think I am going in for unadulterated crime, do you? Not much. No telling where it'll come to, of course, but what I'm engaged in right now has none of the shock stuff." "Well, what about it?" she demanded. "No evasion, now. I can be of use to you; I have cars, boats, Lord knows what. If you need a helper as chauffeur or brainworker, I'm here. If you're in need of information, or want to pull the wool over the ears of some silly male, I'm your party. Do you want me for a partner, or not?"

"Done," said Gray promptly.

"Then we'll need an office—"

"I have one. Not a very fine one—"

"We'll take one in the Corinth building; I'll contribute the rent as my share of the firm's expenses," she said calmly. "There's a fine one on the second floor, vacant—"

"Look here!" said Gray. "Rents in that building are enormous! I don't intend that you shall patronize—"

"Will you keep quiet?" she broke in icily. "We move in tomorrow morning. You're putting a good deal into the partnership, and I intend to put something. The class of people we shall deal with need to be impressed by our offices. Now, no more discussion. It's agreed. Plump out your problem, Jimmy!"

"I had never dreamed of all this," he said. "But I'm glad, more than glad! Well, I suppose you never chanced to hear of anyone called Speed Martin?"

The girl tensed slightly in her chair. She leaned forward to knock the ash from her cigarette, not daring to trust her voice at once. Then, when she answered, it was negligently. "I think so— can't just this moment say where. Who is he?"

"I wish I knew," and Gray frowned slightly. "However, I mean to find out. Now Ill come to the present difficulty."

She looked at him wide-eyed, curious, interested. Those deep blue eyes gave no hint of the startled alarm that had shot through her at Gray's words. If he meant to find out—he would do it, sooner or later. He was that sort. And if he did—

"You know Mrs. Hanson, the elderly widow who lives up the street?" Gray was saying. "You do, of course— everyone does. A philanthropist. She engaged a maid two weeks ago, apparently a very good sort. The maid had an afternoon off yesterday. She came home late in the evening, was ill, and died before a doctor could arrive. Ptomaine poisoning, by all indications, but she was in great fright. She would not talk at all, but cried and carried on until she sank and then went out. Mrs. Hanson was with her, and said that just before she died, the girl uttered the name of Speed Martin."

Diana Corinth folded her hands in her lap—she had laid aside her cigarette— and sat very still, deliberately so. Gray was paying no great heed to her, but went on with his story.

"That's all— no indication she was murdered, nothing else whatever; just the name. I've been unable to trace it. Mrs. Hanson has engaged me to run down the matter, for she believes the girl met with foul play. The police laugh at her. I thought of getting some suggestion from you."

Diana smiled, rather faintly. "The girl's name?"

"Mary Simpson. Twenty-two. Rather quiet— comes from upstate somewhere. No relatives."

"Very well." She glanced at her watch. "Hm— two o'clock! Meet me at our office in the Corinth building at nine in the morning, Jimmy. You'll find it under your own name on the hall index, and the office ready. May have some news then, or some suggestion."

His leave-taking was awkward, joyous, embarrassed—a curious commingling of emotions. When he had departed, Diana Corinth went back to her boudoir and for some time talked with the' manager of the Corinth Building. Then she called another number, and gained response.

"I want to speak with Speed Martin," she said. "Call him. I'll wait."

She waited, tense, anxious. Presently a voice answered.

"Diana speaking," she said. "Tell me what you know about a girl named Mary Simpson."

"Huh?" came the response. "Not a thing!"

"You're lying," she replied evenly. "Tell the truth."

"Honest!" responded the man at the other end of the wire. "Never heard of her—"

"All right. That ends everything between us," said the girl, and in her voice was a cold finality that spoke of intense anger. 'No— none of that! You've lied to me, and now you can take the consequences. I'm through with you. Goodby." She rang off, and sat for a while motionless, a queer hint of tragedy in her immobile face.

AT nine in the morning, Diana shook hands with her partner, and displayed the new offices of the firm. The two rooms were simply but handsomely furnished. She pointed to the inner room. "That's yours. I'll be office girl for visitors. There are cigarettes on your desk— all complete. Make yourself at home."

"It's magic!" declared Jimmy Gray, staring around. He went to his desk, saw everything there from pad to ash-tray, and dropped into the chair. She laughed at his helpless air.

"Not magic, but quick work! There's a filing cabinet— all story detectives have them. Now, what about our case? Discovered anything?"

Gray smiled. "No. The man isn't known here by police or others."

"He makes it his business not to be."

"Eh?" Gray looked at her, found her serious, came to the alert. "You haven't discovered who he is, surely?"

"Why not?"

Gray met her steady gaze, relaxed in his chair, reached for a cigarette.

"Go ahead, enchantress! I'm dust before your feet."

At this instant the door of the outer office opened and a woman entered, looking around irresolutely. She was Diana's maid.

"Here I am, Alice," called the girl. "Come in."

"This came for you five minutes after you left, Miss Diana," said the maid, and extended a special delivery envelope. "I thought it might be important and brought it downtown."

"Right. Thank you."

THE maid departed. Diana Corinth tore open the envelope, glanced at a card it had enclosed, and turned deathly white. Gray sprang to his feet, but she gestured him back and laid down the letter. It bore a Canadian stamp, with an American special delivery stamp.

"We were speaking of Martin," she said quietly. "He's a very clever man, Jimmy, and very powerful in his own way. He stays out of Detroit, and lives over the line in Windsor most of the time. He has a good many men working for him— bootlegging and other things. Nobody knows his real name or his appearance."

Surprise grew in Gray's eyes as he listened.

"You're amazing!" he commented. "Where's the point of contact?"

She had dreaded this question. "The engineer of my yacht last summer told me about the man— had been a criminal but was reformed, and saw Martin at Harbor Point one day. Shortly after, there was a sensational robbery there at the clubhouse."

"I remember it," said Gray thoughtfully. "The man is at the head of a gang, then?"

"More than that," returned the girl. "And this letter would prove it."

She pushed the letter across the desk and watched Gray's face as he drew out the card and perused it. Upon it were written— by typewriter— the words:

If it's war, then— vae victis! SPEED.

There was a long silence. She felt his eyes lift, felt their fixed and penetrating gaze upon her face, wondered if he read aught amiss there. Then she was reassured...

"Looks plain enough, Diana," he said, with a worried air. "If he was concerned in the death of that girl, he watched the Hanson house, knew I was called in, watched me and knew I visited you. But why not send: his threat to me? Woe to the conquered— hm! The fellow gives himself away there. Must be some reason to be afraid of us. See here, you'd better stay out of this partnership—"

"Silly!" she smiled, a little scornfully, in her relief. "If the dead girl had gone across the river to see Martin— ah! You said she was a good sort?"

"Very. Mrs. Hanson was fond of her."

"Good!" Her blue eyes blazed with sudden eagerness. "Call her up, ask if a new maid has been employed. If so, tell Mrs. Hanson to send her here at once with a note for you. Quick, now!"

A desk telephone, already connected, was at Gray's elbow. He obeyed Diana's command without question, and a moment later had Mrs. Hanson on the line. He asked about a new maid.

"Yes? Sent by a friend— very fortunate, eh? I'd like to see her, Mrs. Hanson. If you can spare her for the morning, will you be good enough to send her here at once? Give her a note for me. No, I've discovered very little— just enough to make me want to look into it more deeply. Thank you. Good-by."

He hung up and nodded.

"She'll be here in twenty minutes. May I ask why?"

"I'm not sure— just an idea. This Mrs. Hanson is a peculiar woman, you know. She has money galore, a house filled with costly things, and is noted for

the jewelry she used to wear in younger days and still keeps by her. Now, if this maid of hers had been worked on or tricked by Speed Martin, had been made use of, had finally caught on to the game and rebelled—she would be got rid of in a hurry. Another one would be supplied—"

Gray whistled. "Great is Diana of the Detroiters! You've hit the nail on the head— but what about the girl who's coming here?"

"Leave her to me," said Diana confidently.

When the girl appeared, some little while later, Diana Corinth had made preparations. She knew the fallacy of Gray's theory; Speed Martin had no idea that Gray was seeking him, and this message referred simply to her own telephone conversation with Martin. So she could speak as she wished to the young woman. before her— a pert, self-confident, entirely sophisticated young woman who asked for Mr. Gray. Diana laughed softly, and pointed to the chair beside her desk. Behind it, the door of Gray's office was closed.

"Sit down, sit down— throw that note into the waste-basket," she directed calmly. "You've certainly bungled matters nicely!"

Open-mouthed, the girl stared at her, but beneath- the amazement was sudden swift alarm, and Diana did not miss it. At her gesture, the girl took the chair.

"What do you mean?" she ventured. "I— this is Mr. Gray's office— the name on the door—"

"Speed could use that name as well as any other, couldn't he?" snapped Diana.

"Speed!" The name came in a gasp. "What do you mean? Who are you?"

"None of your business." Diana regarded her victim with assurance, and smiled to herself at the girl's startled air. "Haven't you discovered that the old lady suspects something wrong with this Mary Simpson business?"

"No." The girl assumed a wooden mask. "I don't know what you're talking about anyhow."

"Want me to call up Windsor 7711— Mention of this telephone number, which was Speed Martin's own, brought another gasp from the girl— this time of surrender.

"Oh! Then you know!"

"Of course I do," said Diana, and laughed. "The game's been called off for a few days— why haven't you communicated with Speed?"

"Ain't had a chance," said the girl sulkily. "Off, is it? And me wasting my time working around that fool woman? That's a hell of a note! I know where the things are, and everything's in shape for tonight— and now it's off!"

"Only for a couple of days," said Diana, reassuringly. "But you're wrong in the day— Speed told me himself it was tomorrow night."

"I'd ought to know, hadn't I?" came the retort. "Bill and Frisco were to show up at eleven sharp, take the big car back to Daly's, and wait for orders. Tonight, see?"

"Hold on a minute; I'll find out."

SHE rose, passed into the adjoining office, and left the door ajar. She gave the waiting and listening Jimmy Gray a wink, then stooped over the telephone, held down the hook with one hand, and lifted off the receiver and called the Windsor number.

"Call Speed to the 'phone, and quick about it— oh, he is? All right. Hello, Speed! You know who this is— I've just been giving your message to that girl, and there's a mixup— you what? Without letting me know?" The rising anger and amazement of her voice were excellently simulated. "After this, you let me know when you switch plans, see? All right, I'll tell her; good-by."

Diana returned to the outer office.

"Speed says it was a mistake all around," she announced to the waiting girl. "The plan goes through for tonight, and you're to go to Daly's with Bill and Frisco. What about Mrs. Hanson?"

"She's safe," said the girl, rising. "Deaf as a post anyhow, and everything we want is downstairs. The safe's a joke— Frisco can go through it in five minutes. Well, is that all?" Diana nodded, and the girl departed in obvious relief. When the door had closed behind her, Gray appeared. Diana looked up at him brightly.

"Well, does the new assistant satisfy you?"

"No— she amazes me!" Gray laughed, and then sobered quickly. "What was that Windsor number you called—"

"An imaginary number!" Diana broke into quick laughter, and the magic of it swept aside the swift touch of danger. She had risked this. "When the girl knew I knew Martin was in Windsor, that settled everything. She's a fool. Well, now what's your program?"

"Simple." Gray spoke swiftly, decisively. "I'll see Mrs. Hanson at once have her arrange to be out of the house tonight— tell her a robbery's planned. That will simplify the thing for Bill and Frisco. Then we'll let 'em go through the place—"

"Let them rob it?"

"Sure. We'll follow them to Daly's and nab the whole gang with the goods. Be' right back of them in our own car, and a police car following us. Then we may get hold of Martin. Of course, we've no evidence against him regarding 'that poor girl's death, but somebody may squeal when we pinch 'em. Td better get right up and see Mrs. Hanson this morning."

"You know where Daly's is?"

"Yes— a rather disreputable roadhouse twenty miles north of town. You'll be here when I get back?"

"Probably not. I've a luncheon engagement." Diana passed over a key. "There's the office key. PI call up and have my roadster here for you at noon— you can use it in running around this afternoon, and we'll have it ready for tonight. Goodby, and good luck!"

"Gray caught up his key, seized his hat, and was gone.

When she had arranged by telephone for the delivery of the car to Gray at noon, Diana regarded herself in a hand mirror, settled hair and lips to her own satisfaction, and went forth to do some shopping. Her Ford coupe was parked near by. Obtaining it, she drove to the Campus Martius, parked the car again in a ground up Michigan Avenue, and spent half an hour shopping.

When she returned to her car, she found a man sitting in it. He nodded to her, and threw back his coat to show a police star.

"Miss Corinth? Get right in, miss, and drive up to the Fort Street station."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," said Diana briefly. "Get out—"

"Unless you want me to call the wagon and take you along on a murder charge, you will," said the other coldly. "Take your choice, miss."

"A murder charge?" repeated Diana, aghast. "Are you crazy?"

"No more'n most," and the officer chuckled. "Come along, now, without any fuss, and tell the cap'n all about it."

Furious, Diana obeyed, and the memory of that card from Speed Martin struck into her ominously.

CONTRARY to her expectations, Diana found herself very courteously received by a grizzled police captain, who bade her be seated, then swung his chair toward her and picked up a paper.

"You're not under arrest, Miss Corinth," he said, in reply to her first question, "and I hope you'll not be— it's a matter for questions. A man was killed this morning on the Ecorse Road just within the city limits; he was struck by a Ford coupe, which drove on without halting. The number of the license-plate was reported by two witnesses, and is your number. Now, what can you tell about it?"

"None too certain, are you?" said Diana coolly. "I can tell you just this— it all depends on the time. When did the accident occur?"

"At eight-ten."

Diana settled herself in her chair, and smiled slightly.

"I was at home until eight-forty this morning —my home's in the other end of town, as you probably know. My servants can vouch for this, also that the

Ford coupe was being cleaned by my chauffeur. At eight-fifteen the manager of the Corinth Building called me on the telephone and talked with me. You can verify these facts in five minutes by telephoning."

The captain gestured to the listening sergeant, who took up his telephone. Diana's alibi was established in less than five minutes.

"Sorry to have bothered you, Miss Corinth," said the captain. "As you said, I was none too sure— the reports of witnesses usually don't stand the test. I'm mighty glad we don't have to go any farther with this; you've been pinched twice for speeding— it might have been a bad business."

Diana took her departure pleasantly and without comment. She knew, however, it was not by chance that the witnesses had made a mistake, or that the detective had been sitting in her car at the parking ground. This had been a gentle hint from Speed Martin— a threat, nothing more, of what might easily come to pass in dead earnest. The threat, however, only served to rouse Diana's anger.

Thus when, in the middle of an animated luncheon which was to be followed by a throat-cutting game of bridge, she was summoned to the telephone, Diana was in a mood to be anything but meek when Speed Martin's voice came to her.

"Hullo there, Di!" he greeted. "Heard you'd be around to the Perkins hut today— want a few words with you. Have a good time with the cops this morning? Well, you and I must have a showdown, old girl."

"The quicker the better," she snapped. "I suppose you think I'd hand you over?"

"I take no chances on you or anyone else, Di." And he laughed softly. "You can tell all you know, and welcome— it can't hurt me a mite. But I want a word with you personally. Will you drive out and see me sometime today? After all, old girl, you know what's between us; you may wash your hands of me for good, but you can't kill the past. Say the word, and we'll have a last meeting, find out just where each other stands, and have things settled."

"All right," she flashed.. "And I intend to find out one or two other matters, too! Where are you?"

"Just now, at police headquarters." And he laughed again. "I'll send a man around to the Perkins mansion to guide you, at any time you say. You needn't be afraid of him—"

"Don't worry, I'm not," snapped the girl. "Nor of you either. Have him here at three sharp, and I'll be along."

"Thanks, Di. Have a cop follow your car if you like—"

"Don't be a fool," she retorted. "You know I'll not turn you in to the cops. Good-by."

DIANA knew that she stood in no danger. Martin had tried to show her his power, to intimidate her if possible— perhaps to anger her and force this interview. That he must desire it fervently, she was well aware; he would need to have a clear understanding with her as to the future, since all relations between them were ended. He would not fear anything from her, nor did she particularly have any fear of him— the past assured this much. And his murder of Mary Simpson, which she no longer doubted, had ended everything between them for ever. It was no wonder that with such thoughts at the back of her head, Diana's bridge was not brilliant that afternoon. Promptly at three, a maid announced that a caller was waiting for her, and she rose, explaining that she had to try out a new chauffeur, and so departed.

Amos Brown, as the visitor announced his name, was a smallish man with sharp nose, sharp eyes, sharp face in general; he was very merry, and the girl set him down as an absolutely cold-blooded rascal—a human viper, capable of anything. He accompanied her out to the car and got in beside her.

"Which way?"

"Fordson," said Amos Brown, and grinned. "We'll go roundabout."

The little man waxed garrulous. He talked of the weather, of the city, of things in general, but said never a word about himself or his associates. She understood that he was staving off questions, and herself kept silent.

After half an hour's driving they had swung around to the north of the city and now kept straight ahead. Realizing that she might well be delayed by this errand, Diana halted at a small town and telephoned back to the office. Gray answered.

"IF I don't show up by six," she said, "go ahead without me, Jimmy, and I'll meet you at Daly's. I can find where it is. I'll be there around twelve or before."

"Right," he said. "Better not go there alone, though—"

"I'm safe, thanks. Good-by."

She returned to the car, and met a suspicious look from Amos Brown.

"Telephoning?" he asked caustically.

"Yes, to say I'd not be back until late. Shut up and don't be so suspicious," she snapped angrily. "If I wanted to doublecross Speed, I'd have done it before this. Where's Daly's?"

He made no response, at once, then spoke slowly.

"Daly's is about four mile ahead, but we ain't stopping there. I'll tell you when we pass."

He was as good as his word. Daly's proved to be a pleasant-looking place set back from the road amid the trees; its appearance held nothing sinister

whatever. They were quickly past, and drove on toward the north. Amos Brown had fallen silent, now.

Fifteen minutes afterward, as they- approached the outskirts of a small town, he motioned to a house ahead on the right— a tiny box of a place.

"Turn in there."

DIANA obeyed. A car stood before the house door, and she swung her coupe in and halted beside it. Brown hopped out nimbly, but the girl waited.

"Tell Speed to open up and show himself," she said. The little man grinned, comprehending her suspicion, and ascended the steps of the small veranda. He entered the house. A moment later the door opened again, and Speed Martin appeared in the opening.

"Come along, Di!" he exclaimed, adding. "All safe."

She hesitated no longer, but climbed out of the car, and Martin held open the door as she entered and stepped into a plainly furnished room. Martin turned to Amos Brown.

"Get into my car and have the engine running," he said. "If anything looks wrong up the road, or a car stops, honk the horn and I'll be out."

Amos Brown nodded and left the room. Martin pulled out a chair from the wall.

"Sit down, Di— we're alone, and should be quite comfortable. Sorry you had to come so far, but I'm taking no chances; and as you see, must keep ready to run. Good of you to come."

Diana sat down, refused his offered cigarette case, and produced her own. She accepted a light, then sat back and eyed him steadily.

"You put yourself in a hole when you lied to me about that Simpson girl, Speed," she opened fire, without preliminary.

"Why interest yourself in the matter of a servant girl, Di?" he asked, smiling a little.

"No evasions, please."

There was a pause— a silence, a feeling of gathering forces, of an impending clash and conflict, like the dead hush that comes before a hurricane.

MARTIN was an unusual man— certainly no criminal to all appearance; rather a prosperous business man. His face was strong, whimsical, yet its humor was sardonic, and his thin lips held a firmness that went into ruthless cruelty. Black brows met in a straight bar above his direct and very sharp eyes. His hands were large, powerful, well-kept. He conveyed an impression of latent force, of poise, of thorough competence. Women like such men.

"Enjoy your trip to the station?" he asked, with his grim smile.

"A threat?" she demanded quietly.

"A warning," he said. "You frightened me, breaking everything off as you did—"

"Bah!" She made a gesture of contempt. "When you lie to me, when you murder a poor girl to cover up—then I'm through with you. We become strangers, even enemies."

"You're the only person alive who knows all about me, Di," he said reflectively.

"I've forgotten it," she flashed out. "If—"

"You needn't," he said. "Nothing you knew of me would be of use to anyone. You'll never telephone me again, old girl— at that number! I've broken clean away from Windsor, and that business this morning was just a little joke to impress myself on you. I wanted to see you and reach a clear understanding. Is it war between us?"

"Yes," she said promptly, her gaze challenging him.

"Then don't get in my way." His face tightened, drew into hard lines. "Throw me off if you like, but— don't get in my way. Not even what lies between us in the past, Di, would hold me back in such case."

"War is war," she said negligently. "I've shielded you until now; and I'm through. I'm asking nothing from you, and I'm promising nothing. That's the status from now on."

He looked at her, admiration in his eyes.

"No compromise— gad, but you're a fine one! I'm grateful to you for the past, Diana; I don't want to hurt you. If we—"

She stood up, and broke in crisply.

"Let the dead bury their dead, Speed. You're a thief, a liar, a murderer— Lord knows what else! From now on, were strangers. Follow your road, I'll go mine; if we clash, it's no quarter. If we don't clash, well and good. Good-by."

She turned to the door, and did not look at him again. The man rose, and a touch of fury rose and died in his eyes, and in its place came quick pain.

"Good-by, Diana," he said thickly.

She made no response, but opened the door and stepped outside, and closed the door behind her. In the strong light of afternoon, her face showed sternly set, as though the interview had cost her dear; but she nodded brightly to Amos Brown, gat into her own car, started it. She turned out to the road, then went on to the town ahead.

"It had to be done, I suppose," she said, and dabbed her eyes swiftly. "And it's done. Ill take in a movie, get supper, drive back slowly— rest my nerves. I'm pretty ragged."

To return to Detroit, meet Jimmy Gray, and come back along the same road would be sheer waste of time. She might better wait here, and then meet Gray at Daly's place; and so she decided.

DALY'S was not a bad sort, as such places went. Downstairs, the front of the barn-like place was given over to the big room for eating, drinking, dancing; two smaller private rooms behind, and the kitchens. Upstairs might be a bit of gambling and other things, but these did not obtrude on the ostensible roadhouse features below.

The place was not crowded that night, for it was mid-week, but there was a comfortable assemblage, and the negro jazz band whooped things up to fill the gap. It was hard upon eleven when Diana entered, and the spectacle of a woman coming in alone— and such a woman— was enough to draw a gasp from the youngest habitué.

Having learned a bit about the place, and being quite able to use her eyes, Diana unconcernedly made her way toward the rear of the cabaret room, merely giving a smiling shake of the head to the beckoning head-waiter. Ahead, to the left, was the partition cutting off the two private rooms, the waiters going past the two doors to gain the kitchens beyond, through a small passage. At a table in the rear, which was empty, the girl paused, and a waiter came swiftly.

"Bring Daly here," she said, and sat down.

It had been a long chance, of course— Speed Martin's car was outside there, so he and Amos Brown must be here. Not in the main room, though; and as she waited for Daly, she caught the clear, hard tones of a voice from one of the private rooms. Speed was here on the ground floor, then— close to a getaway in event of trouble! She had figured him right; the luck was breaking her way.

With relief, Diana settled back in her chair and looked up at the approaching Daly. He was a dewlapped, suave, blue jowled man, and one appraising glance from his bold eyes told him exactly what Diana was. He bowed slightly.

"Good evening, Miss. You wanted me?"

"Yes. I am Miss Corinth, and I'm expecting a gentleman later on. Can you give me a private room where I can wait for him?"

With the air of knowing a lady when he saw one, Mr. Daly said he certainly could do that little thing. He escorted Diana to the second of the private rooms—a large chamber, with a double window masked by flowers and bushes, overlooking the side yard where the cars of guests were parked. Diana ordered a club sandwich and a pot of tea. Daly instructed the waiter to see

that she was left in peace unless she rang for anything, and he assured her that he would watch out for her gentleman friend. Then he departed, smirking.

LEFT alone with her late supper, Diana switched off the lights, settled herself by the window, and nibbled comfortably. In between the blare of music from the cabaret room, she caught low voices from the adjoining chamber, but made no effort to listen—she knew Amos Brown was there with Speed Martin. Eleven-thirty, she figured, would see the game at its end.

There were no doors to the private rooms— merely heavy curtains. She remained unmolested. Her tea and sandwich finished, she lighted a cigarette— placed her small automatic pistol in her lap, and glanced at her watch. Eleven-twenty. They should be along now at any moment, provided nothing had gone wrong in town.

Car lights swept the poorly lighted enclosure, glimmered across trees and shrubs and parked cars, vanished. Then they came again, powerfully, and the grind of a car. A heavy closed machine showed up, came past the line of parked cars, and drew to rest just beyond them— almost opposite the window where Diana sat. She extinguished her cigarette, waited. From the adjoining window came a low whistle. It was answered from the car, then by a low voice. "All right. We'll be right in."

She saw two men leave the car and vanish toward the rear of the place— dim figures in the obscurity outside. Then, almost at once, other car lights swept the trees as another car entered the enclosure. Diana knew that all was well. She left the window and darted to the curtained doorway, pistol in hand, and waited against the wall to one side of it, fingers on the electric switch. No telling what might happen now—

Feet sounded outside— not the soft, quick tread of the waiters, but heavy solid steps. They paused at the girl's doorway; a hand gripped the curtain aside; she gripped the pistol, fingered off the safety catch.

"Not there, you fools!" came the voice of Speed Martin from the next doorway. "Here!"

They passed on. The girl sank against the wall in relief.

Outside, an expensive roadster with another car following had come into the enclosure and rolled to a halt before the entrance., The doorkeeper came out, and Jimmy Gray, leaning over the side, told him to send Daly out. He assented and went into the building. From the following car came a number of men who spread out about the grounds. One man sat beside Gray.

Daly emerged, suavely expectant at sight of the expensive car. He descended the steps and came up to it; then he halted sharply as the man beside Gray leaned out, and the lights fell on the police uniform and star.

"Hello, Daly! Cap'n Connor— know me?"

"Hello, Cap," said Daly. "What's up?"

"Speed Martin and the two men who just drove in to join him," said Connor crisply, and the gun in his hand covered Daly. "My men are all around here, and you can take your choice— either an open, public raid and you held with the rest, or a quiet tip and no publicity. Where's Martin? Come across and save yourself trouble."

Daly was no fool. He knew he was trapped, and taken beyond escape or any warning to Martin. One of the men came up from the other car and was standing at his elbow.

"You're on, Cap," he said without hesitation. "Martin's in one of the private rooms on the ground floor. A lady's in the other. I don't know if the two men have come in or not."

"All right." Connor climbed out. "Which room is Martin in?"

Daly told him, and the man beside them was sent to wait outside the window of the room.

"Who's the lady in the other room?" demanded Gray. "Miss Corinth?"

"That's her," said Daly disgustedly. "She in on this stuff? Good gosh! Well, gents, the house is yours— but have a heart, that's all I ask!"

THE doorman stood on the steps, wondering. Gray and the chauffeur of the second car, who showed no police uniform, strode into the place and made their way across the floor, skirting the edge of the dancers. Their progress was not rapid. As they neared the far side of the room, they saw Captain Connor appear in the kitchen doorway. The curtained doorways of the two private rooms were to their left.

From one of those doorways a man darted, rabbit-like. Even as he emerged, he saw the police uniform at the end of the passage, saw the two men approaching, and swift as a flash darted into the other doorway.

"Get him, Gray!" said the chauffeur, darting forward. "I'll hold the others."

Gray went forward on the jump, knowing the man had sensed something wrong and had slipped into the room where Diana Corinth waited. :

She, standing beside the doorway, jerked up her pistol as the man flitted in, and her fingers switched on the light. In the electric glare he turned, snarling— he had already gone to the window. It was Speed Martin. For an instant they stared at each other. The snarl died from his face.

"So you've got me, Di!" he said. "War, eh? I didn't know—"

She switched off the light, plunged the room into darkness again.

"I can't, Speed, I can't!" she exclaimed, and heard a step pause outside. "Not this time— I'll cover you once more! Go ahead— the window—"

"Thanks, old girl!" he said huskily— and was gone.

Men were running, feet were pounding, voices rising. Outside the doorway Jimmy Gray dropped the curtain he had seized. He waited a moment, then called.

"Diana!"

"Here," she said, and switched the lights on again. No sound of alarm, no shot, came from outside. Speed Martin had vanished like a shadow among the bushes.

WHEN Diana entered the office of Jimmy Gray, on the following morning, he was awaiting her. She saw at a glance that he knew everything, that is, everything he could know.

"Will you come in here, please?" he said, replying to her cheerful greeting. She went into his office, and he faced her frankly, indicating the open newspaper on his desk.

"I'm sorry about last night," he said. "You've read all this, of course— full confessions and so forth, yet all knowledge of Speed Martin resolutely denied. Just a fellow they had met, they said. Well, what do you know about him?"

"Haven't I told you already?"

"I don't know what to think, Diana," and his cold reserve broke. "I was outside that door last night, heard what you said, knew you wanted to let him go. Why? What's that criminal to you? If our partnership is to endure on a business basis, it must be founded on trust."

HERE was crisis, and Diana was very pale as she met his level eyes.

"You're right, Jimmy," she said gravely. "What Martin and I have been to each other in the past, is ended. We met yesterday afternoon— it was a declaration of enmity, of war without quarter—"

"You've known him in the past!" exclaimed Gray, and his voice showed how he was hurt.

"Yes. I was weak last night, and spared him; I'd not do it again. I spoiled a big coup for you last night, and I'm sorry. If you want to dissolve this partnership here and now, you have every right to do so—"

"I don't," broke out Gray abruptly. "Diana, we're partners. I'll ask no questions; I'll take you on perfect trust."

"You blessed Jimmy!" she said, and her eyes were misty. "That makes me tell you. Speed Martin is my brother— my scapegrace, cast-off, disinherited brother. I've stuck by him until now, but now it's ended. Now you know, Jimmy Gray."

For a moment Jimmy Gray met her challenging, level, yet pleading gaze—and then his hand went out to hers.

"Shake," he said, simply.

Hands gripped, eyes held, and suddenly they smiled one at another in understanding.

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6: Gabriel-Ernest

Saki (H. H. Munro)

1870-1916

The Westminster Gazette, 29 May 1909

Collected in: *Reginald in Russia and other sketches*, 1910

Hector Hugh Munro

"THERE IS A wild beast in your woods," said the artist Cunningham, as he was being driven to the station. It was the only remark he had made during the drive, but as Van Cheele had talked incessantly his companion's silence had not been noticeable.

"A stray fox or two and some resident weasels. Nothing more formidable," said Van Cheele. The artist said nothing.

"What did you mean about a wild beast?" said Van Cheele later, when they were on the platform.

"Nothing. My imagination. Here is the train," said Cunningham.

That afternoon Van Cheele went for one of his frequent rambles through his woodland property. He had a stuffed bittern in his study, and knew the names of quite a number of wild flowers, so his aunt had possibly some justification in describing him as a great naturalist. At any rate, he was a great walker. It was his custom to take mental notes of everything he saw during his walks, not so much for the purpose of assisting contemporary science as to provide topics for conversation afterwards. When the bluebells began to show themselves in flower he made a point of informing everyone of the fact; the season of the year might have warned his hearers of the likelihood of such an occurrence, but at least they felt that he was being absolutely frank with them.

What Van Cheele saw on this particular afternoon was, however, something far removed from his ordinary range of experience. On a shelf of smooth stone overhanging a deep pool in the hollow of an oak coppice a boy of about sixteen lay asprawl, drying his wet brown limbs luxuriously in the sun.

His wet hair, parted by a recent dive, lay close to his head, and his light-brown eyes, so light that there was an almost tigerish gleam in them, were turned towards Van Cheele with a certain lazy watchfulness. It was an unexpected apparition, and Van Cheele found himself engaged in the novel process of thinking before he spoke. Where on earth could this wild-looking boy hail from? The miller's wife had lost a child some two months ago, supposed to have been swept away by the mill-race, but that had been a mere baby, not a half-grown lad.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded.

"Obviously, sunning myself," replied the boy.

"Where do you live?"

"Here, in these woods."

"You can't live in the woods," said Van Cheele.

"They are very nice woods," said the boy, with a touch of patronage in his voice.

"But where do you sleep at night?"

"I don't sleep at night; that's my busiest time."

Van Cheele began to have an irritated feeling that he was grappling with a problem that was eluding him.

"What do you feed on?" he asked.

"Flesh," said the boy, and he pronounced the word with slow relish, as though he were tasting it.

"Flesh! What Flesh?"

"Since it interests you, rabbits, wildfowl, hares, poultry, lambs in their season, children when I can get any; they're usually too well locked in at night, when I do most of my hunting. It's quite two months since I tasted child-flesh."

Ignoring the chaffing nature of the last remark Van Cheele tried to draw the boy on the subject of possible poaching operations.

"You're talking rather through your hat when you speak of feeding on hares." (Considering the nature of the boy's toilet the simile was hardly an apt one.) "Our hillside hares aren't easily caught."

"At night I hunt on four feet," was the somewhat cryptic response.

"I suppose you mean that you hunt with a dog?" hazarded Van Cheele.

The boy rolled slowly over on to his back, and laughed a weird low laugh, that was pleasantly like a chuckle and disagreeably like a snarl.

"I don't fancy any dog would be very anxious for my company, especially at night."

Van Cheele began to feel that there was something positively uncanny about the strange-eyed, strange-tongued youngster.

"I can't have you staying in these woods," he declared authoritatively.

"I fancy you'd rather have me here than in your house," said the boy.

The prospect of this wild, nude animal in Van Cheele's primly ordered house was certainly an alarming one.

"If you don't go. I shall have to make you," said Van Cheele.

The boy turned like a flash, plunged into the pool, and in a moment had flung his wet and glistening body half-way up the bank where Van Cheele was standing. In an otter the movement would not have been remarkable; in a boy Van Cheele found it sufficiently startling. His foot slipped as he made an involuntarily backward movement, and he found himself almost prostrate on the slippery weed-grown bank, with those tigerish yellow eyes not very far from his own. Almost instinctively he half raised his hand to his throat. They boy laughed again, a laugh in which the snarl had nearly driven out the chuckle, and then, with another of his astonishing lightning movements, plunged out of view into a yielding tangle of weed and fern.

"What an extraordinary wild animal!" said Van Cheele as he picked himself up. And then he recalled Cunningham's remark "There is a wild beast in your woods."

Walking slowly homeward, Van Cheele began to turn over in his mind various local occurrences which might be traceable to the existence of this astonishing young savage.

Something had been thinning the game in the woods lately, poultry had been missing from the farms, hares were growing unaccountably scarcer, and complaints had reached him of lambs being carried off bodily from the hills. Was it possible that this wild boy was really hunting the countryside in company with some clever poacher dogs? He had spoken of hunting "four-footed" by night, but then, again, he had hinted strangely at no dog caring to come near him, "especially at night." It was certainly puzzling. And then, as Van Cheele ran his mind over the various depredations that had been committed during the last month or two, he came suddenly to a dead stop, alike in his walk and his speculations. The child missing from the mill two months ago — the accepted theory was that it had tumbled into the mill-race and been swept away; but the mother had always declared she had heard a shriek on the hill side of the house, in the opposite direction from the water. It was unthinkable, of course, but he wished that the boy had not made that uncanny remark about child-flesh eaten two months ago. Such dreadful things should not be said even in fun.

Van Cheele, contrary to his usual wont, did not feel disposed to be communicative about his discovery in the wood. His position as a parish councillor and justice of the peace seemed somehow compromised by the fact that he was harbouring a personality of such doubtful repute on his property;

there was even a possibility that a heavy bill of damages for raided lambs and poultry might be laid at his door. At dinner that night he was quite unusually silent.

"Where's your voice gone to?" said his aunt. "One would think you had seen a wolf."

Van Cheele, who was not familiar with the old saying, thought the remark rather foolish; if he had seen a wolf on his property his tongue would have been extraordinarily busy with the subject.

At breakfast next morning Van Cheele was conscious that his feeling of uneasiness regarding yesterday's episode had not wholly disappeared, and he resolved to go by train to the neighbouring cathedral town, hunt up Cunningham, and learn from him what he had really seen that had prompted the remark about a wild beast in the woods. With this resolution taken, his usual cheerfulness partially returned, and he hummed a bright little melody as he sauntered to the morning-room for his customary cigarette. As he entered the room the melody made way abruptly for a pious invocation. Gracefully asprawl on the ottoman, in an attitude of almost exaggerated repose, was the boy of the woods. He was drier than when Van Cheele had last seen him, but no other alteration was noticeable in his toilet.

"How dare you come here?" asked Van Cheele furiously.

"You told me I was not to stay in the woods," said the boy calmly.

"But not to come here. Supposing my aunt should see you!"

And with a view to minimising that catastrophe, Van Cheele hastily obscured as much of his unwelcome guest as possible under the folds of a Morning Post. At that moment his aunt entered the room.

"This is a poor boy who has lost his way — and lost his memory. He doesn't know who he is or where he comes from," explained Van Cheele desperately, glancing apprehensively at the waif's face to see whether he was going to add inconvenient candour to his other savage propensities.

Miss Van Cheele was enormously interested.

"Perhaps his underlinen is marked," she suggested.

"He seems to have lost most of that, too," said Van Cheele, making frantic little grabs at the Morning Post to keep it in its place.

A naked homeless child appealed to Miss Van Cheele as warmly as a stray kitten or derelict puppy would have done.

"We must do all we can for him," she decided, and in a very short time a messenger, dispatched to the rectory, where a pageboy was kept, had returned with a suit of pantry clothes, and the necessary accessories of shirt, shoes, collar, etc. Clothed, clean, and groomed, the boy lost none of his uncanniness in Van Cheele's eyes, but his aunt found him sweet.

"We must call him something till we know who he really is," she said. "Gabriel-Ernest, I think; those are nice suitable names."

Van Cheele agreed, but he privately doubted whether they were being grafted on to a nice suitable child. His misgivings were not diminished by the fact that his staid and elderly spaniel had bolted out of the house at the first incoming of the boy, and now obstinately remained shivering and yapping at the farther end of the orchard, while the canary, usually as vocally industrious as Van Cheele himself, had put itself on an allowance of frightened cheeps. More than ever he was resolved to consult Cunningham without loss of time.

