PAST MASTERS 170

Cutcliffe Hyne
W W Jacobs
Abraham Merritt
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"Saki"
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PAST MASTERS 170

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: The Gray Hair

C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne

1865-1944

Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian, 30 Dec 1910

"HE'S A common liar," said York.

"I don't think it," said the Club secretary, judicially. "He may have exaggerated in the details; he probably has done; any man with a tongue in his head would do with such an opportunity; but I'm inclined to believe he'd got ordinary truth for a foundation. And mark you, I've known Felton off and on for a long time. I was only a year senior to him at Cambridge."

"My dear boy," said York, "I've known him intimately ever since he was Johnny Felton in knickerbockers and tears at a dame school. There was nothing heroic about him then, and I've never noticed a change grow in that respect during all the years that have edged in since. He was no good at games or anything when he was a kid; he's been nothing but a petticoat pendant ever since he came down from the 'varsity. No, Johnny's always been the most nervous, effeminate little creature imaginable. But," York added, thoughtfully, "I must confess that I have never found him to be much of a liar either. He hadn't the necessary inventiveness. Whenever he told a tale that was anything beyond the most ordinary gossip, it was the dreariest thing imaginable— up to the present outbreak, that is."

"And now, because he comes out with a startler, you don't believe him."

"There's something wrong about this tale," said York, obstinately. "It doesn't hang together right."

"Well," said the club secretary, "I've had some experience of liars at this shop, and I always notice that the one prominent feature in all their yarns is the beautiful way in which all the pieces dovetail in with one another. But letting that alone, there's another thing to remember. When Felton left London two months ago for the States his hair was dark brown; he comes back with it gray as a badger's; there's no getting over that."

"And that's the only thing which stumps me," said York, thoughtfully. "Men do not get completely gray in eight short weeks without a good solid reason. Hullo, though, look. There he is, off button-holing Methuen. He's telling his yarn over again; and that must be the fourteenth time this blessed day. Now look here. I'll bet you Methuen stumps him. Methuen's been all over the world, and he'll pick out the weak points which we don't see. Come on and listen."

"Can't," said the club secretary. "I've got work to do."

"Oh, come along."

"Work!" said the club secretary solemnly, and helped himself to matches and went off to his own den.

York got up and stretched his arms. He smiled like a man who is going to be entertained, and then he crossed the room and took the deep chair close to Methuen's. He ordered a large whisky and soda from the waiter who had just come in, and settled himself down to listen. Felton was fairly into the swing of his tale.

"Oh, we wandered all about North Carolina and Tennessee," he was saying. "In the Allegheny country for the most part. Know it?"

"Not a bit," said Methuen, "except vaguely, by reputation. I've merely passed through there from Richmond, Virginia, down to New Orleans, on the cars."

"Remember Ashville in North Carolina?"

"Can't say I do."

"Well, you must have passed through it, but perhaps were there at night. The Ashville. Poor old chap! Poor old Sugden!"

"What's the matter with Sugden, Johnny?"

"Handed in his checks," said Felton, darkly. "Thought they only did that out west. But it's a good phrase anyway. What did Sugden meddle with checks for?"

"It was moonlighting," said Felton.

"I thought it was America you were talking about," York cut in. " 'Moonlighting' sounds as if you'd got to Ireland."

Felton ignored the suggestion.

"You know what moonlight whisky is, Methuen, don't you?"

"Real mean corn?"

"Illicit whisky made by the tarheelers up in the mountains. It's awful stuff to drink, and nobody but a mountaineer could swallow it, or make it."

"Hard stuff to brew?"

"No, dangerous. It's against the law, you know. And when the sheriff and his gang raid a still, they shoot first and ask questions afterwards."

"Ah!" said Methuen, "I've heard they were a pretty tough crowd up in the mountains there, and especially on the Tennessee side, in the Great Smokies."

"Do you know the ground then?" Felton asked quickly.

"I've told you no. Trot out your yarn, Johnny. I can't contradict."

"Oh, you think I came back here to tell lies," said Felton, and York from the depths of the big chair laughed. "But you needn't suppose that I went in and out of a business that turned my hair this colour merely because I liked it."

He passed a hand over his gray head with a gesture that was entirely pathetic.

"Before I left England on that horrible trip to the Alleghenies, you know I got on with the women as well as any fellow in London. You are neither of you ladies' men, and I know you despise me for it; but that was my hobby, and no one can deny that I was well up in the front rank. Well, I came back a cauliflower-headed fogey. Do you suppose any of this year's debutantes will care to do a flirtation with me like half the last batch did?"

"Of course they'll all jump at the chance," said York. "Veal always adores the hero of wild romantic adventure."

Felton gave a slow and mournful shake of the head, but his eyes distinctly brightened.

"Do you really think so?" he said.

"Sure of it," said York, briskly. "Look how the little dears all trot after Methuen there."

"Skittles!" said Methuen. "I don't know ten women in London, and don't want to. 'My love is on a distant shore,' or, to be more accurate, on several distant shores. So you see they don't clash. I once tried spooning with two women at once in this village, and they met and compared notes and both came and clawed me. I had to clear in a hurry, and I haven't dared to tackle the London female since. But York's right, Johnny. Spin your yarn and show your scars; curdle 'em, and they'll adore you. It's funny why they should, but that's the way they're built."

Felton shook his head and tried not to look pleased.

"But what induced you of all people to brew moonlight whisky?" Methuen asked. "Some women been scratching you here, and you ran away and got desperate?"

"I went out to the States merely to see an old friend," said Felton. "You won't know him, either of you. His name was Sugden, and he lived in the north before he left England. We had always kept up a good correspondence ever since he was abroad, and he was always wanting me to go over and look him up.

"So a couple of months ago when the season here came to an end, I sent him a cable and followed it myself in the next steamer. He was living in Ashville, North Carolina; and he'd been most things, from clerk in a store—counter-jumper that is, y'know— to conductor of a trolley car. But just before I got there he'd been bringing off one or two operations in real estate which had left him in funds, and he said he wanted a holiday. We agreed to go off together. It was a tossup between one of the sea-bathing places up north and a trip to the mountains, and I gave my bean for the dose of savagery."

"Oh, come now, Johnny!" said York.

"It's a fact," said Felton, "and if you want to know the reason I must own to being a horrible snob. You see, poor old Sugden's clothes were so awfully behind date that I should have been ashamed to go with him to any place where we might meet smart people. So now you see."

"Beg pardon," said York, "that sounds more likely."

"I don't know why you fellows should be so sceptical," said Felton. "You don't suppose I went off, and got into a mess, and earned this infernal gray hair, for the sheer fun of the thing, do you?"

"Go on with the yarn," said Methuen. "Never mind York. He's jealous."

"Well, at first we were going to take a jersey, or a buckboard, or some sort of vehicle, and drive along in that, and have a tent and be fairly comfortable. But Sugden said we should have much better fun if we rode, and be able to see far more of the country.

"The nights are very hot at that time of the year, and it didn't a bit matter about sleeping in the open. And as for grub, we must buy what we could as we went along. He was to take a kettle, a frying pan, and each of us had a blanket on the front of his saddle, and a bag slung behind to carry anything we were forced to take. You should have seen poor old Sugden on that Kentucky horse of his, with flap stirrups, and a big felt hat! Buffalo Bill was a fool to him.

"We struck straight out for the mountains. We were going past Bill Nye's place at Buck Shoals on the French Broad River, then to Bowman's Bluff, where there is the English colony, and then way up to Caesar's Head, and on down the other side into Tennessee. We weren't going to have any settled plans past that; we were going just where the spirit and the trails took us; and we were going to forget that such things as real estate or stiff collars had ever been invented. It was all Sugden's scheme, he just bristled with it; he said it would be a regular trip in Arcadia. Poor old Alfred!

"Well, you know, you chaps, I'm no hand at describing scenery. You've got to read that in books if you want to find out about it, or else go out there and stare for yourselves. But I will say it was all fine; great forests, y'know, with big red cliffs sticking out of them, and red soil on the roads, and red water in the rivers. Occasionally we came across a village, and got apples and peaches and chickens, and filled up the corn bag, and bought a fresh tin of baking powder, and at night we made fast the horses to tree boughs, and built a fire to cook at, and camped out under the stars. Am I boring you?"

Methuen yawned.

"Er— no," he said. "But never mind the landscape and the commissariat, Johnny. I'm a hit pushed for time now, and you can tell that some other day. Get on to the shooting. I want to hoar how you earned those venerable looks."

Felton sighed.

"It's a hard thing to have to talk about," he said, "especially as nothing but my curiosity took us up there at all. You see moonlight whisky was not new to Sugden. It was merely bad liquor and nothing more. But it was just like a now story book to me then. It was filthy staff to drink; sort of mixture between paraffin and methylated spirit; but it gave you a delicious kind of creeps when you remembered the murderous outlaws who had brewed it. At least that was the way it struck me, when I didn't know anything about them."

"Fancy Johnny getting enthusiastic about anything so badly dressed as outlaws," York murmured.

"Give the man a chance," said Methuen. "Go on, Johnny."

"And after a good deal of fishing for it, we were given the tip as to where one of the finest stills in all the mountains was hidden; and we got set on to the end of the horse trail, and rode away for it through the trees.

"Now it turned out that the revenue had been trying hard to discover this still for many a year; but that we didn't know, and the tarheelers we'd asked questions from got it into their frowsy heads that we were revenue spies, and had sent word; which also of course we didn't guess. But we got the news given to us mighty suddenly. We had gone a matter of a dozen miles, maybe, when we came upon a big black pine felled across the horse trail. We pulled up, and someone told us to hold our hands above our heads. There was no help for it. There were a dozen gun barrels pointing at us from cover; and some fellows came with ropes, and in another minute they had us trussed up like a couple of fowls on a game dealer's slab.

"We told them we were nothing but harmless tourists, but they only jeered and banged us about with their feet. They'd quite persuaded themselves that we were revenue spies, and not all the talking in the world would have made them change their minds. But they didn't even give us a chance to talk. They tied up the mouths of each of us with his own handkerchief, and then held a trial over us. Fancy that! And then there was no foolery about it either. In ten minutes they had condemned the pair of us to death, and I felt a sort of empty feeling grow where my stomach ought to have been that was quite new to me. I don't mind telling you I was in the deuce of a funk. You fellows may think me a coward if you like, but I don't mind telling you I was horribly frightened."

"Don't apologise," said Methuen. "Any man would have been. But I suppose when you were both thoroughly sorry for yourselves, they gave you a kick and sent you on your way, or else you would not be here now!"

"Oh, did they?" said Felton. "You don't understand these brutes. A few of them were for stringing us up there and then, but a someone suggested that they would make a better example of us if they hanged us by the side of the

high road; and the rest picked up the idea at once. They took us back down the trail on led horses, and halted when we got to the road, under a big white oak.

" 'It will carry the pair of them,' said somebody.

" 'No, one at a time,' said somebody else. "We will string up the tall fellow here, and tote the other one down the grade and hang him on that big magnolia tree below the bend.'

"Up till then I'd a wild hope that we were only going to be scared; but when I saw they intended to murder the pair of us I very near fainted. I saw them put a rope round Sugden's neck and pull him up to a branch of the white oak, and the brutes made me look on till he was stone dead. Poor old Alfred! And I was as powerless as a fly to help him! And then we moved off down the road, and left him dangling behind us, and I expected to be dead, too, within another hour!"

"Phew!" said Methuen. "That was a tight corner. And so I suppose you got desperate, and made a break for it, and got clear?"

"I'd all the will to do that," said Pelton, "but not the chance. I'd my wrists tied behind me, and my feet coupled together beneath the horse's belly. Otherwise I should have made a dash for it, even with the certainty of being shot down before I got a dozen yards away. Anything is better than being strung up like a dog. But, as I say, they took care that escape of that kind was impossible.

"And the way I did get free was unexpected. We met a fellow on the road to the bend by the magnolia who had travelled down with me in the cars (so it seems) from New York; and he vouched that I was a Britisher newly landed, and could not be a revenue spy. They were half in mind to hang me still, so that I should not bother them further, but at I last they said if I'd give my word of honour I to clear from the country and not try to take any vengeance, they'd let me go. And I did that. Poor old Alfred was dead and couldn't be helped. And so I didn't think shame in looking after the saving of my own life.

"I suppose," he added, with a shrug of the shoulders, "a man in a book would have saved Sugden and exterminated the moonlighters; but then I'm only an ordinary individual, and merely human. I hadn't a chance given me to do anything. And I rode back to Ashville and looked in the glass. My hair had been brown when I started out ten days before, it was the colour you see it now then, and I wasn't surprised. I felt as if I'd lived five and forty years between the two dates. Well, it's seven o'clock, and I must be going. Goodbye, you fellows. Don't tell everybody what a mess I've been in."

"Which being interpreted," said York, as the little gray-haired man went wearily out of the room, "is a request to advertise the matter most thoroughly far and wide. What do you think of the yarn?"

"Don't quite know," said Methuen. "It seems a bit improbable somehow, but there's no getting over that grey hair. He couldn't have invented that— Hullo, look here there, it can't be. Yes, it is. I say, Cospatric"— a man who had just come into the room walked across laughing— "what on earth are you doing here."

"I landed in England yesterday from the States, and came to this club to dine with a steamer acquaintance."

"Sit down and talk," said Methuen. "This is Mr. York— Mr. Cospatric. Fancy stumbling across you, here of all places."

"It is a horrible small world," said Cospatric. "On the stairs coming up to this room I met a little fellow I saw only the other day in Ashville, North Carolina. He was staying in one of the big summer hotels there, to pick up local colour, and also for another purpose which made onlookers laugh. He'd evidently been in the habit of dying his hair, and had got sick of it. Consequently as the daily dose was discontinued, his locks were gray close to the head, and brown at the ends. It made him a most comic sight, and watching the gray sub-stratum get deeper day by day provided cheap amusement for the whole hotel. We concluded he was some sort of a novelist, because he was very eager about the blood and thunder tales in the local papers, and keen to be told all the details.

"There was one affair which especially fascinated him. A truculent deputy sheriff called Sugden went up to raid some moonlight whisky mills, and made himself disliked by the local tarheelers, and was hanged by them out of revenge on a tree by the roadside. It was quite a three days' sensation in the local rags, with scare-headings and woodcuts all complete. Felton just revelled in it. I shouldn't mind betting he dishes up that Sugden episode for English fiction before many months are over."

York was gasping with laughter in the depth of the big armchair. "He's done it already," he said.

"Oh, you know the man, do you?" said Cospatric.

"We know him, all right, and he isn't a good storyteller. He gave us the yarn with tons of detail, only he got mixed up about the names. Oh, Johnny, Johnny, I didn't think you could rise to heights like this!"

Methuen lifted his tumbler.

"Here's to him," he said. "And we won't give him away. It would be sheer cruelty to cut the ground from under him now that he has gone to all this trouble and expense to build up his yarn. And besides, female London is in my debt. I owe them a score."

2: Stranger Than Fiction

Lafcadio Hearn

Patrick Lafcadio Hearn, 1850-1904
The Atlantic Monthly, April 1905

IT WAS A PERFECT West Indian day. My friend the notary and I were crossing the island by a wonderful road which wound up through tropic forest to the clouds, and thence looped down again, through gold-green slopes of cane, and scenery amazing of violet and blue and ghost-gray peaks, to the roaring coast of the trade winds. All the morning we had been ascending— walking after our carriage, most of the time, for the sake of the brave little mule;— and the sea had been climbing behind us till it looked like a monstrous wall of blue, pansy blue, under the ever heightening horizon. The heat was like the heat of a vapor-bath, but the air was good to breathe with its tropical odor, an odor made up of smells of strange saps, queer spicy scents of mould, exhalations of aromatic decay. Moreover, the views were glimpses of Paradise; and it was a joy to watch the torrents roaring down their gorges under shadows ot tree-fern and bamboo.

My friend stopped the carriage before a gate way set into a hedge full of flowers that looked like pink-and-white butterflies.

"I have to make a call here," he said— "come in with me."

We dismounted, and he knocked on the gate with the butt of his whip. Within, at the end of a shady garden, I could see the porch of a planter's house; beyond were rows of cocoa palms, and glimpses of yellowing cane. Presently a negro, wearing only a pair of canvas trousers and a great straw hat, came hobbling to open the gate— followed by a multitude, an astonishing multitude, of chippering chickens. Under the shadow of that huge straw, hat I could not see the negro's face; but I noticed that his limbs and body were strangely shrunken— looked as if withered to the bone. A weirder creature I had never beheld; and I wondered at his following of chickens.

"Eh!" exclaimed the notary, "your chickens are as lively as ever !.... I want to see Madame Floran."

"*Mom ke di*," the goblin responded huskily, in his patois ; and he limped on before us, all the chickens hopping and cheeping at his withered heels.

"That fellow," my friend observed, "was bitten by a *fer-de-lance* about eight or nine years ago. He got cured, or at least half-cured, in some extraodinary way; but ever since then he has been a skeleton. See how he limps!"

The skeleton passed out of sight behind the house, and we waited a while at the front porch. Then a métisse— turbaned in wasp colors, and robed in iris colors, and wonderful to behold— came to tell us that Madame hoped we

would rest ourselves in the garden, as the house was very warm. Chairs and a little table were then set for us in a shady place, and the métisse brought out lemons, sugar syrup, a bottle of the clear plantation rum that smells like apple juice, and ice-cold water in a dobanne of thick red clay. My friend prepared the refreshments ; and then our hostess came to greet us, and to sit with us— a nice old lady with hair like newly minted silver. I had never seen a smile sweeter than that with which she bade us welcome ; and I wondered whether she could ever have been more charming in her Creole girlhood than she now appeared— with her kindly wrinkles, and argent hair, and frank, black, sparkling eyes....

In the conversation that followed I was not able to take part, as it related only to some question of title. The notary soon arranged whatever there was to arrange; and, after some charmingly spoken words of farewell from the gentle lady, we took our departure. Again the mummified negro hobbled before us, to open the gate— followed by all his callow rabble of chickens. As we resumed our places in the carriage we could still hear the chippering of the creatures, pursuing after that ancient scarecrow.

"Is it African sorcery?" I queried.... "How does he bewitch those chickens? "

''Queer— is it not?" the notary responded as we drove away. "That negro must now be at least eighty years old; and he may live for twenty years more— the wretch!"

The tone in which my friend uttered this epithet— *le miserable*!— somewhat surprised me, as I knew him to be one of the kindliest men in the world, and singularly free from prejudice. I sus pected that a story was coming, and I waited for it in silence.

"Listen," said the notary, after a pause, during which we left the plantation well behind us; "that old sorcerer, as you call him, was born upon the estate, a slave. The estate belonged to M. Floran— the husband of the lady whom we visited ; and she was a cousin, and the marriage was a love-match. They had been married about two years when the revolt occurred (fortunately there were no children)— the black revolt of eighteen hundred and forty-eight. Several planters were murdered; and M. Floran was one of the first to be killed. And the old negro whom we saw to-day— the old sorcerer, as you call him— left the plantation, and joined the rising: do you understand?"

"Yes," I said; "but he might have done that through fear of the mob."

"Certainly : the other hands did the same. But it was he that killed M. Floran,— for no reason whatever, — cut him up with a cutlass. M. Floran was riding home when the attack was made,— about a mile below the plantation Sober, that negro would not have dared to face M. Floran: the scoundrel was

drunk, of course,— raving drunk. Most of the blacks had been drinking tafia, with dead wasps in it, to give themselves courage."

"But," I interrupted, "how does it happen that the fellow is still on the Floran plantation?"

"Wait a moment!.... When the military got control of the mob, search was made everywhere for the murderer of M. Floran; but he could not be found. He was lying out in the cane— in M. Floran's cane!— like a field-rat, like a snake. One morning, while the gendarmes were still looking for him, he rushed into the house, and threw him self down in front of Madame, weeping and screaming, *'Aie-yaie-yaie-yaie*!— *moin té tchoué y! moin té tchoué y!— aie-yai-yaie!*' Those were his very words:— 'I killed him! I killed him!' And he begged for mercy. When he was asked why he killed M. Floran, he cried out that it was the devil— *diabe-á* — that had made him do it!.... Well, Madame forgave him!"

"But how could she?" I queried.

"Oh, she had always been very religious," my friend responded— "sincerely religious. She only said, 'May God pardon me as I now pardon you!' She made her servants hide the creature and feed him; and they kept him hidden until the excitement was over. Then she sent him back to work; and he has been working for her ever since. Of course he is now too old to be of any use in the field— he only takes care of the chickens."

"But how," I persisted, "could the relatives allow Madame to forgive him?"

" Well, Madame insisted that he was not mentally responsible, — that he was only a poor fool who had killed without knowing what he was .doing ; and she argued that if she could forgive him, others could more easily do the same. There was a consultation ; and the relatives decided so to arrange matters that Madame could have her own way."

"But why? "

"Because they knew that she found a sort of religious consolation— a kind of religious comfort— in forgiving the wretch. She imagined that it was her duty as a Christian, not only to forgive him, but to take care of him. We thought that she was mistaken— but we could understand.... Well, there is an example of what religion can do."

The surprise of a new fact, or the sudden perception of something never before imagined, may cause an involuntary smile. Unconsciously I smiled, while my friend was yet speaking; and the good notary's brow darkened.

"Ah, you laugh!" he exclaimed— "you laugh! That is wrong!— that is a mistake!.... But you do not believe: you do not know what it is— the true religion, — the real Christianity!"

Earnestly I made answer:—

"Pardon me! I do believe every word of what you have told me. If I laughed unthinkingly, it was only because I could not help wondering" ....

"At what?" he questioned gravely.

"At the marvelous instinct of that negro."

"Ah, yes!" he returned approvingly. "Yes, the cunning of the animal it was— the instinct of the brute!.... She was the only person in the world who could have saved him."

"And he knew it," I ventured to add.

"No— no— no!" my friend emphatically dissented— "he never could have known it. He only felt it!.... Find me an instinct like that, and I will show you a brain incapable of any knowledge, any thinking, any understanding: not the mind of a man, but the brain of a beast!"

3: A Will and a Way

W. W. Jacobs

1863-1943

The Strand Magazine March 1901

Wagga Wagga Express, 20 July 1901

THE OLD MAN sat over the tap room fire at the Cauliflower, his gnarled, swollen hands fondled the warm bowl of his long pipe, and an ancient eye watched with almost youthful impatience the slow warming of a mug of beer on the hob. He had just given unasked-for statistics to the visitor of the inn who was sitting the other side of the hearth. His head was stored with the births, marriages, and deaths of Claybury, and with a view of being entertaining he had already followed, from the cradle to the altar and the altar to the grave, the careers of some of the most uninteresting people that ever breathed.

"No, there ain't been a great sight o' single men here abouts," he said, in answer to a question. "Claybury 'as always been a marrying sort o' place— not because the women are more-good looking than others, but because they are sharper."

He reached forward and, taking up his beer, drank with relish. The generous liquor warmed his blood, and his eye brightened.

I'VE BURIED two wives, but I 'ave to be careful myself, old as I am, *he said, thoughtfully*. There's more than one woman about 'ere as would like to change 'er name for mine. Claybury's got the name for being a marrying place, and they don't like to see even a widow-man. Now and agin we've 'ad a young feller as said as 'e wouldn't get married. There was Jem Burn, for one it ain't a month ago since four of 'is grand-children carried him to the churchyard ; and there was Walter Bree: 'e used to prove as 'ow any man that got married wasn't in his right mind, and 'e got three years for wot they call bigamy.

But there used to be one man in these parts as the Claybury women couldn't marry, try as they might. He was a ugly little man with red 'air and a foxy face. They used to call 'im Foxy Green, and 'e kept 'appy and single for years and years. He wasn't a man as disliked being in the company o' women though, and that's wot used to aggeravate 'em. He'd take 'em out for walks, or give 'em a lift in 'is cart, but none of 'em could get hold of 'im, not even the widders. He used to say 'e loved 'em all too much to tie hisself up to any one of 'em, and 'e would sit up 'ere of a night at the Cauliflower and send men with large families a'most crazy by calkerlatin 'ow many pints o' beer their children wore out every year in the shape o' boots.

Sometimes 'is uncle, old Ebenezer Green, used to sit up 'ere with 'im. He was a strong, 'earty old man, and 'e'd sit and laugh at Foxy till 'is chair shook under 'im. He was a lively sporting sort o' man, and when Foxy talked like that 'e seemed to be keeping some joke to hisself which nearly choked 'im.

"You'll marry when I'm gone, Foxy," he'd say.

"Not me," says Foxy.

Then the old man 'ud laugh agin and and talk mysterious about fox-hunts and say 'e wondered who'd get Foxy's brush. He said 'e'd only got to shut 'is eyes and 'e could see the pack in full cry through Claybury village, and Foxy going 'is 'ardest with 'is tongue 'anging out.

Foxy couldn't say anything to 'im because it was understood that when the old man died 'e was to 'ave 'is farm and 'is money ; so 'e used to sit there and smile as if 'e liked it.

When Foxy was about forty-three 'is uncle died. The old man's mind seemed to wander at the last, and 'e said what a good man 'e'd always been, and wot a comfort it was to 'im now that 'e was goin'. And 'e mentioned a lot o' little sums o' money owed 'im in the village which nobody could remember.

"I've made my will, Foxy," he ses, "and schoolmaster's takin' care of it; I've left it all to you."

"All right," ses Foxy. "Thankee."

"He's goin' to read it arter the funeral," ses 'is uncle, "which is the proper way to do it. I'd give anything to be there, Foxy, and see your face."

Those were 'is last words, but e laughed once or twice, and for a long time arter 'e'd gone Foxy Green sat there and wondered at 'is last words and wot there was to laugh about.

The old man was buried a few days after, and Foxy stood by the grave 'old lng a 'andkerchief to 'is eyes, and behav-ing as though 'e 'ad lost money instead of coming in for it. Then they went back to the farm, and the first thing the schoolmaster did was to send all the women off before reading the will.

"Wot's that for?" ses Foxy, staring.

"You'll see," says the schoolmaster; "them was my instructions. It's for your sake, Mr. Green; to give you a chance at least, that's wot your uncle said."

He sat down and took out the will and put on 'is spectacles. Then 'e spread it out on the table, and took a glass o' gin and water and began to read. It was all straightforward enough. The farm and stock and two cottages, and money in the bank, was all left to Josiah Green, commonly called Foxy Green, on condition— There was such a noise o' clapping, and patting Foxy on the back, that the schoolmaster 'ad to leave off and wait for quiet. On condition, he ses, in a loud voice, that he marries the first Claybury woman, single or widow, that

asks 'im to marry her in the presence of three witnesses. If he refuses, the property is to go to 'er instead.

Foxy turned round like mad then, and asked Henery White wot 'e was patting 'im on the back for. Then, in a choking voice, he asked to 'ave it read agin.

"Well, there's one thing about it, Mr. Green," ses Henery White; "with all your property you'll be able to 'ave the pick o' the prettiest gals in Claybury."

" 'Ow's that?" ses Joe Chambers, very sharp; "he's got to take the first woman that asks 'im, don't matter wot 'er age is."

He got up suddenly, and without even saying good bye to Foxy, rushed out of the 'ouse and off over the fields as 'ard as 'e could go.

"Wot's the matter with 'im?" ses Foxy. Nobody could give any answer, and they sat there staring at each other, till all of a sudden Henery White jumps up goes off if anything 'arder than what Joe Chambers had done.

"Anything with the drink?" ses Foxy, puzzled like. They shook their 'eads agin, and then Peter Gubbins, who'd been staring 'ard with 'is month open, got up and gave the table a bang with 'is fist.

"Joe Chambers 'as gone arter 'is sis-ter." he ses, "and Henery White arter 'is wife's sister, as 'e's been keeping for this last six months. That's wot they've gone for."

Everybody saw it then, and in two minutes Foxy and the schoolmaster was left alone looking at each other and the empty table.

"Well, I'm in for a nice thing," ses Foxy. "Fancy being proposed to by Henery White's sister-in-law! Ugh!"

"It'll be the oldest ones that'll be the most determined," said the schoolmaster, shak'ng 'is 'ead. "Wot are you going to do?"

"I don't know," ses Foxy, "it's so sudden. But they've got to have three witnesses that's one comfort. I'd like to tell Joe Chambers wot I think of 'im and 'is precious sister."

It was very curious the way the women took it.

One an' all of 'em pretended as it was an insult to the sex, and they said if Foxy Green waited till 'e was asked to marry he'd wait long enough. Little chits o' gals o' fourteen and fifteen was walking about tossing their 'eads up and as good as saying they might 'ave Green's farm for the asking, but they wouldn't ask. Old women of seventy and over said that if Foxy wanted to marry them he'd 'ave to ask, and a good many times too.

Of course, this was all very well in its way, but at the same time three Claybury gals that was away in service was took ill and 'ad to come 'ome, and several other women that way away took their holidays before their relations knew anything about it. Almost every 'ouse in Claybury 'ad got some female

relation staying in it, and they was always explaining to everybody why it was they 'ad come 'ome. None of 'em so much as mentioned Foxy Green. Women are artful creatures and think a lot of appearances. There wasn't one of 'em as would 'ha minded what other folks said if they'd caught Foxy, but they'd ha' gone half crazy with shame if they' d tried and not managed it. And they couldn't do things on the quiet because of the three witnesses. That was the 'ardship of it.

It was the only thing talked about in Claybury, and Foxy Green soon showed as he was very wide-awake. First thing 'e did was to send the gal that used to do the dairy-work and the 'ouse-work off. Then 'e bought a couple o' large, fierce dogs and chained 'em up, one near the front door and one near the back. They was very good dogs, and they bit Foxy hisself two or three times so as to let 'im see that they knew wot they was there for. He took George Smith, a young feller that used to work on the farm, into the 'ouse, and for the fust week or two 'e rather enjoyed the excitement. But when 'e found that 'e couldn't go into the village, or even walk about 'is own farm in safety, he turned into a reg'lar woman-hater.

The artful tricks those women 'ad wouldn't be believed. One day when Foxy was eating 'is dinner William Hall drove up to the gate in a cart, and when George came out to know wot 'e wanted, 'e said that he 'ad just bought some pigs at Rensham and would Foxy like to make fust offer for 'em. George went in, and when 'e came out agin he said William Hall was to go inside. He held the dog while William went by, and as soon as Foxy 'eard wot 'e wanted 'e asked 'im to wait till 'e'd finished 'is dinner, and then he'd go out and 'ave a look at 'em.

"I was wantin' some pigs bad," he ses, "and the worst of it is I can't get out to buy as things are."

"That's wot I thought," ses William Hall; "that's why I brought 'em to you."

"You deserve to get, on William," ses Foxy.

"George," ses Foxy. "George," he ses, turning to 'im.

"Yes," ses George. "Do you know much about pigs?"

"I know a pig when I see one," ses George.

"That's all I want," ses Foxy ; "go and 'ave a look at 'em."

William Hall gave a start as George walked out, and a minute afterwards both of 'em 'eard an awful noise, and George came back rubbing 'is 'ead and saying that when 'e lifted up the cloth one o' the pigs was William Hall's sister and the others was 'er nephews. William said it was a joke, but Foxy said he didn't like jokes, and if William thought that 'e or George was going to walk with 'im past the dog 'e was mistook.

Two days arter that Foxy, 'appening to look out of 'is bedroom window, saw one o' the Claybury boys racing 'is cows all up and down the meadow. He came down quietly and took up a stick, and then 'e set out to race that boy up and down. He'd always been a good runner, and the boy was 'alf-blown like. 'E gave a yell as 'e saw Foxy coming arter im, and left the cow 'e was chasin' and ran straight for the 'edge, with Foxy close behind him. Foxy was within to yards of 'im when 'e suddenly caught sight of a blue bonnet waiting behind the 'edge, and 'e turned round and went back to the 'ouse as fast as 'e could go and locked 'imself in. And e 'ad to sit there, half-busting, all the morning, and watch that boy chase 'is best cow up and down the meadow without daring to go and stop 'im.

He sent George down to tell the boy's father that night, and the father sent back word that if Foxy 'ad got anything to say agin' 'is boy why didn't 'e come down like a man and say it hisself?

Arter about three weeks o' this sort o' thing Foxy Green began to see that 'e would 'ave to get married whether 'e liked it or not, and 'e told George so. George's idea was for 'im to get the old-est woman in Claybury to ask 'im in marriage, because then he'd soon be single agin. It was a good idea, on'y Foxy didn't seem to fancy it.

"Who do you think is the prettiest girl in Claybury, George?" he ses.

"Flora Pottle," ses George at once.

"That's exactly my idea," ses Foxy; 'if I've got to marry I'll marry 'er. However, I'll sleep on it a night and see 'ow I feel in the morning."

"I'll marry Flora Pottle," he ses, when 'e got up. "You can go round this afternoon George and break the good news to 'er."

George tidied hiself up arter dinner and went. Flora Pottle was a very fine looking gal, and she was very much surprised when George walked in, but she was more surprised when 'e told 'er that if she was to go over and ask Foxy to be 'er 'usband 'e wouldn't say "No."

Mrs. Pottle jumped out of her skin for joy a'most. She'd 'ad a 'ard time of it with Flora, and five young children since 'er 'usband died, and she could 'ardly believe 'er ears when Flora said she wouldn't.

" 'E's old enough to be my father," she ses.

"Old men make the best 'usbands," ses George, coaxing 'er; 'and, besides, think o' the farm."

"That's wot you've got to think of," ses her mother. "Don't think o' Foxy Green at all ; think o' the farm."

Flora stood and leaned herself up agin a chest a drawers and twisted 'er hands, and at last she sent back word to say that she wanted time to think it over.

Foxy Green was very much astonished when George took back that answer. He'd thought that any gal would ha' jumped at 'im without the farm, and arter going upstairs and looking hisself in the glass 'e was more astonished than ever.

When George Smith went up to the Pottles agin the next day Flora made a face at 'im, and 'e felt as orkard as if 'e'd been courting 'er hisself a'most. At first she wouldn't 'ave anything to say to 'im at all, but went on sweeping out the room, and nearly choking 'im. Then George Smith, wot was a likely young feller, put 'is arm round 'er waist, and taking the broom away from 'er, made 'er sit down beside 'im while 'e gave 'er Foxy's message. He did Foxy's courting for 'im for an hour, although it only seemed about five minutes to both of 'em.

Then Mrs. Pottle came in, and after a lot of talk Flora was got to say that George Smith might come agin for five minutes next day. Foxy went on dreadful when 'e 'eard that Flora 'adn't given an answer, but George Smith, who liked the job much better than farming or making beds, told 'im she was coming round, and that 't was only natural a young gal should like to be courted a bit afore givin' in.

"Yes," ses Foxy, biting 'is lip, "but 'ow's it to be done?"

"You leave it to me," ses George Smith, "and it'll be all right. I sit there and talk about the farm as well as wot you could."