As he drove off to the station his aunt was arranging that Gabriel-Ernest should help her to entertain the infant members of her Sunday-school class at tea that afternoon.

Cunningham was not at first disposed to be communicative.

"My mother died of some brain trouble," he explained, "so you will understand why I am averse to dwelling on anything of an impossibly fantastic nature that I may see or think that I have seen."

"But what did you see?" persisted Van Cheele.

"What I thought I saw was something so extraordinary that no really sane man could dignify it with the credit of having actually happened. I was standing, the last evening I was with you, half-hidden in the hedge-growth by the orchard gate, watching the dying glow of the sunset. Suddenly I became aware of a naked boy, a bather from some neighbouring pool, I took him to be, who was standing out on the bare hillside also watching the sunset. His pose was so suggestive of some wild faun of Pagan myth that I instantly wanted to engage him as a model, and in another moment I think I should have hailed him. But just then the sun dipped out of view, and all the orange and pink slid out of the landscape, leaving it cold and grey. And at the same moment an astounding thing happened — the boy vanished too!"

"What! vanished away into nothing?" asked Van Cheele excitedly.

"No; that is the dreadful part of it," answered the artist; "on the open hillside where the boy had been standing a second ago, stood a large wolf, blackish in colour, with gleaming fangs and cruel, yellow eyes. You may think—
"

But Van Cheele did not stop for anything as futile as thought. Already he was tearing at top speed towards the station. He dismissed the idea of a telegram. "Gabriel-Ernest is a werewolf" was a hopelessly inadequate effort at conveying the situation, and his aunt would think it was a code message to which he had omitted to give her the key. His one hope was that he might reach home before sundown. The cab which he chartered at the other end of the railway journey bore him with what seemed exasperating slowness along

the country roads, which were pink and mauve with the flush of the sinking sun. His aunt was putting away some unfinished jams and cake when he arrived.

"Where is Gabriel-Ernest?" he almost screamed.

"He is taking the little Toop child home," said his aunt. "It was getting so late, I thought it wasn't safe to let it go back alone. What a lovely sunset, isn't it?"

But Van Cheele, although not oblivious of the glow in the western sky, did not stay to discuss its beauties. At a speed for which he was scarcely geared he raced along the narrow lane that led to the home of the Toops. On one side ran the swift current of the mill-stream, on the other rose the stretch of bare hillside. A dwindling rim of red sun showed still on the skyline, and the next turning must bring him in view of the ill-assorted couple he was pursuing. Then the colour went suddenly out of things, and a grey light settled itself with a quick shiver over the landscape. Van Cheele heard a shrill wail of fear, and stopped running.

Nothing was ever seen again of the Toop child or Gabriel-Ernest, but the latter's discarded garments were found lying in the road so it was assumed that the child had fallen into the water, and that the boy had stripped and jumped in, in a vain endeavour to save it. Van Cheele and some workmen who were near by at the time testified to having heard a child scream loudly just near the spot where the clothes were found. Mrs. Toop, who had eleven other children, was decently resigned to her bereavement, but Miss Van Cheele sincerely mourned her lost foundling. It was on her initiative that a memorial brass was put up in the parish church to "Gabriel-Ernest, an unknown boy, who bravely sacrificed his life for another."

Van Cheele gave way to his aunt in most things, but he flatly refused to subscribe to the Gabriel-Ernest memorial.

7: The Marble Child

Edith Nesbit

1858-1924

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Edith Nesbit

ALL over the pavement of the church spread the exaggerated cross-hatching of the old pews' oak, a Smithfield market of intersecting lines such as children made with cards in the old days when kings and knaves had fat legs bulging above their serviceable feet, and queens had skirts to their gowns and were not cut across their royal middles by mirrors reflecting only the bedizened torso of them and the charge— heart, trefoil, or the like— in the right-hand top corner of the oblong that framed them.

The pew had qualities: tall fat hassocks, red cushions, a comparative seclusion, and, in the case of the affluent, red curtains drawn at sermon-time.

The child wearied by the spectacle of a plump divine, in black gown and Geneva bands, thumping the pulpit-cushions in the madness of incomprehensible oratory, surrendered his ears to the noise of intonations which, in his own treble, would have earned the reprimand, 'Naughty temper.' His eyes, however, were, through some oversight of the gods of his universe, still his own. They found their own pasture: not, to be sure, the argent and sable of gown and bands, still less the gules of flushed denunciatory gills.

There is fair pasture in an old church which, when Norman work was broken down, men loved and built again as from the heart, with pillars and arches, which, to their rude time, symbolized all that the heart desires to materialize, in symbolic stone. The fretted tombs where the effigies of warrior and priest lay life-like in dead marble, the fretted canopies that brooded above their rest. Tall pillars like the trunks of the pine woods that smelt so sweet, the marvel of the timbered roof— turned upside down it would be like a ship. And what could be easier than to turn it upside down? Imagination shrank bashfully from the pulpit already tightly tenanted, but the triforium was plainly and beautifully empty; there one could walk, squeezing happily through the deep

thin arches and treading carefully by the unguarded narrow ledge. Only if one played too long in the roof aunts nudged, and urgent whispers insisted that one must not look about like that in church. When this moment came it came always as a crisis foreseen, half dreaded, half longed-for. After that the child kept his eyes lowered, and looked only at the faded red hassocks from which the straw bulged, and in brief, guarded, intimate moments, at the other child.

The other child was kneeling, always, whether the congregation knelt or stood or sat. Its hands were clasped. Its face was raised, but its back bowed under a weight— the weight of the font, for the other child was of marble and knelt always in the church, Sundays and week-days. There had been once three marble figures holding up the shallow basin, but two had crumbled or been broken away, and now it seemed that the whole weight of the superimposed marble rested on those slender shoulders.

The child who was not marble was sorry for the other. He must be very tired.

The child who was not marble,— his name was Ernest,— that child of weary eyes and bored brain, pitied the marble boy while he envied him.

'I suppose he doesn't really feel, if he's stone,' he said. 'That's what they mean by the stony-hearted tyrant. But if he does feel— How jolly it would be if he could come out and sit in my pew, or if I could creep under the font beside him. If he would move a little there would be just room for me.'

The first time that Ernest ever saw the marble child move was on the hottest Sunday in the year. The walk across the fields had been a breathless penance, the ground burned the soles of Ernest's feet as red-hot ploughshares the feet of the saints. The corn was cut, and stood in stiff yellow stooks, and the shadows were very black. The sky was light, except in the west beyond the pine trees, where blue-black clouds were piled.

'Like witches' feather-beds,' said Aunt Harriet, shaking out the folds of her lace shawl.

'Not before the child, dear,' whispered Aunt Emmeline.

Ernest heard her, of course. It was always like that: as soon as any one spoke about anything interesting, Aunt Emmeline intervened. Ernest walked along very melancholy in his starched frill. The dust had whitened his strapped shoes, and there was a wrinkle in one of his white socks.

'Pull it up, child, pull it up,' said Aunt Jessie; and shielded from the world by the vast silk-veiled crinolines of three full-sized aunts, he pulled it up.

On the way to church, and indeed, in all walks abroad, you held the hand of an aunt; the circumferent crinolines made the holding an arm's-length business, very tiring. Ernest was always glad when, in the porch, the hand was

dropped. It was just as the porch was reached that the first lonely roll of thunder broke over the hills.

'I knew it,' said Aunt Jessie, in triumph; 'but you would wear your blue silk.'

There was no more thunder till after the second lesson, which was hardly ever as interesting as the first, Ernest thought. The marble child looked more tired than usual, and Ernest lost himself in a dream-game where both of them got out from prison and played hide-and-seek among the tombstones. Then the thunder cracked deafeningly right over the church. Ernest forgot to stand up, and even the clergyman waited till it died away.

It was a most exciting service, well worth coming to church for, and afterwards people crowded in the wide porch and wondered whether it would clear, and wished they had brought their umbrellas. Some went back and sat in their pews till the servants should have had time to go home and return with umbrellas and cloaks. The more impetuous made clumsy rushes between the showers, bonnets bent, skirts held well up. Many a Sunday dress was ruined that day, many a bonnet fell from best to second-best.

And it was when Aunt Jessie whispered to him to sit still and be a good boy and learn a hymn, that he looked to the marble child with, 'Isn't it a shame?' in his heart and his eyes, and the marble child looked back, 'Never mind, it will soon be over,' and held out its marble hands. Ernest saw them come toward him, reaching well beyond the rim of the basin under which they had always, till now, stayed.

'Oh!' said Ernest, quite out loud; and, dropping the hymn-book, held out his hands, or began to hold them out. For before he had done more than sketch the gesture, he remembered that marble does not move and that one must not be silly. All the same, marble had moved. Also Ernest had 'spoken out loud' in church. Unspeakable disgrace!

He was taken home in conscious ignominy, treading in all the puddles to distract his mind from his condition.

He was put to bed early, as a punishment, instead of sitting up and learning his catechism under the charge of one of the maids while the aunts went to evening church. This, while it was terrible to Ernest, was in the nature of a reprieve to the housemaid, who found means to modify her own consequent loneliness. Far-away whispers and laughs from the back or kitchen windows assured Ernest that the front or polite side of the house was unguarded. He got up, simulated the appearance of the completely dressed, and went down the carpeted stairs, through the rosewood-furnished drawing-room, rose-scented and still as a deathbed, and so out through the French windows to the lawn, where already the beginnings of dew lay softly.

His going out had no definite aim. It was simply an act of rebellion such as, secure from observation, the timid may achieve; a demonstration akin to putting the tongue out behind people's backs.

Having got himself out on the lawn, he made haste to hide in the shrubbery, disheartened by a baffling consciousness of the futility of safe revenges. What is the tongue put out behind the back of the enemy without the applause of some admirer?

The red rays of the setting sun made splendor in the dripping shrubbery.

'I wish I hadn't,' said Ernest.

But it seemed silly to go back now, just to go out and to go back. So he went farther into the shrubbery and got out at the other side where the shrubbery slopes down into the wood, and it was nearly dark there— so nearly that the child felt more alone than ever.

And then quite suddenly he was not alone. Hands parted the hazels and a face he knew looked out from between them.

He knew the face, and yet the child he saw was not any of the children he knew.

'Well,' said the child with the face he knew; 'I've been watching you. What did you come out for?'

'I was put to bed.'

'Do you not like it?'

'Not when it's for punishment.'

'If you'll go back now,' said the strange child, 'I'll come and play with you after you're asleep.'

'You daren't. Suppose the aunts catch you?'

'They won't,' said the child, shaking its head and laughing. 'I'll race you to the house!'

Ernest ran. He won the race. For the other child was not there at all when he reached the house.

'How odd!' he said. But he was tired and there was thunder again and it was beginning to rain, large spots as big as pennies on the step of the French window. So he went back to bed, too sleepy to worry about the question of where he had seen the child before, and only a little disappointed because his revenge had been so brief and inadequate.

Then he fell asleep and dreamed that the marble child had crept out from under the font, and that he and it were playing hide-and-seek among the pews in the gallery at church. It was a delightful dream and lasted all night, and when he woke he knew that the child he had seen in the wood in yesterday's last light was the marble child from the church.

This did not surprise him as much as it would surprise you: the world where children live is so full of amazing and incredible-looking things that turn out to be quite real. And if Lot's wife could be turned into a pillar of salt, why should not a marble child turn into a real one? It was all quite plain to Ernest, but he did not tell any one: because he had a feeling that it might not be easy to make it plain to them.

'That child doesn't look quite the thing,' said Aunt Emmeline at breakfast. 'A dose of Gregory's, I think, at eleven.'

Ernest's morning was blighted. Did you ever take Gregory's powder? It is worse than quinine, worse than senna, worse than anything except castor oil.

But Ernest had to take it— in raspberry jam.

'And don't make such faces,' said Aunt Emmeline, rinsing the spoon at the pantry sink. 'You know it's all for your own good.'

As if the thought that it is for one's own good ever kept any one from making faces!

The aunts were kind in their grown-up crinolined way. But Ernest wanted some one to play with. Every night in his dreams he played with the marble child. And at church on Sunday the marble child still held out its hands, farther than before.

'Come along then,' Ernest said to it, in that voice with which heart speaks to heart; 'come and sit with me behind the red curtains. Come!'

The marble child did not look at him. Its head seemed to be bent farther forward than ever before.

When it came to the second hymn Ernest had an inspiration. All the rest of the churchful, sleepy and suitable, were singing,—

'The roseate hues of early dawn,
The brightness of the day,
The crimson of the sunset sky,
How fast they fade away.'

Ernest turned his head towards the marble child and softly mouthed,—you could hardly call it singing,—

'The rosy tews of early dawn,
The brightness of the day;
Come out, come out, come out, come out,
Come out with me and play.'

And he pictured the rapture of that moment when the marble child should respond to this appeal, creep out from under the font, and come and sit beside

him on the red cushions beyond the red curtains. The aunts would not see, of course. They never saw the things that mattered. No one would see except Ernest. He looked hard at the marble child.

'You must come out,' he said; and again, 'You must come, you must.'

And the marble child did come. It crept out and came to sit by him, holding his hand. It was a cold hand certainly, but it did not feel like marble.

And the next thing he knew, an aunt was shaking him and whispering with fierceness tempered by reverence for the sacred edifice—

'Wake up, Ernest. How can you be so naughty?'

And the marble child was back in its place under the font.

When Ernest looks back on that summer it seems to have thundered every time he went to church. But of course this cannot really have been the case.

But it was certainly a very lowering purple-skied day which saw him stealthily start on the adventure of his little life. He was weary of aunts—they were kind yet just; they told him so and he believed them. But their justice was exactly like other people's nagging, and their kindness he did not want at all. He wanted some one to play with.

'May we walk up to the churchyard?' was a request at first received graciously as showing a serious spirit. But its reiteration was considered morbid, and his walks took the more dusty direction of the County Asylum.

His longing for the only child he knew, the marble child, exacerbated by denial, drove him to rebellion. He would run away. He would live with the marble child in the big church porch; they would eat berries from the wood near by, just as children did in books, and hide there when people came to church.

So he watched his opportunity and went quietly out through the French window, skirted the side of the house where all the windows were blank because of the old window-tax, took the narrow strip of lawn at a breathless run, and found safe cover among the rhododendrons.

The church-door was locked, of course, but he knew where there was a broken pane in the vestry window, and his eye had marked the lop-sided tombstone underneath it. By climbing upon that and getting a knee in the carved water-spout— He did it, got his hand through, turned the catch of the window, and fell through upon the dusty table of the vestry.

The door was ajar and he passed into the empty church. It seemed very large and gray now that he had it to himself. His feet made a loud echoing noise that was disconcerting. He had meant to call out, 'Here I am!' But in the face of these echoes he could not.

He found the marble child, its head bent more than ever, its hands reaching out quite beyond the edge of the font; and when he was quite close he whispered—

'Here I am.— Come and play!'

But his voice trembled a little. The marble child was so plainly marble. And yet it had not always been marble. He was not sure. Yet—

'I am sure,' he said. 'You did talk to me in the shrubbery, didn't you?'

But the marble child did not move or speak.

'You did come and hold my hand last Sunday,' he said, a little louder.

And only the empty echoes answered him.

'Come out,' he said then, almost afraid now of the church's insistent silence. 'I've come to live with you altogether. Come out of your marble, do come out!'

He reached up to stroke the marble cheek. A sound thrilled him, a loud everyday sound. The big key turning in the lock of the south door. The aunts!

'Now they'll take me back,' said Ernest; 'you might have come.'

But it was not the aunts. It was the old pew-opener, come to scrub the chancel. She came slowly in with pail and brush; the pail slopped a little water on to the floor close to Ernest as she passed him, not seeing.

Then the marble child moved, turned toward Ernest with speaking lips and eyes that saw.

'You can stay with me forever if you like,' it said, 'but you'll have to see things happen. I have seen things happen.'

'What sort of things?' Ernest asked.

'Terrible things.'

'What things shall I have to see?'

'Her,'— the marble child moved a free arm to point to the old woman on the chancel steps,— 'and your aunt who will be here presently, looking for you. Do you hear the thunder? Presently the lightning will strike the church. It won't hurt us, but it will fall on them.'

Ernest remembered in a flash how kind Aunt Emmeline had been when he was ill, how Aunt Jessie had given him his chessmen, and Aunt Harriet had taught him how to make paper rosettes for picture-frames.

'I must go and tell them,' he said.

'If you go, you'll never see me again,' said the marble child, and put its arms round his neck.

'Can't I come back to you when I've told them?' Ernest asked, returning the embrace.

'There will be no coming back,' said the marble child.

'But I want you. I love you best of everybody in the world,' Ernest said.

'I know.'

'I'll stay with you,' said Ernest.

The marble child said nothing.

'But if I don't tell them I shall be the same as a murderer,' Ernest whispered. 'Oh! let me go, and come back to you.'

'I shall not be here.'

'But I must go. I must,' said Ernest, torn between love and duty.

'Yes.'

'And I shan't have you any more?' the living child urged.

'You'll have me in your heart,' said the marble child— 'that's where I want to be. That's my real home.'

They kissed each other again.

'It was certainly a direct Providence,' Aunt Emmeline used to say in later years to really sympathetic friends, 'that I thought of going up to the church when I did. Otherwise nothing could have saved dear Ernest. He was terrified, quite crazy with fright, poor child, and he rushed out at me from behind our pew shouting, "Come away, come away, auntie, come away!" and dragged me out. Mrs. Meadows providentially followed, to see what it was all about, and the next thing was the catastrophe.'

'The church was struck by a thunder-bolt was it not?' the sympathetic friend asks.

'It was indeed— a deafening crash, my dear— and then the church slowly crumbled before our eyes. The south wall broke like a slice of cake when you break it across— and the noise and the dust! Mrs. Meadows never had her hearing again, poor thing, and her mind was a little affected too. I became unconscious, and Ernest— well, it was altogether too much for the child. He lay between life and death for weeks. Shock to the system, the physician said. He had been rather run down before. We had to get a little cousin to come and live with us afterwards. The physicians said that he required young society.'

'It must indeed have been a shock,' says the sympathetic friend, who knows there is more to come.

'His intellect was quite changed, my dear,' Aunt Emmeline resumes; 'on regaining consciousness he demanded the marble child! Cried and raved, my dear, always about the marble child. It appeared he had had fancies about one of the little angels that supported the old font, not the present font, my dear. We presented that as a token of gratitude to Providence for our escape. Of course we checked his fancifulness as well as we could, but it lasted quite a long time.'

'What became of the little marble angel?' the friend inquires as in friendship bound.

'Crushed to powder, dear, in the awful wreck of the church. Not a trace of it could be found. And poor Mrs. Meadows! So dreadful those delusions.'

'What form did her delusions take?' the friend, anxious to be done with the old story, hastily asks.

'Well, she always declared that two children ran out to warn me and that one of them was very unusual looking. "It wasn't no flesh and blood, ma'am," she used to say in her ungrammatical way; "it was a little angel a-taking care of Master Ernest. It 'ad 'old of 'is 'and. And I say it was 'is garden angel, and its face was as bright as a lily in the sun."'

The friend glances at the India cabinet, and Aunt Emmeline rises and unlocks it.

'Ernest must have been behaving in a very naughty and destructive way in the church— but the physician said he was not quite himself probably, for when they got him home and undressed him they found this in his hand.'

Then the sympathizing friend polishes her glasses and looks, not for the first time, at the relic from the drawer of the India cabinet. It is a white marble finger.

Thus flow the reminiscences of Aunt Emmeline. The memories of Ernest run as this tale runs.

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8: The Formula

Ethel Lina White

1879-1944

The Lady's Realm, Feb 1912

Ethel Lina White

Produced by Roy Glashan and Terry Walker

"ONE gets tired of hearing the trite remark that often the bravest deeds are those that receive no recognition," observed the Colonel, "For my part, I'm prepared to include the noble army of obscure heroes in my creed. But— when I look back on the dark days of the Mutiny, the one man I would like to decorate had his name blackened by two of the vilest charges it is possible to bring against an Englishman. What was more, he had to plead 'Guilty.'"

The keen eyes of the veteran grew slightly misty, as he looked away from the trim lawn, flanked with brilliant flower-beds, and bristling with an eruption of croquet-hoops, to the far country, where the vivid green of June— blazing in the sun— burned into a blue smoke of distant hills.

The lads by his side gazed with curiosity at his wrinkled face, tanned by tropical suns to the colour of strong tea, its hue only just beginning to fade before the yellow peril of liver. They were nice, pink-and-white-boys, both—in training at a military college; at present they played polo very well and very gamely for their country, just as later on, they would fight for her very badly, as they had been taught— and very gamely.

In spite of their visible impatience the Colonel began his tale in the slow, meditative manner of one, who, having run through his portion of time in the course of a long life, does not scruple to draw on eternity.

"This man of whom I'm thinking," he began slowly, "answered to the name of Ansom. At least, he did, before the bad business. I doubt if he had any chance of doing so afterwards, as his name was then judged unworthy to be uttered by decent lips.

"No, my lads, calm yourselves! He was no soldier. Your profession is not going to be dragged in the dust in this story. He was an anomaly for India, being neither military, Government, trader, nor missionary. He was well-known to both English and natives in the sense that they were familiar with his tall, slouching figure, his thin, monkish face, and his moral peculiarities. Otherwise he was little known.

"Although he was no parson, he was commonly called the *padre*. It was the popular way of reconciling his solitary habits and his strict and minute code of rectitude with the personality of an ordinary Briton.

"His was a curious face; in a manner of speaking, transparent— for in moments of stress you saw through it, as through a glass darkly, the muscles throbbing in his cheeks, like the springs of a steel trap. His eyes were prominent, and ever shifting in their sockets, following every flicker of his nerves.

"As a matter of fact, he was an abnormally conscientious man, who followed a rigidly Christian line of conduct, not through loyalty to the Leader, but through a most real and potent fear of the Devil. He honestly believed the doctrine that if his hand offended, it were better plucked off than left to spread rot amongst the sound members. And he was ever on guard to preserve the scrupulous cleanliness of his tongue, for he held that to utter a single lie, or the name of his Maker in vain, was to instantly consign both his body and soul to everlasting damnation.

"A curious creed in these slack days when no one fears penalties. Wait and hear what it cost him, in the year 1857 on that memorable evening on the 10th May, when the call of the church-bells was the signal for the smouldering native rebellion to break into the first spurt of the fire at Meerut. You've often heard the tale of how the 3rd Native Cavalry stormed the gaol where the eighty-five martyrs of the greased cartridge affair were confined, and then started to slaughter every white person in the town.

"Thus it chanced that barely had the sun-baked soil of India sucked up its first drop of European blood, when an Englishwoman was galloping for her life, through the network of native streets, the special quarry of a man of the 20th Sepoys, which was the first regiment, you remember, to fire on its officers.

"This man had recently been in England, and whilst there, had received much flattering attention from a certain family called Tallboys, on account of his abnormal skill at cricket. While he won their local matches for them, he received some coaching on his own account, in the Gracious Game, for Mary Tallboys, the daughter, was indiscreet enough to flirt seriously with her visitor.

"When she joined her brother in India, not long afterwards, she found that the values were shifted. The taint of the tar-brush put the Indian on the black

list of her acquaintances, and she took the first chance of repairing her error, by ruthlessly cutting her former friend— a mean action which naturally implanted in his heart an ever-growing sense of injury and desire for revenge.

"She paid dearly for her English snobbery, for on that night of the 10th May, the values were again shifted, and at the sight of a superior officer, shot on parade like a rabbit, the Sepoy sloughed his whole skin, with its little bit of England grafted on to native stock, and with atavistic celerity reverted to that primeval period when we were all stark savages.

"Picture then, this poor, silly county-bred girl, her English roses still fresh upon her plump cheeks, her blue eyes glazed with fright, flying before the pursuit of a brown devil, who brandished his sword in the rays of the setting sun, and yelled for vengeance!

"It is supposed that, out of sheer panic, she struck the Delhi Road—only conscious of one desire to escape from a nightmare, where, in the flicker of an eye-blink, a quiet Indian town was changed to a reeking shambles. She was leading well, when the horse of her pursuer slipped and stumbled and fell, both animal and rider rolling over together. It was a bad toss, and by the time he was remounted the Sepoy had lost sight of his quarry for the moment, in the network of streets. He appealed to the passers-by, but with little success, for the lust of slaughter was already sending them hot-foot on similar errands of blood. Thus he received two reports— one that an Englishwoman, riding like the wind, had whirled along the Delhi Road, before one could stop her; the other, that she had passed into the house of Sahib Ansom.

"Thus my man comes into the story. The tale of what followed was related to me by a native who had the words from the Sepoy's own lips. So graphic and picturesque was his account that I feel I was a spectator of the whole scene.

"At the check, the Sepoy stopped in momentary hesitation. Every school-boy at 'hare-and-hounds' knows the value of a long start. It is almost impossible to overtake the quarry if the pursuit has been delayed too long. He knew that the Englishwoman rode better horse-flesh than his, and was, in addition, a lighter weight. It was just humanly possible for her to win through the thirty-odd miles to Delhi, before he coursed her down. On the other hand he dared not lose the chance of finding her in Ansom's house, like a rat in a trap.

"A sudden impulse fired his brain. He entered the shuttered house to find Ansom, pallid from the heat of the long day, and clad for coolness, in his sleeping-suit, lying on a long cane-chair, smoking a cigar. The Sepoy's keen eyes noticed that the weed had burnt irregularly and that at his entry, the muscles of Ansom's face twitched convulsively, like a dying snake that awaits the sunset.

"'He knows,' he said to himself.

"He stood before Ansom, the blue turban of a Mohammedan on his head; the sun came in through the chink in blood-red streaks, playing on the brass-work on the great curved blade— destined to rip up many an English body. He looked at the pale, throbbing face of Ansom and he laughed in his beard.

"'Now shall I know the truth,' he said. 'This is one who fears to tell a lie, lest he burn in the hottest hell. Which way went the Englishwoman? Speak!'

"There was a pause during which Ansom looked at the speaker, as though deprived of all power of volition or thought. Then the pupils of his blank, staring eyeballs split, so that one could see the thoughts racing hither and thither, as they pulsed from the frenzied brain.

"The Sepoy laughed.

"'Quick! Time presses. The truth, and you shall go unscathed! Lie, and'— he raised his heavy blade— 'you shall go straight to the God you worship, your lie wet on your lip.'"

The Colonel stopped and moistened his throat with the mineral waters prescribed to appease his tyrannous liver.

"It is rather interesting," he said, "to try and follow the working of Ansom's mind at that moment. I can see that you fine fellows wonder at his hesitation. Sooner than betray a woman, you'd be split up as cheerfully as one splits an infinitive. But I want you to remember that Ansom's religion was a real thing to him— as real as the stripes on the Union Jack to you. He honestly believed that a lie would send him to everlasting damnation.

"The Sepoy had him pinned down with a prong, as one nips a viper in the cleft of a forked stick. The whole thing happened in about two minutes, so I leave you to imagine how he stoked his brain to action, all engines throbbing at full steam.

"Then he opened his lips.

" 'I will tell you the truth,' he said, and his voice sounded like a bray.

"He stopped, and glanced involuntarily at the clock on the shelf, and then his eyes shot a scared look in the direction of the Delhi Road. The Sepoy stood like a brown image, but his glance flickered after Ansom's, quick on its train like intelligent lightning.

" 'I will tell you the truth,' again said Ansom.

"He stopped to moisten his lips, now dry as chaff, with his tongue. It was his honour against his soul. A woman's life against his dread of eternal death.

"*Which* would win?

" 'I will tell you the truth,' he said the third time, as though he would gain moments that were more precious than rubies.

" 'On my word of honour— as an *English gentleman*— the Englishwoman is here, in this room, in that locked press.'

"With quivering hand, he barely indicated the tall carved cupboard behind him, while his eyes shifted involuntarily in their former direction.

"There was a moment of silence, after the words of betrayal were uttered. Ripples of agonised torture passed over Ansom's face—pale shadows of the pains that rent him within. One could see that the Fiend had clapped his hand on him and dragged him down to a smoking hell.

"Then the Sepoy burst into ironic laughter. He laid his hand on the press.

" 'And the key? In the tank yonder? So, so. And how long before we recover it, or force the lock, to find the press *empty*? And while the precious moments pass, the woman will be flying ever farther from me, down the Delhi Road. Already the start is great!'

"He turned and looked into Ansom's eyes.

" 'You have lied, and lied transparently, after the manner of your kind, who are but men of glass. Have I not lived in England? And do I not know that formula— that sacred formula— "An English gentleman"? Had you sworn by your God, I might indeed have questioned— wondered. But it is not with that *sacred* oath— "The word of an English gentleman" that a sahib sells his countrywoman.'

"He raised his blade.

" 'But from your lie have I the truth. You have valued your honour and a woman higher than your God and your soul. So—die!'

"Had I been there I should have held it a great moment. Even though the lie were in vain it was a magnificent triumph that one of our race had bought a woman's life with his soul.

"But hot on that splendid moment came a scene of shame, the bare thought of which hurts. For as the wind of the sword whistled through the air, Ansom fell to the ground, and clasped the Sepoy round the knees.

" 'It is the *truth*!' he cried. 'Test it! Spare my life. Oh, spare my life!'

"The look of grudging admiration passed from the Indian's face.

" 'The Englishman kneels.' He laughed shortly. 'Your life? Yes. On this condition.' He pointed to a photograph of Queen Victoria the Good which stood on the shelf. 'I would have made you defile your flag, but you have not one here. But, destroy that picture of your Queen and spit on the pieces!'

"The muscles of Ansom's face worked as though urged by machinery. Like a whipped cur, he crossed to the shelf. He took and defaced that piece of cardboard that stood to him for pride of country, while the Sepoy stood and laughed.

"He sheaved his sword.

" 'Keep your life, dog!' he said. 'You have bartered your soul for a woman, and your sovereign for your life. Praise be to Mahomet I am no Englishman!'

"He vaulted into his saddle and his hoofs could be heard thundering on the dry road at a rate sufficient to overtake any fugitive. Four hours later, he came upon her riderless horse, cantering along the road, and found that he had been fooled. Before his return, the woman, disguised as a native had been smuggled across to the British lines, where alone safety was to be found that night of dread. Oddly enough she survived all the horrors of the Mutiny, and in the end married a V.C."

The lads stared as the Colonel ended his tale.

"What do you mean? She was in the press the whole time?"

"She was in the press."

"Then the skunk betrayed her."

The lad's voice was full of incredulous disgust.

"Everyone thought as you do, Sawyer. The disgrace of that deed was blazened from station to station and stuck to his memory after he took vows and ended his life in a monastery. Yet that's the man for my ribbon and cross!"

The Colonel stopped to laugh at the disgusted faces.

"Come, lads. I had the story from his lips. He's had a rough passage, but he's passed over now, and let's hope it's been made up to him! When the Englishwoman fled to Ansom's house, he was resolved— even as you or I— to save her, at all personal cost. Remember what that cost implied to *him*! When the Sepoy put that question to him, he was resolved to damn his own soul to save her life. But then he saw this point.

"Would a *lie* be sufficient to save her? Had he said that she was far away on the Delhi Road, it was more than probable that the Sepoy would instantly have doubted, and searched the place. Although the man had credited him with truthfulness it is not in Oriental nature to have real belief in veracity. Ansom understood human nature, and he knew the subtle workings of the Indian's mind, who read human nature as you read a primer. He guessed that the Sepoy knew what an Englishman valued most, and that the truth— too hideous from its cowardice and treachery in the form he presented it— would fail to gain credence, and pass for a lie. Therefore he deliberately threw the Sepoy off the trail with those furtive glances, as if he knew that every moment was precious. And therefore— he pleaded for his life, because *he* alone could save the woman. Had he been granted the boon of death, she would have been left to perish miserably in the locked press."

There was a long pause. Then the elder lad spoke thoughtfully:

"How do you know his tale was true, Colonel? He valued his soul very high, and he held a lie to be the price of it. Well, when all was said and done, it was his own score. He managed to save his soul."

"That's so. That's the view every man and woman in India who heard the story took of his conduct. Then how do I know he told me the truth? By this."

The Colonel's voice rose an octave.

"Before Ansom was a Christian, before he was an English gentleman, he was a *man*. I know he loved that woman, in secret, with all the depths of his soul. Yet— he faced the agony of suspense when her life hung in the balance. Again— he grovelled in the lowest depths of shame, when he renounced and insulted his country and his Queen. Lastly— the supreme test of all— he faced that woman when he opened the press— the woman who had heard herself betrayed, and could neither understand, forgive nor forget. The woman he loved.

"Lads! I tell you that man had passed through triple damnation. Having counted the cost, he had been in three separate hells. How then— should he fear— *one*?"

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9: Arctic Angels

A. DeHerries Smith

Augustus DeHerries Smith, 1881-1945
Adventure, 15 Nov 1928

HOWLS FLOATED out on the thin Arctic air, filling rock-walled Kannequoq Inlet with dirge-like notes. A dozen gaunt huskies padded to and fro near the red boulders to which they were tied; they eyed one another in murderous speculation, straining uselessly at the tethering sticks fastened to their shaggy necks.

Occasionally one of the animals halted its ceaseless trotting, squatted and, elevating a long wolf snout, sent out another wail to echo and re-echo back from the granite cliffs.

"Rotten! Rotten! Rotten!" Sergeant Richard Cleaver muttered to himself, striding up and down the narrow confines of the Mounted Police detachment building. "That brute Scarth is torturing those dogs just for pure devilment; can't be any other reason that I can see. For five cents I'd go down there and shoot up the whole works."

Peering through one of the little windows, he gazed down at the trader's roof, set on a lower rock ledge, and then at the whimpering blurs beyond. A moon faced half-breed, lounging in the post doorway, glanced up at the huskies and spat contemptuously. Apparently the man saw something humorous in the situation. Yellow teeth showed momentarily when the native tore off another mouthful of tobacco from a black plug.

Thin columns of smoke continued to well up undisturbed from the huddle of skin *tupiks*, sheltering beneath the cliffs from the ever present winds. But beyond the curling smoke there was no movement; none of the Eskimo inhabitants took any notice of the starving animals' plea for food.

With a curse, the sergeant swung away from the window to glare at Constable Timothy Noonan's thick frame stretched on his bunk.

"Helluva lot you care, you fat lobster!" Cleaver threw out at the slumbering man's round, freckled face. "You don't give a hoot about the prestige of the service, do you? Said you'd never make a dog man, and that goes! Blah!"

An angelic smile stole across the sleeper's features. He rolled over lazily, grunting his contentment. Sergeant Cleaver snorted and stamped out of the cabin, crashing the door behind him.

SERGEANT Cleaver shrugged his khaki service tunic up on wide shoulders, staring across the inlet at the precipitous coastline beyond. Already the brown hillsides were showing red where the lichens were commencing to take on

their summer hue. There was a faint hint of green at the blue white glacier's foot. A brilliant sun shone down out of an amazingly blue sky.

"Spring, all right," he mumbled to himself as gray eyes roved over the ice pans and bergs tinkling together in the bay. "Another eight months' winter over, and I ought to be tickled pink. Damn Scarth and his dogs, anyhow!"

The supply ship would probably be coming in another month or so, but he couldn't go out on leave with all these sick and starving Eskimos on his hands, the sergeant ruminated, when his gaze swung about to the huddle of *tupiks*. Had to look after the poor devils somehow.

"I'll make him feed those dogs, at any rate," he said with sudden decision.

Quick fingers fastened the glinting brass buttons of the faded tunic, as soft stepping sealskin boots carried him downward in long strides.

A sudden chorus of expectant howls broke out from the watching huskies when Cleaver passed Scarth's fish cache, and swung in at the trader's open door.

The sergeant's keen ears picked up a low whistle when he stepped into the post's dim interior and stood, motionless, waiting for his eyes to become accustomed to the gloom.

"That you, Uluk?" he queried, blundering forward.

Twin grunts answered and, following the direction, he made out two lounging blurs behind the wood heater's rounded shape.

"Look here, Scarth, you'll have to feed those dogs," Cleaver announced, pushing forward until he was looking down at the trader's narrow face and flickering eyes.

"Huh— huh," Scarth grunted, giving the faintly grinning Uluk a soft kick on the leg with his sealskin mukluks. "What the heck am I goin' to feed 'em on, eh? You Arctic angels goin' to tumble down a bunch of manna, eh?"

The trader's narrow shoulders quivered slightly. To cover the motion he jumped erect, pulling up his ever slipping and dirty mackinaw shirt. A yellow hand waved toward his empty shelves.

"Yes, I know you're traded out," Sergeant Cleaver agreed, ignoring the tone as he followed the gesture. "No grub left. You can fish though, can't you?"

"Nothin' doin'," Scarth laughed. "That's a native's job. Think I'm goin' to have the Esks see me an' lose my white man's rep? Not so's you'd notice it."

"Well, what about Uluk?"

"Uluk?" Scarth replied, a note of feigned astonishment in his tone. "Why, the lad's half white, ain't he? Got to look after his rep too. Don't want to have the Esks see him workin'. No, sir."

The half-breed grinned faintly in response to the trader's nudge.

"Well if it wasn't for the fact that you'd report it and I'd be replying to fool questions from headquarters for the next two years, I'd shoot your blasted huskies," Cleaver rumbled.

He wheeled away, pacing up and down the post's earthen floor, followed by two pairs of amused eyes. Only just enough dog feed left to keep the police huskies going until the supply ship got in, the Mountie reflected. Out of the question to feed Scarth's animals on his team rations. And the hungry Eskimos had eaten their sled dogs long since.

"Hey!" Scarth's thin voice came suddenly. "Lookit, Cleaver. That skin boat of your'n is the only thing left in Kannequoq that'll float. There's walrus out there on the floes. Red meat. Why don't you go out an' belt one down for the Esks? I'll buy the scraps for the dogs. How's that?"

Again Cleaver sensed thinly covered insult in the little man's tones and again he ignored it. Under other conditions he would have quickly removed the sneer from that weasel face, but now only one thought pulsed through his brain—how to feed the Eskimos and those yowling brutes up on the rocks.

FOLLOWED by twin grins of satisfaction, the Mountie padded to the door to stare out across the ice filled inlet. Yes, there were walrus out on the float ice; he had seen them through the glasses. It was as much as a man's life was worth, though, to venture out among those razor edged pans in a frail skin boat.

Cleaver clenched brown fists, swung away from the post and, padding across the ice polished rocks, reached the first of the *tupiks*.

For a moment he stood with one hand on the caribou skin that served for a door, his sunburned face wrinkled in disgust. Abominable odors floated out on the crisp air from the *tupik*; the stench of unwashed humans, half tanned deerskins, moldy furs.

Cleaver pulled out a handkerchief and, holding it across his mouth and nostrils, ducked his long body and came upright in the *tupik*. The foul smelling interior was littered with the Eskimos' priceless possessions; they were too far gone now with the coast sickness to care. Wooden pans sewn with rawhide, and stone cooking pots were thrown about in confusion. The floor was a wild jumble of feverish natives rolling about on bearskins, sealing spears, snowshoes and mukluks.

"By Christopher, they've got to have red meat or they'll all kick out," the Mountie said to himself, staring down on the emaciated, yellow faces. "Guess I've got to do it."

"Oh, Kanneyok," Cleaver called in the Innuit tongue. "I come bearing a message. Listen well, O you people of the ice."

Three tousled heads were elevated for a moment above the skins; a thin arm waved to signify that the message had been heard.

"Thus and thus," the sergeant called in Innuit through his handkerchief. "There must be red meat or you will all pass to the shadow hills. Therefore, because the great white king does not forget his people, I and the fat one go to hunt walrus. With the new sun we bring meat. I have spoken."

Faint clucking sounded when the Eskimos passed this satisfying information along. A chorus of grunts.

"That's the way to shoot it to 'em," Scarth's nasal tones came suddenly from the doorway. "You police sure knows your onions. Fall for this white king stuff, don't they? But, by cripes, you'd better make good, Cleaver, or the Esks'll give you the hee-haw from Alaska to Greenland—"

"*Anumlatciaq tamna oomiak!*" a laughing voice broke in on Scarth in the Eskimo tongue.

There followed a crisp oath from the trader, the sound of a blow, and a yelp from Uluk.

"*Anumlatciaq tamna oomiak!* The skin boat it never goes out!"

Cleaver translated the half-breed's phrase slowly, subconsciously aware that the sick Eskimos had heard and understood the words. Several of them were sitting upright, bony faces staring over at the door flap.

"By God, I've stood all I'm going to take from you and that grinning breed of yours!" the Mountie roared, gripped by long suppressed passion.

One leap carried him across the littered *tupik*. Two hard hands fastened on Scarth's scrawny throat. The sergeant dragged the little man out into the glaring sunshine, shook him viciously for a long moment, and then sent him spinning with a well placed kick.

The trader was on his feet again in a moment, close set eyes darting fire. He opened his slit of a mouth; then thinking better of it, he wheeled away and padded off for the post, mumbling to himself.

Cleaver watched him pass out of sight; then once more he ducked back into the *tupik*, calling:

"Oh, Kanneyok, I have made a true talk; I am a redcoat and you are the children of the great white king. The skin boat goes out. There will be red meat before the sun comes again. I have spoken."

"*Ai! Ai!*"

A chorus of grunts answered him, but Cleaver sensed that the natives' tones lacked conviction. Swearing softly to himself, the Mountie plunged out into the clean air and made his way up to the detachment building.

"AIN'T no way for a buck to talk to his superior, but that was a damn' fool play," Constable Noonan offered from his perch on the bunk. "You got us in dutch, Sergeant dear. We'll never be able to handle the Esks again if we falls down on this job, an' I got a hunch that's what Mr. Scarth is after. Suit his tradin' fine if the natives go wild an' woolly. I ain't no Sherlock Holmes, but if this ain't a plant I'm a Hindoo philosopher."

"Oh, shut up!" Cleaver put in irritably. "I've got enough on my hands without scrapping with you. We're going out in the skin boat in the morning, ice or no ice, and we're going to bring back a walrus. I've given the king's word for that. It's getting dark. Any intention of feeding the dogs tonight?"

"Thought you said I weren't no dog man—"

"You've got enough brains to feed them some tallow, at any rate," the sergeant cut in on him. "Go out, Timothy Noonan, or I'll throw you out!"

Constable Noonan dodged about the heater, grabbed his parka off a peg and slid through the door. Once outside he listened for a moment to the ice pans' tinkling and the mournful wailing of Scarth's huskies. Then with an expressive shoulder shrug, Noonan made his way up to the little storehouse.

The key grated in the lock, and with that well known sound eager whines burst from the dogs penned in the corral. Scarth's starving brutes heard those expectant whimpers and filled the night air with agonized howling.

It was a good three hours later when Noonan pushed in the door of the detachment building and grinned over at his chief. Cleaver was stretched on his bunk, khaki shirted, body bathed in yellow lamplight, and deep in "Soldiers Three". The sergeant threw the book down and glared at the rubicund face.

"Look here, you nighthawk," he called. "Haven't you got any savvy at all? You stay away from that girl, or I'll—"

"Nix on the gentle sentiment tonight," the constable broke in. "Love's off; murder's on. Been prowlin'. We won't possess any skin boat in the mornin'; the Esks will have it that the great white king ain't the caribou's chin whiskers no longer, an' Scarth will be known as the very strong man from here to Hoboken."

"What's the matter with you?" Cleaver boomed, jerking bolt upright. "Scarth wouldn't dare break up that boat; not after that three months I got him for monkeying with our schooner last year."

"Oh, you'd be surprised!" Noonan mocked his superior. "There's more ways of killin' a polar bear than choking it with chocolate eclairs. Climb into your parka an' mukluks an' we'll take in the movie. It's a real fifty cent show. Come on."

Mumbling uncomplimentary things regarding his companion's mentality, Cleaver vaulted off the bunk, pulled on his sealskin boots and parka, and followed Noonan's squat figure out into the night.

A bright moon bathed Kannequoq Inlet, flooding the open spaces with soft radiance, softening the rugged coast's raw contours. The two men stood motionless, ears filled with the subdued tinkling of the ice pans and the distant honking of some migrant geese seeking open water.

Noonan caught the other man's sleeve and pointed down to Scarth's trading post. Cleaver nodded. Yes, the lights were out—and for the first time in a month the unfortunate huskies had ceased howling. He turned to peer down at the constable, but Tim avoided the glance, padding off and beckoning his comrade to follow.

Swinging wide of the settlement below, the little man made his way over the moonlight bathed ridges until at length he arrived at one of the giant boulders that studded the beach. Beyond him, and less than a dozen yards away, the police skin boat lay overturned on the white sands.

"Well?" the sergeant's glance read as he lowered himself to the cold shingle alongside his comrade.

Noonan made no offer to enlighten him, signaling for silence.

The sergeant and the constable lay motionless, staring up at the stars.

All at once the constable twisted over on his face, when Cleaver's hard hand gripped his thick arm.

A new sound had been added to the faint night noises. Both Mounties knew what it was; the soft slithering of sealskin boots over the rocks.

Then suddenly two upright figures were blurred against the ice filled waters when Scarth and the half-breed stepped down from the rocks and padded over to the skin boat. Each man was leading a number of the trader's huskies.

"*Pst!*"

Noonan pulled Cleaver's head down to him, whispering:

"You've seen hungry dogs up here chewin' the rawhide lashings off sleds, ain't you? You've seen 'em eatin' the sides outa skin houses, an' gnawin' old sealskin boots? Sure. Well, now they're changin' the diet; goin' to scoff our old skin boat."

Cleaver's right hand jerked back toward his revolver holster, but before it reached the weapon Tim's fingers fastened on his wrist.

"Not yet! Not yet!" Tim Noonan urged. "See the whole show. Comic's comin'. Savvy what it is, Dick? We've given the king's word that there'll be red meat for the sick Esks in the mornin' an' Scarth has passed the talk around that

there won't be any. If there ain't no meat our name is mud, frozen mud at that. An' how the heck can we get walrus without a boat?"

Cleaver glared down at the constable's grinning face. What was he repeating that for, and why the blazes was he so happy about it?

The sergeant wrenched his hand free, thrusting the revolver forward. At the same moment a low oath sounded from one of the two men, and Cleaver's trigger finger relaxed.

SCARTH tugged the lines off the dogs he was leading, kicking one of the starving brutes toward the walrus hide covering the *oomiak*. But instead of rushing forward and tearing at the skin the dog squatted on the shingle, staring up at its master. Three more of the released huskies lay down and curled up for immediate sleep. Some of the others commenced to wander along the beach. None of the animals took the least notice of the skin boat.

Scarth's rumbled cursing and the half-breed's clucking sounded dimly in the sergeant's ears as he rolled over to stare in amazement at the bursting Noonan.

"Oh, my fat sides," Tim groaned. "Seventeen dried fish, eleven tins of bully beef, five lumps of tallow, an' a chunk of pemmican as big as a battleship. An' they polished off the whole works. An' now Scarth's offerin' 'em a dried up old walrus skin for dessert. A dog's life, that's what it is."

Sudden realization stabbed Cleaver's mind. Tim had sneaked out and fed Scarth's starving huskies so that they would not attack the skin boat!

"Listen," Noonan's voice came again. "Yesterday a big floe grounded beyond the point. There was a walrus on it as big as the side of a house. Uluk shot it. Get the idea? With the skin boat gone we couldn't pull the Arctic angel stuff, and when we fell down on the job Scarth would lug in his walrus an' get the glad hand from the Esks. Cripes, you're in a hurry, eh?"

Cleaver had vaulted from the icy ground with a catlike leap. As Noonan lumbered to his feet he heard Scarth's surprised cry and the half-breed's yelp of dismay.

The trader threw himself face down on the beach when the white faced sergeant raced across the slippery shingle. A single lunge brought Scarth to his feet.

Then sounded the slithering of Noonan's mukluks on the shingle as the little man raced after the grunting half-breed.

"I take it all back about the dogs, Timsy," Cleaver yelled at the flying figure. "Damn it, I'll recommend you for corporal's stripes for this!"

"Keep 'em!" Noonan's voice panted. "I'm the detective sergeant of this man's army, an' that's good enough for me. All right, you blubber chewer, try a taste of that!"

Whug! Whug!

Cleaver laughed softly, turning back to the squirming Scarth.

"Look here, you insignificant fragment of decayed whale meat," he growled at the trader. "You're too small to pound, but I have something nice in store for you. It'll be daylight in an hour. You and the breed will cut up that walrus and bring it down here. Then you'll keep on making soup for the Esks until they're well again. On top of that you're going to wash all their clothes and clean up the *tupiks*. That's slow motion death, if you ask me. Not a word, you rat. Move!"

As he shoved Scarth forward, Cleaver saw his comrade come upright and fan himself vigorously. Surrounding him were four of the satiated huskies. They sniffed gratefully at Noonan's legs.

10: "Antonio"

Henry Leverage

1879-1931

Blue Book, June 1920

"HIGGENS!"

The butler paused between the portiéres.

"Higgens, unlatch the front door, open it slightly and go to the back of the house."

"Yes sir."

"I'm expecting a gentleman who does not wish to be seen."

George Mott leaned forward in his chair. He drew out a flat key, unlocked a drawer and carefully sorted a number of newspaper clippings. These clippings concerned all lovers of good government.

Clean politics was George Mott's particular hobby. He had lived to see his home town debauched by an unsavory crew of latter-day pirates. The leader of the buccaneers was an aggressive, bulldog-type chief of police, named Calvin Grimm, who had come originally from New York.

George Mott sent to the same city for talent of a different order. A soft step in the hall and a low cough— soon after Higgens disappeared toward the butlers pantry— announced the caller.

The portiéres separated. A slender, ingenuous-appearing young man bowed, removed a checked cap from his silver-gray head and approached the table upon which the reformer had spread the clippings.

"You are on time, Fay."

"I always try to be."

George Mott leaned back. He eyed Chester Fay.

"I need your services in order to clean up this city," he said.

Fay recalled that Flintport was known as a "right" town for gamblers, sure-thing grafters, lottery men and concessionaires. It was a dangerous place for ordinary crooks, "J don't know what I can do for you, Mr. Mott."

"I want Calvin Grimm, chief of police and detectives, removed for cause. I want Frank Tucker, an honorable and fearless man, put in his place. The better element of Flintport wants Mr. Tucker."

"I could get evidence against the political ring, Mr. Mott."

"We tried that! Fay, we've tried everything!. The crooked ring is stronger, than ever. You're my last resort."

FAY walked back and forth in front of the table. He stared at the reformer and dropped his glance to the newspaper clippings. The wealth of the room-furnishings made the air oppressive.

George Mott was the owner of extensive manufacturing plants in and around Flintport. He inherited the original shops from his father, a philanthropist. Most of the profit from the business was spent by George Mott for prison-reform and civic improvement. It was through his reform associates that he had met Chester Fay, alias Edward Letchmere, otherwise known as Sir Arthur Stephney. Fay had considerable influence in the underworld.

"The trouble with Flintport," said George Mott, "is that there are too many crooks in high office. The chief of police is an old New York ward-heeler. You know what that means?"

Fay nodded: "Yes, I know."

"And the rest of the City Hall crowd here in town are as bad as Calvin Grimm. They've doubled the tax-rate in the last three years. The streets are in need of repair. Gambling-houses run wide open. A lottery flourishes."

"Who controls the elections?"

"The ring!"

"And the City Aldermen?"

"The grafters!"

"What's the population of Flintport?"

"A hundred and sixty thousand. Three hundred police and thirty-seven detectives are supposed to suppress vice. They encourage it."

George Mott spread out the newspaper clippings. "Violent crimes in Flintport— burglaries, hold-ups, murders, robberies— are practically nil. Secret crime is everywhere."

Chester Fay glanced at the clippings. He raised his eyes to George Mott. "You mean the investigating committees report very little surface crime?"

"Yes; their investigating isn't much!"

"That's the trouble, then. You need more crime."

"What?"

"Yes. Import fifty or sixty house-prowlers, yeggs and pickpockets and tell them to get busy. The public will demand that Calvin Grimm be removed from office, and your friend—"

"Frank Tucker."

"Mr. Tucker placed in his stead."

George Mott gathered up the newspaper clippings. "I hadn't thought of that," he admitted.

Fay's glance was piercing. "You did me one or two good turns, Mr. Mott. You sent little Emily O'Mara to a boarding school and paid for her education. You pensioned old Jack Knafe. You got a friend or two of mine out of Rockglen. I'll do you a favor. Give me the word to go ahead, and I'll try to make this town too hot for the chief of police. Providing—"

"What, Fay?"

"There's honest men enough in town to represent a decent public sentiment."

"There's plenty of public sentiment—if we can arouse it. The ring controls the workers and the grafters. The workers wont stand for a carnival of crime such as you propose."

"It should be all over in two weeks. How about the newspapers?"

"I own one— the *Record*. The political ring owns one. The third paper is neutral. A saturnalia of crime would swing the third paper to my side."

"How about expenses?" Fay turned and picked up his cap, cane and gloves from the padded-leather chair.

"Draw on me for anything you want, Chester?"

The cracksman moved toward the portières. "I'll look Flintport over," he said. "I'll send to Hope Hall for little Emily O'Mara. She and I may be able to accomplish something."

"A moment, Fay."

"What is it?"

"No word must get out that I am involved in this."

"Leave that to me, Mr. Mott!"

CHESTER FAY left the Mott mansion and strolled about Flintport.. He found it an average town of the second class. His activities extended to a thorough inspection of the City Hall and the jail, and a visit to a retired yegg who lived in a southern suburb. The yegg knew the inside facts concerning every politician in Flintport. "All rotten," was his general summing-up. "They'd rob a blind widow of her last cent. They're so crooked they couldn't hide behind a grapevine."

Leaving the yegg, Fay phoned to Hope Hall, the Duchess' home for ex-convicts on the Hudson. He requested the Duchess to send little Emily O'Mara to the best hotel in Flintport. Also he acquainted her with the situation in the crooked city. "Give out the word— spread it!" he exclaimed. "Tell our friends it's a good place for easy money."

Minnie May promised to do her part. She was acquainted with fully one half of the active lights in the Eastern underworld. This list of acquaintances was made up of porch-climbers, store-histers, second-story men, "guns" or pickpockets, heavy-men, stickups and safe-blowers. She added that she would also send along a particularly aggressive mob of gipsies whose specialty was opening safes with can-openers.

Little Emily O'Mara registered at Flintport's best hotel that evening. Fay met her in the ladies' parlor. The girl's father had been an old-time bank-robber. He had been killed in attempting to make a getaway from prison,

"Everything is set!" said Fay. "I have a job for you in the morning. How would you like to sell cigars in the basement of the City Hall?"

"I never sold them, but I can try."

"Good! It's all arranged. I bought the concession from a crooked politician. Also I bought a bootblack-stand from an Italian. He moves out tomorrow. I move in. My name will be Antonio, called Tony for short."

"You, shine boots?" The girl's brown eyes glowed.

"Sure!"

"Why, Chester!"

THE cracksman looked around the ladies' parlor. No one was watching. "Sure," he repeated. "The Detective Department is in the basement of the Town Hall. Calvin Grimm has an office not ten feet from the bootblack-stand. All the fly-muggs in this town— thirty-seven— will buy their cigars from you and get their shoes blacked at my stand." "What's the idea, Chester?" "You go upstairs and get a good night's sleep. Move your bag to a quiet, inexpensive boarding-house at daylight tomorrow. Meet me at the cigar-stand at seven o'clock. The idea is to help George Mott get rid of a grafting ring that hasn't one particle of honor."

"I'm keen for Mr. Mott!" declared little Emily.

THE basement of the City Hall was a dingy, damp floor divided into corridors and offices. The Bertillon room, the chief's office, detectives' headquarters, a row of telephone-booths, a candy- and flower-stand— occupied the floor.

Fay had looked the situation over and found it to his liking. The bootblack-stand had been sold by an Italian who was not satisfied with the tips given him by Flintport's detectives. Most of them owed him money. He left behind a wizened fellow countryman named Gabriel, who could talk Italian fluently. Fay did not know a word of the language.

He appeared dressed as a New York Italian of the second generation. Walnut stain darkened his skin. A handkerchief of a bright hue was wound about his neck. His trousers and coat were corduroy.

The cigar-stand had not been used for many months. The politician who sold it to Fay explained that the old owner never kept a cheap enough brand of goods for the detectives.

Fay installed little Emily behind the counter and helped her open the boxes. He wiped off the cases. He got Gabriel to assist him in sweeping up. The janitor of the City Hall furnished new electric bulbs. Fay tipped him with two five-cent cigars.

"What a time do the detectives comma to work?" he asked ingenuously.

"Any time they damn please, wop

Fay waited until the janitor disappeared around a corner of the corridor. He leaned over the counter and said to little Emily.

"Sell all your goods at less than cost. I'm expecting a cigar-lighter from New York. It takes a photograph every time a man lights a cigar. We want the detectives to patronize this stand."

"Why do you want their photographs?"

"It's turn about! They mug the criminals— why can't we make a rogues' gallery of detectives?"

Little Emily's eyes glowed delightedly. "Why have you taken that bootblack stand?"

"I'm going to mark every detective who gets a shine there."

"How do you think you can work that?"

"I've figured two ways— both effective."

Gabriel jumped down from one of the chairs on the bootblack-stand. A florid faced man came out of the chief of detective's office. The man plumped into a seat.

"Clean 'em off!" he growled.

Fay glided over the stones of the basement. He assisted Gabriel in polishing shoes with inch-thick soles.

The customer tossed Fay a nickel, sprang from the chair, and stopped in front of the cigar-stand. "Hello, what's this?"

Little Emily O'Mara smiled over the counter. "Will you have a cigar?"

The man chose six. He eyed the girl.

"Charge them up, kid," he grunted. "You know me?"

"No, I don't!"

"I'm Grimm— Calvin Grimm!"

THE chief of detectives went through a stone arch and disappeared.

"Gabriel, who was that?" asked Fay.

"That's the bigga-da-boss!"

"Fine fellow," said Fay with glittering eyes.

As Antonio, from the East Side of New York, and of the second generation, Fay made a presentable Italian bootstand proprietor. He learned the names of most of Chief Grimm's sleuths. Gabriel knew them all. The picturesqueness of

his costume allowed Fay considerable latitude in the basement of the dingy City Hall. He was called into the jail to polish a murderer's boots who was going up for trial. cracksman made a swift mental note of the jail, the cells, the sleepy-looking guards.

He adjusted the combined electric cigar-lighter and flash-camera when it arrived from New York. The apparatus had been manufactured by an ex-fence and model-maker, to Fay's order. It took a one-inch picture of any individual lighting a cigar at the cigar-lighter. The flame from the tip of the jet was acetylene-gas instead of alcohol.

"Just mug the detectives," Fay told little Emily. "We want a complete rogues' gallery."

"I'm not sure which are the detectives, Chester."

"Always snap the camera when I drop a brush on the floor. We've got a day to get a complete gallery. Mark down those quarter cigars to five cents. That'll bring them all to the counter."

The girl was a magnet which drew many of Chief Grimm's sergeants. Her brown hair and eyes, her youth and the fact that she was almost alone in a dingy basement lured the detectives away from their duties.

"WHAT are you waiting for?" little Emily asked Fay one evening,

"More good thieves. I've connected with about thirty. They're hanging out with a yegg I know in the southern part of town. I want more than thirty before I tell them . to start."

"Grimm looked very uneasy today, Chester."

"Yes. Two or three of the boys started working on their own hook. They prowled about twenty houses. They stuck up the president of the street-railroad company."

"Is it in the papers?"

"It's in Mr. Mott's paper, big. There's just a few lines in the two other papers. We have got to turn this town over and get everybody convinced that the chief of police can't stop the crime-wave."

A telephone message to "Antonio" on the next day, caused Fay to hurry from the City Hall into an outside telephone-booth. There he communicated with Minnie May.

"More coming," she said. "I've heard from six of the pest short-workers in the East. They want the mugs of the town detectives. That's all they need."

A "short-worker," in the argot of the underworld, is a pickpocket. Fay smiled keenly when he hung up the receiver. Six fast dips, equipped with a working knowledge of the faces of Flintport's detectives, could operate with

impunity. They would wade through every street-car where a detective wasn't aboard.

Fay phoned his friend the yegg that night. His orders were tense: 'Tell them to cut loose! Am sending more pictures."

The yegg promised to tell the "boys." Fay worked in a closet until midnight, developing negatives and prints as fast as possible. Gabriel proved a willing messenger. The bootblack was as thick-headed as some of Calvin Grimm's detective sergeants. He went to the yegg's house and returned with a note from the old safebreaker.

Fay showed the note to little Emily. It stated that the gang was getting anxious. They wanted to put the cleaner on the town, as the yegg expressed it.

"Trouble starts for Calvin Grimm today," Fay told the girl.

She leaned her elbows on the cigar counter. Detectives and policemen in uniform went in and out of headquarters. An order had come from men higher up to stop the house-prowling and hold-ups in the suburbs of Flintport.

"We may be suspected," said little Emily O'Mara.

Fay adjusted the bandana scarf around his neck, pulled down his torn cap and said: "This is the last place they will suspect anybody. I've polished the shoes of every detective on the force. I've brushed them and talked with them. Little do they know that in their own Bertillon files are my photograph, finger-prints and police record."

THE girl heard Fay humming a tune from an Italian opera when he left the stand. A stout detective called loudly for a shine. Fay's brush went over the man's overcoat before he finished with the customer and took a smooth dime. To little Emily's fancy there had magically sprung on the detective's back a green mark— faintly discernible in the half-light of the basement.

"I'm marking them all," said Fay. "I've got a piece of chalk in the whisk-broom."

Little Emily opened the cigar-case and served a customer who asked for a five-cent perfecto. The man paused for a light, looked at Fay and declared:

"This is the best cigar in town for the money!"

"I no gotta big store," Fay said. "I no pay bigga rent."

The man braced his shoulders and went toward Calvin Grimm's office. The chief of detectives stood in the doorway. His florid face had changed to a livid purple.

"I wont talk to newspaper men!" he roared. "Get away!"

"But how about this recent series of robberies in the outskirts?" asked the reporter when he removed the perfecto from his mouth.

"Nothin' to it!"

Calvin Grimm buttoned up his overcoat, thrust the man aside and charged past the cigar-stand. Fay raised his brows slightly.

"Did you see the green mark on his shoulder?"

"Yes," said Emily.

"I've got them all tagged. My friend the yegg suggested that a photograph wasn't as good an identification as a distinct mark. A detective can wear glasses, shave off his mustache or turn up his coat-collar and pull down his hat. That prevents the pickpockets' recognizing. them on the street-cars. A green chalk-mark on the left shoulder, high up, is a better means of spotting the sleuths of this town."

Fay went to the bootblack-stand. He sat on a chair and watched the door leading to Calvin Grimm's office. A buzzing sounded inside as if a score of bees were aroused. Telephones rang. Detectives arrived and departed with worried strides. The mobs were operating with success.

These mobs, and a few single workers, made a specialty of picking out a city, working hard for a week or two and departing for new and unaroused communities. Minnie May had sent Flintport the cream of the underworld. The word was out, from Chatham Square to Chicago, that the city was due for a plucking.

Fay escorted little Emily to her boarding-house that night, said good-by and went to his own modest room with a feeling that Flintport was not exactly a safe place for a pedestrian. Patrol-wagons clanged through the streets. A crowd gathered around a street-car office where complaints concerning lost pocket-books and jewelry were received.

Twenty or thirty professional pickpockets had reaped a harvest. The morning papers were filled with a list of the victims. Editorials in the *Record* denounced the chief of police.

Fay read this paper and smiled. George

Mott was on the job.. The reformer appealed for honest government and cited the crime-wave as an example of corruption in police circles.

"Have you seen the papers?" Fay asked little Emily when she appeared for work at the cigar-stand.

"Goodness, yes!"

"Looks good, Emily!"

The girl removed her gloves. She gazed at Fay's walnut-stained features. "We must be very careful," she warned. "Suppose one of those pickpockets or robbers: should inform on you? They've seen Gabriel bringing the photographs and the notes. They know that the pictures and marks were made in this basement."

"They'll not squeal, Emily. There's a fifty-thousand-dollar blanket-bond to spring any of them if they get caught. The Duchess put the money in the hands of a lawyer."

"Where did she get all that money, Chester?"

"Through friends. The chances are that very little of it will be lost. The crooks she sent to Flintport are the best in the world. They don't look like pickpockets and house-prowlers. They look like prosperous business men."

Calvin Grimm's voice woke the echoes of the damp basement. He shouted for a shine. Fay turned from the cigar-counter and hurried to the stand. He daubed the chief of detectives' broad shoes with a pasty mess. His elbows worked back and forth. He snapped the polishing cloth with professional skill.

"Where did you come from, wop?" asked the police chief.

"Delancy Street, New York. I gotta two bootblack-stands there, boss."

"Know Big Tim?"

Fay knew Big Tim. He pretended to be deeply interested in brushing off Calvin Grimm's dark overcoat. The mark he made with the green chalk was distinct enough to suit any pickpocket. The Chief strode out to the street.

"Be careful," whispered little Emily when Fay came to the cigar-stand. "Everybody will see that chalk-mark, Chester."

"I want everybody to see it. Grimm thinks he's a smart man. He can't move in this town without being noticed by the bunch that Minnie May sent over to help Mr. Mott out."

"I'm afraid you're chalking the detectives too plainly."

"I'll change the mark tomorrow."

LATE that evening the basement of the City Hall filled with an assortment of men. Calvin Grimm was waited on by delegations from two civic leagues. Thin-faced reporters dogged the Chief's footsteps. His sleuths were overworked. They succeeded in catching three pickpockets. Their leader was exhibited to the newspapermen.

"Is that all?" they asked the sleuths.

"Grimm's got two more locked up!"

Fay elbowed his way toward the Chief's office. He heard the names of the dips mentioned. Two were friends of Minnie May's. The other was Nollie Matches, of choice police memory. They had been unfortunate enough to get caught with their pockets filled with "unweeded leathers."

"I'll have to save them," Fay said to little Emily.

They walked toward her boarding-house.

"Can you do it, you think, Chester?"

"Yes. I'd better wait a day or two. Grimm may accidently catch some more." The girl thought of the staring headlines in the evening papers. The crime-wave was laid to the Chief's inefficiency. Broad hints were thrown concerning police graft.

"Will he be recalled?" the girl asked.

"I think so. I heard, through a cipher note sent by Gabriel, that one bank, a shoe store, a jeweler and a pawnbroker are going to be robbed tonight. The bank job will be on the First National."

"The great big one on Main Street, Chester?"

"Yes. If that don't wake this town up, we'll try another. There's bound to be some excitement at headquarters tomorrow. Grimm may get lynched."

The chief of Flintport's detective bureau and police force was a worried-looking man when he entered his office on the following morning. He had not slept. His clothes were wrinkled. The green chalk mark was still on his overcoat.

Fay learned the news of the night. The First National Bank, a shoe-store, half a dozen lesser "touches," had been made. The city was in an uproar. Extras were being circulated through the streets. The *Record* demanded Grimm's immediate removal, It suggested Frank Tucker for the position. The Police Commissioners were divided regarding this move.

"They wont stay divided long," Fay told little Emily. "My yegg friend, the Duchess, and the New Shanghai Club of New York, have invited all the pickpockets and safe-robbers at large to visit Flintport. It'll be a regular rogues' convention."

"How about the ones they caught?"

"Nollie Matches and the others?"

"Yes,"

"They wont release them on bail. Grimm is very hostile. I'll go in the jail this afternoon. Perhaps I can do something."

Fay kept Gabriel running errands. He did not want the Italian around the bootblack-stand. The streets were muddy, because of a rain that morning. Fay took more than usual care in scraping the heels of the detectives who asked for a shine. Upon each detective's shoe he made a cross with a sharp scraper. This mark would serve for identification in case the chalk rubbed off the overcoats.

Grimm charged from his office at noon. The Chief ignored Fay's appeal: "Shine em up, boss?"

"Damn you! Get out of my way!" he roared, and plunged like a mad bull toward the street.

Fay heard little Emily's warning cough. He went to the cigar-stand.

"They've caught some more pickpockets," she said. "I overheard a reporter say that two were brought in to the jail— handcuffed, and surrounded by a crowd who wanted to kill them."

Fay waited until Gabriel came from lunch. He picked up a shoe-shining box, cloth and scraper. "Watch things," he told little Emily. "I'm going to visit the jail."

HE was back within an hour. Laying the box on the counter, he said:

"They can catch all they want now. I slipped Nollie Matches twelve hacksaw blades. The guards let me in to polish that murderer's shoes. Nollie's cell was on murderers' row. He says he'll make a general jail-delivery. That ought to finish Calvin Grimm."

"Be careful of those chalk-marks, Chester. I saw one detective brushing his coat off. They may guess who put the sign on them."

"This is a hick burg! There should be no trouble robbing everybody in this town. Every detective, with one or two exceptions, has a green spot on the upper left-hand part of his coat. Almost all of them have crosses marked on their shoes."

The girl's brown eyes flashed. "We're in danger, just the same, Chester."

Fay opened his corduroy jacket and glanced at a platinum and gold watch.

"Another six hours, Emily, should bring action from the Police Commissioners. The holiday crowds are being worked by that bunch of dips. I expect to see blue fire around here about seven o'clock. We'll keep both stands open and watch results."

The City Hall was crowded when night came. Rain did not keep back the reporters or indignant citizens. Two riot-calls were sent in to Grimm's office before nine o'clock. Patrolmen, detectives and ambulance-chasers ran through the basement.

Fay sat hunched on the bootblack-stand looking for all the world like a sleeping Italian. The walnut stain aged his face. The cap he wore had been discarded by the former owner of the stand, His well-manicured fingers were coated with shoe-blacking.

He watched the arrival of a delegation from a civic league. They were led into Calvin Grimm's office. After them came the five Police Commissioners. Boys shouted "Extra!" in the corridor. Little Emily did a thriving business at the cigar stand. She glanced over the case at Fay. He seemed to be waiting for something to explode in Grimm's office.

Disappointment stamped his features when the Commissioners and the civic league members came out without reaching a decision regarding Grimm's removal. The Chief had promised to make good within twelve hours or resign.

Fay went to little Emily when the crowd had dispersed.

"They're ripping the town right open," he said, "but they've got to do more than that. The Duchess didn't send enough dips, She should have added a few Bolsheviki with bombs. Grimm still holds his job. Frank Tucker hasn't taken his place yet.

"Mr. Mott will be disappointed."

"We'll see what happens tomorrow, Emily. Close up the stand, and I'll take you home."

FAY returned to the City Hall after seeing little Emily to her boarding-house. He idled around the jail and visited the poolrooms. He learned that writs of habeas corpus were denied the pickpockets held in the prison. Grimm and the judges refused to allow Nollie Matches and his pals to go out on bail.

Striding toward his lodgings at midnight, Fay suddenly heard shots and shouts. He retraced his steps toward the City Hall. A crowd gathered in no time. Jeers were hurled at a police wagon. Grimm's first assistant appeared on horseback. He was hooted at.

"What happened?" asked Fay innocently.

A citizen exclaimed:

"The jail is out! That's what happened!" Fay eyed the citizen. "Somebody escaped?"

"Eight escaped! They shot two guards. The chief of police is to blame!"

Fay went to his room, phoned the yegg at daybreak, and learned that the mobs were about ready to leave Flintport. "There'll be a few necktie-parties if some of them don't," said the old crook. "Look at the papers this morning, Chester. We're doin' wot we can."

The papers were startling enough to satisfy Fay. He glanced at the headlines, saw six safe-breaking jobs listed, counted the number of citizens who had been robbed on street-cars and stuck up by masked men, and told little Emily that Grimm's end was a matter of hours.

"Get ready to leave here, Emily. Just walk out, when I give the word. Go to your boarding-house, get your grip, and take a trolley to Hope Hall. I'll close the stand or give it to Gabriel. Nollie Matches, Jimmy the Wire, Eddy Goldman and five others ripped the jail wide open. They're gone. We better be going, too."

"I want to see the finish, Chester."

"We'll stay that long."

GRIMM emerged from headquarters at noon. He glared up and down the dingy corridor. Beads of sweat were on his brow. The news of the night had driven a spike of fear in his heart.

"They want you on the phone," somebody called through the doorway.

"Who?"

"The Commissioners!"

Fay straightened his legs and dropped from the chair he had been pretending to sleep in.

"Shine! Polish!" he offered.

Grimm's eyes flared. He stepped back and picked up a suitcase. He advanced in the direction of little Emily. Leaning over the counter, he muttered:

"Check this for me, kid. I'll be back for it in twenty minutes."

Fay watched the Chief hurry into the office. A reporter slouched through the basement. An auto-horn honked in the street. The Mayor and the Board of Aldermen came trooping in, single file. They right-faced and went into headquarters.

Gliding swiftly toward little Emily, Fay motioned for her to lift the suitcase to the counter. "Let me see it," he asked. "I'll bet there's plunder in it. Yes, an easy lock. I'll open it. Stall for me. That's right, Emily. Get out in front of the stand. Watch for Grimm. He'll try to sneak out. We'll hand him back his case after we put the cleaner on it."

"A cleaner," in the argot of the underworld, was a thorough weeding-out process, Fay spent some time over Calvin Grimm's suitcase. He glanced up once and saw Mr. Mott, a tall, square-jawed man, and the Police Commissioners, going by the stand. They were headed in the direction of Calvin Grimm's office.

A newsboy shouted through the basement:

"Extra! Pickpockets reap rich harvest!"

Fay placed the suitcase under the cigar-counter. "Get behind the stand," he told little Emily. "Grimm is going to make a get-away."

"With swag, Chester."

"Without swag."

The Commissioners entered the office of the Chief of Police. Fay glided to the stand, sent Gabriel away and picked up a brush. He stood at attention.

Grimm appeared. He glared through the gloom, braced his shoulders and started toward the cigar-counter.

"Polish them up, boss?" asked Fay nonchalantly.

"No!"

The detective leaned over the counter. "Give me my case, quick."

Little Emily handed him his suitcase. He pulled down a slouch hat and lunged toward the street door. He bowled over a reporter and shouted for a taxicab.

"That's the finish,' said Fay to little Emily. "I put everything he had in the case, under the counter. You'll find about twelve thousand dollars hidden there. He was a cheap grafter."

"But he'll notice how light the case is and come back, Chester."

"He wont come back."

"Why?"

"I saw Frank Tucker with Mr. Mott. That means that Grimm is fired. We'll notify my friend the yegg to send the pickpockets and heavy men out of town right away."

Little Emily looked toward the street door.

"Don't worry about Grimm," said Fay. "I filled his suitcase with that cigar-lighter and all the spare photos of his detectives. I should have added the brush with the chalk in it and the scraper."

"What will he think when he finds them?"

Fay smiled and stared intently at little Emily.

"We don't care what he thinks. You pack that twelve thousand in cigar-boxes. It belongs to the city of Flintport."

"What are you going to do, Chester?"

"I'm going in and congratulate the new chief of detectives— Mr. Tucker. I'll assure him, through George Mott, that the crime wave is no longer a menace to this town."

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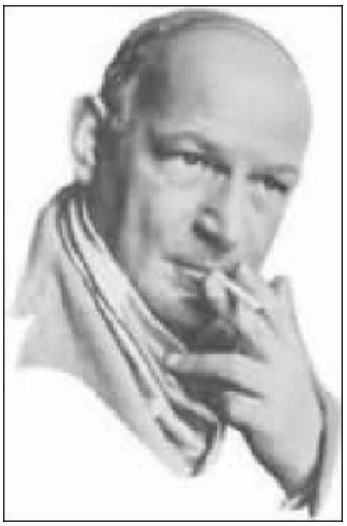
11: The Logical Tale of the Four Camels

Achmed Abdullah

Alexander Nicholayevitch Romanoff, 1881-1945

The Royal Magazine, Dec 1921



Alexander Nicholayevitch Romanoff

IN SIDI-EL-ABAS it was spring, white spring, and the pale peace of perfumed dawn.

We were smoking and dreaming, too indolent to speak, each waiting for his neighbor to open the trickling stream of soft, lazy conversation. At last, Ibrahim Fadlallah, the Egyptian, turned to the young Englishman and said:

"Soon, oh my dear, you will return to your own country, so listen to the moral tale I am about to tell, so that you can take back to your own people one lesson, one small lesson which will teach you how to use the manly virtues of honor, self-restraint, and piety all accomplishments in which you unbelievers are sadly deficient. Give me a cigarette, oh my beloved. Ah, thanks; and now listen to what happened in Ouadi-Haifa between Ayesha Zemzem, the Sheik Seif Ed-din, and Hasaballah Abdelkader, a young Bedouin gentleman, who is very close to my heart.