"And about me, too, I s'pose?" ses Foxy, catching 'im up.

"Yes," ses George; "I tell 'er all sorts o' lies about you." Foxy looked at 'im a moment, and then 'e went off grumbling.

He was like a good many more men, and because Flora Pottle didn't seem to want 'im 'e on'y fancied 'er the more.

Next day 'e sent George Smith up with an old brooch as a present, and when George came back 'e said 'e thought that if it 'ad been a new one it would have done wot was wanted. You can't keep secrets in Claybury, and it soon got round wot Foxy Green was arter. That made the other women more determined than ever, and at last Foxy sent up word that if Flora wouldn't ask 'im to let 'im know, as 'e was tired o' being a prisoner, and old Mrs. Ball 'ad nearly 'ad 'im the day afore.

It took George Smith two hours' 'ard courtin' afore he could get Flora Pottle to say "Yes," but at last she did, and then Mrs. Pottle came in, and she shook 'ands with George, and gave 'im a glass o' beer. Mrs. Pottle wanted to take 'er up to Green's farm there and then, but Flora said no. She said they'd go up at eight o'clock in the evenin', and the sacrifice should be made then. Foxy didn't like the word "sacrifice" at all, but if 'e'd got to be married 'e'd sooner marry Flora than anybody, and 'e 'ad to put up with it.

"There'll be you for one witness," he ses to George, "and Mrs. Pottle is two; wot about the third ?"

"I should 'ave 'alf-a-dozen so as to make sure," ses George.

Foxy thought it was a good idea, and without letting 'em know wot it was for, 'e asked Henery White and Joe Chambers, and three or four more 'e 'ad a grudge against for trying to marry 'im to their relations, to come up and see that 'e'd been able to pick and choose.

They came at ha'-past seven, and at eight o'clock there was a knock at the door, and George, arter carefully looking round, let in Mrs. Pottle and Flora. She was a fine-looking gal, and as she stood there looking at all them astonished men, 'er face all blushes and 'er eyes large and shining, Foxy thought getting married wasn't such a bad thing arter all. He gave 'er a chair to sit on and then 'e coughed and waited.

"It's a fine night," he ses at last.

"Beautiful," ses Mrs. Pottle. Flora didn't say anything. She sat there shuffling 'er feet on the carpet, and Foxy kept on looking at 'er and waiting for 'er to speak, and 'oping that she wouldn't grow up like 'er mother.

"Go on, Flora," ses Mrs. Pottle, nudging 'er.

"Go on, Flora," ses Henery White, mimicking 'er. "I s'pose you've come to ask Foxy a question by the look of it?"

"Yes," said Flora, looking up. "Are you quite well, Mr. Green?"

"Yes, yes," says Foxy; "but you didn't come up 'ere to ask me that."

"It's all I could do to get 'er 'ere at all, Mr. Green," ses Mrs. Pottle; "she's that shy you can't think. She'd rather ha' 'ad you ask 'er yourself."

"That can't be done," ses Foxy, shaking 'is 'ead. "Leastways, I'm not going to risk it."

"Now, Flora," ses 'er mother, nudging 'er agin. "Come on, Flora Pottle," ses Bob Hunt; "we're all awaitin'."

"Shut your eyes and open your mouth, as if Foxy was a powder," ses Henery White. "I can't," ses Flora, turning to her mother. "I can't, and I won't."

"Flora Pottle," ses 'er mother, firing up.

"I won't," ses Flora, firing up too; "you've been bothering me all day long for ever so long, and I won't. I 'ate the sight of 'im. He's the ugliest man in Claybury."

Mrs. Pottle began to cry and say that she'd disgraced 'er; but Foxy Green looked at 'er, and 'e ses, "Very well, Flora Pottle, then we'll say no more about it. Good evening."

"Good evening," ses Mrs. Pottle, getting up and giving Flora a shake. "Come along, you tantalizing mawther, do. You'll die an old maid, that's what you'll do."

"That's all you know," ses Flora, smiling over at George Smith; "but if you're so fond of Mr, Green, why don't you ask 'im yourself ? He can't say 'no.' "

For half a minute the room was as quiet as a grave, and the on'y thing that moved was Foxy Green's eyes as he looked fust at the door at the other end of the room and then at the window.

"Law bless my soul!" ses Mrs. Pottle, in a surprised voice. "I never thought of it." She sat down agin and smiled at Foxy as if she could eat 'im. "I can't think why I didn't think of it," she ses, looking round. "I was going out like a lamb. Mr. Green—"

"One moment," ses Foxy, 'olding up 'is 'and, "I should be a terrible' bad, cruel, unkind husband to anybody I didn't like. Don't say words you'll be sorry for afterwards, Mrs. Pottle."

"I'm not going to," ses Mrs. Pottle; "the words I'm going to say will he good for both of us; I'm far more suitable for you than a young gal— Mr. Green, will you marry me?"

Foxy Green looked at 'er for a moment, and then 'e looked round at all them grinning men wot he'd brought there by mistake to see 'im made a fool of. Then in a low, 'usky voice he ses, "I will."

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4: The Intolerable

J. H. M. Abbott

1874-1953

The Australian Woman's Mirror, 17 Feb 1925

NOTHING that Peter Singleton was able to advance in his own defence had the slightest effect upon the righteous wrath of Beatrice the Unloved.

When a woman has become accustomed to fervent assurances of a man's love, and then discovers that there is a possibility of such assurances being mere deception, her wrath is naturally very righteous indeed. He might explain and prevaricate, and enunciate the ridiculous, until an offended deity should strike him dead, she told him, before he would be able to convince her that he spoke the truth with regard to the compromising situation in which she had found him with that odious and intolerable creature, Jean Besant. She was not a fool. She was not a flapper. She was a woman of mature experience. Let him take his silly tale elsewhere. He might have his ring back. Here it was now. He could give it to that woman.

But she would keep his letters. Oh, yes, she would retain them. She valued them. Not for their literary quality. Not at all. For quite another reason. And he would presently learn what that other reason was. Oh, yes, decidedly he would learn. And the lesson she intended to teach him would be one he would not easily forget for the remainder of his deceitful and mendacious existence. Yes, she would show him that if he could not be a a man, she, Beatrice Mitchell, could be very much a woman, with all a woman's attributes of fury when any such male creature as he presumed to scorn her.

How had he scorned her? Why, by not respecting her sufficiently to keep away from such an intolerable woman as Mrs. Besant. That was how. There was such a thing as the implication of scorn. An action was more than the expression of an opinion. Infinitely. Mere words meant nothing. It was the deed that counted. So she went on, in cold and bitter rage,until Peter Singleton had had as much of it as he could stand. It was not a nice thing that he said to her, but it was a very human expression of his humanity. Rising to his feet and facing her, in the dim drawing-room, whilst the thunder storm raged outside, he remarked suddenly:

"Oh— go to blazes!"

Then he went out into the rain, and it was not until he had boarded the tram at the corner of Ocean Street that he realised himself to have come away without his hat. And Beatrice Mitchell remained crouched in the dark drawing-room, weeping. The thunder that rolled and echoed in her ears, and the drenching rain that soaked him through, before he came to the wharf in Darling Harbor where his ship lay, exactly suited the mood of each of them.

Peter Singleton, master mariner, at the age of thirty-five, was without doubt the type of man who is most attractive to women. He was good-looking, virile, athletic and easy mannered, and consequently it was inevitable that he should be ever beset by more or less satisfactory affairs with females, many of which began from no move on his part.

When he went up the side of the Ignotus, his singularly wet and draggled appearance, and the expression of his face, somewhat startled the quartermaster on duty at the gangway, so that he forgot to mention that a visitor awaited the captain in his room. He remembered his omission as the latter hurried for'ard towards the ladder leading to the bridge, and started after him with the intention of rectifying the omission— but was prevented from doing so by the hail of the chief officer, who, mackintoshed and buttoned up against the execrable weather, came out of the saloon companion-way, umbrella in hand, and addressed him unpleasantly.

It was Mr. Tremayne's custom to address members of the crew disagreeably, and although they resented it, it was ever their experience that it paid to hearken carefully to whatever the mate might have to say. So he turned to attend, and allowed Captain Singleton to complicate further the thread of his existence.

"Why the devil aren't you at your post, Mulcahy? Damme, you're on the gangway, aren't you? Then what the devil do you mean by wandering about all over the deck? Some of you chaps have no more idea of discipline than a monkey."

The young seaman's face flushed to a deeper pink.

"Well, sir— th' cap'n, he's but just come aboard, and I want to tell him that—"

"I don't want any jaw about it. You stick to the gangway. I'm going ashore for an hour or two. If a lady should come asking for me tell her I'm away for the night. See? Won't be back for two nights— until just before sailing-time on Monday. A Mrs. Besant. See? I don't want her to wait for me. So shove her off. Understand?"

"Yessir." The quarter-master lifted his forefinger to his cap, and Mr. Tremayne departed, scowling, down the side-ladder.

'Ye blinkin' guttersnipe!" muttered Mr. Mulcahy after him.

The rain cascaded down from the boat deck on to the rail across which the youthful-looking quartermaster surveyed the Saturday afternoon emptiness of the wooden jetty, from whose splintery surface the last of the waiting cargo had been transferred to the holds of the *Ignotus* before noon.

He saw the mate walking rapidly towards the big doors in the galvanised-iron front of the huge building that opened on to the waterside thoroughfare

beyond, one of which stood slightly ajar— and suddenly became intensely interested in watching Mr. Tremayne execute some rapid and inexplicable manoeuvres of concealment and evasion. What danger he might be evading and concealing himself from Mr. Mulcahy could not guess, but enlightenment was presently to be vouchsafed him.

The chief officer had halted uncertainly, and then incontinently darted behind one of the massive wooden pillars which supported the roof of the wharf, turning his gaze across the empty berth on the other side to scrutinise with serious intentness the disreputable hull of a coal-hulk whose tarred hull glistened dully in the wet alongside the next jetty. He seemed to be seek ing to contract his broad shoulders so that they might not overlap the upright, had gathered the skirts of his flapping mackintosh tightly about him, and stood stiffly erect with his umbrella between his knees. It was very evident that he sought with great assiduity to obliterate himself from the scenery of this sector of Darling Harbor.

Thomas Mulcahy's mouth opened, and his eyes goggled with wonder at this queer performance. He had never before known Mr. Tremayne display personal modesty of any sort.

From the narrow slit in the tall doors emerged Big Mick, the watchman, and immediately behind him came a lady clad in a dark green rubber rain-coat which reached to her ankles. The two of them walked down the wharf, past the mate's place of concealment, towards the side-ladder. Neither of them so much as glanced in the direction of the hidden officer.

"He ain't gone ashore yet, lady," boomed the echoing tones of the immense custodian of the wharf. "I'd ha' seed 'um. Th' quattermasther— him up on deck yarnder— he'll be tellin' ye whaere he is. A lady a-wantin' th' mate, Tommy," he bellowed up at Mr. Mulcahy, as they came to the foot of the ladder. Out of the corner of his eye, the latter beheld Mr. Tremayne sprint swiftly to the opening and disappear.

"Up th' ladder, lady, an' ye'll be right. He'll find him for ye. Sure, 'tis no throuble at all, at all, ma'am."

Big Mick doffed his peaked cap of office, and executed a clumsy wrinkling of his capacious waistcoat, as he performed what was intended for an obeisance. The lady ascended through the cascading drip, and presently stood before Mr. Mulcahy. And as she looked at him, Mr. Mulcahy quailed.

She was handsome and majestic, but there was something in the glint of her eye— its steady, steely way of boring through his own into his inner self— that caused the young and comparatively innocent and simple seaman to experience a chill of the spine. He stood in deep fear of the mate— but he knew that he feared the mate's visitor even more. If it came to lying to this

lady on Mr. Tremayne's behalf, he well realised that he could not do it, whatever the consequences might be.

"Good afternoon," she said peremptorily, "I wish to see the chief officer. Kindly direct me to his cabin."

Mr. Mulcahy hesitated— and was lost. "He— sure, he's ashore for an hour or so, ma'am. Will you— will you wait for him?"

"Yes. Thank you. I will, I know where his cabin is. Behind the captain's on the bridge. I'll go up there," and she sailed along the deck before the quarter-master, strangely overawed, could find words to inform that she would probably find it locked.

Dejectedly Thomas Mulcahy spat across the rail, and shivered as he contemplated the return of the chief officer. Glancing up the empty wharf, he fearfully considered the consequences of desertion. But he shook his head, and, turning his gaze in board, was just in time to catch a glimpse of the skirts of the green raincoat disappearing up the ladder which led to the heights of Olympus.

"God save us all!" he muttered miserably. For half an hour he paced up and down the deserted deck, a few yards to either side of the gangway, a prey to lively apprehension. Tiring of this exercise, he went and sat down upon the foot-high threshold of the saloon door-way, his hands clasped between his knees, and with sorrowful eyes bent upon the deck. Hardly had he been there five minutes when he was aroused from his gloomy and pessimistic reverie by a gentle and plaintive female voice, as full of supplication and entreaty as the last one had been of stern and uncompromising command. He sprang to his feet, startled, and fearful of further unfathomable misfortune.

"Oh, if you please, I would be so glad if you can tell me whether Peter— I mean could you tell me whether Captain Singleton is at home— I mean, on board?" This time young Thomas Mulcahy felt rather something of sympathy and pity than the vague fear and dread which had possessed him in the presence of the last visitor of the *Ignotus*. This lady was fair and beautiful and sweet, not handsome and majestic and imperious, and there was a look of great sadness in her pretty face that stirred his Celtic sensibilities, and made him feel sorry for her. There was some thing of unhappiness in her eyes, and possibly some indication of not very distant tears that had flowed from them, and the gallant young seaman's heart warmed to the poor lady with the gentle way, just as it had contracted with cold fear under the baleful influence of the terrible other one. He forgot all about the mate, who might return at any moment under an impression that Mulcahy had hastened the departure of the other lady. The Old Man was not a brute like Mr. Tremayne. He could not fail

to be glad to see this gentle and lovely creature. He would take her to the captain's cabin himself, God bless her sweet face. Yes, indeed.

"This way, ma'am, if ye plaze. I'll take ye up there meself, so I will. Indade, th' Cap'n's aboard, an'll be glad to see ye, I make no doubt of it. This way, ma'am."

He led the way along the deck, the pretty lady following. And then, with startling suddenness, befel a series of dramatic happenings such as neither Mr. Mulcahy nor those immediately concerned in them would have considered possible outside the pages of melodramatic fiction. The starboard side of the upper deck of the *Ignotus*— 4,000 ton transporter of wheat, wool, and anything else her owners and agents could obtain for her to ferry across the Seven Seas— became the stage upon which was set such a series of finales as are almost incredible, even to their chronicler.

As the quarter-master and the pretty lady who had earned the sympathy of his generous young heart approached the ladder leading to the realms above, Captain Singleton and Mrs. Besant descended it, followed by an elderly gentleman, of humorous aspect, who grinned broadly in evident enjoyment of a situation which afforded none whatever to the pair who preceded him. At the same moment Mr. George Tremayne, the chief officer, stepped upon the deck from the gangway, and stood rooted to the planking— terror, despair, consternation, fury and hopelessness registering themselves upon his not inexpressive countenance.

"Oh, Peter!" wailed Mr. Mulcahy's pretty lady.

"Beatrice!" gasped Captain Singleton.

"George— you damned villain!" exclaimed the handsome and majestic lady with the captain.

"Jean!" gurgled the mate, in the tone of one who strangles.

"Well— well— well!" chuckled the amused gentleman in the background. "Here we all are, Beatrice, my dear. Here we all are. What!"

The unhappy Mr. Mulcahy backed against the rail, too bewildered to escape. For a few moments no one moved, and there was no sound but the drip of the rain. Then, with fierce energy, the handsome Mrs. Besant strode along the deck, seized the chief officer by the arm, headed him to the gangway and fairly dragged him down the ship's side.

"Come with me," she exclaimed, as she took this swift, decisive action. "Come on shore at once. You would, would you. We'll see about it!"

The pretty lady stumbled towards the amused gentleman. The captain looked at them sheepishly, as the girl clung to that cheery personage's arm. She was weeping softly.

"Oh, father," she sobbed, "what does it mean?"

With unabated grin Mr. Augustus Mitchell explained the situation.

"It means, Bee, that you're a little fool. It means that Peter here's another. But as for Tremayne, it means that there's no escape. Between this and sailing time on Monday he will have ceased to be a bachelor, and Mrs. Besant to be a widow. He had funked it at the last; but there's no funk about her. Not an ounce. God help the man; but he's met his match."

He paused and chuckled.

"Now then." he went on—"you go up above and make it up with Peter. I expect that's what you're here for, isn't it?"

"I came to give him his letters," she murmured. "I thought Mrs. Besant had captured him." She glanced shyly at the captain. He, too, was grinning.

"Not a bit of it, old girl. He's told me all about it. All he was doing when you came across him and the lady in the lounge of The Carnation was trying to save his mate. But 'twould take better than any of us to do that. Peter, you owe me a drink. Come— take her up topside. I'll be after you in a minute. I'll take a turn round the deck."

In a few moments the stage was empty, save for young Mr. Thomas Mulcahy.

"Glory be!" he muttered, in some bewilderment. "Th' pore blinkin' mate!"

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5: The Deeming Murders in England

How They Were Discovered

Anonymous

Argus (Melbourne) 17 Aug 1895

Subtitled "A True Detective Story"! A wildly inaccurate fictionalised account of the infamous Frederick Deeming serial killer case, which portrays it as a triumph of a lone Melbourne Argus *journalist's tenacious investigation. It's worth comparing to, say, the* Wikipedia *article, to see what vast liberties have been taken. Among other bogus details, Deeming is given a strong Lancashire accent. He was from Leicestershire.*

IT WAS bitterly cold in the city on the 9th of March, 1892, and tiny stalactites of slowly-thawing ice hung from the heavy moustache of a strongly-built man who had just come in from the street outside and was resting his elbows on the mahogany writing-table of one of the largest dealers in dairy produce in London. The dealer and his visitor talked in rapid confidential tones upon business matters, upon the prices and qualities and grades of butter, upon the state of the market, cargoes and methods of packing, the present glut and the future prospects of Danish, Normandy and Australian sorts.

Ching-a-ling-a-ling went an electric bell across the passage, and in a moment or two a well-drilled office-boy knocked at the door, and, addressing the latest comer, said, "You're wanted at the telephone sir."

The strongly-built man stepped across to the telephone, and raised the receiver to his ear.

" Hullo, there. Is that you, Lowe?" came a voice out of nowhere, disentangling itself with difficulty from the confused current of interwoven noises that crossed each other on the tingling wires.

"Yes. Who's speaking ?"

"Townend, at *The Argus* office. Look here, I want to see you as soon as possible. There's a big murder case on in Australia, and we've just got a cable from the office in Melbourne instructing us to make inquiries at this end. Be as sharp as you can."

Mr. Samuel Lowe, member of the London Staff of *The Argus*, dropped the instrument, hastily apologised to the merchant, and went down the office staircase three steps at a time. Commerce absorbs a large amount of the average pressman's time and attention, but it sinks into insignificance in the presence of— Crime.

A quarter of an hour later Mr. Lowe and Mr. Townend were staring intently at the sheet of paper lying on the table before them. The cable message from Melbourne read simply, "Inquire Scotland-yard, Williams murder. Send portraits. Interview mother."

Mr. Townend looked at Mr. Lowe interrogatively. Mr. Lowe looked at Mr. Townend affirmatively." All right," he said, " I'll look after it."

The Bow-street officials were polite but unsatisfactory. They had never heard of a murder in Australia in which a person of the name of Williams was concerned. It was as though one had asked them for details about a man named Smith wanted for a forgery committed on the shores of Baffin's Bay. A close examination of newspaper files at the Central News Agency failed to disclose any accounts of the murder mentioned in the cable message, and two hours had passed without the faintest gleam of light being shed upon the occurrence.

"Scotland yard, cabby," shouted the stoutly-built man through the aperture in the roof of the hansom, and sat back in the seat to think hard, as the experienced London cab-horse skated over the slippery wood-blocks of the Strand, heading for the mysterious building in which the highest detective acumen of England daily gathers up the clues of information that come rolling in from every quarter of the globe. So busy, indeed, were the autocrats of the metropolitan police and the detective department that they could not even see Mr. Lowe when he sent his name in by the German man-servant. If Mr. Lowe desired any information he must be kind enough to forward his request by letter. This seemed a little discourteous on the part of Superintendent Shore and Superintendent Anderson, but the occupant of the hansom cab had still another string to his bow, and as the cab-horse skated back into the city Mr. Lowe again devoted himself to an accomplishment which is, unfortunately growing somewhat rare— that of thinking. As a result of his cogitations the cab-horse was pulled on to his haunches in front of a red lamp, and Mr. Lowe lost no time in explaining the position to an old acquaintance of his— the police official in charge.

"I fancy this is what you want," said the officer, with a smile, as he spread the "infor-mation sheet for that very day on the desk before him and pointed to entry number 44, which contained a full description of Albert Williams, wanted for wife murder, at Melbourne, on Christmas Eve, 1891. The entry set forth that Williams spoke with a Lancashire accent, and stayed formerly at Rainhill. It was signed by Superintendent Shore.

Mr. Lowe devoured that information sheet with the hearty appetite of one who has been subjected to semi-starvation for some time past. He committed the entry to memory verbatim by reading it over carefully two or three times, a knack which is always useful to a journalist. M. Blowitz, the Paris correspondent of The Times, proved its value when he learned off the terms of peace at the close of the France-German was in one reading and telegraphed them in extenso to his paper. Only M. Blowitz was dealing with murder on the

grand scale— the murder that is committed with grape and shrapnel and bayonets at the charge.

When Mr. Lowe returned to Scotland-yard after a hurried visit to *The Argus* office in Fleet-street, he had a letter from Mr. Townend to Superintendent Short requesting informa-tion in his pocket, and he had the informa-tion itself up his sleeve. Warned by his previous experience he omitted the formality of sending in his card, and running up a flight of stone steps and along a passage entered Superintendent Shore's private room and introduced himself in person. The superintendent eyed him coldly, and read the letter asking for particulars as to the murder and for the address of "Mrs. Williams" in Liverpool.

"I know nothing at all about it," said the superintendent in the measured tones of a man who has learnt by long experience to be economical in administering his stock of veracity, "and moreover," he added with engaging frankness, "if I did know, I should not tell you."

Mr. Lowe leaned across the table with a queer smile and looked straight into the superintendent's eyes. "As you know nothing about the matter," he said, "perhaps you will allow me to enlighten you. Albert Williams murdered his wife in Melbourne on Christmas Eve. He formerly stayed at Rainhill. He speaks with a strong Lancashire accent, and there is a detailed description of him published as the 44th entry in today's information sheet. It is doubtless correct, for the memo. bears your own signa-ture, Superintendent Shore."

The superintendent sprang to his feet.

"The man who told you this shall be dismissed from the force," he hissed with an oath. "Don't you think you had better find him first," replied the other with just the suspicion of a sneer, "and you may discover when you have got him, that he is not under your authority. The city police and the metropolitan constabulary are very different bodies, as you know." Few men would attempt to bluff a Scotland-yard superintendent in his own milieu, but Mr. Lowe tried it on for the sake of the friendly police officer who had shown him the information sheet. The bluff came off, and the king of clubs was safe, but the superintendent never knew that is was the only card in his opponent's hand.

"I am going to Liverpool to-night," Mr. Lowe remarked, as he buttoned his over-coat, "to follow this thing up."

"We shall be delighted to hear of your discoveries," said the superintendent sarcastically. "By the way, when you get to Liverpool you might call on Inspector Williams— he is in charge there— and tell him that his brother has committed a murder in Australia. He will be so pleased to see you."

"Thanks for the hint," rejoined the press-man. "I shall certainly call on Inspector Williams. I shall tell him that I do so at your request, and that I am instructed by the Scotland-yard authorities to furnish them with any information that I may gather. Your recommendation will, no doubt, be of great service to me." And he bowed himself out, leaving Superintendent Shore fully three inches smaller in stature than he had been before the commencement of the interview.

"Where the deuce is Rainhill?" asked Mr. Lowe anxiously in the office afterwards.

"Rainhill," replied Mr. Townsend oracularly, emerging from a dusty file of the Liverpool Post, "appears to be a lunatic asylum about 10 miles out of Liverpool, but you had better hurry up or you will miss the express.

"It seems to be rather a wild-goose chase, doesn't it?" asked Mr. Lowe.

Mr. Townsend looked at him straight, "It's the biggest wild-goose chase a man was ever sent on," he said, "but we can have our instructions and we must carry them out." Then he turned out his pockets, and produced a couple of sovereigns and 4s 3d. in silver, which he handed to Mr. Lowe, remarking that the banks were closed, and that he would want some money. The petty cash box yielded another £10, and with this provision against immediate necessities the amateur detective entered the next stage of the inquiry — and a cosy first-class carriage on the 10.5 p.m. express to Liverpool.

Half past 9 next morning found him at the headquarters of the Liverpool detective department in Dale-street, and the officer in charge, though at first suspicious and reticent, gradually thawed under the influence of the strong personal recommendations from Superintendent Shore, which Mr Lowe presented glibly by word of mouth, adding, with a deft adaption of the superintendent's sacrasm, that he was commissioned by the Scotland-yard authorities to furnish them with all possible information about the murder. Thus it was that he enlisted the assistance of the officer, who, by merely pressing an electric button, summoned to the joint consultation a constable who was well acquainted with Rainhill, and in the space of a few minutes Mr. Lowe learned that Rainhill was a township with a population of about 2,000, that it contained a lunatic asylum, two churches, and a railway station on the Liverpool and Manchester line. But the constable knew no one there of the name of Williams.

Mr Lowe ruminated for a few moments, chewing the end of his big moustache. " Can you put me on the local gossip," he said, "the man or woman who takes an intelligent interest in other people's business and knows all about the births deaths, and particularly marriages that have taken place in Rainhill for the last 20 years or so?"

"There's John Higham," said the constable reflectively; 'he's the local letter-carrier, and he knows everyone in the place. Perhaps he might help you." Of course; nuts the very man, and Mr. Lowe felt that he was close to the haunts of the wild-goose after all.

It had been snowing and blowing hard all night with thunder and lightning, and hurrying squalls of hail and sleet. In the morning the storm had almost blown itself out, but it was still piercingly cold, the air was thick and opaque, and the half-seen sky was leaden, so that the day suited well with the task in hand. It was fitting weather for following up the death-trail. Everyone knows that Nature can accommodate herself to human moods, especially the poets', and Browning let the interdependence be seen very plainly. In "Prospice," that Alpine storm in verse, cannot one feel the fog in the throat, the mist in the face, and the cold blasts that blow about the narrow pass where death sits waiting? In the song from "Pipa Passes," on the other hand, or "Home Thoughts from Abroad," does not one get life at its brightest in a flood of sunshine? Listen how "the chaffinsh sings on the orchard bough." One can hear the gushing melody right through the poem.

But when Mr Lowe reached Rainhill the storm was over, though the soft, white, newly fallen snow covered the whole township like a shroud. He patched a lad from the railway station in search of John Higham, who presently appeared wheezing, and opened his old eyes in astonishment at the tale which the stranger had to tell of a squatter king who had died in Australia, leaving a fortune of fabulous amount to his next-of-kin, a person of the name of Williams, formerly of Rainhill. Old Higham knew two ladies of the name of Williams, who were both inter-viewed at once, and left to their own flustered anticipations as soon as Mr. Lowe had satisfied himself that they could have no possible connection with the murder. Here the scent was lost temporarily, and he had to cast about patiently to recover it. As he walked down the street with old Higham, there appeared upon the scene young Higham, a stripling of 18, who assisted his father with the delivery of the mails. To him the old man unfolded the story of the fortune which had been left in Australia, and of the efforts which were being made to recover the long-lost heir, a lucky individual named Albert Williams

The boy's features worked in a desperate effort to grasp the thread of some associations, then his eyes took on a new light, glowing with the joy of a great discovery.

"Feyther." he said, speaking the the long liquid Lancashire drawl, "doant 'e moind thot theer Williams as coom'd to Rainhill last 'arvest-toime. Mayhape 'e wur tha feller, 'Im's married Emmie Mather an' took 'er off to Chaney?"

"Ay, ay, sewerly," the old man responded. "I moind 'im well, ma lad. 'E rented Din-ham villa from Mrs Hayes, an' Ben Young cemented tha kitching floor fur 'im. Dear dear, so 'es coom'd into a fortin. I hallus thrown theer wur sumthin' square wi' him afoor 'e went away. Ay, thot's 'im sewerly."

Mr. Lowe gave an involuntary exclamation of surprised delight. When hounds are hunting live game and they pick up the scent again after a check they always give tongue. "When did you say he married her, my lad?" he said.

"Last 'arvest-toime," replied the lad, "oop at tha choorch yonder. They wur married by passon 'isself, an 'yo can see tha stiffkit if yo loike. But 'ere cooms Joe Pickering, 'e married Emmie Mather's sister, an' 'e can tell you moor o' Willums than me."

Joe Pickering, a stalwat young carpenter remembered Williams perfectly, and recollected doing the woodwork in the scullery at Dinham-villa when the cementing of the floors was being carried out by Ben Young. Moreover, he had lately seen a letter written to Mrs. Mather by Williams from Melbourne, in Australia, in which Williams said that "dear Emily was quite happy, and in the best of health." The letter was dated some time in January.

There could no longer be any doubt in Mr. Lowe's mind that he was on the right scent, and he almost whistled as he remembered that the unfortunate "dear Emily" was murdered by the polite letter-writer on Christmas Eve.

Higham, senior, in his capacity as parish clerk, soon found the marriage register in the vestry of the old church, and turned up an entry relating to the marriage of Albert Oliver Williams, bachelor, and Emily Mather, spinster. A copy of the entry would cost 3s. 7d., he remarked meaningly. Mr. Lowe handed over the fee, as well as a couple of half-crowns for the old man's private purse.

"Yo woant want the munny back if it's not tha roight Williams, will 'a?" said the careful clerk; and when reassured on the point went off to call the "passion."

Mrs. Mather and her daughter, Mrs. Pickering, were both at home when Mr. Lowe called and was shown into the neat little parlour, with its horse-hair sofa and armchair, its cheap German prints on the walls, and its square table in the middle of the room, with a brass-bound family Bible lying mathematically in the centre.

The visitor introduced himself by handing the old lady his card. "I represent The Melbourne Argus," he began, "and also [after a short pause] Scotland yard. I want to ask you about a Mr. Williams who married your daughter last September."

It was wonderful how readily Mrs. Mather talked. She had had the letting of Dinham-villa, which belonged to Mrs. Hayes, and applicants to view the property had to come to her for the key. Mr. Williams wished to take the

house, and when he came for the key he met Emily. He fell very much in love with Emily, and almost at once pro-posed marriage. The marriage came off in a very short time, and was celebrated by a dance in Dinham-villa, in the kitchen, which had been newly cemented. Certainly some of the neighbours had blamed her for allow-ing her daughter to marry a man whom no one knew anything about, but he was a free-handed, well-spoken man, and he had promised her a good home. They were very happy together, and Emily had written several letters home since they had left.

Her last letter was dated from Colombo, but her husband had written from Melbourne.

"Now, Mrs. Mather," said Mr. Lowe, "I want to ask you about your daughter."

The old lady looked up at him sharply.

"I want to know first," she said, "what you are driving at, and I will not say another word until you tell me."

"Mrs. Mather," said Mr. Lowe, "I have something very painful to say to you. I am going to tell you now about two people, a man and a woman. The man I am positive is Albert Oliver Williams. The woman may be your daughter, or it may the woman who, I have ascertained, came to Rainhill to visit Williams as his sister, but who, I have reason to believe, was his wife. Williams murdered his wife in Melbourne on last Christmas Eve."

Almost before he had finished speaking Mrs. Mather had fainted, and it was not without some difficulty that Mr. Lowe and Mrs. Pickering together managed to revive her. Then he told her all that he knew, weaving the tangled scraps of information together into as consistent a whole as possible. But there were still some terrible gaps to be filled up.

"Mind you, I do not believe that it is your daughter who has been murdered," said Mr. Lowe, arguing against his own convictions. I think it is very probably that his real wife, who visited him here in Dinham-villa, followed him to Melbourne, and that when she made herself known to him there, and reproached him for his desertion, he took ker life."

It was a plausible hypothesis and it was of priceless value just then for it enabled Mrs Mather to hope. With her hopes her strength revived and unlocking an old fashioned secretraire she took out all the letters written by Emily Mather since her marriage, and also portrait of both the bride and bridegroom. After a little persuasion, she handed the letters and portraits to Mr. Lowe, who desired to take them to London and get them copied, receiving in return an assurance that they would be safely guarded and given back uninjured.

"Now, you must tell no one what I have told you," said Lowe, as he took his leave.

"It is absolutely necessary that you preserve the strictest secrecy." And the old lady, terrified and full of vague misgivings, pledged herself to silence.

When Mr. Lowe took his seat in the up express for London he had good reason to congratulate himself upon his day's work. He had succeeded beyond his most sanguine anticipations, and he had made his position secure by closing the door completely against subsequent inquirers for information. Not only had he extracted a promise of silence from the one living individual capable of giving positive information about the murderer, but he had swept off all the letter and all the portrait as well— that is to say, all the documentary evidence and all the means of identification. After rifling the treasure-chamber he had locked the door and left with the key in his pocket.

Next morning, *The Argus*, away on the other side of the globe, published an interview, three-quarter of a column long, with the mother of the hapless Lancashire girl whose remains had been dug up a few days before from the cemented grave in the house at Windsor. It was the first of a series of perhaps the most remarkable coups ever known in the history of Australian journalism.

Backwards and forwards between London and Liverpool went the restless Mr. Lowe, collecting and piecing together all the ravelled ends of hearsay, all the tangled stands of interference, all the stray fibres of circumstantial and direct evidence, until he had made a rope that was strong enough to hang a man, And yet he was only at the commencement of his task.

It was strange how that other woman, the sister or, more probably, the wife of Williams, who had visited him at Rainhill with her four children, kept on intruding into Mr. Lowe's busy brain. She quite upset his calculations. It was odd that, in spite of all his efforts, he could find no trace of her whereabouts. She and her four children were like so many unquiet ghosts that refused to be laid until they were avenged.

As this last thought struck him Mr. Lowe lifted his hand to his forehead and found it wet. He was sweating from sheer excitement.

A vague idea came to him, stayed with him, and finally possessed him. He hurried from London to Rainhill once more and hunted out Ben Young, the man who had cemented the floors of the kitchen and scullery in Dinham-villa under instructions from Williams.

"Where did you get the cement from, Ben?" was the first eager question.

"It wur in the cooch 'ouse," said Ben.