"The Sheik was a most venerable man, deeply versed in the winding paths of sectarian theology— he had even studied the *Sunna*— and of a transcendent wisdom which his disciples declared to be greater than that of all the other Sheiks.

"But even in your own country it may be that sanctity of the mind and grace of the dust created body do not always match. Indeed, the Sheik's beard was scanty and of a mottled color; he was not over-clean, especially when you consider that as a most holy man he was supposed to be most rigorous in his daily ablutions. He had grown fat and bulky with years of good living; for tell

me, should not a holy man live well so that he may reach a ripe old age, and that many growing generations of disciples may drink the clear drops of honeyed piety which fall from his lips?

"Besides, to compensate for the many piastres he spent on himself, he tightened the strings of his purse when it came to paying for the wants of his large household. He said it was his duty to train his sons and the mothers of his sons in the shining virtue of abstemiousness, asking them to repeat daily the words in the book of the Koran: Over-indulgence is a most vile abomination in the eyes of Allah.

"His first two wives had grown gray, and, his old heart yearning for the untaught shyness of youth, he had taken as the third, Ayesha Zemzem, the daughter of the morning. My dear, do not ask me to describe her many charms. My chaste vocabulary could never do her justice. Besides, do you not know that our women go decently veiled before strangers? Thus who am I to know what I am not allowed to see?

"Suffice it to say that she was a precious casket filled with the arts of coquetry, that she was tall and slender as the free cypress, that her forehead was as the moon on the seventh day and her black eyes taverns of sweetest wine. But the heart of woman acknowledges no law, respects no master except the one she appoints herself, and so it was that Ayesha had no love for the Sheik in spite of his white sanctity, and though he knew the Koran and all the commentaries by heart.

"And then one day she saw Hasaballah, and her veil dropping by chance, he saw her.

"Hasaballah had but lately returned from that famed asylum of learning and splendor, that abode of the Commander of the Faithful, the noble town of Stamboul. He had come back dressed in robes of state, and when he donned his peach-colored coat embroidered with cunning Persian designs in silver and gold, the men in the bazaar looked up from their work and exclaimed: 'Look at him who with his splendor shames the light of the mid-day sun!'

"He was indeed a true Osmanli for all his Bedouin blood, and the soft fall of his large Turkish trousers, which met at the ankle, the majestic lines of his silken burnous, the bold cut of his famed peach-colored coat, were the despair of all the leading tailors in Ouadi-Haifa and the envy of all the young bloods. His speech was a string of pearls on a thread of gold. He walked lithely, with a jaunty step, swaying from side to side. He was like a fresh-sprung hyacinth and the master of many hearts.

"I said that Ayesha saw him and her veil was lowered; and you, oh my dear, you know the heart of man, and you also know what many women shall al ways desire. You will not be shocked when I tell you that on the very same

night you could have seen Hasaballah leaning against the wall in the shadow of the screened balcony which protruded from the Sheik's harem; and there he warbled certain appropriate lines which I had taught him. Indeed, I had used them myself with great effect on a former occasion.

"I am a beggar and I love a Queen.
'Tis thee, beloved, upon whose braided locks
The fez lies as a rose-leaf on the brook;
'Tis thee whose breath is sweetest ambergris,
Whose orbs are dewdrops which the lilies wear.

"Claptrap! Oh, I don't know. You should have heard Hasaballah's own effort. He was going to address her as blood of my soul, but I thought it altogether too extravagant. The time to woo a woman is when you first see her, and the way to woo her is the old-fashioned way. Flatteries never grow old, and I always use the time-honored similes.

"I tell her that she is as beautiful as the pale moon, that her walk is the walk of the king-goose, that the corners of her mouth touch her pink ears, that she has the waist of a lion, and that her voice is sweeter than the song of the Kokila-bird.

"But permit me to continue my tale.

"Two hours later Hasaballah and Ayesha knocked at my gate, and, touching my knee, asked me for hospitality and protection, which I granted them, having always been known as the friend of the oppressed and the persecuted. And early the following morning the Sheik came to my house, and I received him with open arms as the honored guest of my divan.

"After partaking of coffee and pipe he said:

"Ibrahim, last night when I went to the women's quarter to join my female household in their midnight prayer, the weeping slaves told me that Ayesha had run away. Great was my grief and fervent my prayers, and when sleep at last closed my swollen eyelids I saw in my dreams the angels Gabriel and Michael descend from heaven. They took me on their shining wings into the seventh hall of Paradise, and there I saw the Messenger Mohammed (on whom be praises) sitting on a throne of pearls and emeralds, and judging men and jinn.

"And the Prophet (peace on him) said to me: 'Go thou in the morning to the house of my beloved and obedient servant Ibrahim Fadlallah, where thou shalt find Ayesha, and with her a certain good-for-nought young scoundrel, whom thou shouldst carry before the Kadi and have punished with many lashes.' Thus, O Ibrahim, obeying the commands of the blessed Prophet (on whom peace), I ask you to give up to me Ayesha and Hasaballah, that I may kill

the woman and have the man much beaten, according to the wise and merciful law of the Koran.

"And I replied: O most pious Sheik, your tale is strange indeed, though amply corroborated by what I am about to relate. For last night, after the fugitives had asked me for protection, I also prayed fervently to Allah (indeed He has no equal), and in my dreams the angels Gabriel and Michael carried me on wide spread wings into the seventh hall of Paradise, even into the presence of the Messenger Mohammed (on whom be benedictions).

"And the Prophet (deep peace on him) turned to me and said:

"Ibrahim, the pious and learned Sheik Seif Ed-din has just left the abode of the righteous to return to his earthly home. I gave him certain orders, but after he left I reconsidered my decision. When he visits you in the morning, tell him it is my wish that he should leave Hasaballah undisturbed in the possession of the woman he has stolen, and should accept two camels in payment of her.

The Sheik pondered awhile, and replied:

"Verily it says in the most holy book of the Koran that Allah loveth those who observe justice, and that the wicked who turn their backs on the decisions of the Prophet (on whom peace) are infidels who shall hereafter be boiled in large cauldrons of very hot oil. Now tell me, Ibrahim, are you sure that last night the Prophet (peace on him) did not say that I should accept four camels, and not two, in payment of the bitter loss inflicted on my honor and dignity? Indeed, for four camels Hasaballah may keep the woman, provided the animals be swift-footed and of a fair pedigree. Upon those two points I must insist.

"Then, oh my eyes! I thought that bargaining is the habit of Jews and Armenians, and I sent word to Hasaballah to give four camels to the Sheik. And everybody was happy, everybody's honor was satisfied, and there was but little scandal and no foulmouthed gossip to hurt the woman's reputation.

"I have told you how we Moslems, being the wisest of mankind, settle affairs of honor and love. Tell me, do you not think that our way is better than your crude Christian method of airing such matters in a public court of law, and of announcing to a jeering world the little details of harem life and of love misplaced?"

After a moment's reflection the Englishman replied: "I must say, since you ask me, that I consider yours a disgraceful way of bargaining for a few camels where the shame of a misled woman and the honor of an outraged husband are in the balance. In my country, as you say, the whole affair would have been aired in court and considered from every possible point of view, thus giving the respondent, the petitioner, and the co-respondent equally fair chances. The judge finally, according to our strict though humane law, would have pronounced a divorce decree in favor of the Sheik, and would have sentenced

Hasaballah to pay to the Sheik a heavy fine a fine of many hundreds of pounds."

And Ibrahim interrupted quickly:

"But, beloved one, you have no camels in your country."

12: The Pot-Boiler

Grant Allen

1848-1899

Longman's Magazine, Oct 1892

Charles Grant Blairfindie Allen

ERNEST GREY was an inspired painter. Therefore he was employed to paint portraits of insipid little girls in black-silk stockings, and to produce uninteresting domestic groups, of which a fat and smiling baby of British respectability formed the central figure.

He didn't like it, of course. Pegasus never does like being harnessed to the paternal go-cart. But being a philosopher in his way, and having a wife and child to keep, he dragged it none the less, with as good a grace as could reasonably be expected from such celestial mettle. The wife, in fact, formed the familiar model for the British mother in his Academy pictures, while little Joan (with bare legs) sat placidly for the perennial and annual baby. Each year, as observant critics might have noticed, that baby grew steadily a twelvemonth older. But there were no observant critics for Ernest Grey's pictures: the craft were all too busy inspecting the canvas of made reputations to find time on hand for spying out merit in the struggling work of unknown beginners. It's an exploded fallacy of the past to suppose that insight and initiative are the true critic's hallmark. Why go out of your way to see good points in unknown men, when you can earn your three guineas so much more surely and simply by sticking to the good points that everybody recognizes? The way to gain a reputation for critical power nowadays is, to say in charming and pellucid language what everybody regards as the proper thing to say about established favourites. You voice the popular taste in the very best English.

But Ernest Grey had ideals, for all that. How poor a creature the artist must be who doesn't teem with unrealized and unrealizable ideals! All the while that he painted the insipid little girls in the impeccable stockings, very neatly

gartered, he was feeding his soul with a tacit undercurrent of divine fancy. He had another world than this of ours, in which he lived by turns— a strange world of pure art, where all was profound, mysterious, magical, beautiful. Idylls of Celtic fancy floated visible on the air before his mind's eye. Great palaces reared themselves like exhalations on the waste ground by Bedford Park. Fair white maidens moved slow, with measured tread, across his imagined canvas. What pictures he might paint— if only somebody would pay him for painting them! He revelled in designing these impossible works. His scenery should all lie in the Lost Land of Lyonesse. A spell as of Merlin should brood, half-seen, over his dreamy cloisters. The carved capitals of his pilasters should point to something deeper than mere handicraftsman's workmanship; his brocades and his fringes should breathe and live; his arabesques and his fretwork, his tracery and his moulding, should be instinct with soul and with indefinite yearning. The light that never was on sea or land should flood his landscape. In the pictures he had never painted, perhaps never would paint, ornament and decoration were lavished in abundance; design ran riot; onyx and lapis lazuli, chrysolite and chalcedony, beryl and jacinth, studded his jewelled bowls and his quaintly-wrought scabbards; but all to enrich and enforce one fair central idea, to add noble attire and noble array to that which was itself already noble and beautiful. No frippery should intrude. All this wealth of detail should be subservient in due place to some glorious thought, some ray of that divine sadness that touches nearest the deep heart of man.

So he said to himself in his day-dreams. But life is not day-dream. Life, alas! is very solid reality. While Ernest Grey nourished his secret soul with such visions of beauty, he employed his deft fingers in painting spindle legs, ever fresh in number, yet ever the same in kind, and unanimously clad in immaculate spun-silk stockings. No hosier was better up in all the varieties of spun silk than that inspired painter. 'Tis the way of the world, you know— our industrial world of supply and demand— to harness its blood-horses to London hansoms.

After all, he was working for Baby Joan and Bertha. (Bertha was the sort of name most specially in vogue when his wife was a girl; it had got to Joan and Joyce by the date of the baby.) They lived together in a very small house at Bedford Park— so small, Bertha said, that when a visitor dropped in they bulged out at the windows.

But Ernest Grey had a friend better off than himself— a man whose future was already assured him— a long-haired proprietor who wrote minor verse which the world was one day to wake up and find famous. He was tall and thin, and loosely knit, and looked as if he'd been run up by contract. His name was Bernard Hume; he claimed indirect descent from the philosopher who

demolished everything. Unlike his collateral ancestor, however, Bernard Hume had faith, a great deal of faith— first of all in himself, and after that in every one else who shared the honour of his acquaintance. This was an amiable trait on Bernard's part, for, as a rule, men who believe in themselves complete their simple creed with that solitary article. With Bernard Hume, on the contrary, egotism took a more expanded and expansive form— it spread itself thin over the entire *entourage*. He thought there was always a great deal in any one who happened to inspire him with a personal fancy. "I like this man," he said to himself virtually, "therefore he must be a very superior soul, else how could he have succeeded in attracting the attention of so sound a critic and judge of human nature?"

Of all Bernard Hume's friends, however, there was not one in whom he believed more profoundly than the inspired painter. "Ernest Grey," he used to say, "if only he'd retire from the stocking-trade and give free play to his fancy, would bring the sweat, I tell you, into that brow of Burne-Jones's. (You think the phrase vulgar? Settle the question by all means, then, with Browning, who invented it!) He's a born idealist, is Grey— a direct descendant of Lippi and Botticelli, pitchforked, by circumstances over which he has no control, into the modern hosiery business. If only he could *paint* those lovely things he draws so beautifully! Why, he showed me some sketches the other day for unrealized pictures, first studies for dreams of pure form and colour— fair virgins that flit, white-armed, through spacious halls— plaintive, melancholy, passionate, mystical. One of them was superb. An Arthurian uncertainty enveloped the scene. The touch of a wizard had made all things in it suffer a beautiful change. It was life with the halo on— life as the boy in Wordsworth's "Ode on Immortality" must surely have seen it— life in the glow of a poet's day-dream. A world of pure phantasy, lighted up from above with glancing colour. A world whose exact date is *once upon a time*. A world whose precise place is in the left-hand corner of the land of fairy-tales. If only Ernest Grey would paint like that, he might fail for to-day; he might fail for to-morrow; his wife and child might starve and die; he might fall himself exhausted in the gutter— but his place hereafter would be among the immortals."

Ernest heard him talk so at times— and went on with the detail of the left stocking. It's easy enough to let some other divine genius's wife and child starve to death for the sake of posterity; but when it comes to your own, *pardi!* it's by no means so simple. Posterity then becomes a very small affair, bar one component member. But Bernard Hume was a bachelor.

One afternoon Ernest was smoking his meditative pipe in the bare, small studio— he allowed himself a pipe; 'twas his one slight luxury— when Bernard Hume, all fiery-eyed, strolled in unexpectedly. Bernard Hume was a frequent

and a welcome visitor. 'Tis not in human nature not to like deft flattery, especially on the points you believe to be your strongest. You may be ever so modest a man in the abstract, and under normal conditions of opposition and failure; but when a friend begins to praise your work to your face, and to find in it the qualities you like the best yourself, why, hang it all! you stand back a bit, and gaze at it with your head just a trifle on one side, and say to your own soul in an unuttered aside, "Well, after all, I'm a diffident sort of a fellow, and I distrust my own products, but it's quite true what he says— there *is* a deal of fine feeling and fine painting in the reflection of those nude limbs in that limpid water; and what could be more exquisite, though I did it myself, than the gracious curl of those lithe festoons of living honeysuckle?"

So Bernard was a favourite at the little house in Bedford Park. Even Bertha liked him, and was proud of his opinion of Ernest's genius, though she wished he didn't try to distract dear Ernest so much from serious work to mere speculative fancies.

On this particular afternoon, however, Bernard had dropped in of *malice prepense*, and in pursuance of a deep-laid scheme against Bertha's happiness. The fact is, he had been reading Browning's "Andrea del Sarto" the night before, and, much impressed by that vigorous diatribe against all forms of pot-boiling, he had come round to put out poor Bertha's smouldering kitchen-fire for ever. He knew the moment had now arrived when Ernest should be goaded on into letting his wife and child starve for the benefit of humanity; and he felt like a missionary sent out on purpose, by some Society for the Propagation of the Æsthetic Gospel, to convert the poor benighted pot-boiler from the whole base cult of the scullery pipkin.

He came, indeed, at a propitious moment. Ernest had just dismissed the model who sat for the elder daughter in his new Academy picture of "Papa's Return," and was then engaged in adding a few leisurely touches haphazard to little Joan's arms as the crowing baby. (Papa himself stood outside the frame; not even the worship of the simmering saucepan itself could induce Ernest Grey to include in his canvas the jocund figure of the regressive stockbroker.) Bernard Hume sat down, and after the usual interchange of meteorological opinion, drew forth from his pocket a small brown-covered volume. Bertha trembled in her chair; she knew well what was in store for them: 'twas the "Selections from Browning,"— homœopathic dose for the general public. *Habitués* absorb him whole in fifteen volumes.

"I was reading a piece of Browning's last night," Bernard began tentatively; "his 'Andrea del Sarto'— do you know it, Mrs. Grey?— it impresses me immensely. I was so struck with it, indeed, that I wanted to come round and read it over to Ernest this afternoon. I thought it might be— well, suggestive to

him in his work, don't you know." And he glanced askance at that hostile Bertha. So very unreasonable of a genius's wife not to wish to starve, with her baby in her arms, for the sake of high art, and her husband, and posterity!

Bertha nodded a grudging assent; and Bernard, drawing breath, settled down in a chair and began to read that famous poem, which was to act, he hoped, as a goad to Ernest Grey's seared artistic conscience.

Once or twice, to be sure, Bernard winced not a little at the words he had to read— they were so *very* personal:—

"Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged,
'God and the glory: never care for gain!
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
Rafael is waiting: up to God all three!'
I might have done it for you. So it seems.
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Besides, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing will not;
And who would do it cannot, I perceive."

That was tolerably plain— almost rude, he felt, now he came to read it with Bertha actually by his side. Yet still he persisted through all that magnificent special pleading of the case for posterity and high art against wife and children— persisted to the bitter end, in spite of everything. He never flinched one moment. He read it all out— all, all— every word of it— "We might have risen to Rafael, you and I," and all the rest of it. His voice quivered a little— only a little— as he poured forth those last few lines:—

"Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo, and me
To cover— the three first without a wife,
While I have mine. So— still they overcome,
Because there's still Lucrezia,— as I choose."

But he read it out for all that, with eyes glancing askance (at the commas) on Bertha's fiery face, and lips that trembled with the solemnity of the occasion.

The pot-boiler's heart was touched. For, mind you, it's easy to touch every artist's artistic conscience. You only ask him to do the thing he best loves doing.

When Bernard Hume ceased there was a pause for a few minutes— a terrible pause. Then Bertha rose slowly, and went over to her husband. In spite of Bernard's presence, she kissed him twice on the forehead. Then she burst into tears, and rushed from the room wildly.

All that night she hardly slept. Next morning she rose, determined, whatever she did, never for one moment to interfere with Ernest's individuality.

Throughout the day she avoided the studio studiously. At eleven the model who sat for the elder sister in "Papa's Return" came in as usual. She was very much surprised to find Ernest Grey engaged on a large drawing which had been lying about the studio for months unfinished. It represented, as she remarked to herself, among a crowd of other figures, a male model in armour pushing his way through a dense wood towards a floating female model in insufficient drapery. But Ernest himself called it "The Quest of the Ideal."

She stood for a minute irresolute. Ernest Grey meanwhile surveyed her critically. Yes, he thought so— she would do. No more the elder sister in "Papa's Return," but the Elusive herself in "The Quest of the Ideal."

The model looked at him in surprise. She was a beautiful girl, with a face of refined and spiritual beauty. "Why, Mr. Grey," she cried, taken aback, "you don't mean to say you're not goin' on with your Academy picture?"

"This *is* my Academy picture," Ernest Grey answered gravely. "I've discarded the other one. It never was really mine. I'm giving up the hosiery business."

The model looked aghast. "And it *was* so lovely!" she cried, all regrets. "That dear, sweet baby! and her so pleased, too, at her pa coming 'ome again!"

Ernest answered only by bringing out a piece of thin, creamy-white drapery. "I shall want you to wear this," he said; "just so, as in the sketch. I think you'll do admirably for the central figure."

The model demurred a little— the undress was rather more than she had yet been used to. She sat for head and shoulders or draped figure only. "I think," she said with decision, "you'd better get another lady."

But Ernest insisted. He was hot for high art now; and after a short hesitation, the model consented. It was no more, he pointed out, than evening-dress permits the most modest maiden. All on fire with his new departure, Ernest began a study of her head and shoulders then and there— the head and shoulders of the Eternal Elusive.

He wrought at it with a will. He was inspired and eager. To be sure, it was an awkward moment to begin an experiment, with the rent just due and no cash in hand to pay it, while the baker was clamouring hard for his last month's money. "But things like that, you know, must be *Before* a famous victory!" Nothing venture, nothing have. There would still be just time to complete the study, at least, before Sending-in Day; and if somebody took a fancy to his very first attempt at a serious picture, why— farewell for ever to the spun-silk stocking trade!

For a week he worked away by himself in the studio. Bertha never came near the room, though she shuddered to herself to think what Ernest was doing. But she had made up her mind, once for all, after hearing Bernard Hume read Browning's "Andrea," never again to interfere with her husband's individuality. As for the model, her grief was simple and unaffected. She couldn't think how Mr. Grey, and him so clever, too, could ever desert that dear, sweet baby in "Papa's Return" for all them dreadful gashly men and un'olesome women. He was making such a fright of her for his figger of the Eloosive as she'd be ashamed to acknowledge to any of her friends it was her that sat to him for it. A pretty girl don't like to be painted into a fright like that, with her 'air all streamin' loose like a patient at Colney 'Atch, and her clothes fallin' off, quite casual-like, be'ind her!

About Friday Bernard Hume called in. The model expected him to disapprove most violently. But when he saw the drawing, and still more the study, as far as it had gone— for Ernest, knowing exactly what effect he meant to produce, had worked at the head and arms with surprising rapidity— he was in visible raptures. He stood long and gazed at it. "Why, Grey," he cried, standing back a little, and shading his eyes with his hand, "it's simply and solely the incarnate spirit of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century in its higher and purer avatar; deep-questioning, mystic, uncertain, rudderless. Faith gone; humanity left; heaven lost; earth realized as man's true home and sole hope for the future! Those sad eyes of your wan maidens gaze forth straight upon the infinite. Those bronzed faces of your mailed knights have confronted strange doubts and closed hard with nameless terrors. There's a pathos in it all— a— what shall I call it?— a something inexpressible; a pessimism, a meliorism, an obstinate questioning of invisible things, that no age but this age of ours could possibly have compassed. Who, save you, could have put so much intense spirituality into the broidery of a robe, could have touched with such sacred and indefinable sadness the frayed fringe of a knightly doublet?"

As he spoke, Ernest gazed at his own work, in love with it. The criticism charmed him. It was just the very thing he'd have said of it himself, if it had been somebody else's; only he couldn't have put it in such glowing language.

It's delightful to hear your work so justly appraised by a sympathetic soul; it makes a modest man think a great deal better than he could ever otherwise think of his own poor little performances. But most modest men, alas! have no Bernard Hume at hand to applaud their efforts. The Bernard Humes of this world are all busily engaged in booming the noisy, successful self-advertisers.

The model looked up with a dissatisfied air. "I don't like it," she said, grumbling internally. "It makes me look as if I wanted a blue-pill. It ain't 'arf so pretty as 'Papa's Return,' and it's my belief it ain't 'arf so sellin' either."

"Pretty!" Bernard Hume responded with profound contempt. "Well, the sole object of art is not, I should say, to be merely pretty. And as for selling—well, no, I dare say it won't *sell*. But what does that matter? It's a beautiful work, and it does full justice to Mr. Grey's imaginative faculty. There's not another man in England to-day who could possibly paint it."

The model said nothing, but she thought the more. She thought, among other things, that to her it *did* matter; for, in the first place, a painter who doesn't sell isn't likely to be able to pay his models; and, in the second place, no self-respecting girl cares to sit very long for unsaleable pictures. It interferes, of course, with her market value. Who's going to employ an unsuccessful man's model?

For a week Ernest toiled on almost without stopping, but it was easy toil compared to the stocking trade. The study grew apace under his eager fingers; the model declared confidentially to her family he was ruining her prospects. "I'm as yellow as a guinea," she said; "and as for expression, why, you'd think I was goin' to die in about three weeks in a gallopin' consumption." Not such the elder sister in "Papa's Return"— that rosy-cheeked, round-faced, English middle-class girl whom Ernest had elaborated by his Protean art out of the features and form of the self-same model.

At the end of the week he was working hard in his studio one evening to save the last ray of departing sunlight, when Bertha burst in suddenly with a very scared face. "Oh, Ernest!" she cried, "do come up and look at Joan. She seems so ill. I can't think what's the matter with her."

Ernest flung down his brush, and forgot in a moment, as a father will, all about the Elusive. It eluded him instantly. He followed Bertha to the little room at the top of the house that served as nursery. ("Keep your child always," he used to say, "as near as you can to heaven.") Little Joan, just three years old at that time, lay listless and glassy-eyed in the nurse's arms. Ernest looked at her with a vague foreboding of evil. He saw at once she was very ill. "This is serious," he said in a low voice. "I must go for the doctor."

When the doctor came, discreetly uncertain, he shook his head and looked wise, and declined to commit himself. He was rather of opinion, though, it might turn out to be scarlet fever.

Scarlet fever! Bertha's heart stood still in her bosom, and so did Ernest's. For the next ten days the model had holiday; the Elusive was permitted to elude unchased; the studio was forsaken day and night for the nursery. It was a very bad case, and they fought it all along the line, inch by inch, unflinchingly. Poor little Joan was very ill indeed. It made Ernest's heart bleed to see her chubby small face grow so thin and yet so fiery. Night after night they sat up and watched. What did Ernest care now for art or the ideal? That one little atomy of solid round flesh was more to him than all the greatest pictures in Christendom. "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that!" Ah, God! what did it matter, with little Joan's life hanging poised in the balance between life and death, and little Joan's unseeing eyes turned upward, white between the eyelids, toward the great blank ceiling? If Joan were to die, what would be art or posterity? The sun in the heavens might shine on as before, but the sun in Ernest and Bertha's life would have faded out utterly.

At last the crisis came. "If she gets through to-night," the doctor said in his calm way, as though he were talking of somebody else's baby, "the danger's practically over. All my patients in the present epidemic who've passed this stage have recovered without difficulty."

They watched and waited through that livelong night in breathless suspense and terror and agony. You who are parents know well what it means. Why try to tell others? *They* could never understand; and if they could, why, heaven forbid we should harrow them as we ourselves have been harrowed.

At last, towards morning, little Joan dropped asleep. A sweet, deep sleep. Her breathing was regular. Father and mother fell mute into one another's arms. Their tears mingled. They dared not utter one word, but they cried long and silently.

From that moment, as the doctor had predicted, little Joan grew rapidly stronger and better. In a week she was able to go out for a drive— in a hansom, of course— no carriages for the struggling! Exchequer, much depleted by expenses of illness, felt even that hansom a distinct strain upon it.

Next morning Ernest had heart enough to begin work again. He sent word round accordingly to the model.

In the course of the day Bernard Hume dropped in. He was anxious to see how the Ideal and the Elusive got on after the crisis. He surprised Ernest at his easel. "Hullo!" he cried with a little start, straightening his long spine, "what does all this mean, Grey? You don't mean to say you're back at 'Papa's Return'? Have you yielded once more to Gath and Askelon?"

"No," Ernest answered firmly, looking him back in the face, "I've yielded to Duty. You can go now, Miss Baker. I've done about as much as I'm good for to-day. My hand's too shaky. And now, Hume, I'll speak out to you. All these days and nights while little Joan's been ill I've thought it all over and realized to myself which is the truest heroism. It's very specious and very fine to talk in deep bass about the talents that God has bestowed upon one in trust for humanity. I can talk all that stuff any day with the best of you. But I've married Bertha, and I've helped to put little Joan into the world, and I'm responsible to them for their daily bread, their life and happiness. It may be heroic to despise comfort and fame and wealth and security for the sake of high art and the best that's in one. I dare say it is; but I'm sure it's a long way more heroic still to do work one doesn't want to do for wife and children. It's easy enough to follow one's own natural bent: I was perfectly happy— serenely happy— those seven days I painted away at the Elusive. But it's very hard indeed to give all that up for the sake of duty. What you came to preach to me was only a peculiarly seductive form of self-indulgence— the indulgence of one's highest and truest self, but still self-indulgence. If I'd followed you, everybody would have praised and admired my single-hearted devotion to the cause of art; but Joan and Bertha would have paid for it. No man can make a public for anything new and personal in any art whatever without waiting and educating his public for years. If he's rich, he can afford to wait and educate it, as your own friend Browning did. If he's a bachelor, rich or poor, he can still afford to do it, because nobody but himself need suffer for it with him. But if he's poor and married— ah, then it's quite different. He has given hostages to fortune; he has no right to think first of anything at all but the claims of his wife and children upon him. I call it more heroic, then, to work at any such honest craft as will ensure their livelihood, than to go astray after the Ashtaroth of specious ideals such as you set before me."

Bernard Hume's lip curled. This was what the Church knows as Invincible Ignorance. He had done his best for the man, and the old Adam had conquered. "And what are you going to do," he asked with a contemptuous smile, "about 'The Quest of the Ideal'?"

Ernest laid down his palette, and thrust his hand silently into his trousers pocket. He drew forth a knife, and opened it deliberately. Then, without a single word, he walked across the floor to the Study of the Elusive. With one ruthless cut he slashed the canvas across from corner to corner. Then he slashed the two cut pieces again transversely. After that he took down the drawing of the design from the smaller easel, and solemnly thrust it into the studio fire. It burnt by slow degrees, for the cardboard was thick. His heart beat hard. As long as it smouldered he watched it intently. As the last of the

mailed knights disappeared in white smoke up the studio chimney he drew a long breath. "Good-bye," he said in a choking voice; "Good-bye to the Ideal."

"And good-bye to *you*," Bernard Hume made answer, "for I call it desecration."

Bernard Hume is now of opinion that he used once vastly to overrate Ernest Grey's capabilities. The man had talent, perhaps— some grain of mere talent— but never genius. As for Ernest, he has toiled on ever since, more or less contentedly (probably less), at the hosiery business, and makes quite a decent living now out of his portraits of children and his domestic figure-pieces. The model considers them all really charming.

It's everybody's case, of course; but still— it's a tragedy.

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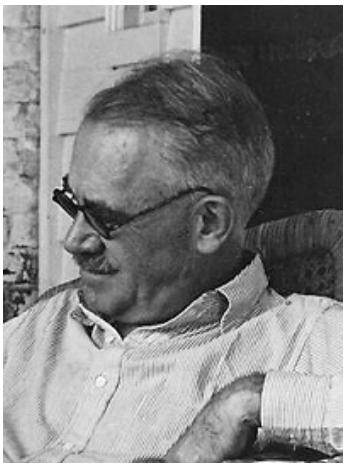
13: Putting Crime Over

Hulbert Footner

1879-1944

Argosy Allstory Weekly, 20 Nov 1926



Hulbert Footner

A Madam Storey case seldom reprinted, and never in any of Footner's own Collections of Madam Storey's cases, due to its considerable length.

IT WAS OWING to the last-minute illness of Mrs Cornelius Marquardt that I had the good fortune to be included in this little dinner of Mme Storey's. Her guests do not often disappoint.

Everybody in the know is aware that the best talk in New York is to be heard around her table. She picks her guests with that end in view, careless of their social position. One may meet a visiting marquis or a tramp poet— the poet more often than the marquis.

Mme Storey herself is a better talker, in my opinion, than any of them, but one would be slow to learn that at her own table. Her object there is merely to keep the ball rolling briskly. She likes to listen better than to talk.

On this occasion the men included Ambrose G. Larned, the brilliant advertising man, who had introduced so many new ideas into his profession; John Durward, the famous English novelist; Harry Evans Colter, our own clever and popular short story writer; and Inspector Rumsey, of the New York police.

Rumsey, the dear little man, is not at all a brilliant person; but he is a perfect compendium of crime, and, since crime seems to be the most interesting of all subjects to persons of every degree nowadays, Mme Storey finds him very useful at the dinner table. When people try to draw *her* out on the subject of crime, she shifts them on to Rumsey.

Foreigners regard us Americans as preeminent in crime; they come over here to see crime; and when we have a distinguished visitor like Mr Durward, Rumsey is pretty sure to be included.

My mistress, as you know, is not enamored of crime, and she managed to divert the talk to other subjects until after we had left the table. When the little company was grouped around the amusing 1850 living room upstairs, it could no longer be staved off, and she let it have its way.

I must tell you that New York was experiencing a crime wave at the moment— but indeed it always is. It is like an ocean beach, with one crime wave falling right on top of the one before.

This was the time of the bobbed-hair-bandit sensation, when many of the smaller jewelers were putting in defensive arrangements of siren whistles and tear gas. These things were always going off accidentally and throwing whole neighborhoods into a panic. The Englishman was all agog as he listened.

Everybody is familiar with Mr Durward's fine head with its silvery hair and delicately chiseled features. He supplied a chorus of "Amazing! Extraordinary! Incredible!" to all the stories that were told.

"In the middle of the day!" I remember him saying. "With crowds passing in the street, these fellows go boldly into your jewelry shops, and point their guns, and take what they please, and get away scot-free! Such a thing would be impossible in London!"

"Not impossible," Inspector Rumsey pointed out good-humoredly. "It has happened even in London. Your police are luckier than we are, that's all. For London streets are narrow and crooked, and the few main thoroughfares are always crowded. It is exceedingly difficult to make a get-away. Now, our streets are broad and straight, and only one of them is completely full of traffic during business hours. You may have noticed that our holdups never take place in the center, but always in busy neighborhoods off the center, where there is enough traffic to conceal the bandits in their get-away, but not enough to stop them."

"Well, what's to be done? Are you just going to submit to this state of affairs?"

"There is a remedy," said Inspector Rumsey quietly, "whenever the public is willing to pay for it."

"And what is that?"

"It is ridiculous and humiliating to the police to be forced to go on foot, when every bandit is provided with an automobile. All patrolmen should be mounted on motorcycles."

"Hear! Hear!" said Mme Storey.

"Even the women are taking to banditry!" murmured Mr Durward. "An incredible country!"

"There's a good deal of nonsense about her," said the inspector. "The newspapers have played up the bobbed-hair bandit so hard that their credulous readers see a bobbed-hair bandit everywhere they look."

"And I notice that the police are advertising in the subway cars," Mr Durward went on. "Cards addressed to the bandits, warning them that they will certainly be caught in the end. Surely that is very naive."

"Well," said the inspector, smiling and firm in the defense of his beloved department, "we must try everything."

Colter spoke up, a young man quick in his movements, with an eager, warm-colored face: "If you're sure to get him in the end, why bother to advertise?"

"It was Mr Larned, here, who persuaded the commissioner to use those cards," said Rumsey.

"Anything can be accomplished by intelligent publicity," said Larned.

He went on to sing the praises of the wonderful new science, of which he was one of the most brilliant professors. A handsome man in his forties, with the full, beaming eye of the enthusiast, we were all sensible of his charm. He was of that type not uncommon in our country, the artist turned business man.

They said his private life was rather scandalous, but I know nothing about that. His new wife was among the ladies present, a pretty woman, but negligible as far as conversation went.

"That's all true," said Harry Colter, when he could get an opening, "but publicity is a two-edged sword which is apt to cut in unexpected directions."

"Take these subway cards," went on Larned. "The idea was that the bandit lives in a world of his own, supported and encouraged by those of his kind, and cut off from all others. It was thought that it would be a good thing to remind him in this unexpected fashion of the existence of the real world which would not tolerate his actions. I appeal to Mme Storey to tell us if this is not sound psychology."

My mistress smiled in a way that told me what her opinion was, but refused to commit herself.

"Harry has something more to say on the subject," she remarked.

"It's a confession of weakness on the part of the police," said Colter energetically. "Mr Durward, with his fresh point of view, instantly perceived that. Irrespective of the effect on an occasional bandit, it certainly lowers the morale of the whole public that rides in the subway. For the public relies on the stern and secret measures of the police in dealing with crooks, and to have

them come out in the open like this and beg the bandits to be good cannot help but be demoralizing."

Inspector Rumsey agreed with Colter, though nothing could induce him to admit that the department could be in the wrong.

"It is true," he said, "the stick-up boys have the public scared. And every story of a successful hold-up that the newspapers print is just that much additional publicity for the bandits."

"You can't blame the newspapers for that," said Larned.

"I don't. It's their job to purvey the news. But it's too bad they've got to feature it the way they do."

"That just proves my point," said Larned. "You've got to have a counter-publicity to deal with it."

I felt impelled to put in my oar at this point. Though I'm only a humble secretary, Mme Storey expects me to keep my end up. There must be no dummies at her table.

"But a true counter-publicity would be directed toward boosting the public morale instead of further depressing it," I suggested.

Mr Larned gave me a cold look, as much as to say: Who is this red-haired female? His eyes quickly passed on to my mistress.

"Perhaps Mme Storey will tell us how she would handle the situation," he said.

My mistress held up her hands in mock dismay.

"Thank Heaven, I'm not obliged to answer that," she said laughing. "My job is quite difficult enough. Bandits are a little out of my line."

SOME DAYS or weeks after the dinner party, when all recollection of this conversation had passed out of my mind, I was working in the outer office of our suite on Gramercy Park one morning, when a good-looking young man came in. He was a mere lad of nineteen or so, but his face wore that unnatural look of experience and assurance that suggests a childhood spent on the streets.

Yet my eyes dwelt on him with pleasure. Though short of stature, he was beautifully made; he moved with a lithe grace that suggested the perfect coordination of every muscle.

His round head was set low between his strong shoulders; the black hair was crisp with health, the black eyes sparkling. I suspected Italian blood. He was well dressed in a somewhat common style, and he addressed me with an ingratiating smile.

"Is this Mme Storey's office?" Like the wolf in the old story, he was trying to sweeten his harsh voice.

"Yes," said I.

"Are you her?"

"No; her secretary." I could see that the little wretch was only trying to flatter me.

"Well, is she in?"

"Mme Storey can only receive visitors by appointment," I said. "Will you tell me your business?"

"Sure," he said, with an appearance of the utmost good humor, plumping himself into a chair without waiting for an invitation. His bright eyes traveled around the room, taking everything in. "You sure got a swell joint here," he remarked sociably.

I ignored this. "What can I do for you?" I asked coldly.

I could see from the beginning that he was just stringing me along; but it never occurred to me to suspect he might have a sinister motive. All kinds of people come into the office, and waste my time, particularly when we have been engaged on a big case, with all its attendant publicity.

"I just wanted to apply for a job," he answered.

"A job?" I said, surprised. "What sort of job?"

"Anything at all," he said, grinning. "I read in the papers how Mme Storey employed a whole raft of operatives, private detectives like, in the Harker case."

"It is only occasionally that she is engaged on a criminal case," said I. "And then any operatives that we may require are secured temporarily from a list that we keep."