To the coach-house accordingly they went, and sure enough they found there three empty barrels which had evidently contained cement.

"Did you use all the cement out of the three barrels?" asked Mr. Lowe.

"Naw," said Ben Young.

"How much did you use then? For Heaven's sake, hurry up my good man. It's a matter of life and death."

Ben Young collected his thoughts deliberately. "A laaid doon tha stool oot o' two o' they baris." he replied, with irritating slowness. "A knaw nowt aboot this 'ere other wonn. It wur empty afoor a got tha job."

"Empty before you got the job," echoed Mr. Lowe, with the ring of a strengthening con-viction in his voice. "Then what became of the cement from that barrel?"

The village plasterer wagged his head slowly from side to side, but never a word spake he. Mr. Lowe might as well have asked him what had become of the snows of yesteryear.

Then a great light flashed in upon the amateur detective's brain, illuminating all that was black a moment before and silhoutting in the sharpest outlines objects which up to that moment had been wrapped in darkness. When the line-of-battleship shows her might search-light every detail of the torpedo-boat stands revealed, painted in black upon a disc of blinding white.

"Where the missing barrel of cement is there I shall find the missing woman also," said Mr. Lowe, half to himself and darted off to submit his ideas to Sergeant Chipchase, the local constable, with whom he at once concluded an offensive and defensive alliance against the outside world. Sergeant Chipchase laid the fact before the district superintendent, and official named Kelly, and the digging then began in Dingham-villa under Mr. Lowe's direction, a digging the result of which most gruesomely verified the calculations which that far-sighted individual had worked out. And so it was that this Childe Roland to his Dark Tower came.

Four sweating constables armed with pickaxes carried out this strange exhumation. Under the stone floor of the kitchen they came upon the cement from the third barrell, and in the cement they came upon the bodies of a woman and four children.

The woman and three of the children had their throat cut from ear, and the fourth child had been strangled with a piece of clothes-line, which was still round its neck.

Mr. Lowe had an unusually interesting cable message to sent to *The Argus* in Melboune that afternoon, and in just a week from the day on which he received his first instructions he sent a complete report of the murders which he had been mainly instumental in discovering, and with which all England was ringing some hours later.

When the story of the Rainhill murders was published in *The Argus* alone of all the Melbourne papers next morning Albert Oliver Williams, alias Frederick

Bailey Deeming, was already on his way from Souther Cross in custody. If the Windsor charge broke down, the Rainhill case would hand him safely enough.

"AH! Mr. Lowe, glad to see you," said Superintendent Shore next day, stretching out his hand cordially to his visitor. "Let me congratulate you upon the smartest piece of detective work that has been done in England for many years."

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6: "Kill Him, Jimmie— or I Will"

W. Wirt

Wirt Winchester Young, 1876-1950

Argosy Allstory Weekly, 29 Sep 1928

Chapter 1: The Black Sedan.

THE THREE MEN sitting in the closed car parked along the curb of one of the quiet residential streets north of Wilson Avenue, Chicago, were watching the infrequent passers-by. It was in the middle of the afternoon and there were not many people on the street. One or two nursemaids with children— a woman or two going shopping— a canvasser going from door to door.

The man sitting at the wheel turned a little, "I sure hope he don't show," he said, uneasily, "I don't give a hoot about any ordinary guy, but puttin' a Federal dick on the spot is something else again."

"You and me both," answered one of the men on the rear seat, who had a Browning sub-machine gun resting between his legs. "They will chase you from here to hell— this lad's buddies. I got two minds to lam it, right now."

"You better get three minds, feller," sneered the man beside him. "What do you care who this bird is? You must want to get beat to death with a couple of nightsticks, don't you? Do ya' see that window, with the shade up an inch, across the street? Well, the big boys are right there to see that we go through. Laugh that off. You better come clean with that gat— or you'll be huntin' for a whole bone in you by night."

"Aw, I ain't got cold feet," protested the other, "only I wish these damn elbows would do their own killin'— they got practice enough. This here—"

"Heads up," said the man at the whel. "Here he comes"

The two men in the rear eased down on the floor of the big limousine and to all appearances it became simply an expensive car with a chauffeur.

The well-dressed young man who had turned the corner from the elevated station, sauntered down the sidewalk toward the car. That there was absolutely no thought of danger in his mind was apparent. He stopped just before reaching the car and lighted a cigarette, tossing the burned match almost under the wheels.

He was a well set up, tanned young man, with laughing blue eyes and a swing to his shoulders as he walked that told of days in the service. As he passed the car he looked carelessly at the driver, who returned the look, just as carelessly.

He had passed the car by about six feet, when the back window slid down noiselessly on oiled sashes and the muzzle of the Browning sub-machine gun came out, also a heavy automatic pistol held in the hand of the other man.

There was no warning— no fair play— no giving the young man a chance of any kind. But some sixth sense must have told him of deadly danger, because he whirled, his hand went under his left armpit and came out with a Colt .45 just as the heavy, steel-jacketed bullets from the Browning and the automatic began tearing and shattering his body.

As he was reeling back, he fired once, straight into the opened window. Then his dead body crumpled to the pavement. The window went up, the big car started and disappeared around the cor-. ner. As it did, the man who had handled the Browning said, "My God— he got Tony— between the eyes."

Old ex-Ranger Captain Yancey of Texas was visiting his niece in Chicago on his way back home. She lived in the 600 block, and he was sitting at the second floor window comparing Chicago and all big cities very unfavorably with Texas, when it happened. As the shots came, he stood up and his right hand flashed down to his side, only to stay there. There was no much-notched old ivory-handled .41 to meet his grip.

"Doggone," he said, plaintively, "I could have got me—" and he turned and ran to the door.

When he reached the body, there was already a little crowd, standing back, watching the blood seep slowly out on the concrete sidewalk from the body of the young man, whose blue eyes were no longer laughing.

As the old Ranger captain bent over the shattered form, two burly men were still peering out of the window across the way, through the inch the shade was raised. One of them whispered, "Here comes Hogan," as a uniformed copper came running up. "He'll tend to this— let's go, Mac. That'll teach those buzzards to lay off us."

"What's this?" said Hogan, as he came up. "Get back, there, you people. What came off? Did you see it?" he demanded of Yancey.

"Well, suh," drawled Yancey, "I was sittin' in the window yonder and I heard the shots, that's all. I reckon it happened too fast for anyone to see much. The young gent here, he fell down and a car drove off."

"Yeah?" said Hogan. "Ring for the dead wagon, Bill," to another officer who got off a motorcycle. "Some guy has been taken for a ride. Did you get the car number, now?" to Yancey.

"No, suh," answered Yancey, who could still put a bullet in the heart of a man at sixty yards. "My eyes are plumb bad. I reckon I was looking at the young gent a lot."

"What's your name?" demanded Hogan.

"My name is William C. Yancey," answered the old Ranger captain, mildly. "I'm from the country, I don't reckon I'll stay much longer with such goin's-on. 'Taint safe to—"

Hogan sneered. "Better get back to the sticks," he growled. "Go on, now— the bunch of ye. Move on— or I'll take some of ye to the station house."

THE driver of the death car was sitting in one of the back rooms of what used to be Powers and O'Brien's saloon and gambling house on Madison Street. The two men who had watched from the window were with him. They were hard-faced, hard-eyed men; one had the baggy pouches under his eyes that told of disordered living. Both were well dressed and had the arrogance and command that goes so often with official authority. 'They were detective sergeants, working out of the ' front office.'

"What did Tony want to butt in for," snarled McGinnis, the man with the pouches under his eyes. "Smith could have done it without him. Now he's croaked, the damn fool."

"It saved us the trouble, Mac," said Haven, his partner, with a sneer. "That wop was due for a ride pretty soon himself. Here's the jack for you and Smith, Johnnie."

The driver looked at the two fifty-dollar bills flung on the table. "What's this?" he growled. " Fifty dollars— for killin' a—"

"Perhaps you'd like to come over to the Harrison Street station with us, instead?" purred Haven. "Down in the little room."

"Put it back in your pocket," said Mac. "This rat is due for a fanning, anyway. Let's take him down and give it to him. He's acting like he was hot— he needs it."

"No— no—" stammered the driver, shrinking back from the cold, hard eyes boring into him. He knew what it meant down in the little room. He knew of strong, well men taken in there in the basement of the old Harrison Street station, with three or four big detectives or policemen, night sticks and blackjacks swinging idly— and knew how they were carried out, a broken, bloody, cringing mass of broken bones and torn flesh.

"Sure, it's plenty," he gasped. "I ain't kickin'. For Cripes' sake, fellers, don't do it. I got lots of good dope for you! I'm right, ain't I? Mac— you know I'm right! I'll do anything. you say. What's the use of beating me up? I'll drive any car and—"

"That's something else again," said Haven, putting the two fifties in his pocket. "As long as you feel that way about it, we'll put off the little room stuff for a day or so."

"Aw, hell," said Mac, his eyes showing the cruel, almost insane desire that always possessed him to see suffering and pain— and to inflict it. "We can get plenty of drivers, Ted. This heeler is overdue, right now."

"Honest, Mac," implored the driver. "I ain't done a thing except work for you fellers. Please, Mac— Hey, I want to tip you guys to something. If I'm right, will you lay off me?"

"He's gettin' good," sneered Mac. "Propositionin' us. What do you know— rat? Come on with it, quick!" and the burly detective took a step forward toward the much slighter, shorter driver, who cringed back, throwing up his right arm.

"Don't," he pleaded, "I— Smith, he began beefin' about knockin' off a Government cop and how you guys ought to do your own killin' and that he was—"

"What was that you said about knockin' off a Government cop? What Government cop? When? Where was he knocked off? What the hell do we know about it, you damn snowbird?" demanded Haven, angrily. "Mac, I guess you're right. We better take this mack in with us."

The driver shivered. He knew that his own life, that would be beaten out of him, depended on what he said.

"I don't know nothin' about it," he said. "I just come up from downstate and I heard some lads talkin' and one of them was this Smith guy. He was drunk and shoutin'—"

"Yeah?" interrupted Mac, "and did he mention our names?"

"Not while he was talkin' about the cop. He did when he began to beef about things in general."

Haven began to whistle softly "and they brought a little star dust down to make the shamrocks grow." Mac started to say something, then closed his mouth. He knew that when Haven began to whistle that old tune, his evil, clever brain was planning. The driver had heard that Haven did that, and almost always right after, men. were killed. He could only hold his breath and hope.

Mac knew that Haven had the brains of the partnership—what Mac didn't have in that respect he made up for with brute courage and cold mercilessness. Haven was not behind him in either of those respects. They both looked upon Chicago as their legitimate hunting ground— and hunted in it as two black jaguars would in the South American jungle.

Haven stopped whistling. "I think that Johnnie here is a good kid, Mac," he said, smoothly. "He don't do any running around. You live with your wife and kids, don't you, Johnnie?"

"Yes," said the driver. "I live out in Morton Park. I tend to my business and then go home— honest, I do."

"That's what I thought," answered Haven. "You're all right, Johnnie. That was a good tip-off you gave us about Smith. l tell you what you do— you go and— here, you take this jack," and he took the two fifties from his pocket, "and give it to Smithie— tell him we said that he did a good job, see, and that we will let him cut in on that Hammond stuff in a day or so. Then, Johnnie, to-morrow morning, you bell him around to Mike's— we'll drop in and give you both a job to do out on the road. When you get out there— put him on the stop and you can keep the money yourself. Don't be afraid of the little room, Johnnie. Mac and I were only kiddin' you to see how much nerve you had, weren't we, Mac?"

"Certainly," said Mac, promptly. "We know you're right, Johnnie."

"I'll have him there," said the driver, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "My Gawd, fellers, I thought you meant it. I'll take him for a ride."

"All right, Johnnie, get going. Tomorrow morning at Mike's. Don't forget, Johnnie?"

"I won't," said Johnnie from the door.

"And then what?" questioned Mac, after the door closed.

"Why, then," said Haven, softly, "at the place where these two desperate gunmen and gangsters are waiting to commit a cowardly murder, there will come along the brave and fearless Detective Sergeants McGinnis and Haven, accompanied by several other equally brave and fearless police in the strict performance of their duty, and I am very much afraid that the two gunmen, who will put up a resistance to arrest, will be killed by the officers." He smiled at his partner.

Johnnie had gone down the stairs, half blindly, praying almost aloud, his parched lips moving. "Oh, God— let me get home in time. If I can get Nett and the kids out in the country, the old man will take care of them. I can duck somewhere if they're safe. I know what they're going to do— they didn't fool me, the dirty—"

He reached the street and made his face resume its usual reckless air. His car was parked in front and he stood by it for a moment, watching the crowd go by, lighted a cigarette, got in unhurriedly and drove west, out of the loop. Once clear of the traffic, he stepped on the gas and drove recklessly.

Chapter 2: Consequences

LATE that night, as Johnnie swung his car in to the curb in front of his house, a man got up from the steps and came sauntering out. "Hello, Johnnie," he said. "I been waiting around for you a hell of a long time. Misses and kids away?"

"Yeah," said Johnnie, getting out. He knew that in coming back to the house he had lessened his chance to get away by about ninety per cent, but he had not figured that Haven and McGinnis would put any kind of a cover on him before morning. He had thought that he could come back to the house in safety to get some clothes he would need on his trip South— as he had left most of his money with his wife in Indiana.

The man who had been waiting for him was a deputy sheriff named Cohen, whom Johnnie knew was close to Haven.

"I took them down in the country for a spell," Johnnie went on indifferently. "Her old man is sheriff down there and is kinda sick. Let's go in and get a drink. I got some of that last beer that come up."

"Good idea," said Cohen, "only I don't go much on beer. Got any hard stuff?"

"Yeah, plenty, any kind you want," and as they walked toward the house ohnnie asked, "What do you know?"

"Not much," said Cohen, with a yawn. "Met Haven and he said that he wanted me along on one of them things to-morrow, and for me not to get tied up no place. 'They're goin' to bring up a shipment from the South, I guess, and he wants me to ride it in, maybe."

"An' you get half a grand for it," said Johnnie. "I sure wish I could get me a piece of tin to wear and get in on some of the heavy jack. I'm satisfied though, now."

"Yeah?" said Cohen. "Well, I didn't have a damn thing to do, and I didn't want to hang around the office. Old McMullen might send me out with a warrant. Thought I'd come out and play around with you."

"Glad to have you," said Johnnie, as he opened the door.

He knew that Haven had sent Cohen to see that he kept his appointment at Mike's, and that if he couldn't shake him his chances of living beyond the next day were few, but he grinned cheerfully as he brought out bottles and glasses, trying to decide whether or not to take a chance and try and kill Cohen that night or let it ride until morning.

He knew that Cohen, for all his seeming carelessness, was watching his slightest move and that his gun swung in a holster just below his right hip. He could get to it faster than Johnnie could to his, in his back pocket.

"We'll make a night of it," said Cohen. " Your missus is away. I'll call up a couple of skirts I know and we'll pull a party."

"Not for me," said Johnnie. "I'm off that stuff, boy. Let's you and me just stag it. I'll play you some stud after awhile. I got me some drivin' to do in the morning."

"Fair enough," agreed Cohen, affably. "I'm getting sick of molls myself."

Johnnie, who had driven many a death car, spoke the truth when he said that he had some driving to do in the morning. He could not shake Cohen, and all through the night he had no chance to kill him. Cohen matched him drink for drink and more, his little beady eyes never losing their alertness.

In the morning he drove with Johnnie to pick up Smith, then to Mike's, where, a little later, Haven and McGinnis came in. Johnnie and Smith were told to be on the Sheridan Road at noon, near the corner of a certain street. A gray roadster with an Indiana license would come slowly by and the driver would ask them the road to Milwaukee. They were to kill both the driver and the passenger.

The driver of the gray car, Haven said, would get out to look at his engine, thinking that the passenger was the one to be put on the spot; but they were to kill both— the driver having, as Haven said with an evil sneer, "become a flying jib," a talkative drunk.

Smith, not knowing that he had talked any while drunk, grinned cheerfully and said, "Leave it to us, chief." This kind of killing he liked to do.

Johnnie had joined in. He would kill Smith, and keep on going north until he reached friends in Milwaukee, who would hide him and pass him along.

If Haven or McGinnis ever got to him, he'd claim that he got scared and ran; that some men in a passing car had seen him. For Smith's life he didn't care. He was a gangster and a crook like himself.

He drove with Smith out on the Sheridan Road to the place ordered, drew in to the side of the road, turned to Smith, who sat in the rear, the Browning sub-machine gun again under his knees, and said, "Hey, Smithy, we're early. I don't like to be here with all these cars comin' by. Let's unload and walk down to the shore. We got an hour, anyway."

"Suits me," said Smithy. "Wait till I pack this cannon," and he stepped to the gun. As he did, Johnnie shot him through the head. The young killer straightened up, his gun still in his hand, and turned to the wheel. His foot was already down on the gas when a sleet storm of lead poured into the car, shattering glass and woodwork. From all sides it came, front and rear, as pitiless and accurate as had the rain of death that had poured on Federal Agent Wilson such a short time before.

As Johnnie sank over the wheel, hit in a dozen places, dying, he saw the flash of brass buttons and police uniforms and heard Haven shout, "Go in, men! Don't let them get you! Shoot to kill!"

Johnnie raised his head amid the flying glass and lead and lifted his gun. His last thought was— if he could only shoot square into the face of Haven, he would be— then the light went out for him forever.

JIMMIE HOWARD sat in the living room of what he called his bachelor apartment on H. Street in Washington, his sleeves rolled up, winding a silk line on a reel. His thin. Serious young face, with solemn black eyes and bony "Duke of Wellington" nose, lighted up with the happiness known only to a fisherman who has a-place to go where the fish are biting, and plenty of good tackle, friends waiting for him, and thirty days' leave—all at the same time.

His friends called him "Sad Parson," or "Sad," or "Parson," just as it happened, because of that serious, melancholy look, half sad, half sleepy. Jimmie only grinned. That half asleep air had badly fooled several men. His friends all knew that inside " that medieval monk's mug" of his, as one of them expressed it, there was a gay, careless, laughing spirit, who thought life a huge joke to be laughed at and lived.

He was from Maine, and, as he used to explain in defense of his "medieval monk's mug":

"One of my great-great-granpas was a Presbyterian elder, darn him. He used to go around with a Bible and convert the Penobscot Indians, and when he couldn't convert 'em he'd smack 'em down. He tried to convert a female of the tribe, some relation to old Powhattan, and instead of his doin' her, she made the old boy lay his Bible down, they tell me.

"Anyway, that accounts for my mug. It's the elder's map, with a little dash of Injun that crops out once in awhile. Yeah, he married her, you poor fish. And darn lucky to get the chance. Boy, you ought to see a picture some artist painted of my great-great-grandma. She was one bearcat for looks."

Now, he sat at the long living room table, his spirit singing to him of fish biting and the cool of the north woods.

He heard a key turn in the outside door and rose. There was only one person in the world that had a key to his door beside himself, and that was Sally Wilson, the girl he was going to marry. When Jimmie was away, she would come over and give his rooms a straightening up, with loving little pats for his coats and things as she hung them up.

She was chief of a stenographic section in the Treasury Department, and there were few afternoons after four thirty when she could not be found with Jimmie, if he were in Washington.

Jimmie looked at the clock. "What are you doing off so early, woman?" he called, as the door opened. "Andy'll be tying a can to you. Come on in. I'm fixing my tackle and—"

Sally Wilson had stumbled into the room, her pretty face drawn and white, her blue eyes dry and staring, her lovely tremulous mouth already working with the grief she had so proudly tried to hide while coming to Jimmie.

"Jimmie," she said, in a cold, strained voice, unlike her usual slow amused drawl and gently soft tones, "Charley— is— is dead!" And she held out her slim young arms to him.

Jimmie had her in his arms, was holding her tight in an instant. "Steady, old girl. I've got you safe. Steady, stop shivering so, Sally, darlin'. Come and sit down with Jimmie." He picked her up, carried her to the big old rocking-chair by the table and sat down with her in his arms.

"I— oh, Charley, my big brother. They killed him. He used to take care of me when I was little. They said his body— was—" Her voice began to rise and she clung to Jimmie like a frightened child.

"Cry, Sally," commanded Jimmie, holding her tight. "Cry, you must. Be a brave girl now— Charley would want you to be! Put your head on my shoulder and just cry."

The relieving tears came finally and with her soft, warm form tight to his, Sally between sobs told Jimmie what Major Scott had hurried over to the Treasury Building to tell her.

"Tighten up, Sally," Jimmie said, patting her heaving shoulder and kissing the top of her proud little boyish head. "I loved Charley— next to you— better than any one in the world, and I know that he wouldn't want to see you grieve so. You're a Wilson from Kentucky—thing to do now is to plan to get them. Child— stop crying for Jimmie— Charley would want us to be getting them— you can cry a lot and everything later."

"Do you— do you think he is really just over the hills, Jimmie, dear, waiting for us?"

"I don't think anything about it— I know it—and I'll bet that he's madder than nine hundred dollars right now at us for not getting busy. Listen, Sally — he's just the same as gone on one of those long trips of his—I tell you."

Jimmie Howard soothed and petted her for a long time before Sally became anywhere near normal. Finally, she said: "Yes, Jimmie, I'm better now— see? I'm not crying any more, honest, I'm not. Major Scott said to tell you to go to Chicago and— find out— who— who killed—"

"Steady, old-timer. You told me how the Wilson women used to send their men out in the old feud days with the cross already marked on their gun stocks. Are you any less a Wilson than they?"

Sally's head came up at last. "No," she said proudly, "I'm one of them, Jimmie, dear. Will you go and—"

"I'd have gone anyway— division chief or not— and now I'm being sent. I'll get 'em for you— and uncle, Sally."

"Then," said Sally Wilson, firmly, "I am going to take my thirty days' annual and go, too."

"What?" said Jimmie, in alarm. "No, you're not. You'd fog me up and you couldn't help me, Sally."

"I won't interfere with you, Jimmie. I'll— I want to be there when you— get them. I'll just get a quiet place and— it might be that I can help in some way. I'll— I'll change my name, Jimmie."

Jimmie looked sternly at the loyely tear-stained face held so close to his. He knew that she would be in no danger, and that he could give her some things to do that would keep her well on the outside. He hoped that it would take her mind off her grief.

"All right, Sally," he said gently, kissing her. "You can be my partner in this. You get to Major Scott in a way that won't attract notice and tell him I asked to have you sworn in as a Federal officer and given credentials and everything with them. When you get to Chicago, you go to the Drake Hotel and register in as Miss Sarah Coudray— wasn't that your mother's name?

"Well, then you get one of the money envelopes from the desk and wrap your credentials and badge up in some flannel or soft stuff and seal it up and give it to the clerk to put in the safe for you. It's your money and jewels— sabe, Sally?"

Sally Wilson nodded her head. "Yes, Jimmie."

"Then I'll make contact with you. My name will be James Henry Tucker— that's a good old New England name. My grandma was a Tucker. Now, are you going to be a good girl and stop grieving about Charley until we get whoever did it?"

"I'm— I'm going to be a good girl, Jimmie, dearest," said Sally with a little quaver in her voice, "and I— I won't let you see, but my heart will keep on grieving, I'm afraid, and—"

"That's all right," said Jimmie, taking her in his arms again. "You're a good, brave girl right now. You go and wash your face and get to Major Scott to-day. I'm leaving on the night Pennsy train."

After Sally had gone, her head up now and the light of the old Kentucky feudists in her eyes, Jimmie swept the fishing tackle on the floor and in spite of his brave talk to Sally about Charley's being just over the hill, he sat somberly for a moment, seeing the face and laughing eyes of his best friend in the service instead of the shining top of the table. "Well, old kid," he said aloud,

very slowly, "they got you— but I swear that I won't rest until I get them," and his arm and head went down on the table and he cried unashamed.

Chapter 3: On The Trail

"IT'S for you, Uncle Willy-um," called little Mrs. Beach from the telephone seat, gayly. " You better come a running— it might be a telegram from Ma telling you to come right home. Don't you go, Uncle Willy-um, will you?"

"Honey," said old Ranger Captain Yancey, as he put down the paper, "Ma don't have to wire me to come right home a runnin'. I was doin' that runnin' to where she was long before you was born. Yes, suh," he said, as he took the receiver from his niece, "this is William Yancey talkin'."

"This is James H. Tucker talking, Mr. Yancey. I'm a reporter for the Theodore N. Scott information bureau. We have been told that you are an exponent of the theory that Company B's horses must be fed on pork and beans and would like to have an interview with you on the subject."

"Well, suh," drawled the ranger captain. "I reckon you got me wrong. That was Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines' way of doin'."

"I see. Well, there is some mistake; but the Scott Bureau is very anxious that I get in touch with you. Would it be possible for me to see you for a few moments?"

"Well, suh, I was aimin' to go out and get me some exercise. If you-all want to come down to the Wilson Avenue beach, I reckon you can. I'll be up at the north end."

"Uncle Willy-um Yancey," said pretty little Mrs. Beach, firmly, as Captain Yancey put the receiver down, "don't you dare tell me you're going to get mixed up in anything up here. Ma said that you were to take a rest. I'll wire her," she threatened, a smile on her lips. She had been raised on the big Lazy W ranch by her uncle and Ma; and her father having been a ranger, she knew from Captain Yancey's answers and the light in his eyes that there was "Ranger business" in the offing somewhere.

"Shucks, honey," said Captain Yancey, reaching for his hat, " you know I'm getting along right smart for that foolishness. That feller wants to know about hoss feed, I reckon."

"This isn't the range country, Uncle Billy,'' said Mrs. Beach, a worried little frown appearing on her forehead. "Up here is altogether different. Bob says that they all don't trust each other and—"

"Sugar," said ex-Captain Yancey of the Rangers, as he started to open the door. "That no-'count scoundrel of a husband of yours is plumb right, I reckon.

Only one thing up here is the same as down in our country and that is, a Colt forty-one bullet placed right will still stop 'em, one place or the other."

James H. Tucker had no trouble in locating Captain Yancey at the south end of the beach— not the north. In certain circles, on fixing a compass point of meeting, north means south and west means east. The beach was crowded and no one paid any attention to the two men lying on the sand back in the shade.

The major got to me with a special delivery before I left," Tucker had said, after introducing himself, and he handed Yancey a sheet of paper on which was scribbled in longhand:

Jimmie— my old partner in the Rangers is staying with his niece, named Beach, at 620 Rosemary Street. His name is Yancey, He may be able to help you some.

There was a scrawled picture of a very bony pair of legs in a kilt at the bottom.

"I phoned him from the depot," went on Jimmie, solemnly. "He gave me a sort of general working description of you. We have to be pretty careful on account of wire taps, even in Washington. There's quite a few people would like to know just where a Federal agent was going— and why— and what he looked like."

Well, suh," smiled Yancey, " if that old cross between a polecat and a sidewinder gave you any kind of description of me, I reckon it wasn't what you could call right complimentary."

"It wasn't," said Jimmie, idly tearing the note into small pieces and sticking them down in little holes in the sand here and there. "But I used my own judgment."

He told Yancey of Wilson, and then was surprised to hear that Yancey had been an eyewitness to the killing and had later in the day wired Major Scott in the old Ranger telegraphic code to that effect, adding that he might be of some help. " 'The mills of the gods,' " quoted Jimmie. "This gang plans a killing— with all details covered— and then do it under the eyes of an old partner of the man's chief. Tell me exactly what you saw, captain, please."

Yancey told him and wound up with: " Son, I saw the face of the man with the machine gun—and the car was a big blue Carton with an Indiana license number 265,784. What was your buddy doin' up here on Rosemary Street?"

"A former Washington girl lives up there," said Jimmie. "Charley was sending in his reports to the major through her. She'd mail them to a girl in Washington. Captain, it's as I told you. We have to take all kinds of precautions. Major Scott had a private secretary once that was wrong— and it cost the lives of three good men.

"That car license doesn't mean a thing. They probably changed it before they had gone ten blocks, in some garage they had hired. This man with the machine gun, captain? What did he look like— a wop?"

"COON," answered Yancey, sitting up cross-legged on the sand and rolling a cigarette, "I don't reckon that he'll do you much good— he's dead."

Jimmie, who had been punching little holes in the sand with his finger, looked up. "Dead! How do you know?"

"It's thisaway," answered Yancey. "This here young buddy of yours was sure game. He turned and got one of them when he was the same as dead himself, and I was all for him. After they took his body away I figured that maybe-so the old man could sort of pay off a little on his account and I knew that some report of the deaths must go in to the coroner's office. Dr. Rienhardt down there is one of the assistants and he and I had got right friendly the time he was in Texas a long time ago.

"So I drifts down there to make him a little visit. Shore enough, in comes the report of the killin' of your buddy, and that the body was at the Augustana Hospital. Well, suh— I didn't reckon I could do any good by seein' him— so I just hung around with Doc some more.

"Then later in the day there's a report from police headquarters that the body of an unidentified man was found on the corner of a North Side street, and that he had been shot between the eyes; had evidently been thrown from a car. I told Doc that I was lookin' for a man that might have got treated thataway and the Doc he said that he'd drive me over to the morgue and let me take a look."

The old Ranger captain, his deeply bronzed old: face as impassive as that of a wooden Indian, stopped, snapped the cigarette butt away, produced tobacco and brown papers, slowly rolled another, lit it, then drawled: " It was the man your buddy killed, son."

"He got one," said Jimmie. "They unload any of the gang that gets knocked off. Well, how about the man with the machine gun? How did you line him up?"

"About the same way, son. I figured that Doc would be the best one to hang around with for a day or so, because everything regardin' any killin' comes in his office. Well, suh, pretty soon in comes a phone that some of the police had shot it out with a bunch of these city bad men up on— now— oh, yeah, the Sheridan road. I tells the Doc that I'd admire to see how it come off right away and me and the Doc we drives out, pronto. We gets there before the bodies had been taken away— or the car, Jimmie.

"There was a right smart lot of the police there— and the car was the same one— and the young gent that had used the machine gun was there, dead, and with him was another young gent; and he was right dead, too."

"Double cross, or maybe a triple," said Jimmie promptly. "They were sent out there to get some one— then got it themselves instead."

"By the police, son," pointed out Yancey, "I got me the papers home about it. This other gent's name was Johnnie Adams."

"Wait a minute, captain. Let me get this. We know how the first man got his. Then the rest of the same outfit that put Charley on the spot get theirs— from the police!"

Jimmie looked out over the placid lake for a little while, when he said: "Captain, Wilson was here on that mail car robbery on the Illinois Central, working with the Post Office Department men. I wonder if—

"Here— how's this? Charley gets on a hot trail— the higher-ups get tipped that he's warm. They don't know who he is, perhaps— or perhaps they do, and don't give a damn— anyway, they get some gang that they've got a toe-hold on, and make them bump him off.

"That's easy, so far. Then they get the idea that the men they used aren't the right ones to know about it, and they frame a little double cross, intending to bump them off, and the police horn in, and— not so good. I was going to say that the cops did the job for them, but, by gosh, it's the cops that did the work for themselves. What papers had the most details of the thing?"

"They all had extras out, son. They had the most interviews with the officers and such like— and pictures and all, in their yellow sheets, I reckon they're called."

"Captain, I never worked here in Chicago before, and I don't know many people. I don't want to go within nine hundred miles of the district attorney or the marshal's office. I know there are square cops here that don't stand for any kind of crooked stuff at all, just as there are straight deputy sheriffs and marshals."

"There's lots of different insides up here, son. They all got their pet grafts, I reckon. I know one square cop up here and that's old Cap'n O'Reilly.

"He's been down my way. Son, he was captain at the old Harrison Street Station when Jack Mallory was inspector and Luke Colleran had the front office. Kipley was chief then. They were all square cops. That was years ago, but I reckon that Cap'n O'Reilly sorta keeps in touch with things—anyway he could give us a lot of workin' information. I used to know him right well, and I reckon he'd like to favor me."

Yancey didn't tell Jimmie that once just over the border in Mexico he had shot his way through a crowded Mexican gambling hall to reach the prone and

wounded figure of a young Irishman named O'Reilly, who had come down from Chicago to get a man and had been decoyed over there by some of the man's friends.

Yancey had reached him just as a Mexican stooped to put a knife in his heart. The Mexican finished his stoop toward the floor, but with a bullet in his heart, and Yancey had coldly and efficiently shot a clear path to the door and carried O'Reilly to safety across the line before the guardias rurals could arrive on the scene,

"This here O'Reilly," he went on, "has right good sense, Jimmie. I reckon he could tell you a lot."

"Do you think he's covered in any way?"

"I don't reckon so, son. He ain't active no more. No reason why any outfit would want to cover him that I can see. Him and me go fishin' a lot when I drift in here for a visit. If I was to call him up and tell him the pickerel was bitin' up on the Flambeau River, out of Ladysmith, Wisconsin, I reckon he'd let go all holds and come. It's a night's ride on the Soo Line out of here."

"How soon can you reach him?" asked Jimmie.

"Why, I reckon if I went right back home and called him up, I'd get him about this time. We'd be leaving on the night train, I bet you."

"I'll be on her," said Jimmie, rising. "I'll get these papers that tell about the Sheridan Road thing."

The next morning Miss Sarah Coudray at the Drake Hotel found several letters slipped under her door when she woke up. Most of them— in fact all but one— were announcements of various shoppes that solicited the patronage of the guests.

The other was a Sherman House envelope, and in it was a little torn off piece of newspaper:

One of the gangsters killed was identified as John Adams, a chauffeur, evidently the driver of the car. He had been for some time a resident of Morton Park. The dead man's family, consisting of a wife and four children, had been taken to the country by him the day before the killing.

From neighbors it was ascertained that Adams's wife was the daughter of Sheriff Gordon of Newton County, Indiana. On receipt of a wire she came at once to the city with Sheriff Gordon and claimed the body of her husband. Mrs. Gordon stated that as far as she knew, her husband was making his money as a legitimate chauffeur, owning his own car. The police state that they believe this to be correct and made no effort to detain her in any way. She left with the body for Newton, last night. There is no reason to doubt that Adams had been the driver of several death cars, according to descriptions furnished by people who had been near the scenes of killing:

On the sheet of paper was written:

Dear Sally:

Run down and see her— another old friend of yours is staying at 2103 Halstead Street.

Sally Coudray tore the letter up into tiny pieces and then burned them on one of the ash trays and blew the ashes out of the window. She packed up, checked out. She stopped on her way to the depot to buy several woman's magazines and a blank receipt book; and went down in Indiana, soliciting subscriptions.

Chapter 4: The New Deputy

"INDADE 'tis a hard game to buck, down there," said Ex-Captain O'Reilly reflectively, as he reeled in his line. "Hard fer enny wan—an' if he's a square cop, 'tis harder. Time was in the owld days that every gambler paid fifty dollars a week fer each table he had in his house, and saloonkeepers accordin' to their means. The sportin' houses on Custom House Place and Fourth Avenue was run accordin' to law and order, and each paid so much.

"Each district had its authorized collector, and while I misdoubt but what there wasn't bigger graft goin' on, it was a rare cop that stood in with a crook, "I had me own troubles, keepin' me fingers clean. I did as I was told an' kep' me district tight as ordered. Thin there was no beer-runnin' gangs and bootleggers and all. The force was mostly Irish. Dom few else except a few Dutchmen, who are good men to have wid ye in a scrap, them squareheads. :

"Now there is everything from Polacks up and down. 'Tis a Kilkenny cat affair entirely. The front office bucks the police end. The sheriff's gang and the county dicks are out for thimselves. The United States marshal's gang is all scrambled up, which it never used to be, and every dom mother's son of them mostly have their fingers in the pie in some way and fight the others.

"Let a man lift a loaf of bread, and they all go out and get 'em— sure; let a poor girl take a pair of silk stockin's now, and— throw her in the coop for life. But these dom murder cars and bootleggers' wars and what not— sure 'tis told me that wan outfit had wid 'em wan of the assistant state's attorneys; and all them dicks from hell to high water are playin' to get their bit, and they double crossin' and triple crossin' each other like a mad crew. 'Tis so, be Judas.

"If Luke had the front office and Jack Mallory and me the old district, and Kipley was back, and old Carter H., sure there'd be— well, maybe not. Chicago's gettin' pretty big and times have changed. Maybe we'd be doin' the same. There's straight cops and straight deputies and all still, never fool yourself, young feller."

"It's about the same everywhere now, captain, at least, as far as we know," said Jimmie. "What I want to get is a line on the best way to horn in."

"Best way I know," answered O'Reilly, "would be for ye to get on wid the sheriff as deputy. Them boys seem to play wid 'em all. Sure now, let's see. McMullen and I pounded the pavement together for miny a mile before into politics he wint and finally becomes sheriff. 'Tis little that owld divil won't do for Pat O'Reilly.

"I have it! Wait, now, I'll give ye an easy one. Ye look some Irish, anyway. Yer name is Murphy— James Cardogan Murphy, the same as yer pa's, and yer mother was me favorite sister Maggie, that got married and wint 'way to hell-and-gone to live— one of me sisters did that thing years ago— now where the divil did she go to live? 'Twas up in Maine. First it was—"

"Holden, Maine," suggested Jimmie, with a grin, almost the first since Sally had come stumbling into his rooms,

"No— Portland; do it be ye know that place? 'Tis a bigger city and all. Ye came down from Portland to see me and what does me bowld Captain O'Reilly do but git his nephew in on the sheriff's gang of hijackers. Sure, her two boys was killed in France, but she might have had six for all any one knows around here."

"Hold 'er a minute, captain," interrupted Jimmie; "when the knock-off comes, it may be that I'll be uncovered. How'll you stand then?"

"The same as I stand right now," said the doughty old Irishman. " 'Tis afraid of no man I am or no gang, and well they know it, all of them, may the black curse of Crum'el. be on their dirty double-crossin' yellow hearts. The same as I stand right now, young feller. I have a few friends left of me own high up and low down. Good men and straight, and all of them gangs lay off 'em. They know better than to fool wid us."

"I hope I don't have to show in at the finals," said Jimmie, "but I thought I'd better say something about it."

"Son," said old Ranger Captain Yancey, "that's comin' clean. This here old doggone fightin' Swede here is—"

"Swade is it?" bellowed old Captain O'Reilly. "Sure now, ye poor skinny piece of tripe, I can take the both of ye right now and trun ye in the river."

The old ranger, who had killed a dozen men, and Jimmie Howard, who had killed a few himself and had the chilled steel nerve of all the Howards, both hastily admitted he could, without any doubt.

"WHO'S the new lad?" asked Cohen, who was sitting in the front office of the sheriff's.

"Old Pat O'Reilly's nephew," answered one of the deputy sheriffs sitting with his feet up on the window sill. "I was in here the day the captain brought him down. Comes from Maine, I heard O'Reilly tell McMullen. He looks like he lost his wad or something, don't he?"

"Yeah, maybe he has. Has he been out yet?"

"Nichols told me that the old man sent him out with them on that Stanton warrant. He said that this guy Murphy was there. Carries his gat under his left arm."

"Guess I'll go over and see what he's got," said Cohen, rising.

"My name is Cohen," he said, as he held out his hand to Jimmie Murphy. "I've seen you around for a couple of days. Let's go and get some lunch."

" All right," answered Jimmie. "I ain't found me no good place to eat yet. I paid a dollar and seventy-five cents for some bum chuck last night in one dump."

Cohen laughed. "You don't know where to go? Boy, I'll take you to a place where you can get good stuff— all kinds," and he looked closely at Jimmie, whose face lighted up.

"I wish you would," Jimmie said earnestly. "I'm a stranger in a strange land. I asked Cap'n O'Reilly where at was a good place to go and get a glass of beer and he said, 'Lay off that dom stuff— 'tis the curse of the O'Reillys!' My gosh, he's the only one of the family that thinks so, I bet. My ma was his sister and she didn't feel like that. The old lady liked her cup of tay, boy."

Cohen grinned. "I've heard that old Cap O'Reilly was pretty tight about lots of things, but a wildcat in a scrap. Come on, I know a good place."

They went down Clark Street toward Adams Street, Cohen nodding or saying "Hello" several times in a block, it seemed to Jimmie. Just after crossing Adams, two men standing in a doorway of an old building looked up and saw Cohen and Jimmie approaching. One of them stepped inside the door and disappeared. The other stood where he was.

Cohen stopped within three feet of him. "What's the idea, Sam, and where did Whitey duck to just now?"

"We're off watch," the man answered, looking at Jimmie, who stood a little to the right and back of Cohen. "The big boy said he might be along here about noon. We were waiting to see him."

"Yeah? Well, he won't, because he's in Hammond this morning, I can tell you that— and something else. Come on out of the door, Whitey; this is for you, too."

The other man stepped out of the shadows. "Had your hand on a rod, didn't you?" sneered Cohen. "Feller, you sure hanged yourself doing that. Well,

here it is, you birds. You're all done and washed up, see. I was told to pass the word. The first rattler out of town is yours— for keeps. The feller you was waiting for must be getting soft to let you get away, at that. You ought to get taken for a ride, you—"

"Aw, hell," said Sam, "what have we done? We wasn't in that."

Cohen laughed. " Well, there it is for you. Use your own judgment. Come on, Jimmie." He started to turn away.

"Wait a minute," said the man called Whitey, his mean, scarred, broken-nosed face and hard eyes showing his rage. "We ain't no cheap knucks to be chased outta town when any one gets through with us, and I don't give a damn if it is—"

"I wouldn't call any names out loud," interrupted Cohen; "and keep your hand in front of you, feller— or you'll get yours, right here!"

Whitey looked at the passing crowds, at the two traffic cops on the intersection of Clark and Adams, then back at the sneering deputy. "It's you," he snarled, "that's put us in wrong, you skunk! You played us dirt and then—" He appeared to notice Jimmie for the first time. "Who the hell is this guy?"

"Me?" asked the sleepy-eyed Jimmie, mournfully. "I'm just a hungry lad he was takin' to lunch. Don't hesitate on startin' anything on my account— because the quicker we kill you rats the quicker we'll eat."

Whitey laughed. "I wouldn't want to stop no preacher from eatin'," he said. "All right, Cohen. Tell the big boy we're on our way, you dirty mongrel half-breed kike!"

At that word Cohen flamed into a deadly rage, and his right fist flashed up at Whitey's jaw. They were standing so that Jimmie and Cohen were practically in front of the others, who were now half in and half out of the doorway of the old building, which had one low, broad stone step leading up from the sidewalk. The two deputies were on the step.

Cohen's blow was fast, but Whitey's head swerved an inch back and to the left, and his counter was faster. His left fist crashed full in Cohen's face. With split lips and blood pouring from his nose, Cohen reeled back, halfway across the sidewalk.

The passing crowd at once made room for him and ran in either direction, seeking cover behind anything they could. Cohen's coat was open and they could see his deputy sheriff star and cartridge belt. He staggered to a halt, blew the blood from his nose and mouth as a swimmer would water, and drew his gun.

There was a more desperate effort by the bystanders to get under or behind something. In Chicago, even the children knew enough to scatter like a flock of quails, on the sight or sound of a gun.

AS Cohen started back across the sidewalk, there was the sound of a shot and Whitey's body, the hand still clutching an automatic, fell across the doorway almost at Cohen's feet. Sam came in view, his hands high above his head, Jimmie Murphy behind him with the muzzle of his Colt .45 pressing into Sam's back.

The two traffic policemen were running towards them, tugging at their guns. From across the street came two plain-clothes men, guns in hand. Cohen's bloody lips twisted into a cruel smile and he deliberately raised his gun to kill the defenseless man within two feet of him.

Jimmie shouted at him, "Hold 'er! He's my meat!" and as Cohen's gun still came up, he slid the muzzle of his Colt up over Sam's shoulder, straight at Cohen's heart, stepping in front of Sam and crowding him into a narrow space between an iron railing and the window of the next store.

" 'Tis me that has 'im under arrest," Jimmie said firmly. "Cohen— put that gun down now." Just then the coppers and plain-clothes men arrived. Cohen stood for a second, rigid, looking full in Jimmie Murphy's eyes, then lowered the gun.

The two coppers recognized Cohen, as did the plain-clothes men, and at once began to drive back the milling crowd that had begun to come around, now the shooting was over.

"What the hell's comin' off, Abie?" demanded one of the detectives, the other stooping over the body of Whitey.

Cohen started to say something when Jimmie interrupted. "These two were tryin' to stick up the jewelry store here when me and me partner come along. Sure, I had to bump off the wan on the sidewalk; and here's the other. Me brave Abie Cohen here, he tries to take 'em both alive wid his fists."

"Yeah?" said the detective, looking at Cohen, then at the dead Whitey and the living Sam behind Jimmie, "and who the hell might you be?"

"I'm a deputy sheriff," said Jimmie with pride.

"He's my partner, Valletti," said Cohen, "old Cap O'Reilly's nephew."

"Oh— I see," answered Valletti. "You take after old Pat, I guess."

More police had arrived, uniformed and plain-clothes men— also the patrol wagon and a couple of reporters. Most of the officers were engaged in keeping the traffic moving, holding back the vast crowd. The two corner officers had gone back to their posts.

"You better get over to the Emergency, Abie," said one of the officers. "We'll take care of this for you. What were they trying to do?"

"Hold up Swanson's here," answered Cohen quickly. "We come along just in time. Take this guy to the Harrison Street station and hold him for Haven and McGinnis. Mac wants him, I think."

The man called Sam had been standing in the little space behind Jimmie, with two or three hard-faced detectives and a police lieutenant almost touching him. As Cohen said 'Harrison Street' and ended with 'Mac wants him,' Sam dropped like a stone to the sidewalk, rolled under the iron rail to the footwide space between it and the store window, around the feet of the officers and rose to his feet, whipping a little .25 calibre automatic from his vest pocket. Jimmie had taken the larger one from his hip pocket when his hands went up. Sam knew of the little room at the Harrison Street station and had decided that he would go out on top, with the chance of taking one or two with him.

There was an automobile parked at the curb and he ran for it, firing over his shoulder. The closeness of the police to one another helped him for a moment.

There are straight police in Chicago just as there are crooked police, but no one ever accused either the straight or the crooked with lacking nerve to stand up to a gun fight or any other kind of a fight, at any time.

They drew their guns and stood where they were, those behind the others stepping to one side or the other to get clearance and returned his fire with their .38 police specials. Cohen, almost blinded with blood, stood with his heels together, firing as rapidly as he could pull trigger.

It happened so quickly, without any warning that the people crowding the windows on both sides of the street hardly had time to shrink back, when it was over. Sam never reached the automobile— alive. His body rolled to it, actually propelled by the stream of lead that was driving into it.

One of his bullets hit the police lieutenant in the chest, another lodged in a detective sergeant's shoulder and a third grazed Jimmie Murphy's cheek, drawing a thin line of red across it up by his ear. Those shots were all Sam had time to fire.

Chapter 5: Speakeasy Nights

ON the way to the hospital Jimmie told Cohen that Whitey drew his rod just after he hit Cohen and on Jimmie's command to drop it, had started to swing it on Jimmie— so Jimmie killed him. Sam had not had time to draw before Jimmie's gun was on him.

"Why the hell didn't you let me kill the snake?" asked Cohen through the handkerchief he was holding to his lips.

"Sure now, I would have," answered Jimmie, placatingly. "Only thing, I was fussed up and I thought he was me own meat and like all the Irish, I guess, I wanted to do me own killing. What it was all about I dunno and I care less. Next time now, Abie, yer name is, isn't it— you can kill 'em all yerself. Me first name's Jimmie."

Cohen laughed. " All right, Jimmie. You and me ought to make good sidekicks—an Irishman and a Jew."

"And the best fightin' men in the world, once ye get 'em started," said Jimmie, gravely.

After one of the doctors at the Emergency had fixed them up, Cohen said, as they were waiting for a taxi, "Well, I don't know how much I can eat with these damn lips all gummed up, but we'll go and get a drink, anyway— that is— if you drink any, Jimmie."

"D'ye ever see an Irishman who wouldn't?" demanded Jimmie. "Lead me to it, feller. 'Tis not much I drink I'll admit. That lad I knocked off must have packed an awful wallop, Abie, darlin', to cut ye up like that."

"He was one of the best heavys in the business," answered Cohen, as they got in the taxi he had flagged. "Before he slipped."

"An' you swung on him," said Jimmie, with a grin. "Sure now, Abie, ye must have, though he slipped a lot."

"I'm pretty good myself," said Cohen, returning the grin as best he could. "Besides he called me a kike and I don't take that from nobody but my friends when they're kidding me."

"Upstairs by me lives kikes, hey, Abie?" grinned Jimmie. "Well, every man has his fighting words all right. Cap'n O'Reilly was telling me the other night that in the old days if any one called him an Irish potato, he'd start moppin' up. They could call him Irish or Mick or flannel mouth, but if they added the potato thing it got him."

"I guess that's right," said Cohen. "Are you living with him, Jimmie?'

"Naw— he's too straight-laced— I mean that all he wants to do is to go to bed early or play whist with a lot of old-timers. Me, I take after the Murphys a lot, I guess. My pa was a regular guy, Abie."

"Yeah— where do you live then?"

"I got me a swell room over on Halsted Street near Madison."

"This the first time you been in Chicago, Jimmie?"

"Yeah, boy. I was in Portland and then another guy and I went up in Canada and worked between there and New York a lot. I was just fussing around and— "

"Did you say down around Montauk Point?" asked Abie with a grin, "or Atlantic Highlands, which?"

"Who wants to know?" answered Jimmie, with a grin. "Boy, some day I'll tell you some tales about big jack. I seen ten grand notes lying around like snow on the table."

"Better not let Cap'n O'Reilly hear you telling it. He'd crown you, feller."

"Ain't that the truth," said Jim mie, earnestly. "When my ma got me to come out here she warned me about telling him anything. There's one good, straight guy, Abie, and I can lick the man that says he isn't. He may look at things different from you and me, but he's there, forty ways from the jack."

"He is," answered Cohen, promptly. "Old-timers tell me that there wasn't a gamer man on the force than old Pat O'Reilly. Well, here we are."

The restaurant was one of those that show a chop or a fish on top of a cake of ice in the window. 'There was a small gilt sign down in one corner, Bowen's Steak and Chop House.

In the front room Jimmie saw several tables on both sides with a narrow passageway between, hardly wide enough for two men to walk abreast. At the back there was a cigar case and a desk with a cash register on it. Two waiters were serving the tables which were fully occupied by men. A fat, jolly-looking man, with a big red face came from behind the cigar case as soon as he saw Cohen.

"I just heard about it," he shouted in a jovial voice. "Been getting ready for another medal, hey, Abie? Ain't you goin' to leave me no customers at all?"

"Here's the guy that did it," answered Abie. "Shake hands with Jimmie Murphy, Jack. Where's the rest of the bunch?"

"Some of them in back," answered Jack Bowen. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Murphy. The boys was talking about you. Make yourself at home. Go on back Abie, with Mr. Murphy, here."

Cohen led the way past a man standing at a locked door beside the desk. 'He unlocked it as he saw them coming. As Cohen passed he grinned and said, "O.K." The man smiled and answered, "O.K., me good lad," as he stood aside. Cohen paused a minute. "This is Jimmie Murphy, outta our office."

"Right," the man answered. "Come in any time, Mr. Murphy."

THE door opened into a room large enough for fifty tables seating four, and a regulation bar running the full length across the rear. Every table was full, and men were standing three and four deep at, the bar. Four bartenders were serving drinks as fast as they could.

"Hell of a crowd in here," growled Cohen. "Let's get one of those little rooms on the side."

He led the way over to the left where there were several doors. A waiter hurrying by stopped. "Go into number two, Mr. Cohen. They're just going. I'll be right in."

"Bring a couple of Manhattans with you, and hurry up," answered Abie.

"Yes, sir," the waiter grinned. "I'll be right there."

Cohen spoke to a couple of the men going out, and then as they sat down at a table, said to Jimmie: "Boy, wait till you see the chuck they hand out here. Want anything else besides that Manhattan, Jimmie, to start off with? I ordered them without thinking."

"Is it good booze?" asked Jimmie. "Some stuff I got the other night was rotten."

"Here?" asked Cohen in amazement. "Feller, this stuff is real, no foolin'."

A meal was served by Adolph, the waiter, with all the drinks he could persuade them to take. At the finish Jimmie sighed. "My gosh," he said, leaning back, lighting one of the big fat cigars from the box that lay on the table. "Boy, if I could afford to eat like this all the time, I'd get fat."

"Yeah," answered Cohen with a grin. "It does cost a lot," and he tossed a dollar down on the table. "Come on, Jimmie, if you're ready, fill your pockets with those cigars. Wait a minute, want any cigarettes?"

"No, I got a pack. Hey, what's the idea, Abie? That buck wouldn't pay for three of the cigars, let alone anything else."

"That ain't for the stuff— that's a tip for Adolph, and he's damn lucky to get it. Get wise, boy. You don't suppose they'd take any jack, do vou? I'll take you to fifty places, old kid. All you got to do is to say what you want."

Jimmie's eyes widened. "Yeah— so that's it? Ain't life grand?"

"It is for the guys who are right," said Cohen.

The door opened and two men came in. Cohen looked up and grinned. "Hello, Haven. Hello, McGinnis," he said. "Sit down and have a drink. This is Jimmie Murphy, a new man at the office. Jimmie, this is Haven and McGinnis from the front office at the hall. They're two regular guys."

Haven and McGinnis both shook hands with Jimmie, eying him shrewdly. "Captain Bate was telling us that you two got Whitey Smith and Sam Norton," said Haven. "I'll take a little Three Star, Adolph," to the waiter who had followed them in. "And so you're Pat O'Reilly's nephew," he added to Jimmie.

"Yeah, my mother was his sister."

"He was before my time," went on Haven. "He retired before I went on the force, but I've heard a lot about him. He was one square cop."

"That's right," said Jimmie, with solemn emphasis. "He was that. I've heard my mother tell about him for years. The old boy fought 'em all, and sent many

a man to salt creek. He's full of lead right now, and all he got out of it was— his pension."

"If he'd catch you in this dump," said McGinnis, with a grin, "he'd damn near murder you himself."

"Ain't that the truth," said Jimmie, returning the grin, "but it's still catchin' before hangin'. When he got me the job he said, ' Sure I misdoubt the Murphy blood in ye. If ye get caught in any jam now— don't be squawkin' to me fer help. Ye won't get it."

"He's a rare old cockaloo," said Haven; "he don't realize that times have changed. Well, Abie, what about this Whitey and Sam thing?"

"Why, nothing much. I was taking Jimmie here to lunch and met 'em and passed the word a feller had given me to tell 'em. Whitey got hard all of a sudden and began rambling about some nut stuff, and finally he called me a kike. I swung at him, but he beat me to it, and I went out on the sidewalk for a minute. Then he tried to get his gat around on Jimmie, and Jimmie got him. Then Jimmie came out with his gat in Sam's back and the gang began to come up. Jimmie here gives out the office that they were trying to stick up Swansons!"

"Yes, we read about it in the extra," answered Haven, "so Whitey got ratty, did he?"

"Yeah, so much so that—"

"Well, that's the way it goes," interrupted McGinnis, and he turned to Jimmie. "Those birds were bad actors. They been pullin' a lot of crooked stuff, and needed killin'. Abie, if you ain't busy, drop around to Mike's tonight, will you?"

"Sure," answered Cohen, rising. "Jimmie and I were just going. We gotta go over and make a report on this here holdup."

JIMMIE trailed around with Cohen for a week or ten days, never forcing his company on him, simply giving Cohen a chance to ask him to come along, which Cohen did at every opportunity. The word gradually seeped around that "Jimmie Murphy was a good boy to have along." The sheriff's office had several deputies who seemed to do all the regular work, and a great many like Cohen, who came and went as they saw fit.

Jimmie became known as a tight-mouthed bird, who was always good-natured and absolutely fearless.

He went with Cohen, and also three or four others, to all the speakeasies and dives, did as they did, ate and drank his fill, tossed out a tip for the waiter, and went on his way.

One night he and Cohen were in one of the South Side road houses. Cohen had been gambling since noon in a joint not two blocks from the city hall, and had lost heavily. Jimmie had been told where he was, and had persuaded him to quit about midnight and dine out on the South Side on the plea that some fresh air would clear his brain and later he could come back and mop up. Cohen agreed.

They were sitting on the veranda of the road house, which sat back among a grove of trees, within a few miles of the Indiana line. Cohen was drinking— steadily and still cursing his luck.

"I held three kings, Jimmie, before the draw, and I made those bums pay heavy before they could draw any cards. The guy next to me hikes it for fifty, and the man sitting next to him lifts it again. I was sittin' in the golden chair, I tell you. "I tilts it again, and so does Wilton, who was next to me; the other guy, a dick named Lawson, stays right along. I boosts it once more, and they both stay. Well, there we was with half a grand in the pot before the draw. Fair enough, ain't it? I draws down to mine and gets another king. Picture that, me with four kings!

"The next lad, Wilton, he draws one card. I know his play— he holds a kicker to threes— well, I figure him at the worst, a full. Lawson, he stands pat. We bets 'em. Wilton he drops out after I shoves in a grand— all I had on the table. We was playin' table stakes— nothin' back, see.

"Lawson, he covers my grand and squawks about it only being table stakes, and I'm runnin' a sandy, see. So I says, ' All right, feller, you think you got such a hell of a good hand. We'll lift the rules'— and I calls Kentucky George over and gets five grand outa him and puts it down on the table.

Lawson, he has hard work raisin' that much. All he can touch for with what he's got makes forty-five hundred dollars, so I drags five hundred dollars and he calls me. Listen, Jimmie, old kid. I shows down four kings and an ace. Pretty good hand, ain't it?

"Yeah, boy," said Jimmie. "What could he have been holdin', now?"

"Jimmie— true as I sit here at this table that hyena put down a straight flush. He had 'em pat. It wouldn't happen once in a million years, and it had to happen to me."

"Who was dealing?" snapped Jimmie.

"That's the worst of it," answered Cohen, draining his glass. "I was myself. I dealt him a straight flush and myself four kings. How's that for Jew luck, Jimmie?"

"Pretty bad, old-timer," answered Jimmie.

"I 'll say it's bad. I lose two grand of my own, and borrow five more from Kentuck." Cohen stopped and looked intently at Jimmie, who leaned back in his chair and grinned at him. "How game are you, Jimmie?" he asked.

"Me— I run from a rabbit, why?"

"Aw, I don't mean that way— I mean— would you want to make some jack— big jack— to-night ?"

"Yeah, boy. I sure do."

"Listen, Jimmie; I know where a truckload of bonded hard stuff will pull in at three o'clock for a change of licenses and drivers. Are you game to hijack it with me?"

"Me? Sure I'm game, but what the hell would we do with that much booze, sell it to some one?"

"Certainly; I know a lad that will buy it the minute we drive it in his place. Wecan get fortv dollars a case for it, and there's five hundred cases. We'll have to stick up the driver and the two guards and the garage men— it Il be duck soup, they won't be looking for no play. Just you and me, Jimmie. Will we do 'er?"

Cohen had drunk enough to make him all weasel and his losses had made him desperate beyond all caution.

"That's twenty grand," said Jimmie. "Ten apiece. Come on. How do we do it— do we just stick 'em up and go away from there?"

" Yeah, only we jump 'em as deputy sheriffs, see— it's in Cook County. We make a regular pinch out of it. We call up the station house and Cap Jones will send over and get the prisoners. We'll have to slip him a grand. They'll get bond right away and we start in with the truck, see—but some one jumps us and takes it away from us. Get it?"

"Yeah, I get it— but listen, Abie, I'm wise enough now to know we're going to start a private war right away. The birds that own that truck ain't going to see that much jack get taken away from them without puttin' some one on the spot."

"Aw, hell, it's the Caproni gang that owns it. Sure, they'll squawk. Whadda we care? There's a war on right now between them and— Jimmie, you're a right guy, ain't you?"

"I am," answered Jimmie solemnly. "But I'm right to me, first. I ain't been here long enough to get the inside stuff. Abie, I don't want to get mixed in anything that I don't know where I'm at, see. I got old Capt'n O'Reilly to think of— as well as my own skin.

"Here, I'll tell you something," and Jimmie reached for the bottle. He was talking a little thickly now himself and his eyes were tightening to slits; his

woice became thicker and a brogue began to creep into the words. He poured out and drank a whisky glass full of the brandy.

" 'Tis me that was payoff man for Doyle and 'twas me and Mike Daugherty that handled the unloadin' at Montauk Point and 'twas me wid Larson and Big Tim that served miny a good man wid sand for breakfast on command of our superiors— Doyle got his finally and so did Mike and Tim and here I am, wid me skin wid a few holes in it, but still wid me skin. 'Tis enough for ye to know. An' now— I'm asked if I'm right.

"Sure, I'm right, Abie darlin', right as a golden guinea, as they say up in Canada— but to meself first and to others as long as I think they're right wid me— an' no longer, me bowld Cohen."

"Sure, Jimmie, sure," answered Cohen, placatingly. "You and me are partners, ain't we? I knéw you were a right guy the first time I saw you."

"Tis so," said Jimmie, solemnly, looking like a' wise old owl. "Go on from there. Sure, I'll help you hijack a truck of booze, or diamonds, for all I care. But first, ye fool, who's who an' why is it— tell me that before we turn robbers."

"There's a hell of a lot of who who's," said Cohen, looking at his watch. "It's like my old father used to tell of the Jews. Him and the Rabbi. There's captains of tens and captains of hundreds. I'll tell you on the way to—"

The proprietor came out on the veranda and up to their table. "Sorry, gentlemen," he said, " I'll have to ask you to pull out. Just received word that the prohi dicks are going to pay me a visit about two o'clock."

"Now, may the foul fiend fly away wid them," said Jimmie. "Sure, we was just gettin' right."

Cohen laughed. " Never mind, Jimmie. We gotta be leaving, anyway. Take good care of them, Pete."

"I will,' answered the proprietor, grimly. "It'll cost me a couple of grand, I suppose— Well, come again, gents."

Chapter 6: Hijackers

HOLDING up the truck in the quiet private garage of one of the big old mansions on the South Side near Sixty-Ninth Street and Drexel Boulevard was easy. Jimmie and Cohen lay in the darkness beside it and when the truck entered, they did also, right behind it.

A garage man slid the big doors shut and switched on a light; new license plates were lying ready on the floor. Two men rose from cots over in the corner, stretched and yawned, ready to drive the truck on after the change. Three men climbed down from the driver's seat, all of them young foreigners.

"Duck soup," said one. "Not a touch in the road at all. Them damn John Laws must have been sleepin'— what the hell!"

Jimmie and Cohen came around the truck one on each side, their guns in hand.

"Up wid 'em!" shouted Jimmie. "Ye are all under arrest! Up— or I'll start shootin'!"

The only resistance offered was that one of the young foreigners, the one nearest Cohen seemed a little slow in obeying. Cohen struck him a hard blow just above his ear with the barrel of his .45 automatic, and he went down like a poled ox.

"Get over against the wall," he commanded. "Quick, or we'll make cold meat outta all of yer."

The five men obeyed, their evil faces and hard eyes showing they were like cornered rattlesnakes.

"Hold 'em, feller," said Jimmie, "till I get their gats."

"Keep that way," commanded Cohen to the line facing the wall, their hands high above their heads. " Frisk that bum on the floor and get his gat, Mister Sheriff, then go to the phone over there in the corner and phone the station house, Drexel 10100 and tell Cap Jones to come over here with a squad."

"You'll get yours for this," snarled one of the men without changing his position. "You guys can't pull this stuff with Al and—"

"Wan more squawk outta you," said Jimmie, "an' 'tis little ye'll need fuss about it. Sure, I'll blow a hole through ye like a subway tunnel, ye wop."

Captain Jones arrived with four men in his car and came charging in, night sticks much in evidence. Jimmie had just said over the phone— "Sheriff's office men have a truck in the garage at the corner of Drexel and Vinton Street. Come over."

Cohen greeted him. "Captain, we have seized this truck full of booze. Will you take these men in and hold 'em until morning for us? I'll phone about it later after we deliver the truck to the U.S. warehouse for safekeeping. You'll be home probably by then, your home phone is YC 1000 aint it?" —

"It has just been changed," said Captain Jones. "Ring for the wagon, one of yez, and the rest go over and put the bracelets on them. My phone has been changed to— I can't remember, look it up in the book, I know it's 2000 or something," he continued to Cohen.

"That's right," said Cohen. "I remember now, 2000. Well, we'll be getting in with the truck."

"Do you want a couple of men to ride it in wid ye?" asked the captain, solicitously. "Sure, there's a grand lot of booze there for the two of ye to—"

"Naw," said Cohen. "Some of the boys are just outside waitin' for us."

"All right," said Captain Jones. "Remember, now, if anything happens to ye, I offered protection in."

"You did," said Cohen. "I'll remember it"— climbing up to the driver's seat. "Come on, buddy, let's go."

"An' now what?" said Jimmie, as they rumbled down the street.

"Easy," said Cohen. "Here we sit, if anybody stops us— we flash our tins, we seized this truck— called Captain Jones, put the prisoners in his charge, and are taking the truck to the warehouse. If it's Federal dicks, which is plenty unlikely at this time, and on this route, same story. Most they could do if they're not open for a cut would be to trail us to the warehouse to make sure. We're regular officers, ain't we, Jimmie? Sure we are."

"Trail, hell," said Jimmie. "Are we to lose twenty grand now? Them prohibition guys may be good snoopers, but few of 'em will stand up to a gun fight. We'll shoot the living lights outta them and their car, and it won't be the first time, either."

Cohen laughed as he swung the truck around a corner.

"They got to do it inside of three blocks then, Jimmie. I don't care nothing about knocking off Federal dicks myself. You got no chance if they pin it on you."

"That's right," agreed Jimmie gravely. "I'm just talkin', Abie; that brandy was heavy stuff. I ain't never killed one either."

Cohen laughed again. " You Irish," he scoffed. "Damn good fighters, hey, Jimmie, old kid?"

"Upstairs by me lives kikes," Jimmie grinned. "Is this the place?" The truck swung into an alley and alongside what looked to be an old stable.

"Yeah, you sit there with it for a couple of minutes. I'll bring the lad out."

In twenty minutes, just as dawn was breaking, Jimmie and Cohen flagged a nighthawk taxi on Indiana Avenue, each with nine one-thousand dollar bills in their pockets. Abie set aside two grand for Jones's cut.

"Not so bad," said Cohen, softly. " Not— so— bad."

"Tell me the rest," said Jimmie, just as softly.

"Why, in the morning we report in that we seized a truck load of booze and turned the prisoners over to Captain Jones and on the way to the warehouse with it we were stopped by a lot of boys who flashed prohibition agents' tins and they took the truck away from us. The old sheriff will raise hell with the prohibition outfit— get it, Jimmie?"

"I do," said Jimmie. "Us being law-abiding deputy sheriffs, we turns it over to the Federal dicks widout question."

"Sure we did," said Cohen. "What else? Now, we go and get us nine drinks and something to eat at Bowen's. Boy, if I didn't gamble, I'd have all the money in the world."

WHEN Jimmie finally got back to his room, he took several pieces of heavy, white paper, wrapped the nine $1,000 bills carefully between them and put them in an envelope addressed to Theodore N. Scott, 1998 H Street N.W., Washington, D. C. He scrawled on a half sheet of paper "Take care of this collection for me— Jimmie " and tucked it in the envelope also.

On his way out the landlady stopped him and said, "Mr. Murphy, there's a letter for you at the desk upstairs. I put it up there so's I wouldn't lose it. It come yesterday."

It was from Sally and said:

"It was my old friend. She told me all about her troubles. Where can I see you? She sent a message to you."

Jimmie sat down and wrote another letter:

"I 'm going to drive up to a little hotel— the Beach Tavern, at Lake Bluffs— for a rest, to-night."

Going out, he mailed them both, then called up Captain Yancey and told him that Captain Jinks was driving north that night and would like to have him come along.

Jimmie knew that there wasn't one chance in a thousand that he was being trailed or that any wire-tap was operating, either on Captain Yancey or Sally; but he also knew that a Federal agent who wanted to live long took no chances whatever that could be avoided.

He had bought a roadster and Cohen had gone with him to the license bureau, where the license was issued to him then and there without even a verbal examination.

As they drove through Evanston, Jimmie told Captain Yancey how he was gradually inching his way in and becoming known as a "right guy" in the whirlpool of the underworld.

"I got me a little information myself," Yancey replied. "This here holdup on the I. C. that yore buddy "was workin' on— Capt'n O'Reilly and I have been kind of nosin' around. Two or three of his side-kicks still on the force who are straight coppers are keepin' their ears open, and a couple of them old—what was it he called 'em, son? 'Them jaspers that tell things?"

"Informers?" supplied Jimmie.

"No, that wasn't it. It was— doggone if I can remember. Anyway—"

"Oh, stool pigeons," said Jimmie.

"Yeah, that's it. Well, Capt'n O'Reilly, he's got him some old-time stool pigeons that most of these young fellers never heard of. Ain't that a heil of a libel on a pigeon, Jimmie? That's the flyin'est bird that—"

"It sure is," said Jimmie with a grin. "So you and Capt'n O'Reilly. have some lines out? I thought you two had retired?"

"You hadn't ought to interrupt the old man that away," said Yancey, but he smiled at the keen young face beside him. "You was tellin' me to get back on the trail. Well, suh, it's hard to cure an old dog, I reckon, from picking up a scent. 'These here gents they tell the cap that from what was dropped here and there that a couple of detective sergeants named Haven and McGinnis seem to have been pretty close to that holdup, son, pretty close."