"Well, put me down on your list," he said. "John Casey, 123 East Broadway."

He was no Casey! However, as the quickest way of getting rid of him, I wrote the address on a pad.

"You got a swell job here, secretary to Mme Storey and all," he said while I was writing. "Somepin' doin' alla time, I guess."

I made no answer.

"Don't she employ no clerk nor office boy nor nothin'?" he asked.

"No," I told him.

"There'd be the job for me," he said.

"Well, let me have a sample of your handwriting," I suggested, pushing the pad toward him. I thought I had him there.

He drew back. "I got a cramp in me hand today," he said without batting an eye. "But say, I could make myself useful here, receivin' callers and runnin' errands and all. And when you needed an outside man I'd be on the spot."

I shook my head.

"And say, when she was out I'd be company for you," he said with a sidelong grin.

The good-looking little wretch was actually trying to vamp me. I was highly amused. His sharp eyes perceived my amusement, and it encouraged him to go further.

"Say, what's your name?" he asked.

"I don't see that that matters," I said.

"Just in case I wanted to write you later to see if there was an openin'."

"I will write to you if there is an opening," I said dryly.

He affected to laugh heartily. "Gee, you're wise, all right! You're there with the comeback!"

He came close to me and smiled insinuatingly. I suppose with a certain type of girl he had found himself irresistible. "Me and you'd get along fine, eh?"

"I dare say," I said coldly. "But you will have to excuse me. I'm busy."

"Is that the door to her room?" he asked, pointing.

I did not answer. He knew that it was the door to her room, because there was no other except that by which he had entered.

"Let me take a look in," he said cajolingly. "I bet it's a swell room!"

"Certainly not!" I said, rising to forestall any move to open the door. "Mme Storey must not be disturbed."

"Oh, I didn't know she was in there," he remarked with an innocent air. "Well, so long, kid," with a final grin over his shoulder. "You know where to find me." And went out.

It did not occur to me to be angry. Indeed, after he had gone, I sat down at my desk, smiling. Such is the power of youth and good looks. I merely put him down in my mind as another fresh kid.

Immediately afterward Mme Storey called me in to take dictation. We were still suffering from the publicity attendant upon the famous Harker case, and there was a pile of letters six inches high on her desk.

My mistress as a matter of courtesy insists on writing once to everybody who writes to her. Of course if they continue to send in trifling letters they go into the wastebasket. Had we been less busy, I would no doubt have related the incident of my caller just for her amusement, and the whole course of subsequent events might have been changed; but as it was, I did not mention him.

I have on several former occasions described the arrangements of my mistress's beautiful room. There is nothing about it to connote the word office.

Once the front drawing-room of a great house on Gramercy Park, it is now furnished with priceless Italian antiques, and forms a fit setting for Mme Storey, who is herself like a vivid figure out of the Renaissance— but not

antique. In spite of all pressure from the outside, she preserves her individuality.

She refuses to organize her genius, nor will she work herself to death either. She accepts the few cases that most appeal to her; all the others are turned down. I constitute her entire office force; and when we feel like it we close up the office altogether, and go for a jaunt.

Mme Storey sits at an immense oak table, black with age, her back to the row of casement windows which look out on the square. At her right hand is the door into my room, and in the same wall near the back of the long room, another door leading directly into the hall.

This door, which is closed with a spring lock, permits her to escape from anybody waiting in my room, whom she may not want to bother with. In the middle of the back wall is a door giving on what we call the middle room, which is used for the multitudinous requirements of our peculiar business—dressing-room, hiding place, temporary jail, and what not. The three rooms constitute our suite.

In taking dictation I sit at my mistress's right hand, with my back to the door from my room. We were in the middle of our work without a thought in our minds except the desire to get to the bottom of that pile of silly letters, when the buzzer sounded that announced the opening of the outer door into my room.

I finished the sentence I was putting down, and rose to my feet. I got no farther, for at that moment the door from my room burst open, and two men ran in, each grasping an ugly automatic.

One was my visitor of half an hour before; the other was a few years older.

What a moment that was! Death itself could not have been worse than what I suffered. My heart turned to water in my breast; I seemed to lose all strength, all control of my body.

How I longed to shrivel up to nothing before those guns! I dared not look at my mistress, who was alongside, and a little behind me. My eyes were glued to those hideous weapons.

"Stick 'em up!" barked the older man.

My hands went over my head like a shot. They strained away from me, as if desirous of flying up under the ceiling on their own account. I heard Mme Storey drawl:

"I'll put mine on the table if you don't mind. The other attitude is so ungraceful."

I stole a look at her. Good Heavens! What a woman! She was actually smiling. The sight of her smile did not put any heart into me, though.

It gave me a dreadful pang to realize that those worthless youths, the sweepings of the streets, held the life of such a glorious woman in their hands.

"None of your tricks!" growled the leader.

"Bless your heart, I wouldn't think of it!" drawled Mme Storey. "I have a gun in the drawer of this table, but I'm not going to try to get it out. I value my skin too highly."

"Look through those two doors," the leader said to his companion. "I'll keep the women covered."

As silently as a shadow, the younger man ran to the two doors. "This door goes out into the hall," he said at the first; and at the other: "Nobody in this room."

"Do you mind if I smoke?" said Mme Storey, moving her hand toward the big silver box that stood on her table.

"Keep your hands in front of you!" barked the leader.

Taking a step forward, he threw back the cover of the box. Seeing that it contained only cigarettes, he shrugged, and allowed my mistress to take one.

"Won't you join me?" she drawled mockingly.

He helped himself, tossing the cigarette up to his mouth without taking his eyes from Mme Storey's face. She nonchalantly lighted up, and offered him the burning match. He put the cigarette to it, with his eyes fixed on hers.

What a picture! While the first one was merely a good looking boy, this one was infernally handsome. Mme Storey's face still wore the mocking half smile; his was like a mask.

It was perfectly inhuman in its immobility; not a muscle quivered; his very eyes appeared to be glazed. It made a cold shiver run down my spine.

"Hand over your pearls," he said.

Putting down the cigarette for a moment, Mme Storey unfastened the string about her neck.

"I'm sorry they're not my best ones," she said. "Still, they're pretty good." She tossed them over.

"Your watch, your rings," he went on, dropping the pearls in his pockets.

She unfastened her watch with calm deliberation, holding her head on one side to keep the cigarette smoke out of her eyes, and drew off her lovely emerald, and the three diamonds. They followed the pearls into his pocket.

Meanwhile the other man commanded me to hand over my pearls.

"A-ah!" snarled his leader out of the side of his mouth. "They're only fish-skin. Don't yeh know the difference?"

The young man refused my beads then, with an abashed look like a schoolboy. But I had to hand over the watch that Mme Storey gave me, and the little diamond I bought with my own savings.

My heart burned with helpless anger. My little stone had not a fraction of the value of Mme Storey's, but she could replace hers the next day, whereas mine represented years of self-denial. What kind of a world was it, I thought, where such wrongs were permitted.

"Your money!" said the leader harshly to my mistress.

"It's in the same drawer with my gun," she told him pleasantly.

He put a hand on the table, and leaned over, bringing his mask-like face close to hers.

"Get it out," he said curtly, "and let me see you touch the gun, that's all."

"By no means!" said Mme Storey, smiling. "I just wanted to warn you, so you wouldn't shoot at the sight of it."

Pulling the drawer toward her, she picked up her gold mesh bag, and tossed it on the table in front of him.

"Now the gun," he added. "Pick it up by the muzzle."

She obeyed. "I'd be glad if you'd let me have my hanky out of the bag," she said. "I may need it."

"Ah, cut the comedy," he told her with his indifferent air. "Where's your safe?"

"In the outer office. There's nothing in it but business papers. My secretary will open it for you."

"You go with her," said the leader to his man.

I leave you to imagine what my feelings were when I had to turn my back on the gun, and walk out of the room with it following me. I nearly died out of sheer terror. I felt a hundred bullets tearing through my body.

But I got the safe open somehow, and satisfied the young bandit that it contained nothing of value to him.

We returned to the other room. My mistress was smiling still. The young bandit was sitting now, with his chair tipped back in a parade of indifference.

No muscle of his waxen face had changed, but there was a glint in his eyes as he watched Mme Storey. He contemptuously permitted her to see that he approved of her as a woman.

When his man reported that there was nothing in the safe, he stood up.

"Then back out," he said, with a jerk of his head toward the door into the hall.

"Why hurry?" drawled my mistress. "Let's have in tea."

The leader stopped. An open, scornful admiration leaped up in his eyes. The insolence of it was simply indescribable.

"You're a pretty game chicken, ain't yeh?" he drawled, putting a hand on his hip in a swaggering fashion. "You look good to me."

He dropped his gun in his pocket— he knew he had her disarmed— and returned a step or two toward the table. He drew a ring off his finger and tossed it toward her.

"Wear that," he said. In a flash he was gone.

When the door closed after them I collapsed. I could hear myself bawling like a child, without any power to stop it. The next thing I knew I was pulling frantically at one of the casements, so that I might alarm the street.

Mme Storey drew me away before I got it open.

"No good," she said. "They'll have a car waiting. You'll only start a panic among the kiddies in the park."

I could still hear myself crying and carrying on like somebody else. "Why didn't you send for the engineer? The button is there under the edge of your table for just such an emergency."

"What!" she said, smiling at me. "And bring John in here empty-handed to get shot?"

"It's outrageous!" I cried. "Coming in here like that! And you take it so calmly. The way that man looked at you was intolerable."

Mme Storey smilingly quoted the childish couplet, slightly amended:

"Sticks and stones will break my bones,
But looks will never hurt me."

"SUCH INSOLENCE!" I cried. "I cannot bear it!"

"Oh, a shot of heroin will do wonders to buck up a man's self-esteem," she said calmly.

She was sitting there smiling, and examining the fellow's ring with the eye of a connoisseur. It was a handsome carnelian in a wonderful antique setting. Heaven knows from whom it had been stolen.

The sight of her indifference drove me almost into a frenzy. "Aren't you going to do anything?" I cried.

"Oh, surely," she said, partly arousing herself. "Do all the usual things, my Bella; telephone to the police and to the newspapers. But as for me—" she relapsed into her smiling, musing upon the ring "– I intend to have a little fun out of this."

WITH PROPER management this affair need never have got into the newspapers, since no whisper of an alarm had been raised. But Mme Storey disdained to conceal it; on the contrary, she informed the press herself.

"It would make such a good story, it would be a shame to keep it from them," she said in her provoking way.

Of course, as I was to learn later, this publicity was necessary to the plan that was even then shaping itself in her mind; but I couldn't guess that in the beginning.

Well, you can imagine what a sensation was created by the news. The famous Mme Storey held up in her own office by a pair of youthful bandits! To come as it did, right on the heels of her brilliant success in the Harker case, when her name and fame was on everybody's lips, gave point to the tale. While the newspapers were still terming her the greatest criminologist of modern times, here she was stuck up by a couple of boys and robbed of her pearls!

It is a weakness of all democracies, they say, that when a citizen is elevated above the heads of the mob, nothing pleases the said mob better than to find an excuse to turn and shy things at the hero. We had to submit to an unmerciful razzing, both public and private. What a chance it gave to the cartoonists!

Mme Storey, I need hardly say, took it all smilingly. Borne up by her secret knowledge of the retribution she was preparing, I think she actually enjoyed it. She encouraged the razzers that her revenge might be more complete in the end.

But it was a bad time for me. I ground my teeth every time the telephone rang. My temper was in a continual state of exacerbation. Not the least of what I had to submit to were the hypocritical condolences of all the old cats in the boarding house where I live.

Inspector Rumsey suffered no less than I did. That his police had allowed Mme Storey to be robbed right under their noses, so to speak, caused the worthy little man almost to burst with chagrin. He wanted to surround us afterward with a whole cordon of police wherever we went, but of course Mme Storey would not hear of anything like that.

What she had termed all the usual things were done, of course, and nothing came of it. We furnished the police with exact descriptions of the bandits, which were sent broadcast. Several of the best men attached to the Central Office were put on the case.

Mme Storey and I went down to headquarters and turned over hundreds of pages of the Rogues' Gallery, without finding the faces we were in search of. Inspector Rumsey was not surprised by it.

"Every year," he said bitterly, "we have a fresh crop of young desperadoes to deal with."

I could not but be sorry for our friend during these days. His difficulties were owing to no fault of his own. After our robbery the crime wave mounted

to still greater heights. Nearly every day the police had a fresh holdup to deal with, and on some days three or four.

"The publicity attached to your case has bucked them up all down the line," Inspector Rumsey said bitterly.

Mme Storey herself took no direct measures toward searching for the bandits. One day when I was burning with indignation at the facetious comments of some newspaper or another, I ventured to remonstrate with her on this.

"Oh, our little holdup boys were merely pawns in the game, my Bella," she told me. "I'm after the commanding pieces."

I was relieved to learn that she was not entirely idle in the matter.

One morning when she took off her hat I cried out in dismay upon perceiving that she had acquired a boy's haircut overnight. I must confess that it was very becoming, revealing as it did the beautiful shape of her head and emphasizing the pure line of her profile. Still I hated to see her adopt so extreme a fashion.

She smiled at my distress. "Wait!" she said, holding up her hand, and disappeared within the middle room.

An hour later she called me to her. I stopped in the doorway, aghast. She stood in the middle of the room, striking an attitude.

I say "she", but at the first glance it seemed to me as if my mistress had vanished, leaving a horrible changeling in her stead. The closely cut hair was now silvered, and her face heavily made up, one might almost say enameled.

Around the eyes and mouth it was cunningly shadowed to suggest the hollows of growing age; in a phrase, the fashionable, hard-living woman of fifty.

She was wearing a costume cut in severe mannish lines, showing a rolling silk collar at the neck, and a Bohemian tie. A little tough hat went with it, and a malacca stick with a plain ivory knob. I'm sure you get the picture: an elderly charmer of the highest fashion, handsome, hard, and utterly reckless.

"Will it pass?" she asked in a throaty voice with a hint of huskiness.

"It is marvelous," I murmured.

"I am Kate Arkledon," she went on, with a half sneer which was fixed in her face; to smile would have ruined the effect. "Have you ever heard of her?"

I shook my head.

"A little before your time, I suppose. Ten years ago Kate Arkledon was one of the cleverest confidence women in the United States. She was famous in her way. Then suddenly she dropped out of sight of all her former associates. As a matter of fact, she is living in respectability and affluence not a dozen doors from me. Once upon a time I did her a service which she has never forgotten.

"Well, with her permission, I am staging a come-back for Kate Arkledon. There is a slight resemblance between us, which I have built upon. It will be good enough at least to deceive anybody who has not seen her for ten years."

I foresaw danger ahead, and my heart sank.

Mme Storey broke off, to study me through narrowed eyes. "Turn around," she said.

"What do you want of me?" I faltered.

"Get a permanent wave," she said.

"But I will look like a Hottentot!" I cried.

"Of course," she said calmly. "They all do when they come out from under the curlers. You will make a very effective red-haired vamp, my Bella. I will dress you and teach you how to make up for it."

"But the make-up is only the beginning!" I gasped. "I could not possibly keep up such a part."

"Certainly you could. It will not be nearly so difficult as the character of Canada Annie, which you carried off so well. You can be a Dumb Dora this time with nothing to do but sit and look unutterable things at men. All you will have to say is 'Ain't it the truth!' when you agree, or very scornfully, 'So's yer old man!' when you disagree."

All this was uttered in the sneering, husky tones of the character she was portraying. It made me shiver.

"What are we going to do?" I asked fearfully.

"We are going to organize a little holdup gang of our own," said Kate Arkledon with a wicked grin.

A cry was forced from me. I could not imagine anybody less fitted for the part of bandit than myself.

"Not really— not really!" I faltered.

"It will be just as real as I can make it appear," she said. "I mean to pull off a stunt or two in the most spectacular style."

I groaned inwardly.

"This is how I figure it out, Bella," she said in her natural voice. "There is certainly an organization behind the crime wave; but it's operating along new lines. It's a very loose and flexible organization, with all the units working independently of each other. Well, my idea is to form a unit of my own which will function so brilliantly that the organization will be forced to make overtures to us. Inspector Rumsey is in the secret."

I tasted in advance the awful excitement that was in store, and my heart was like lead in my breast. But I would have torn my tongue out sooner than protest aloud.

BUSY DAYS followed. It was impossible to let our other business slide, and we had to lead double lives.

By day Mme Storey and her secretary, Bella Brickley, worked in the offices on Gramercy Park, taking care to give out an interview to the newspapers occasionally, so that our presence there was regularly established. By night Kate Arkledon and her pal, Peggy Ray, showed themselves in certain gilded resorts on the West Side.

A good many days passed before I got accustomed to the sight of my painted and bedizened self in the mirror. On the whole, though, I had an easy role to play. All that was required of me was to act as a foil for my mistress.

For the purpose of enabling us to change from one character to another and back again, we engaged a room in one of the nondescript warrens on West Forty-Seventh Street, where all kinds of queer little businesses are carried on by all kinds of queer characters. One could enter or leave such a building at any hour without exciting remark.

For Kate Arkledon's regular hang-out we chose a well-known West Side street, once fashionable, and now much favored of the white collar gentry. It often breaks into the news. However, I shall not name it for fear of depressing real estate values.

We rented a four room flat in a pretentious apartment house, where the tenants' reference were not too closely scanned; and here we immediately began to gather our gang round us.

Mme Storey's principal aid in this affair was the man I shall call Benny Abell, though that was not his real name, nor yet the name by which he had become famous in the underworld. If you have read my account of the Melanie Soupert case you will remember him.

His specialty had been sticking up the box offices of theaters, always working alone, and displaying a truly superhuman nerve. Since my mistress had broken up the Varick Street gang he had become re-united with his family, and had gone straight.

Mme Storey needed him now as a sort of liaison officer with crookdom, where his exploits were still remembered. She never had any intention of using him in an actual hold-up, which would have been like a nightmare to the poor fellow who had been through so much.

Abell, when I first knew him, was a small, determined, white-faced man, of an elegant appearance. Trained to a finish by danger, he was like a sheaf of quivering nerves.

Now happiness had caused him to take on flesh, and his face to assume a serene expression. However, he worked hard to reduce for this emergency, and played his part admirably.

Next we took in George Stephens, one of our regular operatives, and the best man we had after Crider. I should have been glad to have had Crider himself at our back, but he has worked for us so long Mme Storey feared the danger of his being recognized. She didn't want to have any more disguises than she could help. Stephens had the advantage of not having been in America long. A young fellow of aristocratic appearance, he soon acquired the soubriquet of English George.

Our remaining man was Bert Farren, a mere boy who has done good work for us on one or two occasions. Mme Storey chose him because boy bandits seemed to be the fashion.

We still lacked a direct, present connection with the world of crooks; but my mistress said we would have to wait for circumstances to furnish that.

Very early in the game the scene of our first exploit was chosen. This was the jewelry store of B. & J. Fossberg, a large and handsome establishment on Broadway not a hundred miles from One Hundredth Street. It is the finest establishment of the sort on the upper West Side.

Inspector Rumsey was acquainted with Benjamin Fossberg, one of the proprietors, and after a great deal of persuasion won his consent to the staged hold-up. His brother was told, of course, but the clerks were kept in the dark.

It was arranged that the guns which were kept in the store for protection should be removed as if for repairs on the day of the stick-up.

Night after night the five of us met in the flat on West — Street to discuss and rehearse our plans. I had no idea that such elaborate preparations were required to stage an affair which would be all over in a minute or two.

By day our three men watched the store until they were familiar with every detail of the business routine. The Fossbergs had not fallen for any of the idiotic safeguards such as tear gas, sirens, etc. They trusted to the imposing appearance of their establishment to overawe gunmen.

It was on a corner, and occupied the space of three ordinary stores. No such big place had ever been attacked.

A detailed plan of the store was drawn out, together with a map of the neighborhood. This we all studied. Each of us was allotted his station, and many rehearsals took place.

To me fell the comparatively easy job of acting as look-out on the sidewalk. Mme Storey was to enter, and ask to have goods shown her. George and Bert were to cover her get-away with their guns, while Abell was to drive the car, which was to be waiting in the side street.

When the business of the evening was over, it was our custom to show ourselves at one or another of the gilded resorts in the neighborhood. Gradually we settled on the Boule' Miche' as our public hangout.

Abell, who had been making inquiries, said that it had become a favorite gathering place of the white collar gangs. It occupied the site of a famous old New York restaurant on Columbus Avenue, which had rapidly gone down hill after prohibition, and changed its name half a dozen times.

You would never have guessed the characters of its frequenters from their appearance. Everybody looks alike nowadays. In the Boule' Miche' you found exactly the same sort of sleek, showy women, accompanied by sleek and not so showy men, that you would see in any other night club.

It was only when you possessed a key to their occupation that you began to perceive a certain wary look in the eyes of the men; a tendency to glance toward the door every time it was opened. Once in a while strange snatches of conversation would reach your ears. Of course, many perfectly respectable people must have been included among the patrons of the place.

The present proprietor was a dark-skinned gentleman, with a perpetual gleaming smile, and a hard eye that was anything but smiling. His evening clothes fitted him to a marvel. His name was Bat Bartley, and Abell knew him.

He was one of those mysterious New York characters whom everybody knows, and nobody knows anything about. It was the custom of all his patrons to fawn on him, as they always do in such places— I can't tell you why; and while he smiled he scarcely troubled to conceal his contempt of them.

When Abell introduced my mistress to him as Kate Arkledon I saw the wary eyes narrow slightly. Evidently he was familiar with that name. My mistress treated him with cool disdain, whereupon he immediately began to fawn on *her!* Such is human nature!

Upon our first visits to the Boule' Miche' nobody attempted to address us, though, of course, so striking a figure as that of my mistress could not pass unnoticed. People stared at her, and whispered to each other, clearly asking who she was.

No doubt they asked the proprietor, and no doubt he told them— or at least such of them as he could trust. By degrees a tinge of respect and admiration appeared in the glances of the regular habitués. One could almost pick out those who belonged to the fraternity of crooks by the way they looked at the supposed Kate Arkledon.

And then one night we had an encounter which terrified me; I thought our whole elaborate structure was about to collapse. I needn't have been terrified. I underrated my mistress's superb aplomb.

An old boy with a red face and bulging blue eyes, who had been talking to Bat Bartley, came to our table. His Tuxedo, while of good material, was of an old fashion; an air of having seen better days clung around him. Fixing his bloodshot eyes on my mistress, he asked:

"Is this Kate Arkledon?"

"The same," she said, with an air of cynical indifference she now affected.

"Well, well, well!" he said. "I never should have known you, Kate. And you, I see, have completely forgotten me."

My mistress made believe to study him. "Your face is very familiar to me," she said. "But the name— the name—"

He shook his head mournfully. "To think that *you* should have forgotten me. Remember the St Louis Fair?"

Mme Storey must have had Kate Arkledon's biography at her finger tips.

"Chad Herring!" she said instantly, and offered the old fellow her hand. "But how changed!"

"Ah, don't rub it in!" he said. "I know it! Chad Herring's on the shelf! But you, good Heaven, you're fresh as paint!"

"Paint is right!" said my mistress, with her scornful smile, touching her cheek meanwhile.

He laughed uproariously. "Just as smart as ever, I see! You're a wonder, Kate!"

"Sit down," she said.

I trembled at her temerity. Surely the least slip would be fatal. She introduced us all to him by our underworld names.

"Young blood— young blood!" he muttered, sadly shaking his head. He turned to her with a pathetic eagerness. "Kate, what do you hear of Bill Blandick and Paddy Nolan—" He named a whole string of names. "The old gang."

"All gone," she said, spreading out her hands. "That is, gone from me. I have not heard of any of them for more than ten years."

"What have you been doing, Kate?"

"Leading a godly, righteous and sober life," she replied with a bitter sneer.

"You don't look it," he said innocently.

"Ah, there's nothing like dullness to break you up!" she told him. "I'm done with a respectable life. I've come back."

"Come back?" he repeated almost with horror. "At your age! Remember, I know how old you are."

"Well, you needn't broadcast it," she said sharply.

What a wonderful piece of acting she was giving!

"Come back!" he repeated again. "Do you think you can keep your end up in this day of youth and jazz and high-powered automobiles?"

"And why not?" she demanded proudly. "My nerve is as steady as ever. Look at that hand." She held it out. "And I can teach these youngsters a thing

or two. Good God, Chad— think of the opportunities nowadays! There was never anything like it in the old days!"

He looked at her with that same fear. I suppose that the fierce energy she expressed made him feel old and broken by way of contrast.

After a little desultory talk he ambled away. Presently we saw him telling Bat Bartley about it.

"That will help establish our characters," said my mistress calmly.

ON THE MORNING of the appointed day I awoke in blessed unconsciousness and lay staring at the ceiling. Then the realization of what was before me came winging back, and the bottom seemed to drop out of my stomach. I suppose it was much the same feeling as that experienced by a murderer on the morning of his execution. The worst of it was, our stunt was not to be pulled off until four o'clock, the most crowded time on upper Broadway, and I had all those miserable hours to put in beforehand. My breakfast choked me.

Every detail having been completed the night before, there was nothing for Mme Storey and I to do but proceed to the office in our own characters and attend to our usual business.

During the day that amazing woman, my mistress, gave out interviews, talked over the telephone, and dictated letters as if it was no different from any other day in the year. If she noticed that my hand was prone to tremble and my voice to shake, she never spoke of it. Indeed, no reference of any kind was made to what was almost immediately before us.

At three o'clock she locked the drawer of her desk and said to me casually: "Well, Bella, let's go."

I declare, from the openness of her smile and the brightness of her eye, one might have thought it was a picnic we were bound on. She enjoyed it!

Proceeding by taxi to the room on Forty-Seventh Street, we transformed ourselves into Kate Arkledon and Peggy Ray. I noticed that my mistress, while carefully preserving the same character, toned down her make-up somewhat. For the jewelers' she did not wish to emphasize the hardness, the recklessness that she flaunted in the Boule' Miche' every night.

As it was, the perfection of her plain, smart get-up and her high manner created a figure that any jeweler would rejoice to see coming into his shop. Around her neck she clasped a short string of valuable pearls, her only ornaments.

"Decoys," she said to me with a grin.

Me you must picture with my red hair frizzed to a fare-you-well, and my face made up like the American flag, wearing a showy hat, a smartly cut

caracul coat and high-heeled satin slippers. The make-up robbed my face of all character, and I looked to the life the expensive, empty-headed woman that you may find on upper Broadway in her hundreds. But I doubted my ability to run in those high-heeled slippers.

"Then kick 'em off," said Mme Storey. "It will add a picturesque touch to the story."

We continued uptown to the flat on West Street, where we found our three men waiting for us, all smartly rigged out according to the custom of the modern gunman, all cool and smiling. The youngster in particular seemed to regard it as a great lark.

I could almost have hated them all for their unconcern. I wished myself anywhere but there. Mme Storey dealt out guns to all. They were loaded with blanks. Mine went into a specially prepared pocket of my fur coat.

Inspector Rumsey came to us here for a final consultation.

"How about the Fossbergs?" asked Mme Storey. "Do you think they will play their parts satisfactorily?"

"I haven't a doubt of it?" said the inspector dryly. "They couldn't be in a worse state of funk if they expected to be robbed in earnest. I persuaded them to stay away from the store until just before you came, so their clerks wouldn't get on to anything."

"And the guns?"

"It's the custom of the store to keep four loaded guns in different places under the counter. These were collected yesterday and sent to the makers to be cleaned and inspected."

I thought, with a shiver: How does he know but that one of the clerks may have a gun of his own? However, there was nothing to be gained by bringing that up then, and I kept my mouth shut.

"What are the police arrangements?" asked Mme Storey.

"According to your instructions, I did not attempt to interfere with them," returned the inspector. "I have taken nobody in the department into my confidence. There is a man on fixed post on Broadway two blocks south of the store, and another stationed in the little park three blocks north. These men are far enough away not to interfere with you, but you must be careful not to drive past them, or they might shoot if they hear the alarm.

"In addition there are two patrolmen whose beats meet in the middle of the street alongside the store. You will have to watch for these. After they have met and gone back you can depend upon about twelve minutes before they return. Don't forget that there are many men on fixed post along Riverside Drive."

"We will keep off the Drive," said Mme Storey dryly.

The final arrangements were that we were to proceed to the Fossberg store separately, Abell in the car was to wait in the side street near the corner of West End Avenue with his engine running; the rest of us were to walk up and down, keeping in sight of each other, until the two policemen had met.

Two minutes after the policemen had gone back Mme Storey was to enter the store, and I was to take up my position at the door, glancing up and down the street as if I was waiting for somebody. Abell and Farren were then to be looking in the window. Two minutes after Mme Storey had entered they were to follow her into the store.

"Well, good-bye and good luck," said Inspector Rumsey, smiling. "I must say it seems like a mad scheme to me; but I have had too many lessons in the past to venture to oppose any plan of Mme Storey's."

A few minutes later four of us were separately strolling up and down outside Fossberg's store. I was thankful for the rouge which covered my pale cheeks. However, we were not in the least conspicuous on the well filled sidewalk.

A policeman passed, swinging his club, without looking twice at us. In the side street, down near the end of the short block, I could see the car waiting; a touring car, with the top down in true bandit fashion. It was a "stolen" car, too, to add verisimilitude— stolen from one of Mme Storey's friends, however.

Broadway uptown is an immensely wide street with grass plots down the middle. Trees used to grow there; but nowadays they would have nothing to root in but the subway.

Both sides of the way are filled in with immense and expensive apartment houses with entrances in the side streets. The Broadway level is given up to shops, not large in size, but nearly all dealing in expensive luxuries.

While it is not a fashionable street, I suppose there is as much money to the mile as in any other street in the world. The people of that neighborhood have a fat, soft look that must be tempting to a bandit.

Fossberg's, as I said before, is the finest establishment in that part of town. Only a few very choice objects are displayed in the show windows. There is but the one entrance, which is cut across the corner; at that season it was closed by a revolving door.

Inside, the four walls were lined by show-cases, the tops of which served as counters; and there was in addition a square inclosure in the middle of the store, surrounded by other cases to display goods. Within this inclosure was a block of low safes, in which many valuable objects were kept.

Well, the two policemen met, exchanged a word or two, and each slowly retraced his steps. The two minutes passed; then Mme Storey with her languid,

graceful carriage went through the revolving door, and I took up my station outside it.

At this moment, when I expected to have died with terror, all fear suddenly left me. Explain it how you will, my heart rebounded; all my faculties became preternaturally sharpened; the scene of that street was bitten on my brain as if with an acid; the towering apartment houses, red electric cars, smoothly moving motor cars, well dressed people drifting up and down.

Stephens and Farren were close by, looking in one of the show windows. The former was carrying an umbrella hanging from his arm. He had his eye on the chronometer exhibited in a corner of the window to inform passers-by of the correct time. When the proper interval had elapsed they followed Mme Storey through the revolving door.

In order not to interrupt my narrative, I will describe here what happened inside while I was waiting outside, poised like an animal ready for I knew not what.

There were eight or nine customers in the store, Mme Storey said, mostly in couples, since people generally like to have a friend along when they are choosing costly objects. There were five clerks on duty. Mr Benjamin Fossberg ought to have been waiting to receive my mistress, but he and his brother were both too nervous to show themselves openly. They watched the preliminaries from their office at the back.

Mme Storey went to the center inclosure. She had waited a moment or two for a clerk. In the meantime her two men entered; Stephens turning to the left, where watches were displayed, and Farren making his way toward a case of jeweled cuff-links.

Mme Storey told the clerk who came to her that she wanted a diamond ring. She affected not to be able to decide whether she wanted three diamonds in a marquise setting, or an emerald with a diamond on each side. We knew that the most valuable rings were kept in a certain safe, and her object was to make him open it. She said her clerk was an exquisite young gentleman like a model for a clothier's advertisement, and it was a shame to frighten him so rudely.

When he had opened the safe and brought a small velvet lined tray of rings to lay before Mme Storey, he found himself looking into the stubby barrel of her automatic. His face turned as white as the starched collar he wore; his eyes started from his head; no sound escaped him but a little throaty gasp.

"Fetch out all the trays from that safe and put them on the counter," said Mme Storey quietly.

Like a man in a dream he started to obey, reaching blindly for the trays while he kept his terrified eyes fixed on the gun. As he put the trays on the

counter, Mme Storey, always keeping him covered, with her free hand coolly emptied the contents on the square of velvet which covered the glass counter and put the trays to one side.

So quietly was all this done that several of the trays had been brought out and emptied before anybody else in the store got on to what was happening. Then a woman customer on the other side of the center enclosure caught sight of Mme. Storey's gun. A low, terrified cry broke from her, and instantly everybody in the store took alarm.

Stephens and Farren then slipped forward with their guns out, one on one side of her, one on the other. Standing back to back, they commanded the whole store between them.

"Keep still or I shoot!" growled Stephens.

"If you move a step I'll plug you!" added the boy.

There was no other sound, they said, except the hoarse breathing of the terror-stricken men and women. Everybody was frozen where they stood.

In sheer panic the two proprietors had dropped down behind the office partition. Stephens described to me the semicircle of still, ghastly faces that remained turned toward him.

There was one fat, overdressed woman in a near-seal coat, whose lips moved continually. But whether she thought she was gabbling a prayer or beseeching Stephens to spare her life, he never knew, because no sound escaped her.

There were only three persons on Farren's side of the store. None moved. Mme Storey meanwhile continued to concentrate on the clerk who was serving her.

"Move sharp!" she said, raising the gun a little.

He dumped the remaining trays on the counter in a heap. Mme Storey deliberately emptied them. There was now a glittering, sparkling mound of rings on the square of velvet.

Mme Storey picked up the corners of the square, one after another, and, giving the sack a twirl which confined the contents in a ball, dropped it into her hand bag. She then started to back toward the door, the two men covering her retreat.

During all this I was playing my part outside. Immediately after Stephens and Farren went in a woman entered, and I made no attempt to stop her; but when, a moment or two later two more women came along, according to instructions I attempted to hold them in conversation. I asked for information about vacant apartments in the neighborhood.

It is a fruitful subject, and I detained them without difficulty until out of the corner of my eye I saw Mme Storey backing toward the door. You must remember that all this happened in much less time than it takes to tell it.

I gave the revolving door a push to facilitate my mistress's exit. She came out, the gun already hidden. Farren followed, then Stephens.

There was no appearance of hurry. Stephens slyly dropped his umbrella in such a fashion that the revolving door jammed on it, and stuck. These doors will only turn in one direction, you know.

My last impression was of white faces inside, and fists beating on the glass; and the two foolish women that I had been talking to, vainly pushing at the door to get in. They had no idea of what had happened.

The people inside were shrieking at them, and pointing down toward the jammed umbrella. But the two women never got it; they only looked indignant.

Meanwhile we four walked rapidly, but with perfect sedateness toward our waiting car. There was never any need for me to kick off the satin slippers.

Just as we were getting into the car, the clerks broke out of the store with a roar; but in a jiffy we were around the corner and bowling down West End Avenue at thirty miles an hour. Conditions were just right; there was enough traffic in the street to conceal us, and not enough to hold us up. The pursuit never came within sight or sound of us.

We kept right on down West End Avenue past the point where it becomes plain Eleventh Avenue, and scattered at Forty-Second Street, leaving the "stolen" car to be found by the police in due course.

Such was our first hold-up. I expect you will smile at me, just as my mistress did, but I felt disappointed at the outcome, it seemed so easy. After getting so tremendously wrought up as I did at the last moment I required more excitement to satisfy me.

"It will do for a beginning," said Mme Storey cryptically. "If we appeared to get along too well without outside help, it would only be to defeat our own purpose."

YOU CAN IMAGINE with what eagerness I searched the newspapers next morning. Once more I was disappointed.

It appeared that while we were turning our trick at Fossberg's, the famous Bobbed-Hair Bandit had been conducting a sensational raid on the pay roll of a factory in Brooklyn. She got a whole column and a half whereas they only gave us a couple of short paragraphs tacked on to the end of her story.

According to this account which had been given out by one of the clerks, he and his mates had put up a bold resistance, and had succeeded in driving us off

with only a trifling loss to the establishment. These lies made me good and sore.

Why, the value of the rings taken by Mme Storey was upward of fifty thousand dollars. I experienced the psychology of a real gunman. I felt that we had been cheated of our due.

Mme Storey was highly amused when I voiced my feelings.

"Oh, never mind the general public," she said soothingly; "if we get credit among our professional friends at the Boule' Miche', it will be more to the point."

That night Benny Abell was sent on ahead to the resort to act as a sort of advance agent for the company. We were to join him there after midnight.

The Boule' Miche' calls itself a "club", of course, though it hangs out a glittering electric sign to the street. Only "members" are admitted upon presentation of their cards. It is not difficult to get one's self elected.

The entrance is ingeniously protected by a series of dressing rooms and lobbies swarming with employees. Beyond is the restaurant proper, consisting of three large rooms, all done in a florid rococo style with slashings of gilt scroll work.

In the center of each room a little fountain throws up a jet of water with colored lights playing upon it. At this time the place was enjoying a wonderful run of prosperity owing, no doubt, to the widespread connections of the genial proprietor.

Pretty soon Bat Bartley would sell out and the Boule' Miche' blossom out under a new proprietor and a new name. For obvious reasons none of these places lasts long.

As soon as we took our seats in the principal room, it became apparent that Abell had done his work well. Those whom we had spotted as the shady habitués of the place bore themselves toward us with an increased respect.

In particular Bat Bartley was even more supple and suave than usual. He came hurrying up to ask with a meaning air if we would like a private room that night.

"I do my best to keep out the wrong sort of persons," he said, "but once in awhile they will get by." He was referring to agents of the police.

"No, thanks," said Mme Storey with her cool smile. "I enjoy watching the crowd. Nobody is looking for us yet."

Bat Bartley laughed as if she had made an excellent joke. As a matter of fact, no descriptions of us had been published; and we had learned through Inspector Rumsey that the clerk at Fossbergs' had been incapable of furnishing the police with working descriptions.

"Well, anyhow," said Bartley with a wink, "have a bottle of cider on the house."

This beverage, which was served from a plain bottle, unless I miss my guess, originated in a cellar of Reims.

Abell did not remain with us continuously, but visited his acquaintances through the rooms as occasion offered. By and by he brought one of them up to our table.

"Meet my friend, Mr Tinker," he said, "you know, Muggsy Tinker between friends."

It was a comical figure. He had the look of a little boy who had become middle-aged without growing up.

He had a boy's curly pate now streaked with gray, and a schoolboy's sheepish smile, though his face was seamed and wrinkled. A large, staring glass eye which matched very ill with its little twinkling mate added to the peculiarity of his appearance.

He was wearing the conventional dinner coat, but would have looked more at home in a rough jacket with a dirty handkerchief around his neck.

"Please' to meet yeh. Please' to meet yeh," he said, grinning affably all around. He sat down and accepted a glass of cider.

"I've heard of you," said Mme Storey. "You and Buck Millings used to work together years ago."

"That's right. That's right," he said, greatly pleased. "Buck and me pulled off many a job together. He was an A-I partner. They don't make his like nowadays. Poor Buck, he met his end under a freight train in the Joliet yards. To think of anybody remembering them days! We used to hear of you then, ma'am. Oh, yes, you was famous. Way out of our class. You for the classy kid glove work, us for the rough!"

Mme Storey toasted him with her glass.

Mr Tinker, without saying anything plainly, went on to let us know that he had heard of our exploit of the day before, and highly commended it.

"Say, that was pulled off in a real big style," he said. "It was just what you'd expect of Kate Arkledon."

"Just a beginning," said Mme Storey with a casual air.

"Say, the papers gave you a rotten deal on that," he went on. "It made me sore. A brilliant piece of work like that ought to get proper credit."

My heart quite went out to the little man for his sympathy.

"Oh, well, we're not looking for publicity," said Mme Storey.

The little man gave her a sharp look.

"Oh, I don't know," he replied. "Times have changed."

The talk drifted away to other matters. After awhile he said, apropos of nothing that had gone before: "You ought to see Jake."

"Jake who?" asked Mme Storey with an idle air.

"I don't know his proper name. We just call him Jake the Canvasser."

"Whom does he canvass for?"

"Oh, his organization," said Muggsy vaguely.

I pricked up my ears at that.

Mme Storey refused to betray any interest in this Jake; but Muggsy returned to the subject of his own account. "Jake may have a proposition to put up to you. You ought to talk to him. He's an A-I feller."

"What sort-of proposition?"

"Oh, let him name it to you himself. You'll find him better than his word. We all deals with Jake. He earns his commission all right, and then some."

"I know these Jakes," said Mme Storey scornfully. "They belong to the family of bloodsuckers. They live off us who do the work and take the risk."

Muggsy wagged his hand back and forth. "No, no," he said, "you get this wrong. Jake ain't no common receiver. He's got a new proposition. Up-to-date."

"Oh, I guess I can run my business without him," said Mme Storey.

An ugly look appeared in Muggsy's face. "You'll find you gotta deal with Jake," he said. "We all do. The service that Jake supplies is for the benefit of all, and all are expected to pay their share. Nachelly, if anybody tried to profit by Jake's service without puttin' up for it, it would make the crowd sore."

"I'll hear what he has to say," said Mme Storey, coolly.

"Times has changed, ma'am," said Muggsy meaningly. "It used to be everything was individuality, but nowadays it's organization. You can't do nothin' without organizing. Either you gotta climb aboard the band wagon, or the wheels will sure go over yeh!"

ON the following evening the redoubtable Jake turned up at the Boule' Miche' in person. Bat Bartley brought him to our table. He was as smooth as a well-whipped mayonnaise.

In appearance he was the prosperous business man— well, not quite, for the marvelously cut blue suit, a little lighter in color than men usually wear, the pale pink shirt and tie of a darker hue gave him a sporting character. He wore an immense diamond on the middle finger of his left hand.

He was more the successful theatrical manager or baseball magnate. He had one of these smooth full faces that lent themselves naturally to an unctuous smile; his handsome, dark eyes rolled and beamed mysteriously, and gave nothing away.

His first act was to order up a bottle of "cider". I found that he was always amply supplied with funds. He was driven about town by a smart chauffeur in an elegant new car of the most expensive make. He was liberal, too, in making loans to any member of "the crowd" who was out of luck.

You are not to suppose that he sat down and came out plump and plain with his proposition. By no means. A good hour was spent in laying the foundations for a beautiful friendship.

A second bottle followed the first. He made no secret of his admiration for my mistress, and in that I think he was honest. I believe he was a little astonished by her superb style after the commonplace material he was accustomed to deal with.

He entertained us with pleasant gossip of the great world. He seemed to know everybody worth knowing, and I was greatly impressed until he gave the snap away by bringing in the name of Mme Storey.

"Oh, Rose and I are intimate friends," he said carelessly. "She owes her success to the fact that she keeps in close touch with men like me who know all sides of life. But," he added with a confidential smile, "I don't tell her too much, you bet. I look after my friends. Anybody will tell you that. Rose don't get as much out of me as I get out of her."

I wish you could have seen my mistress's innocent expression while he was getting this off. She looked like the cat who has swallowed the canary.

By insidious degrees he approached the real business in hand. He was careful never to give the plain brutal names to things.

"The organization that I represent," he explained, "has two main objects; first to advertise the business as a whole; second, to see that the individual operator gets proper recognition. You can't rise in any profession without publicity. Look at the mean way the papers used you the other day. That couldn't happen if you were in with us.

"Providing publicity to the nervy boys and girls that live dangerously," he went on, "that's our line." The phrase "live dangerously" was continually on his lips. I wondered where he had picked it up.

"Look where they stand today as the result of our publicity," he went on. "The police helpless, the public terror-stricken. You have only to pull your gat anywhere for every boob in the neighborhood to freeze solid. All due to intelligent publicity; to such stunts as the Bobbed-Haired Bandit. That's our stuff. That's reached such a point that we don't even have to furnish the stories any more. The papers run it spontaneously. They hand it to us."

"So it seems," said my mistress.

"But we don't stop with one stunt," he resumed. "Always something new. It was my people who staged the holdup of Mme Storey awhile ago. That was a

wow of a stunt. Just look at the publicity we got out of it. It had a tremendous moral effect. For everybody says to themselves: 'My God! If they can get away with that what chance have *we* got?' And they give up without a struggle!"

Here a certain compunction appeared to attack him, and he assumed a deprecatory tone.

"Of course, I told you just now that Rose Storey was my friend, and so she is in a manner of speaking. I know her well, but she ain't a real friend, like. She only goes with me for what she thinks she can get out of me, so I don't feel under any obligations to her. I just go her one better. That's fair, ain't it?"

"Absolutely," agreed my mistress. "By the way, who pulled off that trick?"

I kept my eyes on my plate during this amazing scene. I distrusted my own powers of dissimulation.

"Two young fellows that I'm bringing out," said Jake. "Falseface Petro and Tony Lanza."

"Falseface? How did he get that name?"

"Because he can make his face like a wax mask. He gives nothing away. It's worth a fortune in our business."

"Sure!"

"Oh, those lads have a future before them," commented Jake. "They're young yet, but they're bound to rise."

"I'd like to meet them," said Mme Storey carelessly. "Perhaps they'd be willing to work work with me."

"They'd jump at the chance," said Jake. "A woman of your reputation. I'll bring them up some night."

"Well, tell them who I am, and what I've done," said Mme Storey indifferently. "I can't be explaining myself to kids."

Jake enlarged upon his organization.

"In addition to publicity," he said, "we have a special advisory department to investigate likely plants and furnish our subscribers with full information. In that case all you got to do is to go and turn your trick, knowing that everything is all right. That costs more, of course."

"I would prefer to investigate my own plants," Mme Storey told him.

"Sure, sure," he said obsequiously; "a person of your experience. We are also prepared to furnish suggestions for big, spectacular stunts, good for a column or more of space, and beside that we run a press clipping bureau."

"Press clippings?" repeated Mme Storey, elevating her eyebrows.

"Sure. Every operator, after he has covered a clever trick, wants to read what they say about it. It's valuable, too, to learn what the police are doing in his case."

"Well, I've been in the game too long," said Mme Storey. "I'm not interested in clippings. What could you do for me?"

"Say," said Jake impressively. "I wouldn't give a person like you no hot air. You're wise. I wouldn't say a word to you about what we could do. I wouldn't ask you to pay a cent, neither. All you got to do is to let me know the place and time where you're going to pull your next trick, and we'll do the rest. The result will surprise you." His eyes gleamed appreciatively.

"Say, with a person of your style and your reputation," he went on, "there's no limit to what we could do! What a chance! What a chance! Why, we'd leave the Bob-Haired Bandit tied to the post!"

"All for nothing?" queried Mme Storey dryly.

"You would agree if you were satisfied with the publicity to pay us our usual commission. Ten per cent of the proceeds. That's all."

"In goods?" she asked slyly.

His face hardened. "In cash. All our dealings are in cash. We don't want to interfere with your arrangements for disposing of the goods."

"I see," said Mme Storey. "Well, look here. I'll tell you what I'll do. You ask your people to furnish me with a suggestion for a sensational stunt that will break into the headlines, and if it appeals to me I'll do business with you."

"Fine!" cried Jake. "You shall have it tomorrow night!"

Shortly after this we went home, it being then about half past two. We left Jake the Canvasser circulating from table to table amongst his customers.

The Boule' Miche' closed officially at the legal hour, but behind its darkened front the privileged guests lingered on until morning. In the midst of a gay party in the outer room I saw the face of Madge Caswell, a young woman who works for us sometimes. She has a faculty for trailing a suspect that amounts to genius.

She was there by Mme Storey's orders, and in a fleeting glance of intelligence my mistress signified to her that Jake was her man. Madge's instructions were to spare no expense in keeping in contact with him, even if it meant hiring half a dozen assistants, but to allow him to slip at any moment sooner than risk letting him suspect he was watched.

The following night found us in our usual places at the Boule' Miche' after midnight, surrounded by the same showy and noisy crowd with flushed faces and glassy eyes. The Boule' Miche' represented a good time to these people, but they were not really having it. They whooped themselves up to it.

What a lot of time and money mortals waste in the constant pursuit of so-called pleasure!

We saw Jake the Canvasser from time to time with one party or another, but he was coy tonight and allowed a good while to elapse before he came to

our table. Perhaps he wished to force Mme Storey to send for him. But she was a better waiter than he was, and in the end he had to come of his own accord.

He sat down and entertained us with his anecdotes. My mistress would not deign to question him. Finally he said:

"Er— I heard from my people."

"Yes?" said Mme Storey, with perfect indifference.

Jake glanced questioningly at the rest of us.

"Oh, you may speak freely," she told him; "these people are in on everything I do."

"Well," said Jake, "the organization suggests that you go back to Fossberg's and turn a second trick. First-rate publicity in that. It will be the last place they'd expect you. If you make your second visit before the clerks have time to recover their nerve, it'll be a walk-away!"

"Not a bad idea," said Mme Storey, with a subtle smile.

My heart began to beat with the same old suffocating fear of the future.

NEXT MORNING we plunged into our preparations again. We already had full information as to the plan and layout of the Fossberg store, and had now to concoct a new line of approach that would stand as good a chance of success as the old.

Bert Farren, who was sent up to make a preliminary reconnaissance, reported that the revolving door had been replaced with two pairs of swinging doors. These doors swung either way. Also, a carriage opener had been hired to stand outside.

It was obvious that he was a detective in disguise, and armed. This man seemed to me like a fatal obstacle in the way of our success, but Mme Storey smiled when she heard about him.

"It will make the problem more interesting," she said.

We struck another snag when Inspector Rumsey approached Benjamin Fossberg with our proposition. He met with a flat refusal.

It was somebody else's turn to be the goat, Fossberg said; he and his brother had not recovered from the shock of the first hold-up. The inspector was finally forced to bring him down to our office, for Mme Storey to exert her charm upon him.

She finally won a reluctant consent, with the stipulation that both brothers be allowed to absent themselves from the store when the stunt was pulled off. Mme Storey had no objection to this, of course.

Fossberg pointed out that he had now no excuse to deprive the clerks of their guns.

"Then load them with blanks," said Mme Storey. "They'll never know the difference. Let there be an exchange of shots. It will add drama to the affair."

In these preliminary discussions it soon developed that I was to be put forward this time as the principal performer. Mme Storey could not be the first to enter the store without adding a disguise to her disguise, and this she could not do since it was necessary for the success of the affair that the clerks should recognize her in the end.

The realization of what they expected of me almost overwhelmed me, but not quite, for now I was borne up by the secret hope that when the actual moment came I should be able to play my part as well as any of them. In the meantime, though, I suffered all the torments of the damned.

This "living dangerously", as Jake termed it, was not all that it was cracked up to be.

We continued to frequent the Boule' Miche' late at night, and our prestige there was growing. Through Jake and through Bat Bartley we were gradually becoming acquainted with all the "operators" or "adventurers", as they termed themselves. Most of them were incredibly young, and all distinguished by the childish vanity which seems to be inseparable from the modern crook. Among them were several of the girls who alternated in the role of the Bobbed-Haired Bandit.

I understood that there were at least half a dozen bobbed-hair bandits. These youngsters, recognizing a great character in Mme Storey, instinctively deferred to her. She would have made good with them, even without the infernal halo of Kate Arkledon's reputation around her head.

One of the girls quite won my heart. They called her Brownie. She was not strictly beautiful, her mouth being too wide and her blue eyes set too far apart, but she had that indefinable something which is called charm.

Her frank gaiety was irresistible. It was her finest qualities which had driven her into association with these thieves— a hatred of smugness and sham. Under happier circumstances she might have adorned the highest circles.

After it was all over we tried to find this girl, but she had disappeared. Like May-flies they enjoy their brief dance in the sun— then oblivion.

I may say here that none of these young people suffered as a result of Mme Storey's activities in the case. It was agreed between her and Inspector Rumsey that the police must do their own work in respect to apprehending the small fry.

My mistress's interest lay with the cold-hearted man or men who remained in safety in the background, profiting by the recklessness of the young. But of course she always meant to get Falseface Petro and Tony Lanza; that she owed to herself.

My heart gave a great jump when I first saw these two enter the Boule' Miche'. Now for the acid test of our disguise, I thought, glancing at my mistress and at my own reflection in the mirror.

We had been playing our roles for many days now, and they had become second nature to us; there was little likelihood that they would recognize us separately. True, for them to find us together added to the danger somewhat; but we were now in the midst of quite a large party, most of whom were known to Falseface and Tony as "safe".

The two young men had been told all about us, and that is the secret of a successful disguise— *i.e.*, to prepare in advance the minds of those whom you wish to deceive.

Jake brought them up to our table from behind me. I could *feel* them coming. My heart beat thickly as at the approach of a dangerous animal. Fortunately I was playing an insignificant role, and they scarcely deigned to notice me.

Little Tony was hailed by the crowd as a good fellow, while Falseface was greeted with more respect. The latter, though he was not now inaction, still maintained his pose of inscrutability.

He stood there with a good-humored sneer, as much as to say he would permit the ladies to admire him. And the worst of it was, you couldn't help but admire him.

Conceited and empty as he was, there was power in his unnatural self-control. In that circle of grinning faces he never smiled.

It was quite thrilling to see him and Mme Storey together. Neither would yield an inch. Each affected to ignore the other; but it was none the less evident that for these two the others at the table simply did not exist.

Neither had much to say. Mme Storey smoked one cigarette after another, and through the haze of tobacco fumes her expression appeared even more cynical and reckless. Falseface Petro gave himself the languid, elegant airs of a celebrated screen star.

We had made room for the newcomers at our table, and the inevitable "cider" circulated. Of course in company like that we never discussed business; the talk was just as empty and meaningless as might have been heard at any table in the place. It was merely a noise.

"Well, what's the good word, Falseface?"

"Nobody's got a good word for you, Butch."

Loud laughter greeted this sally.

"Say, you're so quick you're ahead of yourself. Wait till you catch up, fella."

"If I waited for you, I'd be there yet."

"Is 'at so?"

Somebody broke into song:

"My gal's a high-bawn lady;
She's dahk, but not too shady—"

"Where'd you dig that up, Brownie? That song was laid away when mother was a girl."

"I don't care. I like it."

Louder:

"Fedders lak a peacock, just as gay;
She's not cullud, she was bawn that way."

"What yeh tryin' to do, compete wit' t' orchester?"

"T' orchester ain't in it wit' me."

Fortissimo:

"Down the line they can't outshine
This high-bawn gal of mine!"

"...Odds of sixty-four to one, and she romped home. I had a tip, too, and I wouldn't play it. I wisht somebody would kick me now."

"Hey, fellas, Tony wants somebody to kick him!"

"That's a good show down at the Booth."

"Yeah. Lee Shubert sent me a box last week."

"Yes, he did!"

"...They're gonna call it the Sans Sowcy."

"What's 'at mean?"

"Soich me! Vincent Astor and young Morgan and all the big fellas belongs."

"Well, they're nottin' in my life."

There was dancing in the middle room, and the crowd at our table was continually breaking up and reforming in different combinations. When an opportunity presented itself Mme Storey whispered to me to pass the word to our fellows to let us go home alone this night.

It turned out in the end that Falseface Petro was not as indifferent as he seemed. When Mme Storey rose to leave, he got up also in his lordly way and squired us out.

Tony followed after like his shadow.

Falseface signaled a taxi at the curb.

"Can I drop you anywhere?" he drawled.

"I live in —— Street," said Mme Storey.

The upshot was that Falseface and Tony accepted an invitation to come up for a last drink and a smoke. By this time we had thoroughly established our characters with them, and there was little chance of a discovery. But the sense of danger was always present; one could not relax for a moment.

How strange it seemed to be hobnobbing with those two sleek young savages!

Arrived in our own little flat, none of us needed to put a curb on our tongues.

"Jake told me about the stunt you pulled off at Fossberg's last week," said Falseface. "That was a damn neat piece of work."

"Oh, I was just getting my hand in after quite an extended rest," said my mistress carelessly.

"What you get out of it?"

"Twenty-five thousand. That was about half what the stuff was worth."

"It's better than I can do. Those fellows are bloodsuckers."

"You're no slouch at the game yourself," said Mme Storey. "That was a nervy stunt you pulled in Mme Storey's office. I like to see a woman like that get it. She's too big for her shoes, she is."

"If you've got the nerve they can't stop you!" said Falseface, pluming himself.

"Sure. That's the principle I've always gone on."

"Me and you ought to be in on something together," he said with an elaborate show of indifference.

"Suits me," said my mistress. "We're going to pull a big stunt next week. Going back to Fossberg's to make a second cleanup. There will be good publicity in it this time."

"Well, Tony and me's got nothing on next week," said Falseface carelessly.

"I could use a couple more men if they were the right sort," said Mme Storey. "I take a third; I'll give you a quarter; and the rest divide what's left. There won't be but six or seven of as in it."

"We're on," said Falseface, without troubling to consult his partner.

"All right," said Mme Storey. "Be here at nine to-morrow night to meet the crowd and talk things over. We'll go on to the Boule' Miche' after."

THE AFFAIR was first set for Wednesday afternoon of the following week. On Tuesday Inspector Rumsey came into our office in a state of perturbation.

He had just learned that the captain of the precinct in which Fossberg's was situated had made a shift, and that thereafter there would be an officer on fixed post in the middle of Broadway, immediately in front of the jewelry store.

"Of course I could have given him a tip to put it off until after tomorrow," said the inspector, "but you told me most particularly not to interfere with the local police arrangements."

"Quite so," said my mistress. "If you told the captain to put it off, and then the robbery took place tomorrow, the cat would be out of the bag. And we're not yet ready to release that cat."

"But what will you do?" asked the inspector. "You can't make a get-away with an armed policeman outside the door."

"We'll make a new plan," said Mme. Storey calmly. "Speaking of cats, there's more than one way of skinning them."

"That makes two men outside the door," he said in distress.

"Well," rejoined my mistress, smiling, "there's a back door."

To give us time to discuss the details of the new plan, and to rehearse our parts, the affair was put off until Saturday at ten thirty. On Saturday mornings the volume of business is about the same as the afternoons of other days. On the afternoon of Saturday we feared there would be too great a crowd for our comfort.

I was relieved to discover that in the new plan I was not called upon to play so dangerous a part. We were all to enter the store simultaneously.

Abell was released from any participation in this holdup, much to his joy. There was no glamour about it for him. That left six of us to conduct the actual operation.

The gang was completed by a dandy chauffeur borrowed by Mme Storey from a wealthy friend. The car "stolen" for the occasion was an elegant new limousine.

On Saturday morning at nine we met at the flat. I was in a miserable state of funk. I hope I succeeded in concealing it.

Mme Storey served out the guns, and she herself made sure that Falseface and Tony were not carrying any additional weapons. They protested against the blank shells, but our leader stood firm.

"Our object is robbery, and not murder," she said coolly. "If you are obliged to shoot, the blanks will go off with just as much noise and have the same moral effect. And if there is any slip-up in our plans, you won't land in the death chamber."

They appeared to see the force of her argument.

We left the flat separately. It fell to my part to ride uptown in the elegant car with the dandy chauffeur.

But I was in no condition to enjoy all this grandeur. My knees trembled, my hands were clammy, my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. I wore a close

hat which completely hid my red hair, and certain changes had been made in my facial decorations.

On the first occasion the clerks at Fossberg's could not have had but the briefest glimpse of me; still there was a possibility of my face having been photographed on somebody's mind, and we were not taking any chances.

Two blocks below the store I halted in order to make sure that I was not arriving too soon. Mme Storey came to the car door as if to greet an acquaintance.

"All here," she said cheerfully. "Give us two minutes, then drive on, and go ahead with the program. Do not look about for us as you are entering the store."

"How about the two policemen on beat?" I asked.

"You can disregard them today."

When I drove up in front of Fossberg's in my fine car, the door opener hastened to help me out. As I stepped down I made believe to stumble, and allowed a little cry of pain to escape me.

"Oh, my ankle!"

The man caught hold of my arm to support me. "Will you get back in your car?" he asked.

"No, let him drive on," I said. "I will sit down in the store for a moment."

He helped me across the sidewalk. This trick was to draw him inside the store, you understand.

I was half paralyzed with fear. He must have felt how my arm was trembling; but I suppose he ascribed it to the pain I was suffering.

Inside the store, a clerk made haste to push up a chair, and I sank into it. In a glance I saw that the place was fairly well filled, and then things began to happen.

As the door opener left me to return to his post, he found himself facing Falseface, Tony, and young Farren, who had entered behind me, each with a gun in his hand. Instinctively the doorkeeper's hand went toward his pocket; but at a harsh command from Falseface, he thought better of it, and flung his hands above his head.

In a twinkling Tony had disarmed him. Behind them, in the space between the two pairs of doors, Mme Storey was coolly bolting the outside doors, and pulling down the shades. To the glass of the door she affixed a little notice which had been prepared in readiness:

"Closed on account of death in the family."

Stephens had been sent around through the apartment house to cut off the escape of anybody who might try to get out by the rear door of the store. This door opened into the lobby of the apartment house.

For the moment I remained sitting where I was. All fear left me, and I seemed to be able to see all round my head.

Mme Storey joined the three men, and the four of them spread out, and advanced across the store like skirmishers. When they came abreast of me, I fell into line with them.

A strange silence filled the place. Then Mme Storey ordered everybody, clerks and customers, over to the far side out of our way, and they scurried like rats at her bidding.

The human creature is not a pretty object when he is in the grip of terror. Over in the corner they struggled insanely to get behind each other.

Never will I forget the sight. There was one big woman squeaking in terror, and struggling with all her might. In spite of her struggles, one of the men clerks, who had her by the elbows, continued to hold her in front of him.

Another clerk, instead of following the crowd, silently dropped out of sight behind the counter on my left. I knew he had a gun back there, though it was loaded with blanks. I told Mme Storey about him.

"Well, if he sticks his head over the counter, blow it off," she said harshly, loud enough for him to hear.

Nobody but me could hear the faint ring of laughter in her voice. She was enjoying herself.

A third clerk slipped out through the office at the back, but we were not concerned about him. Presently he reappeared, walking backward, stepping high, and holding his hands above his head. Stephens followed, covering him with his gun.

Mme Storey ordered Stephens to dislodge the man behind the counter. As Stephens looked around the counter, the clerk fired.

Low, terrified cries broke from the people across the store. My own heart failed me at the sound of the explosion, though I knew it was all a comedy.

Stephens did not return his fire, but flung himself upon the clerk, and dragged him out of his hiding place. At the back of the store there was a tall safe with the door standing open. Stephens flung his man inside, and closed the door.

Meanwhile Falseface, Tony, and I had made for the safes in the center of the store. Each of us was provided with big pockets inside the skirts of our coats. I had the combination of each of these four safes, but they were not called for since all stood open.

Dropping on our knees, we began to pour the contents of the trays into our pockets. Such a cascade of glittering necklaces, pins, bracelets and rings!

While I worked, I could see Mme Storey out of the tail of my eye, helping to cover the cowering crowd in the far corner. Without lowering her gun, she

took a tiny cigar from the breast pocket of her neat jacket, and sticking it in her mouth, lit a match with her thumb nail. I think this display of coolness intimidated our victims as much as the guns.

It took us but a minute or two to empty the safes. We did not bother with the show case stuff.

Coming out from behind the counter we made for the rear door. Mme Storey and the other two men backed slowly toward us.

Then from the midst of the crowd they were covering somebody fired, and instantly pandemonium broke loose. Whipping out their guns involuntarily, Falseface and Tony returned the fire as fast as they could shoot.

Nobody could be hurt, of course; but from the shrieks and yells which rose, you would have thought that every shot had found its mark. Somebody was shoved through a show case with a horrifying crash.

As we backed through the office, a loud pounding was heard on the street door. We had not a moment to lose. Somehow, we found ourselves in the lobby of the apartment house, and got the door closed.

It was quiet there. The door closed with a spring lock, and opened inward toward the store. There was no means of fastening it from the outside; but Stephens had brought a long, thin bar for the purpose. When this was laid obliquely across the door, caught inside the handle, the ends projected beyond the door frame; and those inside were unable to pull the door toward them.

I saw it was quiet in the lobby, and the way clear. The door from the street was locked, and Stephens, upon first entering, had bound and gagged the elevator attendant, and had thrown him in a little office alongside the entrance.

To be sure, the door of one of the rear apartments opened, and a white face showed for a moment, but we had nothing to fear from this direction. The door was quickly slammed again.

We crowded into the elevator. Stephens knew how to operate it. The last thing we saw, as we shot upward, was a crowd of people headed by a policeman turning in from the sidewalk toward the street door.

My knees weakened at the sight of the bluecoat. A policeman is such an obstinate fact to face.

On the top landing a couple of people were waiting for the elevator. They fell back in affright as we poured out. We ran up the final flight of stairs to the roof.

I should explain that this apartment house was one of a pair exactly alike, which occupied the whole block fronting on Broadway. All we had to do therefore was to run across the roof, and descend into the twin house, whose

entrance was in the next cross street. The door from the roof was armed with a bolt on the inside, and this we shot as we passed through.

In such a state of excitement, one's instinct was to run right down through the house; but Mme Storey would not permit it. She feared that the noise of our descent might alarm somebody below, and result in our being cut off.

She forced us to wait on the top landing for the elevator. Oh, but it was hard to wait with one's nerves jumping!

The elevator came at last. As we were getting in, we heard running feet on the roof, and fists began to pound on the door we had bolted. The negro elevator boy looked at us terrified, and hesitated.

Mme Storey, smiling, took out her gun, and affected to examine it. The boy's black face turned gray with terror, and he took us down in a hurry. Not a word was spoken.

We issued out of the house without any appearance of hurry. Our elegant limousine was waiting at the door with the engine running. The alarm had not yet penetrated into this street.

We could see people running down Broadway. Mme Storey was the last of us to get in the car.

As she pulled the door after her, the people running down Broadway stopped, and a crowd came pouring around the corner from the other direction. They were headed by a policeman with a gun in his hand. They were not in any too great a hurry, though.

They stopped to reconnoiter prudently. I was looking out of the rear window of the limousine. As the policeman raised his arm I dropped.

We roared away down the street. The policeman sent a couple of shots after us, while I made myself small. However, they went wide. We turned the corner on two wheels; turned another corner and slowed down.

We were safe. Away from the actual scene nobody would ever have suspected that handsome car with its dandy chauffeur of having taken part in a holdup.

When I realized that we were really safe, I suddenly dissolved in weakness. I seemed to lose all grip, all control of myself. Simultaneously perspiring and shivering in an agony of after-fear, I groaned to myself: Never again! Never again!

At Eighty-Sixth Street we turned east, and making our way through the park by the transverse road, abandoned the car in Yorkville, and scattered. As Mme Storey and I made our way decorously down Madison Avenue, all that had happened seemed like a dream. However, the weight of jewelry bumping against my knees reminded me that it was no vision.

My mistress went into a drug store to telephone. With a grin in my direction, she left the door of the booth open a crack, and I heard this astonishing conversation:

"Is this Fossberg's jewelry store?... This is the lady who just held you up... Held you up, I said: Can't you understand English? I just wanted to tell you, in case you had overlooked it, that one of your clerks is shut up in the big safe at the back of the store... Better let him out before he suffocates... Oh, that's all right. Don't mention it. Goodbye."

BY TWO O'CLOCK the first brief accounts of the affair were on the streets. The late afternoon editions carried the complete story. And it was a story!

As a feature we had no competition that day. Jake the Canvasser had certainly delivered the goods. Mme Storey and I read the newspapers, chuckling.

It appeared that the chief source of information was a customer who happened to be in the store at the time. The clerks, as before, were too flustered to give a coherent account of what had happened.

I shall not give the newspaper story in full since I have already described what happened. The best part of the story was that it was true, except for certain artistic details added by the narrator. As when he said he heard the bandits address their leader as "Duchess".

There was a clever touch! The soubriquet stuck, of course; we never appeared in the newspapers after that but Mme Storey was termed the Duchess, or the Duchess-Bandit.

What a marvelous thing is publicity! Only start it once, and it rolls up like a snowball. Every day some new story of the Duchess's exploits appeared.

People claimed to have seen her here, there, everywhere. Moreover, the newspapers all carried indignant editorials asking what was the matter with the police that such things were allowed to go on. That was good publicity, too.

In that first story every possible detail concerning Mme Storey was played up; her elegant appearance, her extraordinary coolness, the humorous remarks that she addressed to her trembling victims. The fact that it was our second descent on the place was not omitted.

Fantastic were the accounts of the loot we had secured. It appeared that so far as the more valuable part of the stock was concerned, Fossberg's was completely cleaned out. In point of magnitude it was the greatest jewel robbery that had ever taken place in New York.

Two policemen added their quota to the story. Officer James Crear said:

"I was on fixed post at the corner of Broadway and— Street about ten thirty this morning, when a fellow ran over to me, and said there was

something wrong in Fossberg's jewelry store on the corner. Said he heard shooting and yelling inside as he passed by. So I ran over there, and I found the store closed, and a notice on the door reading: 'Closed on account of death in the family.'

"I thought this was funny, because I had seen folks going in and out just a few minutes before. I could hear a racket inside, and I rapped on the door with my stick. Pretty soon it was opened by one of the clerks, who was so scared he couldn't tell a straight story. But I understood there had been a hold-up, and the bandits were making their way out through the apartment house lobby in the rear of the store.

"I ran around outside to the door of the apartment house. It was locked. I forced it, and inside I found the elevator boy tied up and gagged. He told me the gang had gone up in the elevator. I ran up the stairs after them. They went over the roof, and down through the adjoining apartment house. They bolted the roof door after them, and I lost more time forcing it. When I got down to the street they were out of sight."

Officer William Rohrback said: "I was patrolling the west side of Broadway at— Street, when I heard Officer Crear rap for assistance. I was two blocks away from his post. When I got there I found a crowd milling around Fossberg's jewelry store. I was told that a hold-up had taken place and that the bandits had gone upstairs in the apartment house, and with the help of Officer Regan, who had also run up, we put a watch at every exit from the house.

"The janitor came up and told me there was a way over the roof into the adjoining house, so, leaving the others on watch, I ran around into the next street. When I turned the corner, I saw a woman getting into a limousine car. It was such an elegant looking outfit I hesitated; but when it started down the street at forty miles an hour or better, I fired three shots in the air. The car failed to stop."

The "customer" in Fossberg's who supplied the real story to the reporter had this to say about the Duchess:

"She was a woman of about forty-five, but well preserved. Must have been a beauty in her youth. In figure still as slender and active as a young woman. She looked more like one of those fashionable dames than a bandit; and more like Park Avenue than Upper Broadway; the real thing. She had the hardest boiled face I ever saw on a woman. I mean by that, she meant business. A desperate character. I wouldn't have thought of opposing her.

"As she was standing squarely in front of me all the time we were herded over at the side of the store, I had plenty of time to size her up. She looked at us as if we were dirt under her feet. The most striking features about her were

her eyes, the pupils of which closed up to mere slits, like a cat's eyes in daylight. It gave her a terrible look."

You see how cleverly he blended fact and fiction.

An amusing outcome of the affair was, that two days later a committee of West Side merchants waited upon Mme Storey in her office, and did their best to persuade her to take the job of running down the Duchess. My mistress smilingly declined.

But I am getting a little ahead of my story. On the night of the hold-up we telephoned ahead to the Boule' Miche' asking for a private room. Such detailed descriptions of all of us had been published, it was no longer prudent to appear in the general room. We entered by a side door, and were taken upstairs by a private stairway.

In the "Diamond Room", as they called it, we held a sort of reception, which lasted half the night. Everybody "in the know"— that is to say, every shady character who frequented the place, came up to congratulate us. Our fame was great in the underworld; the Duchess had thrown the Bobbed-Hair Bandit in the shade.

When Jake the Canvasser came to us that night, what an exchange of compliments took place! For once Jake lost his cagey air; enthusiasm carried him away. He held Mme Storey's hand in both of his, and gazed in her face like a lover.

"Finest thing I ever heard of!" he said. "Finest thing I ever heard of! You're the queen of them all!"

"I had A-I support," she said, including us all in her glance.

"Are you satisfied with the way we handled it?" asked Jake. "Of course, there'll be a lot of new stuff in the morning papers."

"More than satisfied!" said my mistress. "The man who got up that story was a genius!"

"Of course, we put our best man on it," said Jake. "I may say he is a well-known literary guy, who just does this on the side. But at that, he couldn't have done a thing if you hadn't given him the stuff to work on. Say, that notice, 'Closed on account of death in the family,' and the little cigar, and that trick of lighting a match with your thumbnail while you kept the crowd covered; that was better than anything he could invent."

"Oh, I don't know," she said, not to be outdone: "that name he hung on me, 'the Duchess', that was a masterstroke. To a professional person a good name is more than half the battle. And that touch about the cat's eyes; it couldn't have been bettered. I hope your people are pleased with the way we pulled the thing off."

"I haven't had any communication with them yet," said Jake, "but I know they must be. In fact, the affair reflects credit on both sides. It shows that we were just waiting for each other; you feel that, don't you?"

"I'll never make a move without consulting you," she said.

Later, Jake contrived to get all outsiders out of the room, so that he could talk business with my mistress.

"Have you any notion what the stuff is worth?" he asked eagerly.

In respect to this matter, Mme Storey intended to string Jake along as far as she could, of course.

"Not yet," she told him. "I've got good people working for me, and the stuff is all in their hands. But there's so damn much of it it'll take a while for the market to absorb it. They have paid me twenty-five thousand on account. I brought yours."

It was paid, over in twenty-five crisp hundred dollar bills. I may say that this money was not marked. In dealing with men so astute as Jake and his employers, it would have been too risky. But we had the numbers of the bills, of course, and hoped to be able to trace them by that means.

Jake put away the money.

"Well, how about our next grandstand play?" he said, rubbing his hands.

"Oh, give us a chance," laughed Mme Storey.

"Oh, there's no desire to overwork you," said Jake, in his oily way; "no, indeed! But we mustn't miss the psychological moment, either. This thing that we've started will run along for a week or ten days without any help from us. They'll all be workin' to hand us publicity. But when she begins to slack off, that's the time we've got to strike again, and strike hard in a new quarter. And we've got to be ready."

In my mistress's eyes I could read the determination: Not if I can help myself! But Jake could not see that. For all her cool and careless airs, Mme Storey was fully aware of the terrible risks we ran in staging these affairs, and she had no intention of attempting fate any oftener than was absolutely necessary.

"Well, it's no harm to talk over what we're going to do," she said carelessly. "I'm always open to suggestions."

With the lines we had out, we hoped to have Jake and the men who were back of him lodged behind the bars before another such affair could be made ready. But in this, as you will see, we were disappointed.

IN ORDER to avoid repetition, I will combine the gist of several of Madge Caswell's reports into one.

For a number of years, she said, Jake the Canvasser has been a widely-known character throughout the white light district of Broadway. He passes there as Jake Golden, which is his right name. He has two brothers, prosperous manufacturers, and belongs to a widespread family connection, with which he keeps in close touch.

None of these people have any reason to suspect his association with the criminal world. Indeed, so open and aboveboard appears his whole life, that even after watching him for two weeks, I should not have succeeded in turning up anything suspicious, had it not been for the information you gave me in the beginning.

He passes on Broadway as a "sporting character," i.e., a man who makes his living by promoting and backing sporting events and theatrical enterprises. As a matter of fact, he has various small interests in these lines, but not anywhere near enough to support him in the lavish style in which he lives. He has a comfortable apartment in the— Hotel, one of the best in town, that he leases by the year. He has hundreds of friends in every walk of life, who believe that they know him well. The only mystery about him is, where does he get all the money he spends.

In sporting circles individuals come up and disappear with great frequency; men's memories are short, and none of Jake's present associates remember, if indeed they ever knew, that Jake Golden served a sentence in Sing Sing for swindling, some years ago. Previous to that he had been confined in the Elmira Reformatory.

I have three operatives besides myself engaged on this job. We all have a number of disguises, so there is no danger of his being struck by seeing the same face about him day after day. We have been somewhat handicapped by your instructions that we are not under any circumstances to allow him to suspect that he was being followed.

Once or twice we have had to let him slip when we seemed to be about to learn something interesting. However, it probably would not have been definite. He has his tracks too well covered. He does not yet suspect that he is being watched. It is second nature with the man to take the most elaborate precautions to keep his real business secret.