"Yeah?" said Jimmie. " They are the birds that got the credit for knocking off those birds in the car out Sheridan way." Jimmie stopped talking and drove silently for quite a little while, his lips tight.

"They are close to the holdup," he said, thinking out loud. "They uncover Charley Wilson in some way— they have him killed— then they kill the man that killed him."

"That's A B C, son," drawled Captain Yancey; "but how you goin' to prove it in court?"

"In court?" said Jimmie, surprised into a grim smile. "What court? Why bother Uncle and run a bill up, Capt'n? When we're sure of it, we'll invite them to a necktie party— only we'll use lead instead of neckties."

"Shucks, son," said ex-Ranger Captain Yancey, " I'm plumb surprised at you talking thataway, an' you a Federal agent." .

"That's right," said Jimmie. "I was going to invite you and Capt'n O'Reilly to be present, but now I—"

"Son," said Captain Yancey, "I saw them sidewinders kill your buddy without givin' him a break at all. Don't you go leavin' the old man out now."

"I'm shocked at your talking thataway," grinned Jimmie. "An' you a Ranger captain! Here we are."

Sally "Coudray" came down from the veranda of the hotel as they drove up, and they made room for her slim little body between them, then drove toward the quiet lake shore.

She told them of taking a room in the little Indiana town and of meeting Johnnie's grief-distracted young wife. Before two weeks Johnnie's wife had told her about Johnnie and how, on the way down, he had confessed to her what he had been doing, and how they had planned that he was to go to South America and later she would join him.

"She loved him, Jimmie," Sally said. "She just loved him, in spite of what he had done, and she cried and cried. Finally I told her who I was and—"

Jimmie's eyes tightened a little at that, but he didn't say anything. Sally saw it, though, and said: "Why, Jimmie, did I do wrong? I didn't tell her anything about you or Washington. I just said I was— was Charley's sister and that we came from Kentucky, and that I wanted to get revenge on whoever did it."

"Honey," said Captain Yancey, "you did just right. She could understand that, being as how she loved her own man."

"I guess that's right," said Jimmie.

"Well," said Sally, "it turned out to be, anyway. She said she'd help me— that it would be revenging Johnnie, too. Jimmie, she told me that her husband had told her that he was afraid of two detectives, named Haven and McGinnis; that they had made him drive the car when— Charley was killed," and Sally's little hands clinched into tight fists.

"She said that Johnnie told her about the train robbery and everything. It's those two men, Jimmie, and a man named Cohen, who's a deputy sheriff, that are the ones. She said that the neighbors told her when she was waiting for Johnnie's body out at Morton Park that the man Cohen was waiting all that day for Johnnie when he got killed."

"All right, Sally," said Jimmie. "You're a good girl and you have done it all. You go back to Washington now and I'll—"

"But, Jimmie, I want to stay. I want to be here when—"

"Please, Sally— for me? It would only worry me and it might affect my— aim."

"Oh, Jimmie, are you going to—"

"I am," interrupted Jimmie. "And after I'm going to have the word passed that for one Federal man, there were three collected, maybe more. You go home now, Sally, and watch the papers. I've got to get Haven and McGinnis and Cohen and some of their buddies together some way— doing something that will let us catch them with the goods on 'em. They'll be jumped for that, but the right word will go out what happened. It may stop the next gang from getting ambitious."

"Well," said Sally, "I don't—"

"Honey," said Ranger Captain Yancey, "you jest do what this here scoundrel of a Jimmie says. You done found the trail— let the men folks tend to it now: When you-all get to Washington you tell Major Scott to send me a Federal agent's commission so that this here men of yours can't be cutting up any didoes without the old man. I ain't shot me a gun for so long I'm plumb distracted."

"Yeah," said Jimmie. "You look it; captain."

Chapter 7: In Dutch

"WHEW, Jimmie, I'm glad you showed up," said Cohen the next morning as the latter came into Bowen's. "Come on back." They went back in the little room, and after Adolph had brought in bottles and glasses, Cohen said: "Boy, there's particular hell poppin' about that truck."

"Yeah?" said Jimmie. "What now?"

"Why, it seems that— Aw, hell, you'll know it sooner or later anyway. Listen, Jimmie, I run with Haven and McGinnis, see? They're in the biggest stuff in this town."

"Yeah," said Jimmie, indifferently. "What of it?"

"It's this," said Cohen. "That truck belonged to Caproni, see. I knew there was a war on between them and Haven and Mac, and that the big boys wouldn't give a whoop if we knocked it off; but what I didn't know was that Caproni had come through to Haven and Mac and the war was off.

"It only happened that afternoon while I was being made a sucker of over in Kentucky George's. The two gangs threw in together— and then that same night you and me knock off that truck."

"How did you know the truck was going to be there?" asked Jimmie. " According to what you say, there was war."

"Aw, I got friends in their gang, same as they have in ours, I guess. Everyone knows that's one of their stations. Listen. Here they all are sitting pretty and bingo. We knock off a truck that they was bringing in to the tune of fifty grand—we only got twenty, but they was getting fifty outta it."

Jimmie laughed. "An' now all hell can't make the wops believe that Haven and McGinnis weren't double crossin' them. "Tis good, Abie, darlin'!

"Not so damn good,' objected Cohen. "It's brought the war back on again, and Haven and McGinnis are foaming at the mouth—first, because we didn't cut them in, and, second, because I didn't go to them first and tell em what I was going to do."

"What do you care? Ain't ye man enough to take care of yerself, now?"

"Sure I am— but against them two is something else again. I don't want to do it; I've got some sugar from those lads and want to be in with them."

"Well then, tell them how come— all the way through an'—"

"I did, every bit of it. How I lose the money and we was drinkin' and all. They said, "All right, Abie. You and Jimmie Murphy ain't to blame, but you got us in a hell of a fix. Let it go at that."

"Well, then, what are you beefing about? That ain't no foaming at the mouth that I can see."

"You don't know them guys, Jimmie," said Cohen earnestly. "They've patted a guy on the back and put him on the spot an hour later for a blame sight less than that."

"I dunno," said Jimmie, frowning. "I don't want to have 'em think that we pulled a boner, either. I'd like to work with them meself. What can we do, Abie?"

"How do you think I know?" said Abie. "All I can think of is to be careful where we go and what we do for a long, long time. Maybe they'll get over it.

"An' maybe they won't," said Jimmie solemnly. "If they are that kind of men, Abie, we better do something ourselves."

"What could we do— against them? Talk sense, Jimmie."

"Sure now, the fright is driving ye nuts. Not against them, Abie. Something that will show 'em we meant right. Wait now— till I got me good Irish brain working. First, 'tis the starting up of a war again, ye say. Well, both sides wanted peace, didn't they, when they came together?"

"Sure, Jimmie."

"Good so far. Who wanted it the most?"

"Why, Caproni, of course. Haven and Mac had them on the run, having all the cops with them, more or less."

"Good agin. Then this guy Caproni, he thinks Haven and McGinnis double crossed him and now the war is on— bitter war."

"It sure is. Last night Doughface MacGuire and Splint Kelly got theirs, and we put Angelo Serefino and a couple more wops to the cleaner, already."

"Yeah, well, foller me close now, Abie, darlin'. Supposing you and me would go to this Caproni and tell him. Now, who wanted just what happened and offer back the twenty grand. Would he believe us, now?"

"He might at that, they say he is a well educated guy. But where are we going to get twenty grand— outta thin air? I ain't got a nickel."

"Me neither," said Jimmie. "I was up in Milwaukee wid a moll, and she cried it outta me to go to Ireland wid, what was left of it, after I cut me old lady some—"

"And besides," said Abie, "I wouldn't stick my head in that dago's place for a million— not now. We'd get no chance to do any explainin'."

"Supposin' I went to this Caproni now and told him. Then if he was believing me, I could tell him you and I would cut him in on a little thing that would get him back his fifty grand and then some more. Would he patch up the war now?"

"What thing, Jimmie?"

"Whist now! 'Tis me and a bank cop knows it and no one else."

"Bank cop— say, Jimmie. You and me are partners, ain't we? 'Tell me, if there's enough in it, we could mop up and go to Paris. I ain't seen that burg since 1917."

"So quick, hey? Forgot all about squaring yourself with Haven and Mac! No, Abie, listen. It'll take more men than two, this thing. Let's get straight with Haven and Mac first."

"Hey, wait a minute," protested Abie. "How are you going to get straight with them by letting Caproni and his gang in on a big clean-up?"

"NOW, you wait a minute," said Jimmie. "First, does Haven and McGinnis want to have Caproni and his gang to play with, or would they rather mop up on as many as they can all at once and clear the roads for their owa bunch?"

"What a foolish question," said Abie. "Sure they'd rather mop up, but how—"

"Never mind now, answer me questions. Then, if that's the case, I go to Caproni and tell him what happens. I tell him if he'll square us wid Haven and Mac, I'll cut him in on a big wan, he and his gang, to make up for the twenty grand. All right— he gets to Haven and Mac and declares peace agin."

"Yeah? Like nothing at all. First thing he'll ask is why you don't pull this thing yourself with your own gang and he'll be thinking all the time that it's a plant of Haven and Mac to get him and his gang on the spot. That wop's got brains, feller.

"You'd be pushin' daisies before you got two blocks away from his flower store. You're all wrong, Jimmie. Haven and McGinnis don't believe we double crossed them— only that we pulled an awful boner. I wish we could square it. Listen, Jimmie, if you got something ribbed up, why not cut them in— that would show them we're right."

"It would make too many in," answered Jimmie. "Me and the bank cop— then you and Haven and McGinnis and three or four others. It'll take five or six men to do the job, Abie, countin' five outside men and the bank cop, that's six, and if we add Haven and Mac that's eight, and it's only a hundred and twenty grand. Too many in the cut, Abie."

"Aw, we can get plenty of men for a grand apiece that would help stick up the mint if they knew their get-away was covered.

"Yeah, and one of them cheap rats gets caught and squeals. Not in any of. my jobs I don't have them lads. That's what got Doyle track thirteen and a washout. Some of the handpainted shoe. strings got rapped for something else and the dicks made 'em come through with all they ever knew. Not, me, feller. Forget it. I,guess that Caproni thing is no good. We'll have to show Haven and McGinnis some other way that we're wid 'em."

"And we better hurry," said Abie, grimly.

"You said they knew we didn't double cross 'em," said Jimmie.

"Yeah, but lemme tell you, feller, it ain't healthy at all to pull boners when it affects them; and another thing— we didn't slip them anything of the twenty grand either, remember that."

"Well, what of it?" said Jimmie. "I didn't know a thing about their being in it or entitled to a cent. You ought to have told me, Abe. They could have had half of mine. I want to work with them lads. They got things right here."

"Aw, there was a war on, I tell you; how did I know that Caproni had come clean?"

"That's right, Abie, you couldn't. Well, if you think they know we didn't mean to double cross them, we better let it go at that as long as you think the Caproni thing is wet."

"I do," said Abie. doing on that line, Jirnmie."

"All right. I'm going out with Adams and the Terrible Swede with some warrants. See you later, Abie."

After Jimmie had gone, a panel of the wall slid back and Haven and McGinnis stepped in the room and sat down.

"See," said Cohen, "I told you the straight of it."

"We believed you, Abie," said McGinnis, "but we wanted to hear what Murphy had to say."

"Did you hear that crazy Jimmie wanting to go to Caproni! That would be a swell way to get himself put on the spot all right."

"Never mind about Caproni, we'll attend to him," said Haven. "What you do, Cohen, is to get close to Murphy and find out what it is he's got that's good for a hundred and twenty grand. We must be careful. I'm not afraid of old Captain O'Reilly, but there's no use getting him heated up. He's got too many friends among the old-timers. If we could get some toe hold on Murphy, he'd make a damn good man for us," and Haven began to whistle softly.

Cohen and McGinnis poured themselves out a drink and began talking about other things.

"Abie," Haven said finally, "I'm going to tell you something— one reason that Mac here and I got sore about that truck thing was that Caproni had agreed to cut us in for some big jack, and that lost it for us. We know you lads didn't know anything about it, so that's that. Well, Mac and I have 'been under a heavy drag for months, building houses and all and in a deal where we've been putting up, and we need money badly.

"If you can get Jimmie Murphy to come across with what he's got and it turns out as good as he says, it 'Il help a lot. What I'm trying to dope out is a

way to put him where we want him after it's over. I think I got it, but it's up to you, Abie, shill him along."

"He talks a lot," said Cohen, "but he don't say much. He's tight as hell and high water, that guy. Say, I can tell him that you two are still sore and I'm afraid I'm going to get a ride, see, and the only way to square you fellers is to come across with ten grand. He ain't got it and neither have I, and then Pll coax him to cut you in on this bank thing."

"All right, Abie, do the best you can, as quick as you can. If Jimmie agrees, tell him I aim to plan it out so that there will not be so many men needed. Come on, Mac, let's go."

ONE afternoon later in the week Cohen asked Jimmie to drive out on the West Side with him while he served a subpoena, and Jimmie lazily agreed.

"Anything new in that bank thing?" Cohen asked, after he had cleared the loop and was on Jackson Boulevard.

"Gettin' hot," Jimmie said. "It's a payroll, Abie— it goes down once a month to a big plant in the country. Paymaster comes in with bags and guards and everything and comes out of the bank with the bags— you know, one car ahead, one behind, everybody with guns out— that kind of stuff. Then, in an hour or so an old flivver, with a delivery body on it, marked Furniture New and Secondhand, drives around to the side entrance and a couple of men load an old bookkeeper's desk on and away they go."

"And in the desk," said Abie, with an evil grin, "is the real jack! Pretty good, hey, Jimmie?"

"Yeah, boy, who would be looking for one hundred and twenty grand in an old desk? Well, the flivver drives up to the plant and the desk is taken up to the bookkeeper's room and there you are. Sometimes it's chairs or a typewriting desk, see?"

"Why, ain't there no bank down there in that burg to get the jack from, Jimmie?"

"No, it's a new plant, branch of one of the big companies, Abie, and the town isn't built yet. That's why they can't pay off in checks."

"It ought to be soft," said Abie.

"It is," said Jimmie. "I been thinking it over. If Haven or McGinnis can dope out some way that the four of us can put it over, I'll cut them in. We can croak the bank cop— he's no good to us after."

"Sure," said Abie, "I'll see Haven to-night, Jimmie."

They drove up to a little house out beyond Washington Park. As they pulled into the curb a white-haired ruddy-faced old man, with a white, close-cropped

mustache, sitting-on the next porch, leaned over the railing and shouted: " Hello, Yid, did ye come to pinch me now?"

Cohen looked up. "Hello, sergeant," he called. "Not to-day. When I do, I'm going to bring all the sheriff's gang along with me."

"You better," bellowed back the old retired police officer. "Who is that ye have wid ye?" and he got up and came down the steps of the neat little bungalow.

"It's old Sergeant Cassidy," said Abie to Jimmie. "Friend of Haven's— you stay out here and gas with him while I go in." Then as Cassidy arrived: "This is Jimmie Murphy, sergeant, one of McMullen's men and my side kick. He's a right lad— and strong with Haven and Mac."

"Glad to meet ye," said Cassidy, climbing in the car and sitting down with a grunt. " 'Tis seldom any of the boys come around now to see the old man. Murphy, is it? What Murphy now? Ye-have a look of old Terrance Murphy— him they called Skip Murphy on account of the way he dragged his lee and missed a step. He was me partner down at the Harrison Street station when Jack Mallory was inspector and O'Reilly was captain. Jack Flanerty had the saloon on Clark and Van Buren, do ye mind—" and the old talkative Irishman rambled on telling of the days when Jack Flanerty was collector, and of Vina Fields and Carrie Watson. Finally, he repeated, "What Murphy are ye, now?"

"I'm Capt'n O'Reilly's nephew," said Jimmie, with a grin.

"Are ye now? 'Twas Maggie O'Reilly that married a Murphy and went away somewhere. I was—"

"She went to Maine," answered Jimmie. "I'm her son, sergeant, I came on and Capt'n O'Reilly got me this job."

"He did? Sure, he was always a great wan to take care of his own. Is your ma still alive now, Jimmie?"

"Yeah, alive and kicking. My pa is dead, though."

"Yes— so I heard. Sure, Maggie and me were sweethearts in the old days. I thought of marrying her once meself— but she thought different," the old sergeant added, with a grin. "Sure now don't be telling my owld woman that— she'd make me life miserable, she would so. And 'tis a friend of Haven's, ye are, too? Come on in, I have some fine owld stuff hid away."

"Let's wait for Abie," said Jimmie.

"We will. So you're Maggie O'Reilly's boy— well, well. How long you been here, Jimmie?"

"About two months, I came right down from Portland."

"So— that's right, I remember now, twas to Portland they wint. You must come out and meet my owld lady, but mind ye, now, no word about me and Maggie."

"I got clam blood in me," said Jimmie, with a grin, as Abie Cohen came out.

They went in with Sergeant Cassidy as he insisted and finally got away after several rounds of drinks.

Cassidy came out on the porch with them and watched them as they drove away.

"So," he said out loud as the car turned the corner, "Ye are Maggie O'Reilly's son from Portland, young feller me lad, ye are— like hell."

The old sergeant, who had been deep in the "pickin's" while on the force, went to the telephone, and after trying several places, got Haven on the wire.

" 'Tis Cassidy talkin'—Cassidy— Sergeant Cassidy of No. 21— Oh, ye do— why the divil don't ye take the wax outta yer ears? Oh, ye can hear now— can ye— all right thin, listen to me. I dunno what ye are doin' or how close ye are to the lad that's in McMullen's office running around wid Abie Cohen, but this, I'll tell ye. Maggie O'Reilly— she that married Murphy, had two boys— an' both of them was killed over in France—

"How do I know? Never mind how I know— I'm tellin' ye somepin. If that owld devil O'Reilly introjused him as his nephew— guard yerself well, me bowld detective sergeant— Ye will. Never mind the applesauce as me flapper of a daughter do be sayin' all the time. Ye might see that a couple of cases gets dropped off for the old man once in awhile. Ye will— fair enough," and the old police officer hung up.

Chapter 8: Forewarned

JIMMIE, was just leaving the sheriff's office about five-thirty the next afternoon when one of the deputies called after him: "Hey, Jimmie! On the phone, boy! Take it in Sam's office, he's gone!" Jimmie turned back, went into the room, closing the door behind him and picked up the receiver. " Hello," he said curtly, thinking it was Cohen or one of the deputies. " This is Jimmie Murphy, what is it?"

A thin, half hysterical voice with a peculiar whine in it came faintly to his ear. " Jimmie! Is it you, Jimmie, no kiddin'? Jimmie, I got to know sure. Quick, tell me, where is the old apple tree— hurry up, tell me! Don't stall, Jimmie!"

Jimmie's face tightened and his face set in hard lines, but he answered promptly: "Down in my ole pappy's back yard— by the well."

"Oh— that's right, Jimmie, come down here as soon as it's dark— go round the rear in the alley an'—"

"Wait a minute," Jimmie said. "Tighten up, feller. Where is it?"

"Back of Tsi Wang's laundry on Clark near Polk— go round the back and climb up on the shed, I'll be there at the third window. Will you come, Jimmie? Oh, if they find out! The minute it's dark—"

"Steady," drawled Jimmie, " I'll be there, old timer, keep your shirt on. Tell me something."

"I— oh— he may be back any minute, listen, Jimmie, I used to be M.I.G.2— " and the connection was broken.

Jimmie put the receiver slowly back on the hook.

"I think," he said softly to the telephone mouthpiece, "that right here is where old man Howard's son Jimmie calls up the reserves in the shape of Texas Rangers and police captains."

When Jimmie crawled up on the shed built against the wall in the rear of Tsi Wang's that night, Ranger Captain Yancey stood at the corner of the alley, his old slouch hat tilted back on his head, a more or less silly grin on his weather-beaten old face, swaying a little on his feet, already marked down by two or three pair of wolfish eyes as being an old hick that a couple of more drinks would make ready for killing.

In front of Tsi Wang's and down a couple of stores stood ex-Police Captain O'Reilly in a hot argument with two other retired policemen who had met each other there and at once halted and began the old argument as to who had been the best chief in Chicago.

A young policeman walked by them and grinned, conscious of his youth and of the fact that he was on the way up the hill that they had climbed.

He knew Captain O'Reilly, and saluted respectfully as he passed, walking to the corner to give the old rube a look over to see if he could take care of himself.

A thin, wasted hand opened the window as Jimmie raised up from the roof and he threw a leg. over the sash and entered the room. The man that had opened the window had gone back to a cot against the wall of the little dingy room. The smell of opium was distinct to Jimmie's nostrils.

"Jimmie," the man whispered, "don't look at me like that! Quick, Jimmie, you're uncovered! Those thugs took me in a car and pointed you out, and made me tell them— see what they did to me, Jimmie?" and he tore open his shirt. His body was covered with red and dark blue welts.

"In the old days they could have beat me to death, Jimmie, but now I couldn't stand it. I crawled down to old Tsi Wang's room and got to his phone when he was sleeping off a pill.

"All right, old kid," Jimmie said softly. I know—it's all right, Fitz, you're coming back, though. Tell me what it is. How long you got?"

"Old Tsi Wang is hitting the pipe, and the two devils that are guarding me are down below with a couple of skirts. The Chink that's on guard in the alley sneaks around to play a little fantan about this time. I'm all in, Jimmie— my God, once I was an officer and a gentleman like you. This damn stuff got me and—"

"Steady," said Jimmie; "get through first, Fitz, and then I'll get you out of here."

"No use, I'm done, Jimmie. I couldn't live without it, now. It's been six years, Jimmie." He raised himself up with an effort to a sitting position and with clenched hands, holding his head up, spoke as if making a report.

"You were tipped in some way to Haven and McGinnis. They know I used to be an agent, and came down here and got me. They beat me up here, and then took me in a car and showed you to me, and beat me some more. I denied ever seeing you until McGinnis began—I couldn't stand it, Jimmie—and I told them who you were!

"I heard Haven say you were a deputy sheriff— if it had been in the old days, Jimmie, they could have beaten me to death before I told, but now— I thought I had sunk to the bottom— but to betray my own outfit!"

"Under torture, old-timer," said Jimmie; "and even then you wouldn't if your nerves hadn't been shot to hell. You've redeemed yourself, boy. Can you climb out of that window, or will I carry you?"

"Have I, Jimmie? Have I, honest? Tell me."

"You have," said Jimmie, positively. "I wouldn't tell you if you hadn't. It clears your record, no matter what you've been. At the risk of your life, you warned me. Now, come on."

"Jimmie, you go— I can't— that beating I got broke something in me. I was clear when I resigned, Jimmie— I had sense enough left for that. Am I clear, Jimmie?"

"I'll report in that former Federal Agent Fitzmorris worked on the case with me, and was of great assistance," answered Jimmie, absolutely ignoring the fact that any moment might throw him into a death battle. "Come on, Fitz, old kid. Buck up—you're not done yet by a damn sight."

Fitzmorris shook his head. " Jimmie, you've made me feel clean again; but I'm done. Do you think Peggy will know, Jimmie? Thank God she went west before I slipped and—"

"Certainly she knows, fool of the world," said Jimmie; "she's waiting for you up there somewhere. You'll catch it from her for the way you've been acting, but that's all. Come on— let's get out of this dump. We'll give them a fight and make 'em like it."

"Jimmie—can I—"

"Sure you can. The major will do anything I ask him. Boy, I'll have your badge and credentials here in three days, and a thirty-day sick leave along with 'em, so you can straighten up. Get goin', feller, we're overplaying our luck right now. We'll mop up on this gang in the open."

"Sure we will,' said Fitzmorris, standing up. "Why, Jimmie, why not? In the game again, and clear!"

Then his knees gave way under him and he would have fallen to the floor if Jimmie had not caught him in his arms.

Jimmie carried him to the cot and laid him gently down. The room was unlighted except for the light that shone in from the arc light in the alley below, that had come on a moment ago, but there was enough for Jimmie to see that the man he had worked with when they were both rookies had gone to explain his conduct to Peggy.

Not touching the body, or in any way arranging the clothes, Jimmie went softly to the window and out through it, closing it carefully. He got out on the shed, and in a moment was sauntering carelessly out of the alley to hail a passing taxi.

Captain Yancey walked slowly past the still arguing coppers, then stopped, turned and came back to them. " Can any of you gents tell me the best way to the West Side?' he asked.

"Well, now," answered O'Reilly, "it's a large order. What part of the West Side do ye be lookin' for?"

"Why— I reckon it's the corner of Madison and Paulina that I want."

"Ye do? Sure 'tis right by that corner I'll be goin' in a minute, as soon as I tell these scuts wan more thing. It's home I ought to have been a long time ago, instead of standin' here gassin' wid these flannel-mouthed terriers. So long to ye, boys," and he walked along with Yancey to where his car was parked.

AN hour later, Jimmie, sitting in the rear seat of O'Reilly's car with the curtains down, was telling them of Fitzmorris.

"He was one of the best men on the force," he wound up, "and then, after his wife died, dope got him; how, I don't know. He dropped out. Just how Haven knew he was a Federal agent in the old days I don't know, either.

"It was just by chance that Fitzmorris knew me; there are so many agents, and I only know twenty or thirty myself. Just luck, I suppose, that he could tell them who I was. The curse of Crum'el must have been working against me that I'd be one he knew. He rambled a lot, and all I got was that Haven knows who I am— and that's that. Also it's one more to square accounts for with the gang."

Yancey stirred in his seat. "Son, I'm gettin' right well fed up with these here killin's and beatin's like you tell about. I reckon we better close in on them snakes, right now."

"Wait, now," commanded the canny old Irishman. " 'Tis waitin' for them, don't be in a hurry. They'll be puttin' Jimmie here on the spot, but not at wunst. They'll be tryin' to find out if enny wan else is in wid him. They know that Federal dicks generally travel in pairs, wan to cover the other —didn't this Wilson lad have a buddy, now, Jimmie?"

"No— he was working alone with the P.O. Inspectors. There was a lot of Uncle's mail taken in the I.C. thing."

"Well, this Haven and McGinnis will try and decoy ye some place, Jimmie, to get outta ye what ye know and who's wid ye, that's sure. They don't know how deep I am in it— and, be Judas, they're still afraid of the old man, say what they will among themselves. Wan thing right now, young fella, and that is ye go nowhere at all wid any of them unless ye pass the word to us. Ye hear me, now, Jimmie?"

"Well, suh," drawled Yancey, " down in my country we aimed mostly on doing the decoying ourselves— it's going to be right hard to cover Jimmie in a way that won't make them plumb suspicious. From what I saw of the way these here gents work, a car might come along any minute."

"Cover nothing," said Jimmie. "I could wire and get twenty men here from Washington in twenty-four hours. This is my picnic, and I'm going through as is. I can—"

"Sure," interrupted O'Reilly; "sure, Jimmie. But ye don't mind a little help now, do ye, from the old men?"

"Mind? I should say not. I mean that we're men enough to knock these birds off, and in the way they deserve— the three of us."

"We are," said O'Reilly gravely, "if there was twinty of them instead of three— not countin' the understrappers."

"We'll get them later," said Jimmie.

" The capt'n here ought to know his own hunting ground," drawled Yancey. "I reckon he's right about them not putting you— on the spot, as you jaspers say— for a little while. I got me a plan that might work."

"Ye have?" said O'Reilly. "Ye have, hey? Come across wid it, then."

'Well, suh, have you got you any right good burglars among your friends, capt'n?"

"Sure, miny av them, in the pen what I put them in, and out av it when they done their time. What the divil now, Yancey, ye owld fox?"

"Well," said the old Ranger captain, 'I got me an idea that we might give 'em a chance to try Jimmie here out on that tellin' thing and save 'em a lot of plannin'. It's thisaway." And Yancey began to drawl out a plan of action.

Chapter 9: In The Bomb-proof

HAVEN'S new house was a pretentious one, on one of the prominent northwest side corners near Fullerton Avenue. His wife and family had gone away for the season. The only servant left to take care of him, the few times he came home, was an old negro, husband of the cook who had gone with the family to the beach.

He was a big, brawny negro, with a deep scar running from his cheek bone to over his ear on the left side of his face and a twisted nose. When the knock came at the kitchen door he was sitting with his feet up on the table, a bottle with an Old Crow label on the table beside him.

"Dawgone it," he grumbled as he got up to answer, "these heah nocount peddlers don't gib folks no rest, nohow."

He opened the door, after reaching over and setting the bottle down by one of the table legs.

An old man in shabby clothes stood there. He was wearing an old black slouch hat, and his clothes, though worn, were neatly pressed. "I'm sellin' some stuff hyar," he began, " that will shore make the best beer — boy, you sho' smell like you-all don't need no beer malt."

"What dat?" growled the negro. "Does you— What you want, white man? Dis heah ain't de—" he stopped, looking into the frostv blue eyes of the old man standing at the door. "No, suh, capt'n," he went on, "Ah don't need me anything. Ah got me plenty good lickah, yassuh. Is you from de South, captain?"

"Texas," said the old man. "Boy, the colored people up hyar are right snippy. I almost had to kill me seven or eight already since Ah been up hyar. Wheah you from, boy?" The old man leaned against the doorsill, evidently, in no hurry.

"Me? Ah come from Kentuck a long time ago, capt'n. Ah used to run on de L. and N. for yeahs, capt'n. Ah was de chef on old seventy-five. Capt'n, Ah don't want none of dat stuff. Ah got me all de good stuff Ah want."

"Yeah? An' that bootleg licker 'll kill you, boy."

"Dis heah ain't no bootleg licker Ah got. Capt'n, Ah got me in a crap game las' night an' Ah loses heavy. Ah knows you-all is from de South and Ah knows a gentmum when Ah see one. Ah seen lots of gentmum like you down in Texas. Capt'n, does you want to buy you a bottle of de real stuff?"

"Where are you goin' to get the real stuff, boy? I got me a ten-dollar bill for a bottle of good Bourbon if I plumb stahve to death aftuh."

"Dat's just what Ah need, capt'n, to get in de game wid to-night. Capt'n, mah boss am away— does you come in, Ah shows you some real stuff— does you— capt'n, you-all ain't no prohibition officer, is you?"

"Me? One of them snoopers? Boy, I reckon I better kill me a nigger, right now."

The big colored man laughed. "No, suh, capt'n. Does you do dat, you don't git de Bourbon. Come in de kitchen, capt'n."

When the old man came out, he had a bundle under his arm, and the old negro, reaching for the bottle under the table, said aloud: " Now Ah gets me back in de game an' Ah mops up dis time."

The old man didn't seem anxious to sell any more of his stuff, although he tried several more houses in the vicinity, then giving it up as a bad job, took a street car toward town, and within an hour was with Captain O'Reilly.

"Here's a present for you," he drawled, as he put the bundle down, "from Haven's private stock."

"Take it away wid you," answered O'Reilly firmly. "I don't want it. Jimmie is set until the thing is ready. I had McMullen send him wid a square deputy out in the sticks on a job the owld boy thought was for me. Tis no wan will know. where he wint either. Now, what have you, and when do you need me bowld burglar?"

"Well, suh," drawled Yancey, "I reckon we won't need him at all." He told O'Reilly of getting into Haven's house and that the colored man had taken him down in the basement, in his anxiety to get money to gamble with, and had unlocked a room that seemed to be dug out beyond the walls— and showed him tier after tier of cases of liquor in a room at least thirty feet square.

"That nigger," drawled Yancey, "said that he had a key that Haven didn't know nothin' about and that Haven would skin him if he caught him. He said that he had found Haven's key ring one day when Haven forgot to change it with his pants, and he took a wax impression. Since then he's been snitchin' some right along from the back cases."

"So! He has a key, has he?"

"To that room anyway. And I saw something else, capt'n. There's a table in there and three or four chairs; and on the table was a piece of rubber hose, wire hose—an' on top of one of the lines of cases was one of them night sticks."

"Look at that now," said O'Reilly. "Tis the eyes of a hawk ye have still, ye owld divil."

"This nigger," went on Yancey, "told me that he used to be a chef on the L. and N., and that Haven was a Pullman conductor once on the same road."

"He was, before he came here and got on the force, I'm told," answered O'Reilly, "and bad cess to the train that brought the murderin' divil. Wait a minute— why, 'tis the same, I bet ye. Is this coon a big wan, wid a bad scar on him by the cheek bone?"

"Yes, suh, he sure has a bad one— and his nose is twisted around. It looks as if he'd been hit mighty hard some time."

"He was," said O'Reilly grimly. "Twice, before he would behave— wanst by Jack Mallory and wanst by me. Sure now, I got him—'tis as ye say, chef on the L. and N. he was, then burglar and stickup man, then to Joliet for twinty years. Wid good time off now, he'd be out these five years.

"Sure 'tis him— and where better would he be goin' now than to Haven, who railroaded wid him. Gimme room, tilt I get to that phone. He shoots craps, does he? 'Twill be in Yaller Jackson's place widout doubt, but I'll make sure. Yaller will do what I tell him and kape still about it. Go on home now, me brave malt peddler, an' leave it to me. 'Tis no burglar we'll be needin', as ye say."

WHEN the negro who was called Scarface Mose entered Yaller Jackson's place, Yaller called to him: " Hey, dare, Scarface, ole kid. Easy money upstairs— niggers in from de country wid rolls. Up in de back room—go on up and you cleans you a bank roll."

"Dat's what Ah aims to do," grumbled Scarface, turning to the stairs. "Ah gotta get me some jack, yaller boy."

He opened the door of the back room and had stepped inside before he realized that there was no crap game in there.

Instead, he saw the grim, hard old faces of Ex-Police Inspector Jack Mallory and Captain Pat O'Reilly.

O'Reilly shut the door as Scarface moaned: "Oh, mah Lawd!'

Mallory thrust his face almost into that of the trembling Scarface: "Ye did that Martin job last night," he snarled.

"Ah sweah Ah ain't!" stammered Scarface, his face getting a waxy gray. "Ah been straight."

"Haven can't save you, you con," rasped O'Reilly. "Come clean or we'll beat you to death right here. You did it."

"Ah knows dat nobody can save me, capt'n," said Scarface hardly above a whisper. "Not from you two gentmums. Ah'm done."

"Well, now," said O'Reilly, "Ye may not have done it after all; but ye know if we say so, ye go back for life, don't ye?"

"Yessuh, Ah knows dat. Capt'n, honest to God, Ah never—"

"Shut yer mouth," snarled Mallory. "Pat, we started to kill this blackbird once before. We'll just finish the job now.'

"Oh, Lawd, Lawd!" moaned Scarface. "Don't do 'er—don't do 'er."

"Has Haven anything on ye?" demanded O'Reilly.

"No, suh, capt'n. Mah wife dat Ah married when Ah come out from de pen, she's de cook, and he gib me a job, dat's all. When Ah was on de L. and N—"

"What could Inspector Mallory and me do to you?"