I am prepared to assert that he has not in all this time met his principal. I believe that it is the corner stone of their whole system of defense, never to meet. Every day he drops into some pay station or another to call up his principal. It is always another pay station that he calls up, and every day a different one.

It is usually a call to Newark, Paterson, Hackensack, White Plains, Flushing, Jamaica, *et cetera;* some large town on the outskirts of New York. Once or

twice, by getting the next booth, we heard his conversation over the phone, or a part of it. But as the details of the affairs that he reports are already known to you, this throws no fresh light on the matter.

Two of his talks had to do with "Kate Arkledon". He has no suspicion that she is other than she seems. He merely reports what has happened since the day before, and receives his instructions. In speaking over the phone, he never names the man he is talking to. At the end of the talk he receives the number that he is to call next day. He comes out of the booth with his lips moving, as if to commit it to memory. As he never writes it down, there is no way in which we can learn that number beforehand.

On Monday last he called up— Passaic. I sent one of my boys over there as quickly as possible. It proved to be the principal drugstore of the place. Now, as it is somewhat out of the common for a man to wait around a pay station to be called up, one of the clerks happened to remember the incident. The call came in for "Mr Wilkins", and a large, well-dressed, good-looking man of about forty-five stepped forward to take it, the clerk said. He had dark hair, dark eyes, he said; couldn't say if he was bald because he kept his hat on.

Clean shaven; gentlemanly manner; looked like a retired business man. I send you this description for what it is worth. It would fit about one hundred thousand men around New York, I suppose.

On Tuesday Golden called up St George–. This is the municipal ferry station on Staten Island. Got nothing there. On Wednesday it was another drugstore, this one in Flushing. We were there forty minutes afterwards, and a clerk remembered the call coming in.

It was for "Mr Adams". This clerk described the man who received the call as middle-aged and "funny looking". Was unable to explain just what he meant by funny-looking. Thought his eyes were blue, and that he had a heavy mustache, but couldn't swear to it. Yet it was undoubtedly the same man. Very few learn to use their eyes.

However, this clerk added one more item to our store of knowledge. After "Mr Adams" had finished talking he got into a fine limousine car at the door. It had a chauffeur in livery. Of course, he would have to have a car if he's going to get around from Passaic to Staten Island to Flushing day after day.

It was in sending money to his principal that Golden evinced the greatest ingenuity. Golden maintained accounts in four different banks up-town. In each place his credit was high. None of these banks were aware of his other accounts.

By splitting his business into four like this, the volume of it did not appear large enough to excite suspicion. You told me on the night of the twenty-third Golden was handed eighteen hundred dollars in cash at the Boule' Miche' by a

man known as Hutch Diver, and you asked me to trace what became of this money, if this were possible.

Well, I am able to report that he deposited the money in the— National Bank on the following morning. He puts all cash in the bank as received, so there is no use trying to get him by marked bills. He may draw it out later.

One of his favorite stunts is to buy American Express Company checks, and mail them to his principal. These checks are being more and more widely used by automobile tourists and others who do not wish to carry cash on their travels. They have to be signed when purchased, and again when cashed; but Golden's unknown principal has no difficulty in making a passable imitation of his agent's signature when he cashes the checks.

A number of these checks have been returned paid to the head office of the Express Company, and I have traced them back, but without results. Anybody will cash such checks without question; banks, hotels, stores, *et cetera.* They are for moderate amounts, consequently the transactions leave no impression on the memories of the parties who cash them.

These checks have all been returned from towns near New York, the same towns, in fact, that Golden calls up on the telephone. Another method that Golden has of transmitting money to his principal is to draw checks to bearer, and have his bank certify them. Such checks are as good as cash anywhere.

Golden mails these checks to his principal by means of the mail chute in the hotel corridor outside his apartment. As it is impossible for me to keep a man on watch in the corridor, I cannot catch him in the act of mailing them, consequently there is no way in which I can recover the envelope and get a sight of the address. I know, however, that the checks are mailed in plain envelopes, and that Golden keeps a typewriter in his room for the purpose of addressing them.

FROM THE foregoing report, which embodies several of the same tenor, it will be seen that we had been brought to a stand. We were between the devil and the deep sea. We could neither go forward nor back.

Consequently, when the suggestion came through from "headquarters" that we prepare to hold up the Beauvoir Hospital on the day that the payroll was made up, we had no choice but to agree. Alas for my vow, that I would never do it again! I could not abandon my mistress. Feeling a sickness of the heart, I had to go in with the rest.

Beauvoir Hospital! In the mere naming of it you will perceive what a stupendous task we had been given. Up to this time nobody had ever thought of holding up a hospital. And Beauvoir, the great charity hospital which spreads over several city blocks, was by far the largest and the best known of them all.

With its psychopathic cases, its accidents, its victims of murderous assaults, it is continually in the news. In fact, it receives more publicity than all the other city institutions put together. Beauvoir is an essential part of the fabric of New York life.

Imagine being asked to attack such a place. Why, it is a very hive of industry, with crowds entering and leaving at all hours; police bringing in accidents' cases; police sitting at the bedsides of wounded prisoners. It seemed to me like a bad joke on the part of Jake's employers.

I wondered if perhaps they had not penetrated our disguises, and were using this ingenious means of bringing about our downfall. But Madge Caswell's reports continued to assure us that they did not suspect us; and Mme Storey, after a study of the problem, considered that the trick might be turned, though it was appallingly difficult.

Beauvoir, as everybody knows, is on the East River front. It consists of an ancient stone building which forms a nucleus for innumerable more or less modern wings spreading in every direction. The office of the hospital, which was our mark, is in this old building, just inside the main entrance.

There are other entrances for patients and their visitors. The main entrance is used principally by officials of the hospital, and those doing business with them. Unfortunately for us, the old building fronts on a courtyard, which is overlooked by literally hundreds of windows. The grand difficulty would be to get out of that courtyard with whole skins.

You may gauge the size of the institution when I tell you that the weekly pay roll amounted to nearly seventy thousand dollars. This money was brought to the hospital every Thursday morning by armored car. In the office it was made up into pay envelopes by a force of clerks; payment to the employees was spread over the whole week.

Our attack was timed for Thursday just before noon, when the clerks would have the money spread out in the office in the act of making up the envelopes. The force consisted of a head bookkeeper, three male clerks and two women. No additional guards were employed. I suppose nobody had ever dreamed of the possibility that a hospital might be attacked.

The first thing we had to decide was whether or not to take the hospital authorities into our confidence in respect to the proposed raid. We held several anxious consultations with Inspector Rumsey upon this matter.

It appeared that the cashier, whose name was Tabor, was in full charge of all financial matters, and the inspector volunteered to sound him out. He reported later that Mr Tabor was a testy gentleman, whose whole life had centered in Beauvoir.

He had an overwhelming sense of the dignity and importance of the institution he served, and the inspector said it would be quite useless to put up any such scheme to him. He would certainly have a fit at the bare mention of such a thing.

"Very well," said Mme Storey coolly; "then as far as Mr Tabor is concerned this must be a bona fide hold-up."

"Suppose he puts up a fight?" asked the inspector anxiously. "He's a determined old party. He is almost certain to be armed, and perhaps his clerks also. You have a big enough risk to run from chance shots outside, without facing a point-blank fire inside. I could not permit that under any circumstances."

"Pull the right wires," suggested Mme Storey, "and introduce a man of your own as clerk in the office."

This was done. Inspector Rumsey's man subsequently reported that there was only one gun in the hospital office. This was an old-fashioned revolver in the drawer of Mr Tabor's desk, which had apparently not been shot off nor cleaned in many years. It was not, however, any the less dangerous on that account.

Since Mr Tabor made a point of being the first in the office every day and the last to leave, our agent said it was doubtful if he could secure the gun beforehand to unload it; but he guaranteed to seize it when the attack was made. We let it go at that.

It fell to my part to make the first preliminary examination of the ground. I confess I did not like it at all. Beauvoir Hospital bore too strong a resemblance to a prison.

The entrance was by a triple gateway from the street. The two narrow side gates were for visitors to the various wards, and the center gate, which was double, admitted to the courtyard and the main building.

The three gates were divided by two little buildings where guards, presumably armed, were on duty at all hours. Visitors to patients were provided with cards of admission, and it was the duty of these men to examine the cards, and set the holders on the right path.

If we took our automobile inside the courtyard, the guards had only to close the iron gates to block us. If we left our car outside, we would have to run the gantlet of the guards on foot.

I should say that the windows of the office looked out on the courtyard; the first shout from the clerks would alarm the guards. In short, it seemed to be just about as perfect a trap as could be devised. I did not like it.

There was a doorman on duty at the main entrance; but he was a doddering old fellow, incapable of putting up any serious resistance. Inside, a

corridor ran right and left throughout the length of the old building. You turned to the right, and the first door on your right admitted you to the office.

It was an old-fashioned double door of solid wood; it stood open during business hours. The room was about thirty feet long, with an old-fashioned wooden counter running the length of it, topped by a brass grille some three feet high, with several wickets in it.

At one side a door made of heavy brass wire gave entrance to the clerks' inclosure. I noticed that there was no way out for them, except by this door, thence by the door into the corridor.

I had chosen a Thursday morning for this visit, and they were all busy at a long table in the middle of the room putting the money in pay envelopes. Certainly it was tempting Providence to handle their cash practically in public like that.

When I reported to Mme Storey the difficulty of getting out past the guards, she said:

"Well, there must be other ways out of that old warren. We'll study the floor plans."

Inspector Rumsey, who was looking up the police arrangements in the neighborhood, subsequently informed us that since First Avenue had become an important motor thoroughfare, a motorcycle policeman had been assigned to patrol it; and that he spent a good part of his time standing in front of the hospital. Verily, the difficulties surrounding the adventure seemed to be pyramiding against us!

Mme Storey said thoughtfully: "We have a reputation for originality to maintain. We must do something quite new this time. Let us dispense with a car altogether, and make our getaway by water."

FROM THE New York *Sphere*, January, 192—

THE DUCHESS MAKES ANOTHER HAUL

Beauvoir Hospital the Victim; Loss $67,000
Boldest Robbery in History of City

"The Duchess", that most amazing criminal of modern times, played a return engagement this morning. It scarcely seems possible, but she actually succeeded in capping her own exploits; in exceeding her reputation. This time it was no mere jewelry store that was the object of her raid, but Beauvoir Hospital.

Everybody in town is asking: What next? In the teeth of all the orderlies, police and armed guards who are to be found around the hospital, she and her

gang relieved the office force of the week's pay roll to the tune of sixty-seven thousand dollars, and made a clean get-away.

The crime had been carefully planned. The bandits displayed a perfect familiarity with the rambling old building. They made their way out through the rear to the bulkhead adjoining the river, and were picked up by a speedy motor boat. One of their number was wounded in the retreat, but his comrades carried him off. As usual there is no clew.

Every Thursday morning an armored car brings the money for the week's pay roll to Beauvoir Hospital. The amount averages close to seventy thousand dollars. Though the institution has doubled and quadrupled in size since those early days, the pay envelopes are still made up in the office in sight of all and sundry, just as they were twenty-five years ago. In some manner this reached the ears of the Duchess, and the inevitable happened.

At eleven forty-five this morning Emerson Tabor, the cashier of the hospital, and his five clerks were engaged upon this regular weekly task. In another fifteen minutes the money would have been locked in the safe for the noon hour. All six persons were working at a long table in the hospital office.

They were cut off from the public by a stout wooden counter running the length of the room, upon which is superimposed a heavy brass grill. The whole structure is about six feet high. Four of the clerks were filling the envelopes while Mr Tabor and another checked them. There was no one else in the office at the moment except Rudolph Glassberg, of 400 West Ninety-Third Street, who had called to obtain the address of a former employee of the hospital. It was this accidental witness of the affair who was able to give the most comprehensive account of what happened.

Mr Tabor had just told Mr Glassberg that he had no record of the employee in question, when a tall, elegantly dressed lady entered the office. At first glance Mr Tabor was struck by nothing unusual in her appearance, except that she was rather a fine lady to be calling at old Beauvoir. She had an envelope in her hand, which she partly extended toward him.

In a low, musical voice she asked him in what part of the building that person was to be found. As Mr Tabor put a hand through the wicket to take the envelope, his wrist was seized in a grip of steel. The woman dropped the envelope, and from somewhere about her person whipped a pair of handcuffs.

In a trice the cashier was handcuffed to his own brass grill. He found himself looking into those baleful cat's eyes with the narrowed pupils which have been so often described.

Mr Glassberg happened to be looking directly at the woman. He was dazed by the suddenness of her act. So was Mr Tabor.

For a moment there was no sound. The clerks in the rear had no suspicion of anything wrong. Then Mr Glassberg heard the woman say in her courteous, well-bred voice:

"So sorry to discommode you, but I can't let you get to your gun, you know."

The cashier gave a shout of warning, and yanked at the chain; his clerks jumped up, knocking over their chairs. At that moment the rest of the gang entered swiftly and quietly from the corridor.

Mr Glassberg tried to leave then, but was harshly ordered to remain where he was. He frankly confessed that he squeezed into the farthest corner, not daring to make a sound, nor to stir during what followed.

It was the same gang which held up Fossberg's jewelry store last month; four good looking, well-dressed lads, showing none of the obvious marks of the gunman, none of them over twenty-five years old, and one a mere boy; and the showily dressed, red-haired girl who appears to be the Duchess's first lieutenant. The four men, as if performing a well rehearsed drill, leaped on the edge of the counter, and vaulted over the brass grill.

Mr Tabor shouted to his clerk, William Hughes, to get his gun out. Another clerk, Edward Ensor, beat him to it. Ensor had only been working at the hospital for a few days. He snatched the gun out of the drawer where it was kept and fired at the oncoming bandits.

The shot went wild. Immediately two of the bandits dived, and, tackling Ensor low, flung him to the floor. He was disarmed before he could recover himself. Of the two women clerks, Miss Mary Phillips fainted dead away at the sound of the shot, while Miss Gertie Colpas dived under the table, where she kept up a continuous screaming until all was over.

Mr Glassberg said what with the screaming of the woman, the shouting of Mr Tabor, and his frantic efforts to free himself, the noise in the room was deafening. The bandits coolly disregarded it. No sound escaped from any of them.

Two of the men covered the clerks, while the other two producing black silk bags from under their coats, started sweeping up the money and the pay envelopes on the table. All moved as by clockwork.

When the gang entered, the Duchess coolly closed the door from the corridor. She and her woman aid took up their places one on each side of the door, ready for any one who might enter. The Duchess produced the inevitable little cigar while she waited.

Mr Glassberg said she watched what was going on within the clerks' inclosure with a half contemptuous smile, as one might look at a second rate

play. There was something about the woman's unnatural coolness that froze his very blood, he said.

As on the former occasion, the Duchess's attire expressed the very acme of elegant simplicity. She was wearing a severely cut costume of brown, which set off her slender figure to perfection. Inside the collar of the coat was wound a gaily colored silk scarf, and a handkerchief to match it, peeped out of her breast pocket.

Her hat was one of those smart little recent importations that closely outline the shape of the head. Her shoes were smart English brogues, and a pair of chamois gloves completed the ensemble.

Within a minute or so the money was gathered up, and the four men as one, leaped back upon the counter, and vaulted over the brass grill. The Duchess opened the door, and they all ran out into the corridor. Mr Glassberg peeped around the door frame to see what became of them, but did not dare to follow.

At the entrance to the building was stationed John Staley, the doorkeeper; but as he was a man of sixty-nine, and unarmed, he could do nothing to stop the bandits. However, six or more of the husky orderlies for which Beauvoir is famous came tumbling down the stairs from the wards above, attracted by the noise.

Though these men were unarmed, they boldly ranged themselves in a line across the corridor to block the bandits. The latter instantly formed a flying wedge with the biggest among them, the one who resembles an Englishman, in the center, and charged, bowling the orderlies over like nine pins.

It was at this point that the bandits revealed their uncanny knowledge of the premises. Instead of turning out of the main entrance, where they would presently have run into half a dozen armed guards, they opened a door under the stairs, and charged down a concealed flight into the basement.

The basement of the old building at Beauvoir is cut up into a multitude of serving rooms: laundry, kitchen, pantries, storerooms, and the like; nevertheless, the bandits made their way out unerringly, while the orderlies who were in pursuit of them got lost. The bandits burst through the kitchen, bringing terror into the hearts of cooks and dishwashers, and ran out into the open space between the hospital and the river.

In the summer this is a pleasant grass plot. It is surrounded on three sides by tier above tier of balconies, where, in pleasant weather the patients are wheeled out to get the air.

At this season there were few patients on the balconies; but the doctors, nurses, and orderlies ran out to see what was the matter below, adding their

shouts to the uproar. Several shots were fired from the balconies at the fleeing bandits, but none took effect.

They made straight across for the bulkhead alongside the river. Here they met with a check, for their boat could be seen stalled a hundred feet or so out in the stream, the mechanic working frantically to start his engine. A shout of triumph went up from the watchers on the balconies.

At this moment it was touch and go with the Duchess and her pals. Six armed guards had made their way through the hospital, and the bandits were cut off between the buildings and the river. The guards did not immediately rush them, but stood close to the building, firing as fast as they could pull the trigger.

The bandits returned their fire without effect. Finally the Englishman dropped, wounded. Heartened by the sight, the guards charged across the open space, firing as they ran.

However, by this time the motor boat had come alongside the bulkhead; the bandits leaped in pell-mell, carrying their wounded comrade, and the boat shot out into the river.

The guards continued to fire after it, but as the occupants all flung themselves into the bottom of the boat, it is not likely that any more of them were hit. In a moment they had disappeared around the end of a long pier.

The motor boat was a rakish, sharp-prowed mahogany tender of great speed. It had the look of a millionaire's playing, and was, no doubt, stolen for the occasion, though no such loss has as yet been reported to the police. Her name had been painted out. All the observers agreed that the craft was not one which customarily frequents the East River.

Police launch A-22 is stationed in a slip immediately to the south of the hospital, and in less than five minutes she was in pursuit. But the bandit craft was already out of sight down the stream. The police launch was no match for her in speed.

They caught sight of her again off Corlear's Hook; but by that time she had been abandoned, and was already awash. When the police reached the spot she had sunk, leaving only a patch of oil on the surface. What happened to her cannot be known for certain; the police hold to the theory that she was deliberately scuttled.

Children playing in the park at Corlear's Hook told the police that they had seen the mahogany launch come alongside a waiting tug, which had presently passed on, leaving the launch to sink. The tug was too far offshore for her name to be read.

The police are questioning the captain and crew of every tug in the harbor, but it is admitted that the chance of picking up a clue by this means is a slender one. Once again the Duchess appears to have vanished into thin air.

SUCH WAS the first account of the affair. Later editions of the newspapers only amplified and elaborated the story. While a conventional horror of the deed was expressed, you can see by reading between the lines that the ultimate effect of these stories was to glorify the daring and successful bandit.

Such is the evil effect of too much publicity. If a man becomes famous enough, thoughtless persons do not stop to inquire into the quality of his fame.

During the days that followed our gang had to lie very close, for the police were roused to a fury of activity by this "outrage". I suspect that Inspector Rumsey had a very difficult part to play, for he was put in charge of the case. Of all the force, only he and the commissioner were in on the secret.

One problem that faced us was how to return the money to the hospital without giving the whole game away. We solved it by having the same millionaire who had loaned us his automobile on a former occasion come forward and donate to Beauvoir Hospital the sum they had lost. He got great credit for this act.

Stephens was carried to a sanatorium up in Westchester to recover from his wound, which was not a dangerous one. Falseface and Tony were sent under care of Abell to rusticate in a camp belonging to another of Mme Storey's friends in the neighborhood of Saranac Lake.

Abell's real job, of course, was to keep them under surveillance until we were ready to order their arrest. Young Farren was sent off to amuse himself down in Florida.

Mme Storey and I were perfectly safe working in our office every day in our own proper characters; but as she was obliged to keep in touch with Jake the Canvasser, we had to disguise our disguises for the evening. Madge Caswell's reports still held out no hope of reaching the principal through Jake, and it was necessary to take other measures.

I donned a black wig, blackened my eyebrows and lashes, made up my face dead white, and wore a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, while Mme Storey, past mistress in the art of disguise, transformed herself into a shapeless old woman dressed in tawdry finery.

On the night following the robbery we telephoned to Bat Bartley at the Boule' Miche', and asked him to save us a private room. It would be better, we said, if we did not receive our friends that night, however safe they were. The risk was too great. But we wanted to see Jake.

Well, Jake came to us there in due course, and was much amused by our disguises. Mme Storey paid over his share of the loot. We hated to see that good money go, but there appeared to be no help for it.

Jake was in great form. I will pass over all his fulsome praises and compliments; for you are already familiar with his style. The Duchess would become as famous as Jesse James, he said, a national hero. The crown of courage had passed to a woman. And so on.

My mistress let him run on until he said something to the effect that all of us would have to do some hard thinking in order to cap the previous day's work; whereupon Mme Storey held up her hand.

"Nothing doing," she declared firmly.

"Hey?" said Jake, with a falling face.

"I'm done!"

"What!" he cried. "Why, we've just started!"

"No," she said. "I've made a nice little stake out of these two jobs. I'm satisfied. As for publicity, I can scarcely better what I've got. Better quit while I'm on the crest of the wave. You may make out in your newspaper stories that I'm a superwoman, but as a matter of fact I'm just the common or garden variety like any other. And if I try to bite off more than I can chew I'll choke."

"Have you lost your nerve?" he asked with a sneer.

"Not my nerve," said my mistress coolly; "it's as steady as ever it was, and my wits are better. But my body is beginning to rebel. After all, I'm no longer young. A woman of fifty-five, even though she may have kept a passable figure, is not expected to run like a gazelle. When I got home yesterday I collapsed. I had to have a heart stimulant to bring me around."

"Well," said Jake smoothly, "we'll bear that in mind when we're planning our next stunt."

"No," affirmed Mme Storey, "I would not take anything safe and easy, either. I wouldn't appear before the public at all unless I could better this show, and as I don't see my way clear to doing that, I think it's a good place to quit."

Jake lost his smooth air. His distress was very real.

"Wait a minute— wait a minute!" he said. "You don't have to decide anything to-night. This is just a sort of reaction, like. Just let things run along for awhile. You've earned a good rest. Then my boss may have an idea that will appeal to you. He has the most brilliant mind in America today— a soaring mind."

"Just so," rejoined Mme Storey; "but if you keep on flying higher and higher, you're bound to crash in the end. Not but what I hate to give it up,

too," she added pensively. "I love the game. I love to match my wits against those who have money!"

"What'll I say to the boss?" asked Jake plaintively. "He's countin' on you. You ought to hear the way he talked about you over the phone to-day. 'Jake,' he says, 'this is the best material we ever had to work with!'"

"Nice of him to say so," said Mme Storey.

Jake did not perceive the dryness of her tone.

"Oh, the boss is never one to hold back credit from anybody," he said.

For an hour longer he continued to argue with her. By the end of that time she had convinced him that she meant what she said.

He was greatly depressed. More than anything else he was alarmed by a suggestion she let fall, that she was just going to drop out of things and travel.

He finally exacted a promise from her that she would not disappear until he had a chance to consult with the boss. When we left he asked anxiously:

"Be here tomorrow night?"

"Oh, I expect so," said my mistress indifferently. "We can't stay shut up in our rooms all the time."

On the following night Jake turned up with an entirely new line of arguments, which had no doubt been furnished him over the telephone during the day. When all these proved to be of no avail he said with an offhand air:

"How would you like a job inside the organization?"

I started inwardly. So this was where my mistress's elaborate comedy had been tending! I had not perceived her drift before.

"What sort of job?" she asked indifferently.

"To run our advisory department."

"What's that?"

"You would investigate likely plants, and furnish the operators with full details. You would think up big spectacular stunts, plant all the details, and coach the operators."

"Yes," said Mme Storey, "and have somebody else take all the credit!"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Jake. "We could keep the Duchess alive in the public mind, though you never appeared in person."

"What would there be in it for me?"

Jake made a magniloquent gesture.

"Oh, there wouldn't be any difficulty about that. The boss is the soul of generosity."

"Sure. But just what would it run to?"

"Well, say fifty thousand a year."

"Liberal enough," said Mme Storey indifferently; "but it don't appeal to me much. I hate to be tied up in an organization. I like to be on my own."

Jake set himself to work to persuade her. Little by little she allowed it to appear that she was coming around. Finally we heard that which we were silently praying for. Jake said:

"The heads of the organization never meet. It's better so. We have other ways of communicating. But you and the boss would have to have one talk to settle the details."

"Plenty of time for that," said Mme Storey carelessly. "We'd better wait until the search for me lets up a little."

"No need for that," said Jake. "Your present disguise is plenty good enough."

"Well, that's up to the boss," she said, shrugging. "If he wants to see me I'm at his service."

THREE DAYS later Mme Storey and I started out to keep our rendezvous with the "boss". You can imagine how my heart was beating. I could scarcely believe that we were in sight of the end of our difficult and dangerous job.

I was tormented with anxiety. So much mystery had been made of this powerful boss that he seemed to me to be invested with almost superhuman attributes. I dreaded lest he might slip through our fingers after all.

We were on our way to the Madagascar Hotel, where we were to ask for Mr Peter Endicott. All the arrangements for the visit had been made with the greatest care. Jake the Canvasser was not to accompany us. Jake had wished Mme Storey to go alone, but she had declined to do so. Any offer that might be made to her must include me, she said; and Jake finally conceded the point.

From the moment when the meeting had first been proposed we had been shadowed, as we were quick to perceive; and thereafter we never came out of the characters of Kate Arkledon and Peggy Ray. Our ordinary haunts knew us not. By day we remained shut up in the little flat on West— Street. There was a telephone in the flat, but we dared not use it; the danger was too great that the boys at the switchboard might have been tampered with.

We finally solved the problem of communicating with Inspector Rumsey by taking a leaf out of Jake's book. We wrote the inspector a letter, and posted it in the mail chute outside the door of our flat.

The inspector could not communicate with us and, before setting out, Mme Storey had armed herself with a pair of handcuffs, intending to make the arrest herself if the police failed her.

The lobby of the Madagascar displayed its usual animated aspect. Since they cut off the front to make a row of shops on the street it is always overcrowded. I felt rather than saw that we were objects of interest to several of the prosperously dressed men who were sitting and standing about. These I

supposed to be police, and my heart rose. Inspector Rumsey was not showing himself— his face is too well known— but I had no doubt that he was near.

It appeared that our journey was not to end at the Madagascar. As we made inquiry at the desk, a slender, gentlemanly young chap stepped up from behind us.

"Good morning, ladies," he said, smiling. "I was waiting for you."

"Oh, are you Mr Endicott?" said Mme Storey, not without surprise. She had hardly expected to be received by such a stripling.

"His secretary, at your service. I am to take you to him."

I confess I did not like this at all. Mme Storey appeared quite unconcerned.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"Half an hour's drive. I have a car waiting."

He led the way out. I hoped that the police were behind us, but did not like to turn my head to see. We stood waiting under the glass canopy in front, and presently an inconspicuous sedan drove up. Our conductor, always smiling, opened the door for us, and we drove off. I silently prayed that the police might have a car handy also. In the press of traffic it was impossible to tell if we were being followed.

Our route lay over the Queensboro Bridge and out Queens Boulevard. The young man made agreeable small talk all the way. He had all the *savoir faire* of a diplomatic secretary.

On the bridge and beyond it seemed to me that there were more motorcycle policemen than usual about, and I took hope from that. Perhaps they were under Inspector Rumsey's orders.

We drove very fast. Once on the boulevard we were stopped and warned by a policeman. Later, after we had turned to the right in a busy crossroad, another passed us at great speed and came back a few minutes afterward.

We now turned to the left and lost ourselves in one of the amazing new subdivisions that have sprung up so thickly in that district. Picture to yourself rows of little new wooden houses, all alike, stretching on every side as far as you could see. All designed alike, painted alike, the same number of shingles on each roof, I could swear; built so close together there was but just room for a man to walk between; not a tree in sight, and scarcely a blade of grass.

Thousands upon thousands of the little boxes, all alike. To me it was like a nightmare. Consider the numbing effect of this sameness upon the people who lived there! Then another thought came to me: what an admirable hiding place!

We turned right and left; right and left again so many times I was dizzied. All this was unnecessary, of course; the little streets were all laid out at right angles, and we could have reached our destination with one turn.

There were street signs in the usual hap-hazard New York fashion, but we turned the corners so quickly, and the signs were so hard to find, I could rarely read them. And when at last we came to a stop before one of the little houses, no different from thousands of others, I didn't know what the name of the street was. The number of the house was 154.

"Is this Mr Endicott's home?" asked Mme Storey.

"One of them," said our conductor, smiling.

The instant we were out of the car, it whisked out of sight around a corner. We were admitted by a neat, elderly maid servant who looked as if she had seen all and told nothing.

The inside of the house was as standardized as the outside; the furnishings looked as if they had been purchased *en bloc* from an installment shop. But it was comfortable enough.

The servant requested us to follow her upstairs to take off our things. She led us into the front bedroom above.

"As you have so much to discuss with Mr Endicott," she said in her quiet, courteous voice, "and as it would be imprudent for you to leave, and come back again, he hopes that you will remain as his guests here, until everything is settled."

Mme Storey bowed.

"Does that mean we are prisoners?" I asked when the woman had left us.

"Pooh!" said Mme Storey. "They couldn't keep us in this match-box against our will. We could kick our way out."

The front door closed, and we saw the young man who had brought us, making his way quickly up the street. A moment later we heard a motorcycle. As silently as a shadow, Mme Storey ran to the window, but did not succeed in attracting the rider's attention.

"He was clever to follow us so far into this maze," she said.

"But how can he pick out the house now?" I groaned.

"We'll hang out a sign," she said, fishing in her bag for a pencil. "A sheet of paper. Oh, for a sheet of paper!"

It was not forthcoming.

"Never mind," she said, "the upper part of the house is painted white."

We locked the door, and she stationed me beside it to listen for the return of the maid. She threw up one of the windows, and sitting upon the sill, leaned over and began to pencil her initials in big black letters on the white space between the two windows: R. S. In the absolute sameness of that street, it must have stuck out like a sore finger.

We had the window closed, and were standing decorously in the middle of the room, when the maid returned.

"If you are ready," she said.

"Please lead the way," said Mme Storey.

On the floor below the maid opened the door into the rear room, and stood aside to let us enter. I followed my mistress with a fast heating heart.

It was a narrow room with a single window in the corner, looking out on a cement paved space between two kitchen extensions. It was furnished with a "dining suite" and two easy chairs, one on each side of the gas logs. A man stood with his back to us, looking out of the window.

At the sound of our entrance he turned around, and my heart gave a great jump. *I knew that face!* That clever face with the full, dark, beaming eye of the enthusiast; where had I seen it before?

My brain spun around like a teetotum, and then settled down soberly. I remembered. It was Ambrose G. Larned, the publicity genius; and the last time I had seen him was at Mme Storey's own dinner table!

I stole a glance at my mistress. Under the grease paint her expression was very bland.

"So this is the Duchess!" said our host, coming forward with outstretched hand. "And her trusty lieutenant! Sit down ladies, we have much to talk over."

WELL, THERE we sat, the three of us, in front of the tawdry fireplace, Mme Storey and I in the two easy chairs, and the unsuspecting Mr Larned between us in a straightbacked chair. My mistress was smoking one of the famous little cigars, and Mr Larned waved a cigarette about while he talked.

Each recognizing a great spirit in the other, they mostly ignored me. I was quite content to look and listen.

"We strike in the spot of our own choosing," Mr Larned said enthusiastically; "and with a high-powered automobile at hand, or as in your case a speedy motor boat, the danger of capture is almost non-existent— that is, if the affair has been properly planned. And no policeman can tell in advance where the next blow will fall.

"Just look at our record during the last few weeks. First, the creation of the bobbed hair bandit with the numerous exploits to her credit; then the robbery of Mme Storey in her office; then the double hold-up of Fossberg's; and finally your magnificent raid on Beauvoir last week to cap the climax. What can the police do? What could Mme Storey do with all her boasted cleverness? Why, nothing.

"A vastly overrated woman, by the way," he went on, lighting a fresh cigarette. "I know her. There is nothing much to her. Publicity has made her. Which is a further illustration of my point. Publicity will do anything."

I heard the doorbell sound somewhere in the house. Mr Larned's eyelids flickered, but he kept right on talking:

"Publicity is man's greatest discovery. He doesn't know what he's got yet. There are any number of professors and practitioners and promoters of publicity; but they haven't scratched the surface of their subject."

I noticed that nobody went to the door. The suspense became almost more than I could bear, sitting still.

"Rather a good scheme this of ours, don't you think?" said Mr Larned. "One directing head, and a number of units working quite independently."

"And taking all the risk," put in Mme Storey slyly.

"Surely," he said with the utmost coolness; "and quite right, too. It would not be fitting for the commanders to expose themselves on the firing line. The individual operators must fail sometimes, but the organization goes on—"

The front door went in with a crash. A second later Inspector Rumsey entered the room, with other men behind him. Larned swelled up like a pouter pigeon.

"How dare you?" he cried. "What do you mean by this outrage?"

"Inspector Rumsey of the police department," said our friend coolly. "You are under arrest." Then he recognized his prisoner. "Ah, Mr Larned, so we meet again!"

Larned still essayed to bluff it out.

"You know me," he cried. "Everybody knows Ambrose G. Larned. How dare you break into my private dwelling?"

"It won't go, Larned," said the inspector smiling. "Thanks to the activities of this lady, we know all about you and your organization. Jake Golden is already under arrest."

"Who is this woman?" queried Larned.

"The Duchess," said Rumsey with relish; "alias Kate Arkledon; but in reality, Mme Rosika Storey."

Larned collapsed like a pricked balloon. The sight was both tragic and absurd. He slunk to one side, and dropped into a chair.

Well, that ended one crime wave. If another one rolled up almost immediately afterward it was not our fault. Abell and a plainclothes man brought a chopfallen little pair of bandits back from Saranac next day. I would not have missed the scene when Mme Storey returned Falseface's ring with a smile.

What an extraordinary psychological study Larned was. I believe he was a little mad. Mme Storey and I visited him in jail. Even in his downfall he played the great man, and displayed no rancor toward her.

He still loved to air his theories on publicity. It was his theories which had led him into crime. He explained that having tasted all the possible successes of a regular business career, he craved a greater excitement; and finally yielded to the temptation of wielding this enormously powerful weapon in secret.

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14: Burney's Laugh

Stacy Aumonier

1877-1928

The Century Magazine, July 1916

Stacy Aumonier

AFTER breakfast was a good time. Throughout the day there was no moment when his vitality rose to such heights as it did during the first puffs of that early cigar. He would stroll out then into the conservatory, and the bright colour of the azaleas would produce in him a strange excitement. His senses would seem sharpened, and he would move quickly between the flowers, and would discuss minor details of their culture with Benyon the gardener. Then he would stroll through the great spaces of his reception-rooms with his head bent forward. The huge Ming pot on its ebony stand would seem to him companionable and splendid, the Majolica plaques which he had bought at Padua would glow serenely. He would go up and feast his eyes on the Chinese lacquer cabinet on its finely-wrought gilt base; and his lips would quiver with a tense enjoyment as he lingered by the little carved Japanese ivories in the recess. Above all, he liked to stand near the wall and gaze at the Vandyke above the fireplace. It looked well in the early morning light, dignified and impressive.

All these things were his. He had fought for them in the arena of the commercial world. He had bought them in the teeth of opposition. And they expressed *him*, his sense of taste, his courage, his power, his relentless tenacity, the qualities that had raised him above his fellows to the position he held. The contemplation of them produced in him a curious vibrant exhilaration. Especially was this so in the early morning when he rose from the breakfast table and lighted his first cigar.

The great hall, too, satisfied his quivering senses. The walnut panelling shone serenely, and brass and pewter bore evidence that the silent staff whom his housekeeper controlled had done their work efficiently. It was early—

barely nine o'clock— but he knew that in the library Crevace and Dilgerson, his private secretaries, would be fidgeting with papers and expecting him. He would keep them waiting another ten minutes while he gratified this clamorous proprietary sense. He would linger in the drawing-room, with its long, grey panels and splendid damask hangings, and touch caressingly the little groups of statuary. The unpolished satinwood furniture appealed to some special aesthetic appetite. It was an idea of his own. It seemed at once graceful and distinguished.

He seemed to have so little time during the rest of the day to feel these things. And if he had the time, the satisfaction did not seem the same, for this was the hour when he felt most virile.

In the library the exultation that he had derived from these aesthetic pleasures would gradually diminish. It is true that Dilgerson had prepared the rough draft of his amendment to the new Peasant Allotment Bill, and it was an amendment he was intensely interested in, for if it passed it might lead to the overthrow of Chattisworth, and that would be a very desirable thing, but nevertheless his interests would flag.

He had a fleeting vision of a great triumph in the House, and himself the central figure. He settled down to discuss the details with Dilgerson. Dilgerson was a very remarkable person. He had a genius for putting his finger on the vital spot of a bill, and he had moreover an unfathomable memory. But gradually the discussion of involved financial details with Dilgerson would tire him. He would get restless and say, "Yes, yes. All right, Dilgerson. Put it your own way."

He turned aside to the table where Crevace, coughing nervously, was preparing some sixty odd letters for him to sign. A charming young man, Crevace, with gentle manners and a great fund of concentration. He was the second son of Emma Countess of Waddes. He had not the great abilities of Dilgerson, but he was conscientious, untiring, and infinitely ornamental.

He discussed the letters and a few social matters with Crevace, while Dilgerson prepared the despatch-case for the Cabinet meeting at twelve o'clock.

At half-past eleven a maid entered and brought him a raw egg beaten up with a little neat brandy, in accordance with custom.

He told her that Hervieu, the chauffeur, need not come for him. He would walk over to Downing Street with Mr. Dilgerson. As a matter of fact, there were still one or two points upon which he was not quite clear about the rights of rural committees. Dilgerson had made a special study of these questions. It was a great temptation to rely more and more on Dilgerson.

He enjoyed a Cabinet meeting. He felt more at home there than in the House. He liked the mixture of formality and urbanity with which the most important affairs were discussed. He liked to sit there and watch the faces of his fellow-ministers. They were clever, hard-headed men, men who like himself had climbed, and climbed, and climbed. They shared in common certain broad political principles, but he did not know what was at the back of any one of their minds. It amused him to listen to Brodray elaborating his theories about the Peasant Allotment Bill, and enunciating commendable altruistic principles. He knew Brodray well. He was a good fellow, but he did not really believe what he was saying. He had another axe to grind, and he was using the Peasant Allotment Bill as a medium. The divagations of "procedure" were absorbing. It was on the broad back of "procedure," that the interests of all were struggling to find a place. It was the old parliamentary hand who stood the best chance of finding a corner for his wares. The man who knew the ropes. He, too, had certain ambitions...

It seemed strange to look back on. He had been in political affairs longer than he dare contemplate. Two distinct decades. He had seen much happen. He had seen youth and ambition ground to powder in the parliamentary machine. He had seen careers cut short by death or violent social scandal. Some men were very foolish, foolish and lacking in— moral fibre, that must be it. Moral fibre! the strength not to overstep the bounds, to keep passion and prejudice in restraint, like hounds upon a leash, until their veins become dried and atrophied, and they lack the desire to race before the wind...

He had done that. And now he sat there in the sombre room among the rustling papers, and the greatest Minister of them all was speaking to him, asking his opinion, and listening attentively to his answers. He forced himself to a tense concentration on the issue. He spoke quietly but well. He remembered all the points that the excellent Dilgerson had coached him in. He was conscious of the room listening to him attentively. He knew they held the opinion that he was— safe, that he would do the best thing in the interest of the Party.

O'Bayne spoke after that, floridly, with wild dashes of Celtic fun, and they listened to him, and were amused but not impressed. O'Bayne, too, had an axe to grind, but he showed his hand too consciously. He did not know the ropes.

As the meeting broke up, Brodray came up to him and said:

"Oh, by the way, you know I'm dining with you to-night. May I bring my young nephew with me? He's a sub, in town for a few days' leave."

Of course he smiled and said it would be delightful. What else could he say?

As a matter of fact he would rather not have had the young sub. He had arranged a small bachelors' dinner— just eight of them— and he flattered himself he had arranged it rather skilfully. There was to be Brodray, and Nielson, the director of the biggest agricultural instrument works in the country, Lanyon the K.C., Lord Bowel of the Board of Trade, Tippins, a big landowner from the North, Sir Andrew Griggs, the greatest living authority on the Land Laws (he had also written a book on "artificial manures"), and Sir Gregory Caste, director of the Museum of Applied Arts.

The latter, he felt, would be perhaps a little out of it with the rest, but he would help to emphasize his own aspect of social life, its irreproachable taste and patronage of the arts. It would be a very eclectic dinner-party, and one in which the fusion of the agricultural interests might tend to produce certain opinions and information of use in conducting the Peasant Allotment Bill, and a young red-faced sub dumped into the middle of it would be neither appropriate nor desirable. There was, however, nothing to be done. He and Brodray had always been great friends— that is to say, they had always worked hand in hand.

He rested in the afternoon, for as the years advanced he found this more and more essential. There were the strictest instructions left that under no circumstances was he to be disturbed till half-past four. In the meanwhile the egregious Dilgerson would cope with his affairs.

At half-past four he rose and bathed his face, and after drinking one cup of tea he rejoined his secretaries in the library. In his absence many matters had developed. There was a further accumulation of correspondence, and a neat typewritten list of telephone messages and applications for appointments. But there was no flurry about Dilgerson; everything was in order, and the papers arranged with methodical precision.

He lighted his second cigar of the day and sat down. The graceful head of Crevace was inclined over the papers, and the suave voice of Dilgerson was saying:

"I see, sir, that Chattisworth has been speaking up in Gaysfield. Our agent has written, he thinks it might be advisable for you to go up North and explain our attitude towards the Bill to your constituents. They must not be— er— neglected for long in these restless times."

Yes, there was something satisfying in this. The sense of power, or rather the sense of being within the power focus, the person who understood, who knew what power meant, and yet was great enough to live outside it. Strange why to-day he should be so introspective, why things should appear so abstract! He had a curious feeling as though everything was slipping away, or as though he were seeing himself and his setting from a distance.

He gazed at Dilgerson with his square chin, and his neat moustache, deftly stowing papers into a file whilst he spoke. He momentarily envied Dilgerson with his singular grip on life. He was so intense, so sure...

"Yes...yes," he said after a time, "we'd better go up there, Dilgerson. As you say, they get restless. You might draft me a rough summary of Chattisworth's points. Let me know what you would suggest— precedents, historical parallels and so on. It is true; they so soon get restless."

A feeling of apathy came to him after a time, and he left his secretaries and strolled out into the Mall. A fine rain was drifting from the south, and the tops of the winter trees seemed like a band of gauze veiling the buildings of Whitehall. He went into St. James's Park and watched the pale lights from the Government Buildings. Some soldiers passed him, and a policeman touched his hat.

Usually these things moved him with a strange delight. They were the instruments of power, the symbols of the world he believed in. But to-night the vision of them only filled him with an unaccountable melancholy.

He suddenly remembered a day when he had strolled here with his wife twenty-five years ago...

He passed his hand across his brow and tried to brush back a certain memory. But it would not be denied. It was a grey day like this. She had made some remark, something sentimental and— entirely meretricious. He remembered vividly that he had chided her at the time. One must not think like that; one must restrain and control these emotional impulses. They are retrograde, destroying. He had succeeded, risen to the position he held, because—he had always been master of himself.

After his wife's death it had been easier to do this. His two daughters had married well, one to the Bishop of St. Lubin, and the other to Viscount Chesslebeach, a venerable but well-informed gentleman, who had been loyal to the Party. His son was now in India, holding a position of considerable responsibility. He was free, free to live and struggle for his great ambitions. He was fortunate in that respect; in fact, he had always been fortunate.

He made his way back across the muddy pathway of the Mall, imbued with a sudden uncontrollable desire for light and warmth.

Gales met him in the hall and relieved him of his coat. There was an undeniable sense of comfort and security about Gales. He glanced furtively at the ponderous figure of his head "man," who had been with him now longer than he could remember. He muttered something about the inclemency of the weather, and it soothed him to note the ingratiating acquiescence of the servant, as though by addressing him he had conferred a great benefit upon him. He heard the heavy breathing of Gales as he bustled away with his hat

and coat, and then he warmed his hands by the fire, and strolled upstairs to dress.

As he entered his bedroom an indefinable feeling of dreariness came over him again. It was very silent there, and the well-modulated lights above the dressing-table revealed his gleaming silver brushes and the solid properties of the mahogany bed. He looked at the fire and lighted a cigarette, a very unusual habit for him. Then he went into his dressing-room and noted his clothes all neatly laid out for him, and the brass can of hot-water wrapped in the folds of a rough towel. The door half-open revealed the silver rails and taps in the bathroom, and a very low hum of sound suggested a distant power station or the well-oiled machinery of a lift. It was all wonderfully ordered, wonderfully co-ordinated.

He strolled from one room to the other on the thick pile carpet, trying to thrust back the waves of dejection that threatened to envelop him.

At last he threw his cigarette away, and, disrobing himself, he washed and dressed.

He felt better then, a little more alert and interested. He turned down the light and went downstairs. He felt suddenly curiously nervous and apprehensive about the dinner-party. He went into the dining-room and found Gales instructing a new butler in the subtleties of his profession. The table was laid for nine, and indeed looked worthy of Gales and of himself. There was a certain austerity and distinction about the three bowls of red tulips that were placed at intervals along it, and the old silver and the Nuremberg glasses, and the cunning arrangements of concealed lights emphasised his own sure taste and discrimination. Nevertheless, he felt nervous. He fussed about the table, and took the champagne-bottles from their ice beds to satisfy himself that Gales had brought up the right year. He fidgeted with one of the typewritten menu-cards, and told Gales that on a previous occasion Fouchet had overdone the Lucca oil in the Hollandaise. He must speak to him. He was not sure that Fouchet was not going off. His eyesight was failing, or he was becoming careless. The straw potatoes served with the pheasant had been cut too thick, and his savouries were apt to be too dry. Gales listened to these criticisms with a lugubrious sympathy, and, bowing, he left the room to convey them to the *chef*.

After that he retired to the small Japanese room on the ground floor. When he had a bachelor party he preferred to receive his guests there. There was something about the black walls, and the grotesquely carved fireplace, and the heavily timbered ceiling, also carved and painted dark red, that appealed to his sense of appropriateness in a men's dinner-party. It was essentially a man's room, a little foreboding and bizarre. It symbolised also his appreciation of a

race who were above all things clever; clever and patient, industrious, aesthetic, with some quality that excited the mystic tendencies of the cultivated Westerner.

He had not long to wait before two of his guests arrived— Sir Gregory Caste and Lanyon the K.C. They had met in the cloak-room, and, having previously made each other's acquaintance at an hotel at Baden-Baden, were discussing the medical values of rival Bavarian springs. It was a subject on which he himself was no mean authority. The conversation had not progressed far before Lord Bowel was shown in. He was a very big man with a heavy dome of a head, large pathetic eyes and a thick grey beard. He shook hands solemnly without any gleam of welcome, and immediately gave an account of an incurable disease from which his sister was suffering.

Tippins then arrived, a square-headed Northcountryman, who did not speak all the evening except in self-defence, and he was followed by Sir Andrew Griggs and Nielson. Sir Andrew was well into the eighties, and Nielson was a thin, keen-faced man with very thick glasses. There was a considerable interval before Brodray arrived with his nephew. They were at least ten minutes late, and Brodray was very profuse with apologies.

It was curious that the young man was almost precisely as he had pictured him. He was just a red-faced boy in khaki. He fancied that Brodray introduced him as "Lieutenant Burney," but he was not sure. It was in any case some such name, something ordinary and insignificant.

They then all adjourned to the dining-room without breaking the general level of their conversation, and sat down.

On his right he had Lord Bowel, and on his left Sir Andrew Griggs. Brodray faced him with Sir Gregory Caste on his right and his nephew on the left. Lanyon sat next to the lieutenant, and Nielson and Tuppins occupied the intervening spaces. He had thought this arrangement out with considerable care.

It was not until the sherry and caviare had fulfilled their destiny that Lord Bowel managed to complete the full description of his sister's disease. He spoke very slowly and laboriously, and moved his beard with a curious rotary movement as he masticated his food.

Sir Andrew Griggs then managed to break into the conversation with a dissertation on the horrors of being ill in a foreign hotel. He had once been suddenly seized with a serious internal trouble, and had had to undergo an operation in an hotel in Zermatt. It was very trying, and the hotel people were very unreasonable.

Brodray sang the praises of a new American osteopath during the removal of the soup plates, and the salmon found the director of the National Museum of Applied Arts dilating upon the virtues of grape-fruit as a breakfast food.

The host was in no hurry. He knew that the course of events would be bound to draw the conversation into channels connected with matters that were of moment to the construction of the Peasant Allotment Bill.

What more natural than that the virtues of grape-fruit should lead to the virtues of fresh air and exercise, and then obviously to horse-flesh. At the first glass of champagne, the company were already in the country. Horses and dogs! Ah! how difficult to eliminate them from the conversation of a party of representative Englishmen!

Lord Bowel was the first to express his views upon the Bill. The conversation led to it quite naturally at the arrival of the pheasant. They were better cooked to-night, and the potatoes were thinner, more refined.

He watched the curious movement of Lord Bowel's beard as he bit the pheasant, and said in his sepulchral voice:

"The Groynes amendment will in my opinion inflict a grave injustice on the agricultural classes. You may remember that in Gangway's Rural Housings Bill in eighteen ninety-five, Lord Pennefy, who was then on the Treasury Bench, said..."

The ball had started. He had a curious feeling that he wished Dilgerson were there. Dilgerson had such a remarkable memory. He particularly wanted to get Lanyon's views. Lanyon had a great reputation among the people who knew. Unfortunately he was not a good Party man. They said of him that he had a mind like a double-edged sword. He was keen, analytical, and recondite; and he did not mind whom he struck. The lawyer was listening to Lord Bowel intently. His skin was dry and cracked into a thousand little crevices, his cheek-bones stood out, and his cold, abstract eyes were gazing through his rimless pince-nez at his empty glass. For he did not drink.

Lord Bowel dwelt at great length on the Bill's unfortunate attitude towards the agricultural labourer, and at even greater length on the probable result of that attitude upon the agricultural labourer at the polls. When he mentioned the Party he sank his voice to a lower key, and spoke almost humanly.

The pheasants had disappeared, and little quails in aspic had quivered tremulously in the centre of large plates surrounded by a vegetable salad, the secret of which he himself had discovered when living in Vienna, before Lanyon entered the arena with a cryptic utterance, quoting from an Act of James II. He spoke harshly and incisively, like a judge arraigning a criminal. It was very interesting, for the host became aware that as Lanyon proceeded he was not speaking from conviction. He had heard that Lanyon had ambitions of

a certain legal position. The Bill would not affect it one way or the other, but his reputation as a dialectician must be established beyond question. He had his game to play, too.

Nielson broke in and seemed to the host to agree with Lord Bowel in an almost extravagant manner. He, too, spoke feelingly when the Party was the theme. It was said that Lord Bowel was the power behind the Chief. He certainly exerted a great influence in the selection of office-holders. Men whose political reputation was not made invariably agreed with Lord Bowel, in any case before his face.

The game pursued its normal course, the even tenor of the men's voices sounded one long drone of abstract passionless sound. Under the influence of the good wine, and the solemn procession of cunningly arranged foods, they sank into a detached unity of expression. They looked at each other tolerantly, listening for signs and omens, and measuring the value of each other's remarks. There was no enthusiasm, no passion, nothing to belie the suave and cultivated accents of their voices. They seemed perhaps unreal to each other, merely a segregation of ideas meeting in a mirage, without prejudice, or bias, or any great desire for personal expression.

It was as the savoury was being removed that young Burney laughed. The host did not catch what it was that made him laugh, neither did he ever know. It was probably some mildly humorous remark of Tippins. But it came crashing through the room like the reel of pipes in a desert. It was not a boisterously loud laugh, but it was loud enough to rise above the general din. It was the quality of it that seemed to rend the air like an electric thrill. It was clear, mellow, vibrant, and amazingly free. It rang out with an unrestrained vibrato of enjoyment. It hung in the air and satisfied its purpose; it seemed to lash the walls of the room and hurl its message defiantly at the ceiling. It could not be subdued, and it could never be forgotten. It was an amazing laugh. It was like the wind on the moors, or the crash of great high waves breaking on a rock, something that had been imprisoned and suddenly breaks free and rides serenely to its end...

"And the saintly Cybeline—"

It was curious. Why, immediately he heard the young man's laugh, did this line occur to him? Gales was standing by the sideboard looking flustered and perturbed. People did not laugh in the presence of Gales. He had a faculty of discouraging any flippant digressions from the dignity of politics or dinner. Lanyon was looking in the young man's direction, his keen eyes surveying the wine-glasses set there.

Old Sir Andrew looked at him also and smiled dimly; but, surprisingly enough, the others hardly seemed to have noticed the laugh.

Lord Bowel was saying:

"If, therefore, we are prepared to accept this crisis which the Opposition— with a singular lack of insight, in my opinion— seem disposed to precipitate upon the country, we shall be— er— lacking in loyalty not only to the— er— Constitution, but to ourselves, and I said to the Chief on Wednesday..."

"And the saintly Cybeline"—

What on earth did it mean? What was Lord Bowel talking about? Why did the young man's laugh still seem to be ringing round the room? He looked at him, the boy was talking animatedly to Brodray and grinning; he thought he caught something about "we didn't sleep under cover for a fortnight." He had not been drinking— certainly not to excess. No one had had sherry except the silent Tippins. He might have had three glasses of champagne. It certainly didn't account for the laugh; besides, it was not that sort of laugh.

"There was something, something, something,
And the something will entwine,
And the something, something, something
With the saintly Cybeline."

A shadowy vision glimmered past the finger-bowl in front of him. He remembered now— it was in Frodsee's room at Magdalen. There was a tall chap, with curly dark hair, sitting on Frodsee's table, swinging his legs. He was in "shorts," and his bare knees and stockings were splashed with mud. Frodsee himself was standing by the window, declaiming his ridiculous jingle. And there was a third boy there who was laughing uncontrollably.

"With the saintly Cybeline."

He wished he could remember the rest of the words. The sun was streaming through the window, and the young willows were whispering above the river. The jingle finished and they all laughed, and one laugh rang out above the rest. Strange that it should all come rushing back to him at that moment— the free ring of his own laughter across the years! He had something then, he couldn't think what it was, something that he had since lost.

"Even if in the end we have to sacrifice some of these minor principles, I am inclined to think, sir, that the broader issues will be better served...The interests of the Party are interdependent..."

Nielson was speaking, nervously twisting the cigar in his mouth.

He made a desperate plunge to find his place in the flow of this desultory discussion. He mumbled some inchoate remark upon the Land Laws. It was not in any way germane to what had just been said, and he knew it, only he wanted them to draw him back among them, to protect him from the flood of perverse memories that strove to increase his melancholy.

But the memory of that laugh unnerved him. He could not concentrate. He longed once more for Dilgerson, or for some power that would give him a grip upon his concrete existence. He rose from the table and led his guests back into the Japanese room. He lighted a cigar, and, contrary to his custom, he indulged in a liqueur. His guests formed themselves into little groups, and he hovered between them, afraid to remain with either long, in case they should discover his horror, that in that hour— all through a boy's laugh— he had lost the power to concentrate.

Perhaps something in his manner conveyed itself to his guests, for they broke up early. First old Griggs, then Nielson, then Brodray, and the boy. He shook the boy's hand, but made no comment.

Lanyon took his departure alone, and Tippins followed. Lord Bowel seemed the only one disposed to remain. He sank back in an easy chair and talked interminably, unconscious of any psychological change in the atmosphere of the room. He found a patient listener in Gregory Caste, to whom the discussions of a Government official were as balm.

The host moved restlessly, blinking at his two remaining guests. Sometimes he would sit furtively on the edge of a chair and listen, and nod his head, and say, "Yes... yes, I quite agree. Yes, that is so."

Then he would rise, and walk to the fireplace and move some object an inch or two from the position in which it was placed, and then move it back again. He drank a glass of lemon-water, a row of which were placed on a silver tray by the wall, and smoked another cigarette. Then the instinct of common courtesy prompted him once more to join his two remaining guests. He looked closely at Lord Bowel's heavy cheeks, and a curious feeling of disgust came over him. The voice of the Board of Trade official boomed on luxuriously about the arts of Eastern people, about ceramics, about the diseases of bees, the iniquity of licensing restrictions, the influence of Chaldean teaching on modern theology, on the best hotel in Paris, on the vacillating character of the principal leaders of the Opposition. There seemed no end to the variety of theme, and no break in the dull monotony of voice.

It must have been well after midnight that Lord Bowel suddenly sighed heavily and rose. He took his host's hand and said gloomily:

"It has been a most delightful evening."

He watched the two men pass out into the hall, and saw Gales come ponderously forward and help them with their coats. Then he drew back and looked into the fire. He pressed his hand to his brow. He had not a headache, but he felt peculiarly exhausted, as though he had been through some great strain. In the fire he saw again the nodding heads of willows and the young clouds scudding before the wind...He started. He could not understand; he

could have sworn that at that moment he again heard someone laugh. He looked round to convince himself that he was alone in the room. He shivered and stood up. He was not well. He was getting old. A time comes to all men—Anyway, he had not been a failure. He had succeeded, in fact, beyond his wildest dreams. His name was known to everyone in England. His features even graced the pages of the satiric journals. He was the "safe" man of the Party. One paper had nicknamed him "Trumps," the safest card in the pack. It was something to have achieved this, even if—he had sacrificed things, impulses, convictions, passions, the fierce joy of expressing his primitive self. Perhaps in the process he had lost something.

Ah, God! He wished the young man had not laughed.

There was a gentle tap on the door, and Gales came in.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir!" he murmured softly.

"It's all right. I'm going to bed."

He rose weakly from the chair and went upstairs. Once more in the bedroom, the silence tormented him. The furniture seemed no longer his own, no longer an expression of himself, but a cold, frigid statement of dead conformity. He touched the bed, and then walked up and down. What could he do? He had no power to combat the strange terrors of remorse that flooded him. He sat there silently waiting for the mood to pass. He knew that if he struggled it *would* pass. He would be himself again. It was all so foolish, so unworthy of him. He kept saying that to himself, but underneath it all something else seemed stirring, something that went to the roots of his being and shook him violently.

He waited there a long time, till the house seemed given over to the embraces of the night, then he stealthily crept downstairs again. It was all in darkness. He turned on the light in the hall and dining-room. He wandered to his accustomed chair at the dining-table and huddled into it. He struggled to piece together the memories of days of freedom and splendour, when he had sacrificed nothing, when life was an open book.

He visualised little incidents of his childhood and schooldays, but they seemed trivial and without significance or humour.

Ah, God! if he could laugh!

He started suddenly at the sound of someone moving in the hall. He knew instinctively it would be Gales. He jumped up. He did not want his loyal retainer to think him a fool. It would be the most terrible thing of all to appear ridiculous to Gales. He walked round the room nervously peering at the floor.

Gales blinked at him. He was in a dressing-gown, and he mumbled:

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

He glanced at Gales but said nothing. He continued searching the floor. Gales advanced into the room and coughed, and looked at him curiously. He had never known Gales look at him before in quite that way. He felt suddenly angry with the servant and wanted to get rid of him, but at the same time he was self-conscious and afraid. He was aware of the level tones of Gales's voice murmuring:

"Excuse me, sir, may I help you? Have you lost anything? Can I—"

The horror came home to him with increased violence as he glanced at the puffy cheeks of the butler. He felt that he could not endure him for another moment. He almost ran to the door, calling out in a harsh voice as he did so:

"Yes... yes. I've lost something."

He brushed past the butler, his cheeks hot and dry, and his eyes blazing with an unforgiving anger. He did not turn again, but hurried away, like an animal that is ashamed to be seen, and ran whimpering upstairs to his bedroom.

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15: The Great Keinplatz Experiment

Arthur Conan Doyle

1859-1930

Belgravia Magazine July 1885

Arthur Conan Doyle

(*Keinplatz translates as "no-place"*)

OF ALL THE SCIENCES which have puzzled the sons of men, none had such an attraction for the learned Professor von Baumgarten as those which relate to psychology and the ill-defined relations between mind and matter. A celebrated anatomist, a profound chemist, and one of the first physiologists in Europe, it was a relief for him to turn from these subjects and to bring his varied knowledge to bear upon the study of the soul and the mysterious relationship of spirits. At first, when as a young man he began to dip into the secrets of mesmerism, his mind seemed to be wandering in a strange land where all was chaos and darkness, save that here and there some great unexplainable and disconnected fact loomed out in front of him. As the years passed, however, and as the worthy Professor's stock of knowledge increased, for knowledge begets knowledge as money bears interest, much which had seemed strange and unaccountable began to take another shape in his eyes. New trains of reasoning became familiar to him, and he perceived connecting links where all had been incomprehensible and startling.

By experiments which extended over twenty years, he obtained a basis of facts upon which it was his ambition to build up a new exact science which should embrace mesmerism, spiritualism, and all cognate subjects. In this he was much helped by his intimate knowledge of the more intricate parts of animal physiology which treat of nerve currents and the working of the brain; for Alexis von Baumgarten was Regius Professor of Physiology at the University

of Keinplatz, and had all the resources of the laboratory to aid him in his profound researches.

Professor von Baumgarten was tall and thin, with a hatchet face and steel-grey eyes, which were singularly bright and penetrating. Much thought had furrowed his forehead and contracted his heavy eyebrows, so that he appeared to wear a perpetual frown, which often misled people as to his character, for though austere he was tender-hearted. He was popular among the students, who would gather round him after his lectures and listen eagerly to his strange theories. Often he would call for volunteers from amongst them in order to conduct some experiment, so that eventually there was hardly a lad in the class who had not, at one time or another, been thrown into a mesmeric trance by his Professor.

Of all these young devotees of science there was none who equalled in enthusiasm Fritz von Hartmann. It had often seemed strange to his fellow-students that wild, reckless Fritz, as dashing a young fellow as ever hailed from the Rhinelands, should devote the time and trouble which he did in reading up abstruse works and in assisting the Professor in his strange experiments. The fact was, however, that Fritz was a knowing and long-headed fellow. Months before he had lost his heart to young Elise, the blue-eyed, yellow-haired daughter of the lecturer. Although he had succeeded in learning from her lips that she was not indifferent to his suit, he had never dared to announce himself to her family as a formal suitor. Hence he would have found it a difficult matter to see his young lady had he not adopted the expedient of making himself useful to the Professor. By this means he frequently was asked to the old man's house, where he willingly submitted to be experimented upon in any way as long as there was a chance of his receiving one bright glance from the eyes of Elise or one touch of her little hand.

Young Fritz von Hartmann was a handsome lad enough. There were broad acres, too, which would descend to him when his father died. To many he would have seemed an eligible suitor; but Madame frowned upon his presence in the house, and lectured the Professor at times on his allowing such a wolf to prowl around their lamb. To tell the truth, Fritz had an evil name in Keinplatz. Never was there a riot or a duel, or any other mischief afoot, but the young Rhinelander figured as a ringleader in it. No one used more free and violent language, no one drank more, no one played cards more habitually, no one was more idle, save in the one solitary subject.

No wonder, then, that the good *Frau Professorin* gathered her Fräulein under her wing, and resented the attentions of such a *mauvais sujet*. As to the worthy lecturer, he was too much engrossed by his strange studies to form an opinion upon the subject one way or the other.

For many years there was one question which had continually obtruded itself upon his thoughts. All his experiments and his theories turned upon a single point. A hundred times a day the Professor asked himself whether it was possible for the human spirit to exist apart from the body for a time and then to return to it once again. When the possibility first suggested itself to him his scientific mind had revolted from it. It clashed too violently with preconceived ideas and the prejudices of his early training. Gradually, however, as he proceeded farther and farther along the pathway of original research, his mind shook off its old fetters and became ready to face any conclusion which could reconcile the facts. There were many things which made him believe that it was possible for mind to exist apart from matter. At last it occurred to him that by a daring and original experiment the question might be definitely decided.

"It is evident," he remarked in his celebrated article upon invisible entities, which appeared in the *Keinplatz wochenliche Medicalschrift* about this time, and which surprised the whole scientific world— "it is evident that under certain conditions the soul or mind does separate itself from the body. In the case of a mesmerised person, the body lies in a cataleptic condition, but the spirit has left it. Perhaps you reply that the soul is there, but in a dormant condition. I answer that this is not so, otherwise how can one account for the condition of clairvoyance, which has fallen into disrepute through the knavery of certain scoundrels, but which can easily be shown to be an undoubted fact. I have been able myself, with a sensitive subject, to obtain an accurate description of what was going on in another room or another house. How can such knowledge be accounted for on any hypothesis save that the soul of the subject has left the body and is wandering through space? For a moment it is recalled by the voice of the operator and says what it has seen, and then wings its way once more through the air. Since the spirit is by its very nature invisible, we cannot see these comings and goings, but we see their effect in the body of the subject, now rigid and inert, now struggling to narrate impressions which could never have come to it by natural means. There is only one way which I can see by which the fact can be demonstrated. Although we in the flesh are unable to see these spirits, yet our own spirits, could we separate them from the body, would be conscious of the presence of others. It is my intention, therefore, shortly to mesmerise one of my pupils. I shall then mesmerise myself in a manner which has become easy to me. After that, if my theory holds good, my spirit will have no difficulty in meeting and communing with the spirit of my pupil, both being separated from the body. I hope to be able to communicate the result of this interesting experiment in an early number of the *Keinplatz wochenliche Medicalschrilt*."

When the good Professor finally fulfilled his promise, and published an account of what occurred, the narrative was so extraordinary that it was received with general incredulity. The tone of some of the papers was so offensive in their comments upon the matter that the angry savant declared that he would never open his mouth again or refer to the subject in any way — a promise which he has faithfully kept. This narrative has been compiled, however, from the most authentic sources, and the events cited in it may be relied upon as substantially correct.

It happened, then, that shortly after the time when Professor von Baumgarten conceived the idea of the above-mentioned experiment, he was walking thoughtfully homewards after a long day in the laboratory, when he met a crowd of roystering students who had just streamed out from a beer-house. At the head of them, half-intoxicated and very noisy, was young Fritz von Hartmann. The Professor would have passed them, but his pupil ran across and intercepted him.

"Heh! my worthy master," he said, taking the old man by the sleeve, and leading him down the road with him. "There is something that I have to say to you, and it is easier for me to say it now, when the good beer is humming in my head, than at another time."

"What is it, then, Fritz?"the physiologist asked, looking at him in mild surprise.

"I hear, *mein herr*, that you are about to do some wondrous experiment in which you hope to take a man's soul out of his body, and then to put it back again. Is it not so?"

"It is true, Fritz."

"And have you considered, my dear sir, that you may have some difficulty in finding some one on whom to try this? *Potztausend*! Suppose that the soul went out and would not come back. That would be a bad business. Who is to take the risk?"

"But, Fritz," the Professor cried, very much startled by this view of the matter, "I had relied upon your assistance in the attempt. Surely you will not desert me. Consider the honour and glory."

"Consider the fiddlesticks!" the student cried angrily. "Am I to be paid always thus? Did I not stand two hours upon a glass insulator while you poured electricity into my body? Have you not stimulated my phrenic nerves, besides ruining my digestion with a galvanic current round my stomach? Four-and-thirty times you have mesmerised me, and what have I got from all this? Nothing. And now you wish to take my soul out, as you would take the works from a watch. It is more than flesh and blood can stand."

"Dear, dear!" the Professor cried in great distress. "That is very true, Fritz. I never thought of it before. If you can but suggest how I can compensate you, you will find me ready and willing."

"Then listen," said Fritz solemnly. "If you will pledge your word that after this experiment I may have the hand of your daughter, then I am willing to assist you; but if not, I shall have nothing to do with it. These are my only terms."

"And what would my daughter say to this?"the Professor exclaimed, after a pause of astonishment.

"Elise would welcome it," the young man replied. "We have loved each other long."

"Then she shall be yours," the physiologist said with decision, "for you are a good-hearted young man, and one of the best neurotic subjects that I have ever known— that is when you are not under the influence of alcohol. My experiment is to be performed upon the fourth of next month. You will attend at the physiological laboratory at twelve o'clock. It will be a great occasion, Fritz. Von Gruben is coming from Jena, and Hinterstein from Basle. The chief men of science of all South Germany will be there.

"I shall be punctual," the student said briefly; and so the two parted. The Professor plodded homeward, thinking of the great coming event, while the young man staggered along after his noisy companions, with his mind full of the blue-eyed Elise, and of the bargain which he had concluded with her father.

The Professor did not exaggerate when he spoke of the widespread interest excited by his novel psychophysiological experiment. Long before the hour had arrived the room was filled by a galaxy of talent. Besides the celebrities whom he had mentioned, there had come from London the great Professor Lurcher, who had just established his reputation by a remarkable treatise upon cerebral centres. Several great lights of the Spiritualistic body had also come a long distance to be present, as had a Swedenborgian minister, who considered that the proceedings might throw some light upon the doctrines of the Rosy Cross.

There was considerable applause from this eminent assembly upon the appearance of Professor von Baumgarten and his subject upon the platform. The lecturer, in a few well-chosen words, explained what his views were, and how he proposed to test them. "I hold," he said, "that when a person is under the influence of mesmerism, his spirit is for the time released from his body, and I challenge any one to put forward any other hypothesis which will account for the fact of clairvoyance. I therefore hope that upon mesmerising my young friend here, and then putting myself into a trance, our spirits may be

able to commune together, though our bodies lie still and inert. After a time nature will resume her sway, our spirits will return into our respective bodies, and all will be as before. With your kind permission, we shall now proceed to attempt the experiment."

The applause was renewed at this speech, and the audience settled down in expectant silence. With a few rapid passes the Professor mesmerised the young man, who sank back in his chair, pale and rigid. He then took a bright globe of glass from his pocket, and by concentrating his gaze upon it and making a strong mental effort, he succeeded in throwing himself into the same condition. It was a strange and impressive sight to see the old man and the young sitting together in the same cataleptic condition. Whither, then, had their souls fled? That was the question which presented itself to each and every one of the spectators.

Five minutes passed, and then ten, and then fifteen, and then fifteen more, while the Professor and his pupil sat stiff and stark upon the platform. During that time not a sound was heard from the assembled savants, but every eye was bent upon the two pale faces, in search of the first signs of returning consciousness. Nearly an hour had elapsed before the patient watchers were rewarded. A faint flush came back to the cheeks of Professor von Baumgarten. The soul was coming back once more to its earthly tenement. Suddenly he stretched out his long thin arms, as one awaking from sleep, and rubbing his eyes, stood up from his chair and gazed about him as though he hardly realised where he was. "*Tausend Teufel*!" he exclaimed, rapping out a tremendous South German oath, to the great astonishment of his audience and to the disgust of the Swedenborgian. "Where the Henker am I then, and what in thunder has occurred? Oh yes, I remember now. One of these nonsensical mesmeric experiments. There is no result this time, for I remember nothing at all since I became unconscious; so you have had all your long journeys for nothing, my learned friends, and a very good joke too; "at which the Regius Professor of Physiology burst into a roar of laughter and slapped his thigh in a highly indecorous fashion. The audience were so enraged at this unseemly behaviour on the part of their host, that there might have been a considerable disturbance, had it not been for the judicious interference of young Fritz von Hartmann, who had now recovered from his lethargy. Stepping to the front of the platform, the young man apologised for the conduct of his companion. "I am sorry to say," he said, "that he is a harum-scarum sort of fellow, although he appeared so grave at the commencement of this experiment. He is still suffering from mesmeric reaction, and is hardly accountable for his words. As to the experiment itself, I do not consider it to be a failure. It is very possible that our spirits may have been communing in space during this hour; but,

unfortunately, our gross bodily memory is distinct from our spirit, and we cannot recall what has occurred. My energies shall now be devoted to devising some means by which spirits may be able to recollect what occurs to them in their free state, and I trust that when I have worked this out, I may have the pleasure of meeting you all once again in this hall, and demonstrating to you the result. "This address, coming from so young a student, caused considerable astonishment among the audience, and some were inclined to be offended, thinking that he assumed rather too much importance. The majority, however, looked upon him as a young man of great promise, and many comparisons were made as they left the hall between his dignified conduct and the levity of his professor, who during the above remarks was laughing heartily in a corner, by no means abashed at the failure of the experiment.

Now although all these learned men were filing out of the lecture-room under the impression that they had seen nothing of note, as a matter of fact one of the most wonderful things in the whole history of the world had just occurred before their very eyes Professor von Baumgarten had been so far correct in his theory that both his spirit and that of his pupil had been for a time absent from his body. But here a strange and unforeseen complication had occurred. In their return the spirit of Fritz von Hartmann had entered into the body of Alexis von Baumgarten, and that of Alexis von Baumgarten had taken up its abode in the frame of Fritz von Hartmann. Hence the slang and scurrility which issued from the lips of the serious Professor, and hence also the weighty words and grave statements which fell from the careless student. It was an unprecedented event, yet no one knew of it, least of all those whom it concerned.

The body of the Professor, feeling conscious suddenly of a great dryness about the back of the throat, sallied out into the street, still chuckling to himself over the result of the experiment, for the soul of Fritz within was reckless at the thought of the bride whom he had won so easily. His first impulse was to go up to the house and see her, but on second thoughts he came to the conclusion that it would be best to stay away until Madame Baumgarten should be informed by her husband of the agreement which had been made. He therefore made his way down to the Grüner Mann, which was one of the favourite trysting-places of the wilder students, and ran, boisterously waving his cane in the air, into the little parlour, where sat Spiegler and Muller and half a dozen other boon companions.

"Ha, ha! my boys," he shouted. "I knew I should find you here. Drink up, every one of you, and call for what you like, for I'm going to stand treat to-day."

Had the green man who is depicted upon the signpost of that well-known inn suddenly marched into the room and called for a bottle of wine, the students could not have been more amazed than they were by this unexpected entry of their revered professor. They were so astonished that for a minute or two they glared at him in utter bewilderment without being able to make any reply to his hearty invitation.

"*Donner und Blitzen*!" shouted the Professor angrily. "What the deuce is the matter with you, then? You sit there like a set of stuck pigs staring at me. What is it, then?"

"It is the unexpected honour," stammered Spiegel, who was in the chair.

"Honour— rubbish!" said the Professor testily. "Do you think that just because I happen to have been exhibiting mesmerism to a parcel of old fossils, I am therefore too proud to associate with dear old friends like you? Come out of that chair, Spiegel my boy, for I shall preside now. Beer, or wine, or schnapps, my lads— call for what you like, and put it all down to me."

Never was there such an afternoon in the Grüner Mann. The foaming flagons of lager and the green-necked bottles of Rhenish circulated merrily. By degrees the students lost their shyness in the presence of their Professor. As for him, he shouted, he sang, he roared, he balanced a long tobacco-pipe upon his nose, and offered to run a hundred yards against any member of the company. The Kellner and the barmaid whispered to each other outside the door their astonishment at such proceedings on the part of a Regius Professor of the ancient university of Kleinplatz. They had still more to whisper about afterwards, for the learned man cracked the Kellner's crown, and kissed the barmaid behind the kitchen door.

"Gentlemen," said the Professor, standing up, albeit somewhat totteringly, at the end of the table, and balancing his high old-fashioned wine glass in his bony hand, "I must now explain to you what is the cause of this festivity."

"Hear! hear!" roared the students, hammering their beer glasses against the table; "a speech, a speech!— silence for a speech!"

"The fact is, my friends," said the Professor, beaming through his spectacles, "I hope very soon to be married."

"Married!" cried a student, bolder than the others "Is Madame dead, then?"

"Madame who?"

"Why, Madame von Baumgarten, of course."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Professor; "I can see, then, that you know all about my former difficulties. No, she is not dead, but I have reason to believe that she will not oppose my marriage."

"That is very accommodating of her," remarked one of the company.

"In fact," said the Professor, "I hope that she will now be induced to aid me in getting a wife. She and I never took to each other very much; but now I hope all that may be ended, and when I marry she will come and stay with me."

"What a happy family!" exclaimed some wag.

"Yes, indeed; and I hope you will come to my wedding, all of you. I won't mention names, but here is to my little bride!" and the Professor waved his glass in the air.