"Capt'n," answered Scarface, earnestly— and he fully meant it— "you gentmums could skin me alive and nobody pay no 'tention to it, yassuh."

" 'Tis so," said O'Reilly grimly. "Before we do that—which won't take a minute any time—listen to me, Scarface Mose, and listen well, and see that ye get it the first time—there'll be no second. First I'll tell ye what will happen to ye if ye even look like ye was goin' squawk to any one. Now then—"

"HELLO, Jimmie," shouted Abie, as Jimmie came into the sheriff's office. "Where've you been for two days? Boy, I got a hot one, and I've been looking for you all over town. Let's go over and grab us something to eat, and I'll tell you about it."

"Aw, the old man sent me out in the sticks. Nothing doing on that grub stuff for me. I got a hot one of me own to handle. Come over here, Abie. Listen now," he went on as they walked over to one of the unoccupied windows of the big room. "That bank thing comes off to-morrow morning. I got to beat it right now and see the bank cop. You tell Haven and McGinnis that I want them in, see, and that I'll meet them at Haven's to-night about twelve thirty. You be there, Abie, and we'll frame it."

"What! You want to see Haven at his house? Sure, Jimmie, I'll have 'em there. I was surprised that you decided to cut them in. Stick around with me, Jimmie, after you get to the lad at the bank. I'll be over to Bowens."

"I will not. I'm going right now, and when I get through with him I got to go with Capt'n O'Reilly to see some old bird that's sick. I'll be there, Abie, between twelve and one."

"I'll have Haven and McGinnis there," answered Abie, and as Jimmie walked away he added under his breath: "What luck for us— we didn't have to—"

It was twelve thirty when Jimmie pulled up to the curb in front of Haven's brilliantly lighted house. Two uniformed policemen were standing on the corner talking, idly swinging their night sticks, and quite a few people were passing. Jimmie rang the bell, and Abie opened the door. " I'm butler," he said with a grin. " Haven's family have gone away, and there is only an old'smoke in

the kitchen. Come on in, Jimmie. They're in the dining room. Boy, they broke out some fine booze."

Haven and McGinnis greeted Jimmie as ever. "Sit down, Jimmie," Haven said, "and pour yourself a drink. Abie tells me that your thing is ready and you want to cut us in. We're right guys, Jimmie, and we'll stick and slug to the finish."

"I know that," answered Jimmie, sitting down. The dining room was a large one, with French windows leading out to the veranda. The people passing on the sidewalk could be seen from the table.

"Well," he continued, "here it is for the four of us— an' no more. The bank cop we can knock off."

For an hour they discussed it, Haven taking the leading part in figuring ways and means. At last he said, " Well, it's jake now, the way she lies. Have another drink, Jimmie, before you go," and he picked up the.bottle that Jimmie had been using. Just as he was going to pour it, he stopped and held it up to the light.

"Say, there's some cork or something in this, boy. Abie, go down and get a fresh bottle. Wait a minute— Jimmie, you want to see a regular licker storage? I'll show you some booze that came from the bonded warehouse. Come on, Mac, and you, too, Abie. Let's show Jimmie some real stuff."

" Sure," said Jimmie, getting up and easing his heavy cartridge belt, filled with forty-five shells. "This blamed belt is wearing a sore spot on me. I got to take it off for a minute or two." He unbuckled it and laid it on a chair, with the holster and his Colt hanging from it.

"Leave it there," said McGinnis. "It'll be all right."

"That's what I was going to do," answered Jimmie. "It's a relief for a few minutes, anyway."

"I thought you packed your rod under your arm, Jimmie?" said Abie.

"I used to," answered Jimmie, opening his coat and rubbing his side under his left arm, " but it wore me raw down here, too."

Haven led the way from the dining room to the big, lighted kitchen. " Hello, Mose," he said to the negro, who rose hastily from his seat as they came out. "You can go out if you want to. I'll lock up."

"Yassuh, Capt'n," said Mose, promptly. " Ah gits me some fresh air and den—"

"Go shoot craps," supplied McGinnis. "They'll clean you, Mose."

They went down through the roomy, deep basement, Haven pointing out specially built features to Jimmie; past the furnace, through a laundry room to a door set in the masonry. Haven unlocked the door, reached in and switched on a light, holding the door open to let the rest pass him.

The room contained tier after tier of cases, marked Old Crow, Pebbleford, Four Roses, Three Star and other brands well known in the days when the whisper of prohibition was a thing to be laughed at.

In the middle of the room was a table, on which lay a wirewoven length of hose, about four feet long. There were three or four chairs, no other furniture, just the long rows and aisles made by the cases, brand by brand.

Haven shut the door after them. Jimmie heard the lock click as he walked to the table and half sat down on it, picking up the hose and swinging it idly.

"This room is built out under the lawn," said Haven, as he walked toward Jimmie. "There's fifteen feet of dirt over the roof. I made it burglarproof. That's what I use to siphon off with, Jimmie," he added, as Jimmie looked down at the hose.

Cohen picked up a chair and went over by the door and sat down tilting it against the wall.

"And now," continued Haven, smoothly, "before the pleasantries of the evening commence once more," he took off his coat and drew a long, heavy blackjack from his pocket. Cohen's gun had slid into his hand as Haven started to speak and he rested it in his lap, the muzzle straight at Jimmie's heart. McGinnis laughed, his eyes showing the insane gleam of cruelty and reached up on top of one of the cases, bringing down a night stick.

"We will now have a few words from Mr. James Howard, Federal Agent," Haven went on, swinging the blackjack by the loop, "working under Major Scott from Washington."

"Aw, hell," snarled McGinnis, "beat the lousy spy up first. Let me at him a minute, Ted."

"Don't be impatient, Mac," answered Haven. "There's plenty of time for that. It might take Mr. Howard's mind off of what he will no doubt be glad to tell us— if he wants to live."

"It would," said Jimmie with a grin, still sitting on the table.

"I saw what you did to Fitzmorris. He told me you birds were experts. You mustn't take too much credit for that, though. He was all in— time was when he'd have killed you three rats before breakfast any morning."

Haven's impassive face broke as Jimmie mentioned Fitzmorris. McGinnis swore viciously and stepped back a step. Cohen's chair came down on all four legs and the evil smile faded from his lips.

Haven recovered first. "You know Fitzmorris?' he asked, suavely.

"You mean— did I know him?" corrected Jimmie. "He's dead, you know, from the beating you cowards gave him. I knew Charley Wilson, too."

"Wait, Mac," said Haven sharply, as McGinnis stepped forward, the night stick raised. "That will do us no good, I'm afraid. Fitzmorris got loose in some

way and made contact with this young gentleman. Get it— you fool— this is a plant and we've swallowed it, hook, line and sinker. He wouldn't come out here knowing his hand was tipped unless he's covered in some way."

"Covered, hell," snarled McGinnis. "What's eating you, Haven? We got him, same as we got that other dirty spy, Wilson, and that hophead. Supposin' he is covered outside— so are we, all the time. We'll beat him to death and throw him down the well, like garbage. Get out of my way. I'll start on him, the—"

He stopped in his bull-like rush at Jimmie.

FROM one of the aisles made by the cases, stepped old Ranger Captain Yancey, his ivory-handled .41 Colt in his hand.

"He's covered inside, too,' said Yancey, mildly. " Put 'em up!"

Captair O'Reilly, with a United States deputy marshal's star on his coat stepped out in sight from the other side, his police .38 special in one hand, a night stick in the other. "Ye dirty rats," he bellowed, just as Abie Cohen, cornered, knowing that the death he had given others was on him, but game as the weasel he sometimes resembled, raised his gun, which he had lowered when McGinnis started his rush. He meant to kill Jimmie before he went into darkness himself.

Yancey's gun roared and Abie Cohen, deputy sheriff and cold-blooded murderer, pitched forward, a little hole in the center of his forehead— the back of his head almost blown to pieces.

Jimmie's hand went under his soft shirt and came out with an automatic and pressed against Haven's side, in one flowing motion so fast that it was there before the sound of Yancey's shot had died away. McGinnis looked at Yancey and O'Reilly advancing on him, then, in the face of their two guns, snarled like a jungle cat. He dropped the night stick and continued his hand around to his hip pocket. It reached there and then fell away. Ex-Police Captain O'Reilly, now United States deputy marshal, hater of crooks and crooked coppers, himself a "square cop," had shot him through the heart.

Faint sounds of running feet could be heard from the outside for a moment, then they stopped. The two uniformed policemen who had been standing on the corner came running up on the porch followed by one from the alley. They ran up the steps together— to stop, confronted by the grim faces of Jack Mallory, ex-inspector of police, a man known to fear no one man— or twenty— and United States Marshal Bob Bostweck, who had been a "killer" before they were born.

"Are ye boys goin' somewhere?" demanded Mallory, coldly. "If ye are, think twice of it, young fellers. 'Tis Government business goin' on down there. Onless ye be wid Haven and McGinnis now, are ye? If so, me.and the marshal

will take ye to jail—and ye needn't bother to be runnin' down no steps to the basement."

The three young policemen vehemently denied any connection whatever with either Haven or McGinnis.

"Go on, Jimmie," said O'Reilly. "What the divil are ye waiting for, I dunno. Ye have him, go on, kill him."

"Just a minute,' said Haven smoothly. "I know I'm overdue, but I've got a wife and family. Is there any—"

"So did Johnnie Adams and a lot more," answered Jimmie. "Make it snappy, Haven, if you want to come across with anything."

"He's stalling for time," said O'Reilly. " 'T'will do ye no good, me murderin' bucko. If it'll ease yer mind now, me old inspector, Jack Mallory is out in front wid the marshal himself and some of his boys. Ye have no chance, Haven— 'tis the same as ye handed out to miny a lad. Kill him for the snake he is, Jimmie—or I will."

"He can't kill me this way," said Haven. "I surrend—" As he spoke he took a desperate gambler's chance to win clear. There wasn't one chance in a million that he could get by with it, but he took it.

Jimmie was standing close to him on the left side, his gun pressed into Haven's side on a line with his heart, his elbow and forearm on a right angle. Haven's left arm was forced out a little backwards. As he said "surrend—" he slapped up with his left hand at Jimmie's elbow, intending to knock the gun away from him, at the same time circling Jimmie's body with his right arm, drawing him in front of him. Whether he figured he could use Jimmie as some kind of a shield or hostage, once he had him between himself and Yancey and O'Reilly—or that he could, in the confusion, draw his own gun and fight his way clear, no one knew but himself.

As his hand hit Jimmie's elbow, it did what Haven had not foreseen. It rapped Jimmie sharply on the funny bone and Jimmie's whole arm and hand jerked. His finger tightened on the trigger and Haven's grip relaxed. As Jimmie stepped back, Haven slowly sank to his knees, blood spurting out of his side where Jimmie's bullet had torn through an artery. Then, his fighting, merciless spirit whipping him on, he staggered to his feet, his eyes glazing and drew his gun.

Jimmie waited, a little frozen smile on-his lips, until the gun muzzle began to come around. It seemed ages to the two men watching the play. At last—Haven's lips tightened, his body stiffened and the gun began to slowly move to a line with Jimmie.

As Yancey raised his gun, Jimmie fired twice. The gun jumped from Haven's hand with the first bullet. The second went through his evil brain.

"Wan for each," said O'Reilly, calmly, as he looked at the three dead men. "And 'tis wan more than the two buddies av yours, Jimmie. Stay here now till I go up and let Jack Mallory and the marshal in. I do be thinkin' that I'll bring down the young coppers wid them— to teach them an object lesson."

"Well, suh," said Ranger Captain Yancey, mildly, "I reckon I'll go on home to Ma to-night. She's plumb liable to raise Cain with me playin' around up here, thisaway. Son, when you and that right pretty Sally Wilson girl get hitched up, we'll be lookin' for you down in Texas for a visit."

"We'll come," answered Jimmie, looking down at the men who had killed Charley Wilson and Fitzmorris. "I think that Charley is resting easy— now."

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7: M'Phail's Roan Bull

Ernest Favenc

1845-1908

Evening News (Sydney) 17 Dec 1898

I WISH to say that I had no hand whatever in the production of the ghost of M'Phail's roan bull. I make this statement designedly because many people, M'Phail amongst them, although he's dead now, assert that I prepared a live animal to represent the ghost of M'Phail's roan bull, which appeared after the death of the animal, at Danwiga Station, and was the cause of such disastrous doings.

Personally I know that on two occasion the apparition of M'Phail's roan bull was a true ghost; of the other occasions on which it was alleged to have appeared, I knew nothing. This statement I have solemnly made before, but nobody has believed me, so, before telling the story, and I am going to tell it truthfully, I desire to make the statement once more.

M'Phail bore me no love, of that I am aware, but our stations adjoined, and we were on speaking terms, sufficiently to behave in a decent and neighborly way towards each other. He thought that I envied him his well-known stud bull, King Pippin, sire imported, and had designs on that noble animal. I admit that I admired the beast which M'Phail, by no judgment of his own, had imported into the district, but I did not envy him the possession of the bull, or think of doing him an injury.

But that was the way with M'Phail. He thought everyone who saw red-headed Mrs. M'Phail fell in love with her, and wanted to elope with her, and he had a collie that he watched over at night, and, though no one would have had the cur at a gift, imagined everybody was going to steal it.

One would have thought that M'Phail would have been happy in possessing all these things which he valued so highly. But he wasn't. He always imagined that someone was going to steal them. And he felt mad when nobody tried to, or wanted to. If one had only run off with Mistress M'Phail, or stolen the collie, he would have pursued them with all the vengeance of man and law, and never ceased to talk of it afterwards, but the only thing that was of any real value took sick and died on his hands, principally from the distracted efforts he made to cure the animal, and that was the roan bull, King Pippin.

So afflicted was M'Phail at the sickness of the animal that he even sent over for my assistance. But the bull was *in extremis* when I arrived, so what little assistance I could have given was not needed. M'Phail, needless to remark, was more than deeply distressed about the death of the be loved and admired bull. Distressed was no name for it, he was bereft of reason for the

time. I am quite sure that he would have preferred Mrs. M'Phail to have been the victim of Fate.

'It's the work of some scoundrel, some enemy,' and he looked fiercely at me, 'who envied me the possession of that noble creature, and, failing to steal him, poisoned him.'

'M'Phail, you're a fool,' I said. 'If you mean me, you're telling an untruth. And you know it.'

'How should I know it, man, surrounded as I am by enemies, who longed for that bull; how should I know what to think? Answer me that now?'

'How can I answer it? The bull's been fed up too much, and anything may kill him. You know that yourself. You've been stuffing him too full of green feed, or letting him stuff himself.'

'I think I know how to feed stud cattle better than you, Glaisher,' he said.

'Well, I wish you knew how to feed me. Here I've ridden twelve miles to see your confounded bull. I can't bring him to life again, or I would; and you're going to let me go home with out asking me if I have a mouth on me.'

This touched M'Phail on a weak point, and brought him to the ground—for, to tell the truth, he was not inhospitable. He muttered something about being put out by what had happened, and led the way to the house. Here, after our meal, M'Phail grew somewhat himself, and said he had given orders to have the bull skinned.

'Don't do anything of the sort,' I said hastily. 'You don't know what that bull died off.'

'What do you mean?' he demanded.

'Mean! Why, you know as well as I do that you might get one of your men blood-poisoned if the beast had died of "Cumberland" or anything of that sort.'

'Then I'll do it myself,' he said, jumping up from the table.

'Don't!' shrieked Mrs. M'Phail. 'Mr. Glaisher is quite night; you don't know what you might catch?'

'Don't I? I'm going to catch the hide of my roan bull, King Pippin,' he said, getting up and leaving the room.

'Oh, don't let him. do it; don't let him do it!' sobbed Mrs. M'Phail.

'I can't stop him from doing it,' I returned. 'He knows the danger as well as I do.'

However, I got up and followed M'Phail down to the yard, and found him with a knife and steel to his hand. I argued and remonstrated over the body of that wretched animal, who must have heard every word of it, and at last succeeded in restraining M'Phail from carrying out his intention.

'The beast is cold by this time, and you'd have a job to take his hide off. Look what a sight he'd appear badly skinned. Why, if I was the bull, I'd haunt you.'

I think M'Phail was touched, for he gave orders to get a couple of draught horses up and drag King Pippin away in the bush for a bit and cremate his body. Much relieved, I rode home. I had seen one case of blood poisoning, and did not want ever to witness another. Not that I really believed that the bull died of anything but a surfeit of green feed; but still, when anything dies suddenly— horse, bull, bullock, or sheep— there is always danger in handling the body with bare hands. So I went home with a good conscience, and a highly satisfactory feeling of having saved a woman being from destruction.

DID I? I'm afraid not. It must have been about the middle of the night when a peculiar kind of voice awoke me, saying, 'I say, Glaisher!'

I awoke at once. The room was flooded with the most brilliant moonlight, and in the middle stood King Pippin; or, rather, the ghost of King, Pippin; for no respectable bull would walk into any man's bedroom at the dead hour of night, with his hide flayed off, and flayed in the most disgraceful fashion— cuts and gashes everywhere.

'Don't be frightened, Glaisher,' said the appearance, 'I bear you no grudge. On the contrary. You succeeded in stopping that fool M'Phail from taking my hide off, and this is the figure I should have looked. Do you call it a pretty figure?'

'Scarcely,' I returned, regarding the object before me. And I leave it to anybody to say whether a bull without its hide would look a pretty object, excepting to a medical student.

'Say, why have you come to see me about the matter? I saved your carcass from the indignity?'

'I know you did, and I thought that you would like to see how I would have looked if M'Phail had succeeded in his design.'

'I am awfully obliged,' I remarked, 'but really, if you hadn't taken the trouble, it would have been just as jolly.'

'Think I'll frighten M'Phail?'

'No doubt of it frighten him off the station, I should think.'

'I should like to. The mean dog! After stuffing me with rank, green feed, and then, doctoring me to death, he wants to skin me. Now, if he'd only wanted to saw off my horns and preserve them as a friendly memento, it would not have been so bad. But to want to skin me for what my hide would fetch, after pretending such love for me. Pooh! I'll give him the cold sweats to night. So-long!'

'Hold on!' I cried. 'Think of Mrs. M'Phail. Don't frighten her.'

'No, you donkey. We ghosts can materialise before whom we like. Mrs. M'Phail will be sleeping soundly, while M'Phail will be half out of his mind.'

In an instant the portent had vanished, and. I got out of any bed and looked about the floor, expecting to find bloodstains all over it, bat no, there was nothing, and I came to the conclusion that ghosts were bloodless.

This occasion was one of the two which I can affirm to the actual appearance of M'Phail's bull.

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EARLY NEXT morning came a hasty messenger over to my place. He had been riding hard, and handed me a note marked 'URGENT.'

'Come over, please, and see M'Phail,' it read; 'I don't know what can have come to him since King Pippin died. Do come, if you have time.'

This was signed with, what I presumed were, Mrs M'Phail's initials. Naturally I saddled my horse and went.

I found M'Phail very wild-looking, and certainly not himself. He began at me at once.

'GIaisher, what did you mean by saying that King Pippin would haunt me? Last night I saw him! I saw him, I tell you, and I believe it was your doing.'

'Oh, hang it, man! King Pippin's burst. How could you see him last night?'

'I heard a voice calling "M'Phail! M'Phail! get up and see your work!" Up I got, and came out side. There I saw an animal like King Pippin would have been if I had taken the hide off his cold carcass with a blunt knife. Like I was going to do. Now tell me, man; tell me, it was no trick of yours. If I thought that it was I should be all right, after I'd punched you, or you'd punched me. But not if it was a real spook! My sinful soul! I shall go mad!'

I did my very best to quieten the man down, and persuade him that it was a dream, but I had a hard job, and besides, he had shouted his accusation against me out so loud, I know that from that occasion arose the idea that I had been playing ghost tricks. I managed to a certain extent, and we went down and looked at the charred remains of King Pippin, and gradually he got reconciled to the Idea that he had experienced only a hideous nightmare; but I knew in my own heart that it was nothing of the sort.

Sometimes now I feel sorry that I had not lied to the man. It might have saved his life. How ever, it was not to be, and I returned home, leaving M'Phail a little calmed down.

That night I was again awakened by the ghost of the flayed bull, who hadn't been flayed.

'Glaisher!' he said, in that calm, familiar manner that ghosts assume. 'What am I to do? I had no intention, I assure you, of driving M'Phail to such an extreme, but from the way he spoke about me when you were talking over my body, I concluded that the man had no heart, no feelings. Now I see that he has, and I feel deep regret about the matter.'

'Well don't go appearing to him any more then, and he will soon get all right.'

'Very easy to say that; but if you were a ghost you would know different. If you appear to a man once, you must appear to him three times. It's a law no ghost can break.'

'If you show up to M'Phail any more you'll drive him out of his mind,' I replied.

'I don't want to do that; but what am I to do? I must go and see him again; I'm bound to tell you.'

'Well, if you must you must; but must you go to-night? Otherwise, we might fix things up a little.'

'How do you mean?'

'I persuaded M'Phail that he had experienced a bad nightmare, and he seemed to think that I had been playing a trick on him. Now, I will let him hold that opinion, and think that I have been playing a trick on him.'

'And cast dishonor on the ghosts. Let it be thought that a real genuine ghost was only a turnip and a candle, so to speak. No! not to be thought of.'

'I can think of nothing else. Can't you put it off until to-morrow night?'

'I can do that if you'll promise not to play any tricks in the meantime.'

'Very well.'

'Honour bright?'

I gave my word, and the ghost of King Pippin departed with the same celerity as he did the night before.

I HAD to keep my word even to a ghost, but I determined to go and sleep over at M'Phail's. I had a good excuse, just to look after him in his nervous condition. So I went. Mrs. M'Phail was glad to see me, and told me that her husband had passed but a restless night, and he too was glad to welcome me to stop the night. I determined to keep awake, as I was certain that I should hear the ghost's voice as well as M'Phail, but I didn't, or, rather, I dropped off to sleep.

I awoke with a start, and instinctively went out on the verandah. Good heavens; there in the brilliant moonlight stood M'Phail, talking to something that— that night— I could not see. He had a revolver in his hand, and, shouting

loudly to Mrs. M'Phail, I ran down the two or three steps of the verandah, and I distinctly heard these words.

'Then you must come again?'

'Yes, I must!' came a voice from the invisible.

'Then I can't stand another sight of you!', and before I could get near he had shot himself.

Mrs. M'Phail was just behind me, and there was a terrible scene, into which I need not go into details. But M'Phail had gone to join King Pippin in ghostland, and, perhaps, he was happier.

That really is all I know about the tragedy.

8: Wetherell's Romance

Alan Sullivan

1868-1947

MacLean's, 1 March 1922

IT was in a certain restaurant not a hundred feet from the Strand, where one discovers, on three days of the week, a notable beefsteak pie and drinks one's beer from a pewter mug, that Wetherell observed across the table a thin and distinctly interesting face. It was very American. The stranger had a restless mouth, quick, observant eyes, rather cadaverous cheeks, and a manner in which a growing nervousness was but ineffectually subdued. From his many curious glances about the old-fashioned room, Wetherell assumed that he was lunching here because it was one of the recognised duties of every American to do so before he left London, but he was too obviously over-wrought to yield— however he might desire it to the association of the place. Presently Wetherell saw him draw out a few coins, regard them deliberately for an instant and beckon to a waiter.

"How much is your beer?"

"Pint of bitter? Sir— sixpence."

The young man nodded. "I guess I'll have some," he glanced at Wetherell with the most friendly smile possible, then, as though he had transgressed some unwritten code, colored slightly and looked away.

Wetherell had had no time to smile back but became, all in a moment, inescapably conscious of his neighbour's personality. He was like a strange bird that had found its way into some well classified aviary and had not yet been catalogued. In his face there was a perfectly honest wonder, as though the world had treated him well up to a point and then suddenly turned the cold shoulder. He seemed like a man who had been hurt— and was too puzzled to protest. He was too young a man, thought Wetherell, to look like that.

Moved by a sudden impulse, which afterwards he completely understood, Wetherell leaned forward and invited him to take coffee. At the sound of his voice the young man started, and sent him a whimsical and almost incredulous glance.

"Sure! I'll be pleased to. I was hoping you'd speak to me. I drifted in here to-day for the first time: this is where Ben Jonson used to hold forth, eh? I read about it out in the West."

Wetherell nodded. "How far west?"

"Denver-Montana-California— anywhere the other side of the Mississippi. I'm known out there, but I've been a month in London and I don't know a soul yet except my boarding-house keeper. That's why I'm mighty glad you spoke to me."

"Do you like London?" asked Wetherell and instantly regretted the question.

"I did for the first week, but now," the stranger's voice dropped a little, "now I'm afraid of it. It scares me. Can you understand that?"

"I can with some natures."

"Well, I've got one of them. I was thrilled at first, I suppose most Americans are, home of their ancestors— and that sort of thing; then I saw written right across the city 'mind your own business,' and the letters have been getting larger ever since. The thing is that I've been trying to mind my own business and nobody will listen to me."

"Oh," said Wetherell uncomfortably.

The young man sipped his coffee. "Now if you'd come from the West you'd have asked what my business was; but you're English alright so I'll have to tell you. It's mining."

"But that's very interesting."

"I thought so— till I got here. Now I reckon that if anyone has mining stock to sell, the first thing they do is buy a ticket to London. I wish I'd known about that before. I guess I've seen twenty people and they all said 'come back in a month' and though I'm not English, I know what that means."

Wetherell smiled. "Where is your mine?"

THE YOUNG MAN brightened at once. "State of Washington in the Cascade mountains about fifty miles from the coast. Like to see some samples?"

"Yes, if you'd like to show them."

"Show them! I've come six thousand miles to show them and I haven't had them out of the house yet. It's just a step from here— off the Edgware Road. My name is Woodruff— I ought to have told you." He hesitated a moment, glanced at Wetherell's card, then looked him straight in the face. "Sure you want to come?"

Wetherell, quite honestly, made it plain that he was in earnest, and they set off together. He did not contemplate doing business with a stranger, but was gradually becoming absorbed, not only in the young man's provocative person but also, in a queer way, in his very helplessness. That the latter should in all good faith journey six thousand miles to sell mining shares to clients who were still unknown, gave one a new and rather intriguing picture of London. He visualized the inevitable awakening, and studied the American's face with increasing interest. Quite obviously the boy— for he was little more than a boy— was horribly lonely.

He guided Wetherell to a dingy lodging house, and, at the top of three pair of stairs, turned into a small back room, where, without any apology for his

surroundings, he arranged on the frowsy bed a row of quartz fragments. He was breathing a little hard, and two spots of colour had bloomed in his hollow cheeks. Through the samples ran fine threads and filaments of a dull yellow. Wetherell picked up the nearest, fingered it curiously and waited.

"Thing about mining," said Woodruff slowly, and staring at his trophies, "is that you need a good deal of money before you can make any. Jim— that's my brother— and I thought we had enough, but we guessed wrong. That's what fetched me over here. You see the folks out on the coast have troubles of their own— and aren't buying any mining stock— at least not to-day. That stuff you're looking at is worth three hundred dollars a ton, but it's not all like that. I guess the lode will run about fifty— right through."

Wetherell cupped a fragment in his palm. "How much more money do you need?"

The young man glanced up. He had turned a little pale and was scrutinising his visitor's face with a sudden and intense eagerness.

"We've capitalised at four hundred thousand dollars. I've got to sell a hundred and fifty thousand at ten cents that's fifteen thousand dollars. The rest of it is held by Jim and myself and the fellows from whom we bought the property. We've got two hundred feet to drive to hit the lode, but when we do hit her, we'll have three hundred feet of that ore, on top of us."

WETHERELL nodded. He was chiefly conscious of the extreme fragility of this boy who had set himself to batter through two hundred feet of living rock toward a hidden fortune. But this determination animated, without question, his entire existence. It was the far distant clink of drill steel and the thud of dynamite that kept him alive. But he was too sensitive to withstand much longer the indifference of a great city, and too insecure of life to face defeat. It was the transitoriness of him that captured the imagination. No one could be less armed against the world— and at the same time more loyal to his mission.

"When you come to London on a job like this, you should have letters— to the right people. The mining circle here is not as large as you might think,— and is pretty well informed. Your best chance is to find some individual who is willing to take a flyer."

Woodruff looked at him like a puzzled child. "There's seven million people in London. Which do you mean?"

It was on the tip of the other men's tongue to give the obvious answer, when he became slowly and secretly aware that he himself was the person he meant. It could not be determined how or why he should feel this, and his first and overwhelming impulse was to conceal it— at all costs. He was ordinarily of a deliberate mental process, and had never made a snap decision in his life.

But now he seemed to have reached an abrupt turn in the road, that gave him, strangely enough, no particular surprise, and for which he was unaccountably prepared.

"Will you tell me more about the property?" he said thoughtfully. "It's just possible I might be able to help."

The blood climbed swiftly to the boy's temples. He blinked wistfully at the samples, did not seem able to meet Wetherell's eyes, then turned and peered out of the window at the murk of London.

"Were you looking for something like this?" he asked over his shoulder.

Wetherell drew a long breath and lied— magnificently. "Yes, but I didn't realise it till I met you. I've never taken a flyer in my life. Don't you think it's about time? I can afford it."

"My God!" whispered Woodruff unsteadily. He sat down, put his face between his hands, and Wetherell caught the heave of narrow shoulders. Then the fog got into the boy's lungs, and he began to cough.

"About that property," he said presently, pulling himself together, "you'd have just under a third interest. When we reach the lode the shares ought to be worth a dollar apiece." He jerked open a suitcase, spread a rough drawing on the bed, and went on with rising inflection. "Can't you come out and see it for yourself now? It's four feet wide and all quartz from wall to wall, and traced on the surface for a thousand feet. Don't think it's all good, for it isn't, none of them are, and the man is a liar who says so, but I've given you a fair average."

"When do you want the money?" asked Wetherell quietly.

The boy swayed a little, stretched out a thin hand as though for support, and slid limply to the floor. Wetherell, thoroughly frightened, knelt over him, then, as though he were a child, laid him on the bed beside the samples. In that moment he knew that he belonged irrecoverably to this consumptive stranger. Then Woodruff opened his eyes and smiled.

"Hope I didn't alarm you, but I've been feeling rotten ever since I got here. It isn't like the coast. Now about that property, I—"

"Don't mind about that now, there's no hurry."

The boy raised himself on an elbow. "Say— if you'd been trying to pull off something for a solid month and been frozen out every day of the week except Sunday, would you let a bit of a cough prevent you from closing up a deal?"

Wetherell laughed. "I suppose not, if I could, but we don't do business like that over here."

"Then perhaps you want me to come back, say in a fortnight, they generally get off something like that."

"No, but if you can dine with me in my rooms to-morrow evening, we can probably arrange everything."

Woodruff was suddenly amused. "Sure I will, but"— here he broke off, pushed out his lips, and stared at the samples. "I'd like to feel that you're going into this thing just— well, just on the showing we've got. Does it sound saucy to say that to a Britisher?"

"No." Wetherell laughed in spite of the wistful look on the boy's face. "I believe in the property. You've made me believe in it. May I take this plan and a few of the samples and I'll see you to-morrow night?"

Woodruff sat up. "Sure, you can. I'll come downstairs with you."

"No, stay where you are; I'll find my way out. What are you taking for that cough?"

"The best thing I've had is what you've brought to-day, and I feel better already. See you at seven-thirty to-morrow."

BUT WETHERELL did not see him. Seven-thirty came and passed with no Woodruff. Nor was there any message. At nine o'clock he climbed three pair of stairs and knocked. A voice that sounded strangely distant asked him to come in.

Woodruff was in bed, his cheeks flaming. He propped himself up, then sank back with a pathetic little attempt at a welcome.

"Nice way to treat an invitation, isn't it, but the starch has been all out of me since yesterday." He closed his eyes for an instant, and gave a queer unnatural laugh. "I suppose you're wondering why I didn't communicate."

"It doesn't matter," said Wetherell hastily, "I'm sorry you're knocked out."

"I'll be all right to-morrow. I've been lying here trying to guess what you had for dinner. I didn't wire because, well— " He paused with a sudden and extraordinary look of age on his young face. "You see I'm strapped. The queen of this boarding-house blew in last night after you'd gone, and took all I had left. It wasn't any use trying to explain anything— I'd done that several times already— and she wouldn't even send you a wire." He searched Wetherell's face with undisguised anxiety. "Does this make you feel any different about things?"

"I've brought the money, if that's what you mean."

The boy stared at the ceiling. He did not speak. After a long, long silence he turned on his pillow with eyes like stars.

"Well, I'll be darned," he whispered.

Wetherell's heart went out to him in a sudden flood. "Now look here, you're coming to stay with me for a few days till you feel better. You can cable that money to-morrow, if you like, and then take things easy for a week."

"Gee!" said Woodruff, "I thought I was in London. Do you mean it?"

That was the way of it. In something less than an hour, he was in Wetherell's spare room on Half Moon Street, examining his new surroundings with quick interest. Wetherell, regarding the white features, knew instinctively that it would be for much longer than a week. But did that matter? It did not seem to be a burden, and he felt, in an odd way, that he was somehow redeeming London. He did not speculate on the boy's reactions, or what it would mean to be in such case himself, but was quite definitely assured that the whole affair had been intended from the first. He was three thousand pounds the poorer, but, strangely enough, his balance did not seem one whit the less.

The money went off next morning; the whole of it. Woodruff, stimulated by his success, counted on selling enough additional shares to pay his expenses back, but as day after day he grew weaker, Wetherell was convinced that he had made the one great deal of his life. If something of this moved in the boy's own mind, he gave no sign of it.

Came a cable from his brother. The money had arrived in the nick of time, the property was saved, work was progressing. There was no need for his return if he was forming a good connection in London which would be useful in the future. Reading this last, Woodruff smiled whimsically at his saviour.

"Jim thinks I've tapped the Bank of England. Well, I've done better than—" He paused, then broke out abruptly. "My God, old man, where would I have been without you?"

WETHERELL KNEW where he would have been, and where, indeed, he must soon inevitably be. Each day, during which the boy's grip of life slackened imperceptibly, had drawn them closer together. It was like sprinkling a flower that found no relief in moisture. The inward flame was too fierce. And ever, as it wilted, it valiantly thrust out tiny, pathetic tendrils to grasp at the comfortless soil. Wetherell saw them, and they hurt him exceedingly. Doctors, many of them, came, then shook their heads in the dining-room and went away. Finally there arrived the day when Wetherell knew that the boy knew.

"I suppose that each of us has his one big job, and mine was to come to London and find you. Tell me honest, old man, aren't you just the least bit sorry I did?"

"No," said Wetherell steadily, "I'm glad you did."

"That last bone-sawyer was the gloomiest of the lot, wasn't he? It was written all over his face before he went out to have a chin-chin with you. I would have liked to hang on till we broke through the lode, but they can't make her inside of a month yet. And I wanted to look after your interest, too. Say, what am I going to cost you— all told? I want to send the bill out to Jim."

"Nothing, old chap. Don't talk about that."

The boy sent him a quick glance, then nodded understandingly and smiled. "Out on the coast we sometimes heard fellows calling each other 'old chap,' and it used to make us grin. But it don't seem so darn funny right here. Fact is I'm getting to like it." He rambled on, now of London, now of the far distant Cascade Range, till, of a sudden, he turned and lay, face on hand, his eyes cloudy with thought.

"It doesn't make any difference what I say now, does it?"

Wetherell put aside his paper, and shook his head. He could not speak.

"Then it's only right I should tell you about Jim. I said I wanted to send those bills out to him, but I don't know if he'd pay them or not. He was never overly fond of me, and, anyway, he doesn't pay what he can dodge. What I'm trying to get at is this. Jim's holding all my shares except thirty thousand— that I want you to take, against those expenses. Now say you'll take them."

The other man made a little gesture, then had a blinding glimpse of the boy's penultimate faith.

"I'll take them."

Woodruff smiled. He had discharged a debt that lay heavy on his soul. He did not voice any further gratitude for what he had received, being in a queer but unmistakeable way satisfied that acknowledgements would only make Wetherell uncomfortable, the man who, for him, represented the whole British nation. He yearned to live a little longer, to see the success of the mine, and glory in this— his one great friendship; but something persistently whispered that had he been less weak and helpless this friendship would never have reached its present and comforting stage. So he took the bitter with the sweet and complained not at all.

It was a few days before the boy died that Wetherell got what seemed to him a great reward. He had led a humdrum life in which he rather guarded himself against any extreme of feeling. But, down underneath, he had a certain congenital pride of race. He was glad that he was British and secretly proud that he was English. The only way in which he revealed this was a very slight accentuation of manner, when he happened to be with a foreigner. And Americans had been, up to date, naturally foreigners. But Woodruff had, apparently, not noticed anything out of the way, and for this he was thankful. The reward came at the end of an evening that seemed interminable.

"When I got over here first," said the boy faintly. "I didn't understand you people— not a little bit. Now I guess you're mostly the same after one gets through the skin. Out our way what one feels is spread right over us, so you can see it, while on this side of the water it seems to me you think that's hardly, well— decent. Perhaps if you lived where I come from, you'd get the

way we are— after a while. Anyway I just wanted to say that I misjudged the Britisher pretty hard— till I met you. Then I quit."

Wetherell replied for the nation. "Thanks," he said huskily.

THERE WASN'T much more after that. Woodruff slipped West, his hand pressed tightly in a British palm, that extended friendship to the very last. He did not complain at his brother's attitude for the latter had cabled that he could not come, owing to pressing work at the mine. What use could Jim be— in any case? His last look was one of unutterable affection.

It took Wetherell some weeks to pull himself together. During the past month he had lived more intensely than ever before, and it was of his nature that he did not want to repeat the experiment. This thing had been inevitable. He had gone through with it whole-heartedly, and had felt it so much that he was a little frightened. The boy had been so vivid in spite of the frailty of his body, so whimsical and superbly honest, that he pulled at the strings of existence, and Wetherell had no desire for anything to replace him. Then he wrote to James Woodruff and enclosed a statement of his expenses. Something warned him to keep the originals.

The answer, which arrived in six weeks, justified the boy's premonitions. James Woodruff expressed a modified regret at his brother's death, declined responsibility for any expense, and requested the immediate return of all private property. The tone of the letter made Wetherell furious, but his reply merely asked for news of the mine, and stated that he held certain shares against certain proper disbursements on the boy's behalf. Then followed silence.

The way in which he next heard of the property was from a friend who had arrived from Yokohama by way of Seattle, and dropped a casual remark about a mine, the name of which, to Wetherell's startled ear, was very familiar, and which lay some fifty miles from the latter city. This mine, it appeared, had developed bonanza ore— and every effort was being made to keep the discovery quiet. The shares were, he understood, practically unpurchasable. He showed Wetherell a fragment of ore which was half gold and had been given to him by a good-natured miner on the train.

Wetherell did not say much, but that night in his rooms, unpacked the boy's samples, and examined them thoughtfully. He did not feel at all surprised. Money was always welcome, but it meant much, very much— more to him that the boy should have been right. As a matter of fact he had given up thinking of the mine altogether, and regarded his investment as lost, but the boy who had left so quick and tender a legacy, was never connected with this. In Wetherell's memory he was a plus and not a minus sign. But what did puzzle

the latter was that he should have had no report from the property. He was still fingering the samples when the telephone rang, and a voice came in asking to know where and when he would meet Mr. James Woodruff.

It seemed at first perfectly natural that Woodruff should be in London. He had no doubt come over with the reports himself. But a moment later Wetherell caught a note in the voice that antagonized him strangely, and when he named a time and place, and in answer to a casually-worded enquiry about the property was told that the news was not particularly good, he hung up the receiver and turned away with a grim look of comprehension on his usually good-natured face. What angered him was not only the thing he suspected, but also that from now on he should have to remember two Woodruffs instead of one with whom he was well content. And James Woodruff was living up to his reputation.

IN HIS OFFICE next morning, Wetherell gave instructions that his door be left slightly ajar. This gave him command of the long entrance passage, and he was presently rewarded by a glimpse of a tall figure, a sunburned face and eyes that seemed at first glance a little furtive. Then Woodruff was ushered in, and took the hand that was automatically extended before Wetherell realised what he was doing.

Their eyes met, and the two men measured each other. It was Woodruff who spoke first.

"I'd like to say thank you for what you did for my brother."

Wetherell nodded. "That's all right. The boy was in bad shape and I was glad to do what I could. He wasn't fit for the job he attempted."

Woodruff's lips tightened a little. "I guess that was your English climate. I don't think much of it myself."

Wetherell grew hot with anger. He thought that never in his life had he disliked a man so much on short notice. He knew that if he went on to talk about the boy, his temper would get the better of him, and, because there was a tense moment not far ahead, he did not propose to lose it at all.

"How's the mine doing?" He hazarded.

Woodruff looked suddenly gloomy. "That's something I've got to tell you, but it isn't cheerful news."

"No?"

The other man leaned back, put an elbow on the desk and stared at a picture in the furthest corner. "Mining's always a gamble. That's never so true as when a lode is looking its best, and," he paused, then went on regretfully, "I'm darned if it wasn't the case with us. We had a fine showing— a thousand feet long on the surface— we worked like sin to strike it three hundred feet

underground— and when we finally got there we found no values at all. What I want you to get hold of is that we were justified in doing all we did. You're a big stockholder— and I wanted to tell you the thing myself."

Wetherell drew a neat little cross on the blotter. "What would you say my shares are worth— if anything?"

"On the face of it practically nothing, but there's just a chance of getting a little back."

"Oh how's that?" Wetherell tried to look surprised.

"Some fellows out on the coast," said Woodruff evenly, "are willing to take the chance of trying it again. I told them straight it was a dead dog— but they're game." He glanced up significantly. "I reckon you don't want to put any difficulties in the way."

"Have they made an offer?" There was no feeling in the voice, and to the other man it sounded indifferent: but he didn't know the English.

"They offer two cents a share."

Wetherell's pencil began to form little concentric circles. "And you think that's reasonable under the circumstances?"

"It's something for nothing, isn't it?"

There was silence for a moment. Wetherell felt a spasm of contempt, but was coldly bent on carrying out his programme. It pleased him to be one thing to Woodruff— just as it had been a joy to be something very different to Woodruff's brother. And this was comforting because it assured him that he had not degenerated into a sentimentalist whose emotions were nourished by that which was past and done with. So he surveyed this man with a certain deadly welcome and secretly rejoiced in his presence.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I suppose it's something for nothing. I hold thirty thousand shares your brother gave me against his expenses— that would be about a hundred and twenty pounds— at two cents a share."

Woodruff nodded. "Just about."

WETHERELL touched a bell, and, a moment later spoke to his chief clerk who stood impassively on the threshold. "With regard to those mining shares handed me by the late Mr. Guy Woodruff, this gentleman, who is his brother, and"— he dwelt on the next words a little— "knows the property thoroughly, states that their market value is one hundred and twenty pounds." He regarded his visitor with cold blue eyes. "That's right, isn't it?"

"Yes— that's right."

"Would you also be willing to pay at the same rate for the larger number I bought?"

"Sure! That's what I reckoned on doing. My friends won't take the gamble unless they get the lot. I thought you understood that."

"Perhaps I'm a little slow sometimes," said Wetherell patiently. "I was thinking how odd that the shares your brother gave me should realize exactly the amount of the accounts I sent you."

Woodruff colored under his tan. "I would have paid that right away if I hadn't been up against it. I needed all my cash to put into the property."

"And now you've lost it. Too bad," murmured Wetherell, "too bad."

The other man nodded resignedly. "It's all in the game."

"Then possibly you'll be glad of a little ready money. Millen," here Wetherell addressed the clerk, "make out a cheque to the order of Mr. James Woodruff for a hundred and twenty pounds, also—"

"But look—"

Wetherell raised a protesting hand. "Just a moment. You've probably heard that we're not a very sentimental lot over here, but now and again we do feel something. This is a case of it. I put a sentimental value on those shares—because I had them from— well— from a boy, and naturally," he added with a curious smile, "if I feel that about thirty thousand, I feel it all the more— being a Britisher— about a hundred and fifty thousand. I'm not selling to-day, Mr. Woodruff," here his voice lifted a little, "I'm buying. Millen, make out that cheque, will you."

He threw down his pencil and leaned back. "I'm not obliged to give you that money, but I want to wipe you off the slate if I can. No,— no, you needn't get vexed— I happen to have the latest news from the mine, and I've an idea that your brother has got it too. At any rate I hope he has; and it's about him that I want to speak while that cheque is being drawn. You see— or perhaps you don't see— he left behind him something rare and— well— rather beautiful. I was a little afraid you were going to spoil that for me, but I see that you can't— it's beyond you. Now I understand why. It's because you were ready to follow him and foul his trail— which was very straight. You've lost the boy now, and," here the voice faltered slightly, "I've got him."

The door opened. A cheque was laid on the blotter. The door closed again. Woodruff did not stir, but sat huddled in his chair, his chin on his chest. Wetherell scribbled his name.

"Here," he said roughly, "take it. And now get out!"

9: Tao

Achmed Abdullah

1881-1945

The Century, April 1920

IT WAS NOW the custom of Li Ping-Yeng, the wealthy retired banker, to sit near the open window and look up at the sky, which seemed always to be packed with dirty clouds, or down into Pell Street, toward the corner, where it streams into the Bowery in frothy, brutal, yellow-and-white streaks. Occasionally, huddled snug and warm in a fold of his loose sleeve, a diminutive, flat-faced Pekinese spaniel, with convex, nostalgic eyes and a sniffy button of a nose, would give a weak and rather ineffectual bark. Then, startled, yet smiling, Li Ping-Yeng would rise and go down-stairs to the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace in search of food.

To do this, he had to cross his apartment.

Fretted with shifting lights, it lay in dim, scented splendor. Underfoot stretched a thick-napped dragon rug of tawny orange and taupe, picked out with rose-red and brown. Age-darkened tulip-wood furniture faded into the corners, where the shadows drooped and coiled. The door of the outer hall was hidden by a great, ebony-framed screen of pale lotus silk embroidered with conventionalized figures, black and purple and maroon, that represented the "Hei-song-che-choo," the "Genii of the Ink," household gods of the *literati*; while here and there, on table and taboret and étagère, were priceless pieces of Chinese porcelain, blue-and-white Ming and Kang-he beakers in aubergine and oxen-blood, crackled *clair-de-lune* of the dynasty of Sung, peach-blow celadon, Korean Fo dogs and Fonghoang emblems in ash-gray and apple-green.

This was the room, these were the treasures, which years ago he had prepared with loving, meticulous care for the coming of his bride.

She had come, stepping mincingly in tiny bound feet, "skimming," had said an impromptu Pell Street poet who had cut his rice gin with too much heady whompee juice, "over the tops of golden lilies, like Yao Niang, the iron-capped Manchu prince's famous concubine."

But almost immediately— the tragedy had not loomed very large in the morning news, starting with a crude head-line of "Woman Killed in Street by Car on Wrong Side," and winding up with "The Chauffeur, Edward H. Connor, of No. 1267 East 157th Street, was held at the West 68th Street Station on a charge of homicide"— her body had passed into the eternal twilight, her soul had leaped the dragon gate to join the souls of her ancestors.

And today Li Ping-Yeng, in the lees of life, was indifferent to the splendors of Ming and Sung, of broidered silks and carved tulip-wood. Today there was only the searching for his personal tao, his inner consciousness removed from

the lying shackles of love and hate, the drab fastening of form and substance and reality.

Daily, as he sat by the window, he approached nearer to that center of cosmic life where outward activity counts for less than the shadow of nothing. Daily he felt the tide rise in his secret self, trying to blend with the essence of eternity. Daily, beyond the dirty clouds of lower Manhattan, beyond the Pell Street reek of sewer-gas and opium, and yellow man and white, he caught a little more firmly at the fringe of final fulfillment.

Food? Yes. There was still the lying reality called body which needed food and drink and occasionally a crimson-tasseled pipe filled with a sizzling, amber cube of first-chop opium. Also, there was the little Pekinese dog that had once belonged to his bride— "*Su Chang*," "Reverential and Sedate," was its ludicrous name— and it cared nothing for *tao* and cosmic eternity, but a great deal for sugar and chicken bones and bread steeped in lukewarm milk.

"*Woo-oof*!" said "Reverential and Sedate."

And so, startled, yet smiling, Li Ping-Yeng went down-stairs to the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, exchanged courtly greetings with the obese proprietor, Mr. Nag Hong Fah, and ordered a heaped bowl for the spaniel, and for himself a platter of rice, a pinch of soy cheese, a slice of preserved ginger stem, and a pot of tea.

Twenty minutes later he was back in his chair near the window, scrutinizing sky and street.

Unseeing, meaningless scrutiny; for it was only the conscious, thus worthless, part of his brain which perceived, and reacted to, the details of what he saw: the lemon tints of the street lamps leaping meanly out of the trailing, sooty dusk and centering on a vivid oblong of scarlet and gold where Yung Long, the wholesale grocer, flung his sign-board to the winds and proclaimed thereon in archaic Mandarin script that "Trade revolves like a Wheel"; an automobile-load of tourists gloating self-righteously over the bland, shuffling Mongol's base infinitudes; a whisky-soaked nondescript moving along with hound-like stoop and flopping, ragged clothes, his face turned blindly to the stars and a childlike smile curling his lips; or, perhaps, hugging the blotchy shadows of a postern, the tiny figure of Wuh Wang, the wife of Li Hsu, the hatchet-man, courting a particularly shocking fate by talking, face close against face, to a youth, with a checked suit and no forehead to speak of, whose native habitat was around the corner, on the Bowery.

Also voices brushed up, splintered through the open window, the stammering, gurgling staccato of felt-slippered Cantonese, suggestive of a primitive utterance going back to the days before speech had evolved; the metallic snap and crackle of Sicilians and Calabrians talking dramatically about

the price of garlic and olive-oil; the jovial brogue of Bill Devoy, detective of Second Branch, telling a licenseless peddler to "beat it"; the unbearable, guttural, belching whine of Russian Hebrews, the Pell Street symphony, with the blazing roar of the elevated thumping a dissonant counterpoint in the distance.

Li Ping-Yeng saw, he heard, but only with the conscious, the worthless part of his brain; while the real part, the subconscious, was occupied with the realization of himself which he must master in order to reach the excellent and august wisdom of *tao*— the search of his inner soul, beyond the good and the evil, which, belike, he had muddied by his too great love for his wife.

This tao was still too dim for him to see face to face. It was still beyond the touch and feel of definite thought. Its very possibility faded elusively when he tried to bring it to a focus. Yet he knew well what had been the basis of it. He had learned it by the bitterest test of which the human heart is capable— the negative test; the test of suffering and unfulfilled desire; the test of acrid memory. "Memory," he would say to himself, over and over again, patiently, defiantly, almost belligerently, when the thought of his wife's narrow, pleasurable hands rose flush with the tide of his regrets and, by the same token, caused his *tao* once more to dim and fade— "memory, which is of the dirt-clouted body, and not of the soul."

Yet in the matter of acrid memory and unfulfilled desire Miss Edith Rutter, the social-settlement investigator who specialized in the gliding vagaries of the Mongol mind as exemplified in Pell Street, had brought back at the time an entirely different tale, an entirely different interpretation of Chinese philosophy, too.

But be it remembered that philosophy is somewhat affected by surroundings, and that Miss Rutter had been on a visit to an aunt of hers in Albany, balancing a Jasper ware tea-cup and cake-plate on a scrawny, black-taffeta-covered knee, and, about her, tired, threadbare furnishings that harped back to the days of rep curtains, horsehair *chaise-longues*, wax fruit, shell ornaments, banjo clocks, pictures of unlikely children playing with improbable dogs, cases of polished cornelian, levant-bound sets of Ouida, and unflinching, uncompromising Protestant Christianity.

"My dear," she had said to Aunt Eliza Jane, "the more I see of these Chinamen, the less I understand them. This man I told you about, Mr. Li Ping-Yeng— oh, a most charming, cultured gentleman, I assure you, with such grand manners!— I saw him a few minutes after they brought home the poor crushed little body of his young bride, his two days bride, and, my dear— would you believe it possible?—there wasn't a tear in his eyes, his hands didn't

even tremble. And when I spoke to him, tactful, gentle, consoling words, what do you imagine he replied?"

"I've no idea."

"He *smiled*! Yes, indeed, smiled! And he said something— I forget the exact words— about his having, perhaps, loved too much, his having perhaps been untrue to his inner self. I can't understand their philosophy. It is— oh— so inhuman!" She had puzzled. "How *can* anybody love *too* much? What can he have meant by his inner self?"

"Pah! heathens!" Aunt Eliza Jane had commented resolutely. "Have another cup of tea?"

Thus the judgment of the whites; and it was further crystallized in detective Bill Devoy's rather more brutal: "Say, them Chinks has got about as much feelings as a snake has hips. No noives— no noives at all, see?" and Mr. Brian Neill, the Bowery saloon keeper's succinct: "Sure, Mike. I hates all them yeller swine. They gives me the bloody creeps."

Still, it is a moot point who is right, the Oriental, to whom love is less a sweeping passion than the result of a delicate, personal balancing on the scales of fate, or the Occidental, to whom love is a hectic, unthinking ecstasy, though, given his racial inhibitions, often canopied in the gilt buckram of stiffly emotional sex-romanticism.

At all events, even the humblest, earthliest coolie between Pell and Mott had understood when, the day after his wife's death, Li Ping-Yeng had turned to the assembled company in the back room of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, which was for yellow men only and bore the euphonic appellation, "The Honorable Pavilion of Tranquil Longevity," and had said:

"The ancients are right. One must preserve a proper balance in all emotions. The man who, being selfish, loves too much, is even as the one who cooks the dregs of wretched rice over a sandalwood fire in a pot of lapis lazuli, or as one who uses a golden plow in preparation for cultivating weeds, or as one who cuts down a precious camphor-grove to fence in a field of coarse millet. Such a man is the enemy of his own *tao*. It is most proper that such a man should be punished."

After a pause he had added:

"I am such a man, brothers. I have been punished. I tied my soul and my heart to a woman's jeweled ear rings. The earrings broke. The woman died. Died my heart and my soul. And now, where shall I find them again? Where shall I go to seek for my *tao*?"

There had come a thick pall of silence, with only the angry sizzling of opium cubes as lean, yellow hands held them above the openings of the tiny lamps; a sucking of boiling-hot tea sipped by compressed lips; somewhere, outside, on

the street, a cloudy, gurgling trickle of obscene abuse, presently fading into the memory of sounds.

The men sighed heavily. Coolies they were, the sweepings of the Canton gutters and river-banks, cooks, waiters, grocers, petty traders; yet men of an ancient race, behind whom stretched forty centuries of civilization and culture and philosophy, in solemn, graven rows. Thus they were patient, slightly hard, not easily embarrassed, sublimely unself-conscious, tolerant, permitting each man to look after his own fate, be it good or evil. Anti-social, an American would have called them, and he would have been wrong.

Li Ping-Yeng had bared his naked, quivering soul to their gaze. He was their friend; they respected him. He was a rich man, an educated man. Yet Li Ping-Yeng's life was his own to make or to mar. Sympathy? Yes; but not the arrogant indelicacy of help offered, of advice proffered.

Thus they had thought, all except Yu Ch'ang, the priest of the joss-temple.

For many years, since he made his frugal living by catering to the spiritual weal of Pell Street, it had been the latter's custom, when he foregathered with his countrymen, to gain face for himself and his sacerdotal caste by talking with nagging, pontifical unction about things religious and sectarian. But, being a hedge-priest, self-appointed, who had received only scanty training in the wisdom of the "three precious ones," the Buddha past, the Buddha present, and the Buddha future, he had found it hard to uphold his end when tackled by Li Ping-Yeng, the banker, the *literatus*, anent the contents of such abstruse books of theological learning as the "Park of Narratives," "Ku-liang's Commentaries," or the "Diamond Sutra."

Now, with the other baring his bleeding soul, he had seen a chance of settling the score, of causing him to lose a great deal of face.

"Little brother," he had purred, "I am a man of religion, a humble seeker after truth, whose knowledge is not to be compared with yours; yet have I thought much. I have thought left and thought right. Often in the past have we differed, you and I, on minor matters of philosophy and ceremonial. May I, the very useless one, address words of advice to you, the great *literatus*?"

"Please do."

"Ah! Then let me reply with the words of Confucius, that he who puts too much worth on worthless things, such as the love of woman, the love of the flesh, is like the wolf and the hare, leaving the direction of his steps to low passions. To lead such a man into the august ways of *tao* is as futile as tethering an elephant with the fiber of the young lotus, as futile as the attempt to cut a diamond with a piece of wood, as futile as trying to sweeten the salt sea with a drop of honey, or to squeeze oil from sand. Ah, ahee!" He had

spread out his fingers like the sticks of a fan and had looked about him with brutal triumph.

The other's features, as yellow as old parchment, indifferent, dull, almost sleepy, had curled in a queer, slow smile. He was smoking his fourth pipe, a pipe of carved silver, with a green-amber mouthpiece and black tassels. The room had gradually filled with scented fog. The objects scattered about had lost their outlines, and the embroidered stuffs on the walls had gleamed less brilliantly. Only the big, violet-shaded lanterns on the ceiling had continued to give some light, since poppy vapors are slow to rise and float nearer the ground.

"You are wrong, wise priest," he had replied.

"Wrong?"

"Yes. For there is one who can tether the elephant with the fiber of the young lotus, who can cut a diamond with a piece of soft wood, sweeten the salt sea with a drop of honey, and squeeze oil from sand."

"Who?" Yu Ch'ang had asked, smiling crookedly at the grave assembly of Chinese who sat there, sucking in their breath through thin lips, their faces like carved ivory masks.

Li Ping-Yeng had made a great gesture.

"The Excellent Buddha," he had replied, in low, even, passionless, monotonous accents that were in curious, almost inhuman, contrast to the sublime, sweeping faith in his choice of words. "The Omniscient Gautama! The All-Seeing Tathagata! The Jewel in the Lotus! The most perfectly awakened Blessed One who meditates in heaven on His seven-stepped throne!"

And again the grave assembly of Chinese had sat very still, sucking in their breath, staring at their neat, slippered feet from underneath heavy, hooded eyelids, intent, by the token of their austere racial simplicity, on effacing their personalities from the focus of alien conflict; and then, like many a priest of many a creed before him, Yu Ch'ang, sensing the silent indifference of his countrymen and interpreting it as a reproach to his hierarchical caste, had let his rage get the better of his professional, sacerdotal hypocrisy.

"The Buddha? Here? In Pell Street?" he had exclaimed. He had laughed hoarsely, meanly. "Find Him, the Excellent One, the Perfect One, in Pell Street? Look for the shining glory of His face—here—in the soot and grease and slippery slime of Pell Street? Search, belike, for fish on top of the mountain, and for horns on the head of the cat! Bah!" He had spat out the word, had risen, crossed over to the window, thrown it wide, and pointed to the west, where a great, slow wind was stalking through the sky, picking up fluttering rags of cloud. "Go! Find Him, the Buddha, in the stinking, rotten heaven of Pell

Street! Go, go—by all means! And, perhaps, when you have found Him, you will also have found your *tao*, fool!"

"I shall try," had come Li Ping-Yeng's reply. "Yes; most decidedly shall I try." He had walked to the door. There he had turned. "Little brother," he had said to the priest over his shoulder, without malice or hurt or bitterness, "and why should I not find Him even in the Pell Street gutters? Why should I not find my *tao* even in the stinking, rotten heaven that vaults above Pell Street? Tell me. Is not my soul still my soul? Is not the diamond still a diamond, even after it has fallen into the dung-heap?"

And he had stepped out into the night, staring up at the purple-black sky, his coat flung wide apart, his lean, yellow hands raised high, indifferent to the rain that had begun to come down in flickering sheets.

"Say, John, wot's the matter? Been hittin the old pipe too much? Look out! One o' these fine days I'll raid that joint o' yours," had come detective Bill Devoy's genial brogue from a doorway where he had taken refuge against the elements.

Li Ping-Yeng had not heard, had not replied— except to talk to himself, perhaps to the heaven, perhaps to the Buddha, in staccato Mongol monosyllables, which, had Bill Devoy been able to understand, would have convinced him more than ever that that there Chink was a sure-enough hop-head:

"Permit me to cross the torrent of grief, O Buddha, as, even now, I am crossing the stream of passion! Give me a stout raft to gain the other side of blessedness! Show me the way, O King!"

Back in the honorable Pavilion of Tranquil Longevity, slant eye had looked meaningly into slant eye.

"Ah, perhaps indeed he will find his *tao*," Yung Long, the wholesale grocer, had breathed gently; and then to Yu Ch'ang, who had again broken into harsh, mean cackling, said:

"Your mouth is like a running tap, O very great and very uncouth cockroach!"

"Aye, a tap spouting filthy water." This was from Nag Sen Yat, the opium merchant.

"A tap which, presently, I shall stop with my fist," said Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, winding up the pleasant round of Oriental metaphor.

Thus was displayed, then, the serene, if negative, sympathy of the Pell Street confraternity, further demonstrated by its denizens leaving Li Ping-Yeng hereafter severely alone and by replying to all questions and remarks of outsiders with the usual formula of the Mongol when he does not wish to commit himself: "No savvy!"

"I feel so terribly sorry for him,"— this from Miss Edith Rutter,— "Is there really nothing I can do to—"

"No savvy."

"Looka here,"— from Bill Devoy,— "you tell that brother-Chink o' yourn, that there Li Ping-Yeng, to stop hittin' the black smoke, or I'll pinch him on spec, see?"

"No savvy."

"Listen!"— from the old Spanish woman who kept the second-hand store around the corner, on the Bowery,— "What do you think he's going to do with all the truck he bought for his wife? I'd like to buy the lot. Now, if you want to earn a commission—"

"No savvy."

"Is he goin' t' try holy matrimony again, or near-matrimony?"— from Mr. Brian Neill, the saloon keeper, who occasionally added to his income by unsavory deals between the yellow and the white, "For, if he wants another goil, there's a peacherino of a red-headed good-looker that blows into my back parlor once in a while and that don't mind Chinks as long's they got the kale—"

"No savvy."

And even to the emissary of a very great Wall Street bank that in the past had handled certain flourishing Manila and Canton and Hankow accounts for the Pell Street banker, and who, unable to locate him personally and being slightly familiar with Chinese customs, had sought out the head of the latter's masonic lodge and had asked him why Li Ping-Yeng had retired from business, and if, at all events, he wouldn't help them with the unraveling of a knotty financial tangle in far Shen-si. Even there was the same sing-song answer:

"No savvy," exasperatingly, stonily repeated. "No savvy, no savvy."

For two days after his wife's tragic death Li Ping-Yeng, to quote his own words, had given up vigorously threshing mere straw, by which term he meant all the everyday, negligible realities of life.

He had begun by selling his various business interests; nor, since he was a prosy Mongol whose brain functioned with the automatic precision of a photographic shutter and was nowise affected by whatever was going on in his soul, had he made a bad deal. On the contrary, he had bargained shrewdly down to the last fraction of a cent.

Then, prudently, deliberately, the patient and materialistic Oriental even in matters of the spirit, he had swept his mind clear of everything except the search for his *tao*, the search for his salvation. This *tao* was to him a concrete thing, to be concretely achieved, since it was to link him, intimately and strongly, not with, as would have been the case had he been a Christian, an esoteric principle, a more or less recondite, theological dogma, but with a

precious and beneficent influence that, although invisible, was not in the least supernatural. For he was of the East, Eastern; he did not admit the existence of the very word "supernatural." To him everything was natural, since everything, even the incredible, the impossible, the never-to-be-understood, had its secret, hidden roots in some evolution of nature, of the Buddha, the blessed Fo, the active and eternal principle of life and creation.

Perhaps at the very first his search had not been quite as concise, had rather shaped itself to his perplexed, groping mind in the terms of a conflict, a distant and mysterious encounter with the forces of fate, of which his wife's death had been but a visible, outward fragment.

Then, gradually— and by this time it had become spring, wakening to the white-and-pink fragrance of the southern breezes— spring that, occasionally, even in Pell Street, painted a sapphire sky as pure as the laughter of little children— he had stilled the poignant questionings of his unfulfilled desires, his fleshly love, and had turned the search for his *tao* into more practical channels.

Practical, though of the soul! For, again, to him, a Chinese, the soul was a tangible thing. Matter it was, to be constructively influenced and molded and clouted and fashioned. It had seemed to him to hold the life of tomorrow, beside which his life of today and yesterday had faded into the drabness of a wretched dream. He had wanted this tomorrow, had craved it, sensing in it a freedom magnificently remote from the smaller personal existence he had known heretofore, feeling that, presently, when he would have achieved merit, it would stab out of the heavens with a giant rush of splendor and, greatly, blessedly, overwhelm him and destroy his clogging, individual entity.

But how was this to be attained? Had he been a Hindu ascetic, or even a member of certain Christian sects, he would have flagellated his body, would have gone through the ordeal of physical pain. But, a Mongol, thus stolidly unromantic and rational, almost torpidly sane, he had done nothing of the sort. On the contrary, he had continued to take good care of himself. True, he had begun to eat less, but not purposely; simply because his appetite had decreased. And his real reason for keeping his wife's Pekinese spaniel tucked in his sleeve was because "Reverential and Sedate" reminded him when it was time for luncheon or dinner, hours he might otherwise have forgotten.

The idea of suicide had never entered his reckoning, since he held the belief of half Asia, that suicide destroys the body and not the soul; that it is only a crude and slightly amateurish interruption of the present life, leaving the thread of it still more raveled and tangled and knotted for the next life, and yet the next.

He had passed over the obvious solution of devoting himself to charity, to the weal of others, as it had seemed to him but another instance of weak and

selfish vanity, fully as weak and selfish as the love of woman; and the solace of religion he had dismissed with the same ready, smiling ease. Religion, to him, was not an idea, but a stout, rectangular entity, a great force and principle, that did its appointed duty not because people believed in it, but because it was. The Buddha would help him, if it be so incumbent by fate upon the Buddha, regardless, if he prayed to him or not, if he memorized the sacred scriptures, if he burned sweet-scented Hunshuh incense-sticks before the gilt altar or not. For the Buddha, too, was tied firmly to the Wheel of Things. The Buddha, too, had to do his appointed task. Thus, Li Ping-Yeng had decided, prayers would be a waste of time, since they could not influence the Excellent One one way or the other.

How, then, could he acquire sufficient merit so as to reach his *tao*, beyond the good and the evil?

Of course, first of all, mainly, by tearing from his body and heart even the last root of the liana of desire, of love, of regret for his wife; by again and again denying, impugning, destroying the thought of her, though, again and again, it would rise to the nostrils of his remembrance, with a stalely sweet scent like the ghost of dead lotus-blossoms.

She was on the shadow side of the forever. Her soul, he would repeat to himself, incessantly, defiantly, belligerently, had leaped the dragon gate. Broken were the fetters that had held him a captive to the tinkle-tinkle-tinkle of her jeweled earrings. A mere picture she was, painted on the screen of eternity, impersonal, immensely aloof, passed from the unrealities of the earth life to the realities of the further cosmos. He must banish the thought of her, must forget her.

And he did forget her, again and again, with the effort, the pain of forgetting choking his heart.

Sitting by the window, his subconscious mind centered on his tao, his salvation, the blessed destruction of his individual entity, "Reverential and Sedate" huddled in a fold of his loose sleeve, scrutinizing street and sky with unseeing eyes, he would forget her through the long, greasy days, while the reek of Pell Street rose up to the tortured clouds with a mingled aroma of sweat and blood and opium and suffering, while the strident clamor of Pell Street blended with the distant clamor of the Broadway mart.

He would forget her through the long, dim evenings, while the sun died in a gossamer veil of gold and mauve, and the moon cut out of the ether, bloated and anemic and sentimental, and the night vaulted to a purple canopy, pricked with chilly, indifferent stars.

He would sit there, silent, motionless, and forget, while the stars died, and the moon and the night, and the sky flushed to the opal of young morning, and

again came day and the sun and the reek and the maze and the soot and the clamors of Pell Street.

Forgetting, always forgetting; forgetting his love, forgetting the tiny bound feet of the Plum Blossom, the Lotus Bud, the Crimson Butterfly. Her little, little feet! Ahee! He had made his heart a carpet for her little, little feet.

Forgetting, reaching up to his *tao* with groping soul; and then again the thought of his dead wife, again his *tao* slipping back; again the travail of forget ting, to be forever repeated.

And so one day he died; and it was Wuh Wang, the little, onyx-eyed, flighty wife of Li Hsu, the hatchet-man, who, perhaps, speaking to Tzu Mo, the daughter of Yu Ch'ang, the priest, grasped a fragment of the truth.

"Say, kid," she slurred in the Pell Street jargon, "that there Li Ping-Yeng wot's kicked the bucket th' other day, well, you know wot them Chinks said— how he was always trying to get next to that— now— *tao* of his by trying to forget his wife. Well, mebbe he was all wrong. Mebbe his *tao* wasn't forgetting at all. Mebbe it was just his love for her, his always thinking of her, his not forgetting her that was his real *tao*."

"Mebbe," replied Tzu Mo. "I should worry!"

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10: The Trap

W. Douglas Newton

1884-1951

The Lone Hand, 10 May 1919

THREE fingers of light came out suddenly to the south, stabbing the sky. As they saw this, the line of men on the edge of the ridge shifted a little on their bellies and sighed. The Turkish captain, who had been employing his tongue only in vivacious and singularly immoral conversation with the two correspondents, stopped talking. He got up and walked to his men.

"That is Ruchdi," he said, to nobody in particular. He bent down and touched a private on the shoulder.

"Go to Savas Pacha," he said to the man when he stood upright. "Tell him that Ruchdi Bey has effected the juncture. We have his signal from the south end of the pass. All now is ready. Go and say that"— he smiled with a secret and Oriental amusement— "and come back quickly," he ended, "I want you here."

He came back to the correspondents.

"That man," he told them, "is an Albanian, and he is from this Eyalet. He was my body servant when I was here with the District Administration, so I know. There will be a good many of his friends over there in front. It will be amusing to watch him shooting them, for he is my best marksman. His name is Midhat." The captain's face lighted again with the pale and frozen chuckle. "When they cannot get into the brigandage they usually come to us," he explained. "They exist merely for fighting."

He lit another cigarette and walked along the line of prostrate men, slowly looking to their arms. He was the personification of indolence, yet nothing escaped him. In ten minutes the Albanian, Midhat, came swinging back from the brigade commander,

"You are to signal, and then to engage," was what he told the captain. The helio flared three times into the sky almost at the tail of his message. In a breath the rifles opened with an appalling clap.

The Albanians, whom they had laboured these three days to trap, began to move, running about in their lines in the valley at the first discharge. They looked like disturbed ants. The quick glint of their white kilted fustanellas showed in and out among the rocks.They made admirable targets. TheTurks, on their bellies, fired andfired at them with a brisk and expeditious ease.

The thunder of their volleying was flung back at them from the rocky escarpments that built the sides of the valley. It was a running, continuous, hammering; but the hammer was plied by a giant.

The smoke of the Ottoman discharges squirted blue and thin, and then curled back over the heads of the troops, lazily, in thick vapours. Now and then an indolent air would come and tear the billows into veils of dirty cotton wool. There was moisture in the air, and the smoke hung about.

The Albanians were firing briskly, too. From among the brown rocks the sparkle and flash of rifles lipped out, and the smoke welled up, clinging to the stones. Bullets were arriving, singing, over the troops.

"Thee-eeu, thee-eeu," they screamed, the thin high note of death.

Now and then they fulfilled their office. In the line a man would rise up swaying to his knees. His hands would move frantically. When he fell, he came down abruptly, in an odd, eccentric, and limp bundle; his attitude was singularly like that of an uninspired sack. Or a man would suddenly spit a scream, and would shiver, and his knees would draw in towards his chin, while his fingers dug the grass in jerky efforts. Sometimes a man would turn over, like a sleeper disturbed by a fly, and die very quietly, his eyes to the glory of the sky. The wounded were always noticeable. They would get to their knees a moment after their hurt, and crawl, and crawl— somewhere. But they never seemed to get there.

The casualties, however, were not heavy. The company was too well sangared. They were able to proceed with their admirable business of slaying, with a certain decent comfort and immunity. The function of dying was mostly relegated to those men in the valley. There were places in the valley where the fustanellas drifted, and settled like flakes of snow. They were being dropped at all places. They could be seen jerking up, in a smitten-rabbit fashion, and falling down and fluttering and trembling helplessly in the grasp of death, and then being quiet— very. All along the advance there were little white tumbled heaps of them, and it looked peculiar.

The younger correspondent, who was very young, had strange emotions in the stomach when at first he saw the men falling, but in the end he found the kick and tumble of them vastly exciting. The Otto- man captain was enveloped in an aura of fearful enjoyment, conspicuous profanity and cigarette smoke.

The Albanians were fighting very well. They have the habit. They were far from easily broken. Very stubbornly they fell back from hold to hold, and they squabbled over every decimal. They retired only before superior pressure, and very slowly. It was only when Ruchdi Bey's men caught and held them that they gave the slightest sign of being beaten. Between the two fires they collected into a grim and implacable little group, savagely fighting the engagement to the last flicker.

They exhibited conspicuous collective courage, but they also received great stimulus from their old leader, who moved about the band encouraging their

efforts. It was quite easy to see that this old man was the keystone of the defence.

He was a noble old fellow, very tall and very grey, and he had a chest like a barrel. From his jacket of gold embroidered velvet, and the metal greaves over his scarlet leggings, he seemed obviously a person of importance. Possibly he was a chief. In any case he was sufficiently important to produce an effect, almost galvanic, upon his plucky followers. They answered to his voice as a watch will answer to a spring.

When the captain saw this old man, his tongue clicked on his teeth, and he sucked breath and swore softly. He stood looking at the belligerent patriarch, and smiling a little, not prettily. The Ottoman smile is grim, it has found much of its humour in torture. When the younger correspondent came up to him the smile was nearly a grin. The eyes that were turned upon the newspaper man were burning with the small flame of amusement.

The correspondent was a young correspondent. He knew All About It.

"That old buffer there," he told the captain, "he's at the bottom of all this fuss. If you could pip him, the fighting would fluff out, it—"

The Turk came round on him and laughed.

"That is so," he said. "We must get rid of him." He laughed again. There was a delicious humour in his mind. He walked away, going again to the Albanian who was called Midhat. He kicked him softly, to attract his attention.

"That old man over there," he said. He pointed to the vigorous greybeard, plainly visible among the few remaining Albanians. "He is the cause of all this continued trouble. We must stop him. Please shoot him through the head." He looked down at the marksman It was plain he was very much amused.

The man Midhat, however, was not. He glared up at his officer, and his face grew to an unripe olive tint as he glared; his throat worked. The captain nodded and repeated his command.

"Please shoot that old man," he reiterated. "And through the head."

He nodded and smiled, but there was something behind the smile; something steel-like and inexorable. Also his fingers were about the butt of his revolver. The Albanian half rose, his whole body seemed to work and to writhe in frantic protest, but the menace and the strength of the Turkish officer's personality overcame him. He fell back and put his hand to his eyes; then he looked along his rifle. The captain stood over him and said:—

"One shot, I think, should be enough," his voice was good tempered and smiling, but it had the edge of a knife.

One shot was enough.

When the captain reached the two correspondents his merriment was almost beyond control. Tears of amusement started to his eyes; his sides

quaked. The humour that possessed his mind was quite irresistible and unique. The correspondents, as men of the world, were eager to share. They pricked the man with questions.

"O-oh!" laughed the captain

"O-oh, oh, oh! It is quite too funny. Droll—immensely droll." He clapped a hand to his gross side to ease the sting of the enjoyment. "Incredibly funny," he giggled. "That that old man. That old chief was— was the Albanian, Midhat's, father. He's— he's just had to exe-

cute his own father— O-oh, oh! It is very funny!"

The two correspondents looked at the Albanian whose name was Midhat. He was on his breast, and he was digging the hard rock with his working fingers. They were soft and bloody at the tips. The man's face was in the dirt.

The humour of the situation apparently did not appeal to him. The rifle fire crept down decrescendo, decrescendo to nothingness. The defence flickered and went out like an expiring candle. There was a feeble sound of cheering. Fingers of light began hectically to flicker in the air. A bugle sang.

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11: The Bligsby Diamonds

Granville Sedley

fl. 1912

The Lone Hand, 1 Aug 1912

Probably the only published story by this otherwise unknown Australian writer

THE Bligsby diamonds did not, perhaps, enjoy the fame of the jewels of the ducal houses of Westminster or Devonshire, yet, in their way, they were notable ornaments. Host people within a fifty-mile radius of Sandy Blight, the New South Wales station of the Bligsby family, had seen and marvelled at them; it being the exasperating custom of Mrs. Bligsby to humiliate her less affluent female neighbors by wearing the entire outfit at the dreadful concerts and theatrical entertainments which occurred periodically in the Hall of the Blightville School of Arts.

Up to 1901, the Bligsbys had lived precariously at home, with the shadow of the mortgage forever on the doormat, as it were, and the obscene odor of long-dead and unburied sheep permeating the premises. Since the breakage of the drought it had been the custom of the chatelaine of Sandy Blight to rent a furnished flat every year at Parklania, in Macquarie-street, and there, sometimes with, but more often without, the help of Bligsby, to entertain the members of her set.

A calamitous type was Bligsby from the point of view of a wife avid to cut an impressive figure in Society. With sickening persistence he adhered to the Jemima boot convention of another age and social circle. Furthermore, he wore, in and out of season, a vast made-up tie, suggestive of a blackened chest protector or poultice.

Let it not be imagined, however, that Bligsby was by way of being a merry, careless old simpleton. Far from it. He had what is known as the “money-nose” in an aggravated form. He was as hard, temperamentally, as chilled steel. At the club, it was commonly opined that he had no time to look after his dress, being chronically overworked at the more congenial business of taking down his friends.

To get back to the Bligsby diamonds: their owner had them all on at the moment she and her husband are brought under the readers notice, the occasion or justification being a sort of family dinner party. The company consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Bligsby, her cousin, Mrs. Haversidge, and Mr. The legal amorist had gingerly deposited his right foot upon the beaded slipper. William Bloggs, youth of fashion, junior partner in the legal firm of Garnishee, Bloggs and Bloggs, and accredited admirer of his hostess.

Young William had dined right pleasurably that night, with no thought of impending trouble in his well-oiled head. As the filets mignons were borne in, sizzling beneath generous applications of sauce Bernaise (the Bligsbys kept their own chef, spurning the services of the Hibernian food-miner who cooked for the rank and file of the tenants), and, as his third beaker of Cordon Rouge sped icily to that bourne where it was likely to do most good, the legal amorist had gingerly extended his right leg, deposited the foot attached thereto upon the beaded slipper of his affinify— an indispensable ceremony or rite on these occasions— and felt at peace with all the world. Later, having frustrated Bligsby's shameless effort to palm off on him a sixpenny Horribilos— one of those cigars whose savor resembles a hot dust-storm— and having courteously but firmly insisted on being tendered, instead, the fellow of the sound and costly weed which his host was smoking, he had strolled complacently into the drawing-room.

It is a gracious sensation this of strolling into another man's drawing-room, well primed with his vintage wine, smoking one of his best cigars, and blandly conscious that the eyes of his wife will grow the brighter for your arrival— and young William Bloggs appreciated it to the full. But, after him shuffled the preposterous Bligsby. The eternal problem that faced the sentimentalists at all these entertainments was how to dispose of Bligsby. It turned out to be a simple affair, this time. Bligsby was willing to engage the affluent and gambling-mad Mrs. Haversidge at double-dummy bridge (10s. a hundred and 10s. corners) till further orders. He considered the contest a certainty for him, by reason of his superior skill.

Nor was the lady averse from the fray, since she had watched Bligsby sink half a dozen large glasses of champagne during dinner, and deduced shrewdly, and correctly, that he had treated himself to at least two, possibly three or four, liqueur brandies afterwards. Her theory was, that with Bligsby a trifle muddled, or at least mellow, she should be able to make her taxi-fare out of him, and a bit over, with some ease. And so, after a decent interval, the lovers, having seen the two superfluities absorbed in their predatory pastime, found themselves alone together in the dining-room. Nominally, they were there to get refreshments for the players; in point of actual fact, it grieves me to record, they were affectionately hugging one another over against the Mongolian-built sideboard which the Bligsbys' landlord had bought the previous year under the flamingly false pretence that it was "real Sheraton."

"My angel," murmured Bloggs, straining the lady to his bosom, convulsively, and yet with considerate regard to the fact that she had but lately dined, and was, doubtless, as tightly laced as the next woman— a feat at

which, as a result of earnest practice with every conceivable type of female, he had become an adept.

"Darling! Darling!" she murmured ecstatically, "I sometimes dread to think how I worship you,"

Whereupon the young man remarked to the ceiling that she was enchanting, and that her proximity made his head swim, and she assured the back of his neck that he was her heaven, her earth and her life, and that if, by some malign prank of Fate, they were torn apart, the yawning tomb would appeal to her as a welcome refuge.

After this sort of flamboyant chat had proceeded for some time, the lovers began to find it banal. Their passion was, in reality, little more than skin deep. Her fading charms had found favor in his sight chiefly because, pleasure-loving economist that he was, the friendship represented an unlimited vista of excellent and free meals. She clove to him, leech-like, partly because he was her junior by about a decade, partly because she suspected that several of her friends were manoeuvring to supplant her in his notoriously vagrom affections.

It is at this stage in the drama that the Bligsby diamonds, or at any rate some of them, definitely take their call, so to speak, and advance to the footlights. The pride of the collection was the pendant. The splendor of Mrs. Bligsby's pendant was acknowledged by the bitterest carpers. The single diamond in the centre had been pronounced by no less an authority than Barney Moss, the distinguished penciller, to be alone worth a small fortune. The ornament was attached to Mrs. Bligsby's neck by a frail platinum chain. Time and again Bligsby had warned her that she would lose the blanky thing yet, if she didn't watch it, and then, if she expected him to blanky well waste his hard-earned money buying her another, well— and so forth, and so on. Would that she had hearkened to her worthy husband's warnings and invested in a stouter chain!

During one of Bloggs' more vigorous embraces, that evening, the pendant came off. Guided by the hand of evil fortune, it fell, unnoticed, into the tiny opening between the legal gentleman's shirt front and white waistcoat. And there it stayed. One last hypocritical hug, one final outpouring of more or less bogus sentiment, and the twain seized whisky and brandy decanters, cold sodas and the like, and made smugly for the drawing-room. Their arrival was a relief to Mrs. Haversidge, who, to her annoyance, had found that the abhorrent Bligsby was not only sufficiently sober to play at the top of his form, but was in luck to boot.

"Here are the drinks, Henry dear," she cried, with all the rapture of some parched inebriate. "Let's leave off this wretched old rub, and settle up over the others."

Beyond resolutely checking her disingenuous attempt to nullify the effects of the previous deal by mixing the cards together on the table, Henry remained impassive. He was handling an exceptionally powerful “no trumper,” and meant to win the rubber and the couple of sovereigns that went therewith, or know the reason why. His task accomplished, he rose, collected his winnings, poured himself out a brandy and soda, drank half of it, and then, gazing distractedly at his lady wife, exclaimed : “Why, Flo! What in 'Evvin’s name” (the old man was shaky about the aspirates in moments of emotion) “ ’ave yer done with the pendant?”

A search was instituted, which, beginning perfunctorily, became in a brief space of time absolutely feverish. The dining-room, the narrow hall, the bedrooms, even the bathroom, were scoured with meticulous care. Bligsby led the hunt, with the frantic energy of one to whom the loss of money or money’s' worth, is among life’s grimest tragedies.

His helpmeet was little behind him in the matter of keenness and energy. Mrs. Haversidge and Bloggs, on the other hand, played a paltry and indolent role. They stood vaguely, rather wearily, round for the most part, and, at what they conceived to be decent intervals, bleated words of grief, commiseration, stupefaction and the like.

“But how curious , my dear! Where could it have gone?” “Rum, dashed rum. Wonder what the dickens could have happened to the dashed thing!”—imbecile utterances such as these were their chief contributions to the investigation.

There came a time when exhausted nature clamored for a respite; and husband and wife, dishevelled as to their clothes, and breathing fiercely through their nostrils, arose from the floor and confessed themselves temporarily beaten. And it was just here that the restless eyes of Bligsby suddenly became riveted in a sort of cataleptic glare on the carefully-laundered midriff of William Bloggs. Swiftly he walked to that unconscious young attorney, and, with a violent grab, prised the lost article from its hiding-place.

A hideous silence followed. In moments of extreme stress and peril folks are said to see the whole of their past lives hurrying by them like some bolting cinematograph film. Young William did not visualise his past: it was his future that he pictured, and it was bleak and horrible indeed. A costly divorce suit, heavy damages mayhap, and afterwards marriage with Mrs. Bligsby. Intolerable prospect! He shuddered and turned pale. As a matter of fact, his position was far more serious than he suspected. Bligsby’s trust in his wife was complete. He could more readily have credited her with theft than with infidelity.

From the moment that he glimpsed the pendant over the edge of Bloggs' waist-coat, there had been but one explanation of the affair, so far as he was concerned— the young man was a thief. Simultaneously there leapt to his recollection a thousand slights and insolences that he had endured at the hands of this supercilious young ruffian. He was in no mood for leniency. With some hazy idea of what was seemly in such circumstances, he walked portentously to the door and closed it— a work of supererogation, since the servants had been out of the flat and securely immured amid the cockroaches of the basement of the building for hours past. Then, in the tone of voice which he conceived to have been used by Mr. Wilson, sen., at the Tranby Croft unpleasantness, he addressed his flabbergasted guest as follows:

"An' so, Bloggs, yer've repaid me hospertality and that of me wife by tryin' ter get away with 'er joolery!" Blank amazement at the old idiot's imperception appeared on the mobile countenance of Bloggs. The facial convulsion was ascribed by Bligsby to terror born of guilt unmasked.

"Steal Mrs. Bligsby's diamonds! For Heaven's sake, don't talk such rot, man," hectored William, but nervously withal, for a chill feeling of insecurity was gripping his soul.

"Ho!" cried his accuser sardonically. "Then perhaps yer can explain how 'er pendant got into yer waistcoat."

"It— it must have fallen there," stammered the young man weakly.

"Look 'ere, Bloggs," said. Bligsby, with an infuriating air of broad-minded tolerance and impartiality, "if yer want ter do any good for yerself, you'd have ter fake up a better yarn than that. D'yer want ter know my opinion of it? Well, it's rotten. Abso-bally-lootly rotten, old feller." And, changing from banter to judicial gloom, he proceeded to discuss the unlikeliness of a jury listening patiently to such a story. Bloggs cast a hunted glance in the direction of Mrs. Bligsby. A word from her, and all would be well, or, at least, comparatively so. After all, what was it that had occurred? A kiss— a mere nothing, an indiscretion to be easily explained away among people of the world. Mrs. Bligsby, however, kept her gaze firmly averted. It presently smote Bloggs with dreadful force that she had no intention of clearing him from the stigma of criminality at the expense of her own good name; also, he perceived that any attempt on his part to do so would evoke from her a flat denial. He brooded miserably, inconsequently, on trapped rats, chained lions, caged apes and other leashed and powerless creatures, and remained dumb.

The repellent voice of Bligsby disturbed his anguished self-communings.

"The point is," said the old man harshly, "wodder yer goin' ter do about it? Hay?"

"Do! What can I do?" clamored the youth.

"Well, if yer put it that way," answered Bligsby, "I'll tell yer what yer can do at once. Yer can take the choice between prosecution and acting like any other person with the instincks of a gentleman that's been found out in an act o' rank criminality."

Bloggs, now thoroughly unnerved, disclaimed with ashen face any desire to stand his trial, and listened, horror-stricken, while Bligsby detailed the penalties which he held to be his (Bligsby's) duty to impose. Bloggs, in consideration of immunity from legal action, was to resign at once from his clubs, instruct the A.D.C.'s-in-waiting to expunge his name from the books of both Government Houses, engage never to address any member of the Bligsby family again, and cease to visit those houses which the Bligsbys were accustomed to frequent. The two ladies wept blusterously and hiccuped in each other's arms on the sofa; Bloggs was abject in his pleadings for mercy. In vain. Bligsby was adamant. He had a dooty to Society, and he meant to do it.

William Bloggs proceeded to his comfortable abode that night feeling as suicidally hopeless as any man in the State of New South Wales.

I WOULD LIKE to end here, with poetic justice done, a shameful liaison ended, and Society freed of an undesirable unit; but the eternal verities forbid. As a matter of sordid fact, what Mr. Bloggs did, after he had slept fitfully on his trouble, breakfasted ravenously on a long, strong brandy and Apollinaris, and taken counsel with his senior partner, the Honorable Josiah Garnishee, M.L.C. (a wise old pillar of the Kirk, with monkey whiskers and an intimate knowledge of villainy in all its ramifications), was to pay a private visit to his host of the night before at the city offices of the Bligsby estate.

There, without time-wasting circumlocution (Josiah had been insistent on the point that delicate periphrasis was wholly out of place in dealing with one possessed of the insult-proof hide of a Bligsby), he put the financial aspect of the case. Was Bligsby prepared to accept a couple of hundred to treat the whole deplorable occurrence as a joke? No; Bligsby was not. Three? Four? Five hundred? Right. He should have it. And in due course Bligsby had it. The affair with Mrs. Bligsby was never renewed.

And often when William Bloggs muses on the inexpressibly boring effect her geyser-like bursts of affection had on him, and when he recalls the way her crude hugs used to disfigure his ties, he is able to assure himself that perhaps, after all, the distressing and costly business was for the best.

12: The Inmate of the Dungeon

W. C. Morrow

William Chambers Morrow, 1853-1923
Collected in: *The Ape, the Idiot and Other People*, 1897
The English Illustrated Magazine, Jan 1898

AFTER the Board of State Prison Directors, sitting in session at the prison, had heard and disposed of the complaints and petitions of a number of convicts, the warden announced that all who wished to appear had been heard. Thereupon a certain uneasy and apprehensive expression, which all along had sat upon the faces of the directors, became visibly deeper. The chairman— nervous, energetic, abrupt, incisive man— glanced at a slip of paper in his hand, and said to the warden:

"Send a guard for convict No. 14,208."

The warden started and became slightly pale. Somewhat confused, he haltingly replied, "Why, he has expressed no desire to appear before you."

"Nevertheless, you will send for him at once," responded the chairman.

The warden bowed stiffly and directed a guard to produce the convict. Then, turning to the chairman, he said:

"I am ignorant of your purpose in summoning this man, but of course I have no objection. I desire, however, to make a statement concerning him before he appears."

"When we shall have called for a statement from you," coldly responded the chairman, "you may make one."

The warden sank back into his seat. He was a tall, fine-looking man, well-bred and intelligent, and had a kindly face. Though ordinarily cool, courageous, and self-possessed, he was unable to conceal a strong emotion which looked much like fear. A heavy silence fell upon the room, disturbed only by the official stenographer, who was sharpening his pencils. A stray beam of light from the westering sun slipped into the room between the edge of the window-shade and the sash, and fell across the chair reserved for the convict. The uneasy eyes of the warden finally fell upon this beam, and there his glance rested. The chairman, without addressing any one particularly, remarked :

"There are ways of learning what occurs in a prison without the assistance of either the wardens or the convicts."

Just then the guard appeared with the convict, who shambled in painfully and laboriously, as with a string he held up from the floor the heavy iron ball which was chained to his ankles. He was about fortyfive years old. Undoubtedly he once had been a man. of uncommon physical strength, for a powerful skeleton showed underneath the sallow skin which covered his emaciated frame. His sallowness was peculiar and ghastly. It was partly that of

disease, and partly of something worse; and it was this something that accounted also for his shrunken muscles and manifest feebleness.

There had been no time to prepare him for presentation to the Board. As a consequence, his unstockinged toes showed thiough his gaping shoes; the dingy suit of prison stripes which covered his gaunt frame was frayed and tattered ; his hair had not been recently cut to the prison fashion, and, being rebellious, stood out upon his head like bristles; and his beard, which, like his hair, was heavily dashed with gray, had not been shaved for weeks. These incidents of his appearance combined with a very peculiar expression of his face to make an extraordinary picture. It is difficult to describe this almost unearthly expression. With a certain suppressed ferocity it combined an inflexibility of purpose that sat like an iron mask upon him. His eyes were hungry and eager; they were the living part of him, and they shone luminous from beneath shaggy brows. His forehead was massive, his head of fine proportions, his jaw square and strong, and his thin, high nose showed traces of an ancestry that must have made a mark in some corner of the world at some time in history. He was prematurely old; this was seen in his gray hair and in the uncommonly deep wrinkles which lined his forehead and the corners of his eyes and of his mouth.

Upon stumbling weakly into the room, faint with the labor of walking and of carrying the iron ball, he looked around eagerly, like a bear driven to his haunches by the hounds. His glance passed so rapidly and unintelligently from one face to another that he could not have had time to form a conception of the persons present, until his swift eyes encountered the face of the warden. Instantly they flashed; he craned his neck forward; his lips opened and became blue; the wrinkles deepened about his mouth and eyes; his form grew rigid, and his breathing stopped. This sinister and terrible attitude— all the more so because he was wholly unconscious of it— was disturbed only when the chairman sharply commanded, "Take that seat."

The convict started as though he had been struck, and turned his eyes upon the chairman. He drew a deep inspiration, which wheezed and rattled as it passed into his chest. An expression of excruciating pain swept over his face. He dropped the ball, which struck the floor with a loud sound, and his long, bony fingers tore at the striped shirt over his breast. A groan escaped him, and he would have sunk to the floor had not the guard caught him and held him upright. In a moment it was over, and then, collapsing with exhaustion, he sank into the chair. There he sat, conscious and intelligent, but slouching, disorganized, and indifferent.

The chairman turned sharply to the guard. "Why did you manacle this man," he demanded, "when he is evidently so weak, and when none of the others were manacled?"

"Why, sir," stammered the guard, "surely you know who this man is : he is the most dangerous and desperate—"

"We know all about that. Remove his manacles."

The guard obeyed. The chairman turned to the convict, and in a kindly manner said, "Do you know who we are?"

The convict got himself together a little and looked steadily at the chairman. "No," he replied after a pause. His manner was direct, and his voice was deep, though hoarse.

"We are the State Prison Directors. We have heard of your case, and we want you to tell us the whole truth about it."

The convict's mind worked slowly, and it was some time before he could comprehend the explanation and request. When he had accomplished that task he said, very slowly, "I suppose you want me to make a complaint, sir."

"Yes— if you have any to make."

The convict was getting himself in hand. He straightened, and gazed at the chairman with a peculiar intensity. Then firmly and clearly he answered, "I've no complaint to make."

The two men sat looking at each other in silence, and as they looked a bridge of human sympathy was slowly reared between them. The chairman rose, passed around an intervening table, went up to the convict, and laid a hand on his gaunt shoulder. There was a tenderness in his voice that few men had ever heard there.

"I know," said he, "that you are a patient and uncomplaining man, or we should have heard from you long ago. In asking you to make a statement I am merely asking for your help to right a wrong, if a wrong has been done. Leave your own wishes entirely out of consideration, if you prefer. Assume, if you will, that it is not our intention or desire either to give you relief or to make your case harder for you. There are fifteen hundred numan beings in this prison, and they are under the absolute control of one man. If a serious wrong is practiced upon one, it may be upon others. I ask you in the name of common humanity, and as one man of another, to put us in the way of working justice in this prison. If you have the instincts of a man within you, you will comply with my request. Speak out, therefore, like a man, and have no fear of anything."

The convict was touched and stung. He looked up steadily into the chairman's face, and firmly said. "There is nothing in this world that I fear." Then he hung his head, and presently he raised it and added, "I will tell you all about it."

At that moment he shifted his position so as to bring the beam of light perpendicularly across his face and chest, and it seemed to split him in twain. He saw it, and feasted his gaze upon it as it lay upon his breast After a time he thus proceeded, speaking very slowly, and in a strangely monotonous voice:

"I was sent up for twenty years for killing a man I hadn't been a criminal: I killed him without think ing, for he had robbed me and wronged me. I came here thirteen years ago. I had trouble at first— it galled me to be a convict ; but I got over that, because the warden that was here then understood me and was kind to me, and he made me one of the best men in the prison. I don't say this to make you think I'm complaining about the present warden, or that he didn't treat me kindly: I can take care of myself with him. I am not making any complaint. I ask no man's favor, and I fear no man's power."

"That is all right. Proceed."

"After the warden had made a good man out of me I worked faithfully, sir ; I did everything they told me to do; I worked willingly and like a slave. It did me good to work, and I worked hard. I never violated any of the rules after I was broken in. And then the law was passed giving credits to the men for good conduct. My term was twenty years, but I did so well that my credits piled up, and after I had been here ten years I could begin to see my way out. There were only about three years left. And, sir, I worked faithfully to make those years good. I knew that if I did anything against the rules I should lose my credits and have to stay nearly ten years longer. I knew all about that, sir: I nevei forgot it. I wanted to be a free man again, and I planned to go away somewhere and make the fight all over— to be a man in the world once more."

"We know all about your record in the prison. Proceed."

"Well, it was this way. You know they were doing some heavy work in the quarries and on the grades, and they wanted the strongest men in the prison. There weren't very many: there never are very many strong men in a prison. And I was one of 'em that they put on the heavy work, and I did it faithfully. They used to pay the men for extra work— not pay 'em money, but the value of the money in candles, tobacco, extra clothes, and things like that. I loved to work, and I loved to work extra, and so did some of the other men. On Saturdays the men who had done extra work would fall in and go up to the captain of the guard and he would give to each mail what was coming to him. He had it all down in a book, and when a man would come up and call for what was due him the captain would give it to him, whatever he wanted that the rules allowed.

"One Saturday I fell in with the others. A good many were ahead of me in the line, and when they got what they wanted they fell into a new line, waiting

to be marched to the cells. When my turn in the line came I went up to the captain and said I would take mine in tobacco. He looked at me pretty sharply, and said, 'How did you get back in that line?' I told him I belonged there— that I had come to get my extra. He looked at his book, and he said, 'You've had your extra: you got tobacco.' And he told me to fall into the new line. I told him I hadn't received any tobacco; I said I hadn't got my extra, and hadn't been up before. He said, 'Don't spoil your record by trying to steal a little tobacco. Fall in.' ... It hurt me, sir, I hadn't been up; I hadn't got my extra; and I wasn't a thief, and I never had been a thief, and no living man had a right to call me a thief. I said to him, straight, 'I won't fall in till I get my extra, and I'm not a thief, and no man can call me one, and no man can rob me of my just dues.' He turned pale, and said, 'Fall in, there.' I said, 'I won't fall in till I get my dues.'

"With that he raised his hand as a signal, and the two guards behind him covered me with their rifles, and the guard on the west wall, and one on the north wall, and one on the portico in front of the arsenal, all coveied me with rifles. The captain turned to a trusty and told him to call the warden. The warden came out, and the captain told him I was trying to run double on my extra, and said I was impudent and insubordinate and refused to fall in. The warden said, 'Drop that and fall in.' I told him I wouldn't fall in. I said I hadn't run double, that I hadn't got my extra, and that I would stay there till I died before I would be robbed of it. He asked the captain if there wasn't some mistake, and the captain looked at his book and said there was no mistake; he said he remembered me when I came up and got the tobacco and he saw me fall into the new line, but he didn't see me get back in the old line. The warden didn't ask the other men if they saw me get my tobacco and slip back into the old line. He just ordered me to fall in. I told him I would die before I would do that. I said I wanted my just dues and no more, and I asked him to call on the other men in line to prove that I hadn't been up.

"He said, 'That's enough of this.' He sent all the other men to the cells, and left me standing there. Then he told two guards to take me to the cells. They came and took hold of me, and I threw them off as if they were babies. Then more guards came up, and one of them hit me over the head with a club, and I fell. And then, sir"— here the convict's voice fell to a whisper— "and then he told them to take me to the dungeon."

The sharp, steady glitter of the convict's eyes failed, and he hung his head and looked despairingly at the floor.

"Go on," said the chairman.

"They took me to the dungeon, sir. Did you ever see the dungeon?"

"Perhaps; but you may tell us about it."

The cold, steady gleam returned to the convict's eyes, as he fixed them again upon the chairman.

"There are several little rooms in the dungeon. The one they put me in was about five feet by eight. It has steel walls and ceiling, and a granite floor. The only light that comes in passes through a slit in the door. The slit is an inch wide and five inches long. It doesn't give much light, because the door is thick. It's about four inches thick, and is made of oak and sheet steel bolted through. The slit runs this way"— making a horizontal motion in the air— "and it is four inches above my eyes when I stand on tiptoe. And I can't look out at the factory wall forty feet away unless I hook my fingers in the slit and pull myself up."

He stopped and regarded his hands, the peculiar appearance of which we all had observed. The ends of the fingers were uncommonly thick; they were red and swollen, and the knuckles were curiously marked with deep white scars.

"Well, sir, there wasn't anything at all in the dungeon, but they gave me a blanket, and they put me on bread and water. That's all they ever give you in the dungeon. They bring the bread and water once a day, and that is at night, because if they come in the daytime it lets in the light.

"The next night after they put me in— it was Sunday night— the warden came with the guard and asked me if I was all right. I said I was. He said, 'Will you behave yourself and go to work to-morrow?' I said, 'No, sir; I won't go to work till I get what is due me.' He shrugged his shoulders, and said, 'Very well: maybe you'll change your mind after you have been in here a week.'

"They kept me there a week. The next Sunday night the warden came and said, 'Are you ready to go to work to-morrow?' and I said, 'No; I will not go to work till I get what is due me.' He called me hard names. I said it was a man's duty to demand his rights, and that a man who would stand to be treated like a dog was no man at all."

The chairman interrupted. "Did you not reflect," he asked, "that these officers would not have stooped to rob you?— that it was through some mistake they withheld your tobacco, and that in any event you had a choice of two things to lose— one a plug of tobacco, and the other seven years of freedom?"

"But they angered me and hurt me, sir, by calling me a thief, and they threw me in the dungeon like a beast.... I was standing for my rights, and my rights were my manhood; and that is something a man can carry sound to the grave, whether he's bond or free, weak or powerful, rich or poor."

"Well, after you refused to go to work what did the warden do?"

The convict, although tremendous excitement must have surged and boiled within him, slowly, deliberately, and weakly came to his feet. He placed his right foot on the chair, and rested his right elbow on the raised knee. The index finger of his right hand, pointing to the chairman and moving slightly to lend emphasis to his narrative, was the only thing that modified the rigid immobility of his figure. Without a single change in the pitch or modulation of his voice, never hurrying, but speaking with the slow and dreary monotony with which he had begun, he nevertheless— partly by reason of these evidences of his incredible self-control— made a formidable picture as he proceeded :

"When I told him that, sir, he said he'd take me to the ladder and see if he couldn't make me change my mind.... Yes, sir; he said he'd take me to the ladder." (Here there was a long pause.) "And I a human being, with flesh on my bones and the heart of a man in my body. The other warden hadn't tried to break my spirit on the ladder. He did break it, though; he broke it clear to the bottom of the man inside of me; but he did it with a human word, and not with the dungeon and the ladder. I didn't believe the warden when he said he would take me to the ladder. I couldn't imagine myself alive and put through at the ladder, and I couldn't imagine any human being who could find the heart to put me through. If I had believed him I would have strangled him then and there, and got my body full of lead while doing it. No, sir; I could not believe it.

"And then he told me to come on. I went with him and the guards, He brought me to the ladder. I had never seen it before. It was a heavy wooden ladder, leaned against the wall, and the bottom was bolted to the floor and the top to the wall. A whip was on the floor." (Again there was a pause.) "The warden told me to strip, sir, and I stripped.... And still I didn't believe he would whip me. I thought he just wanted to scare me.

"Then he told me to face up to the ladder. I did so, and reached my arms up to the straps. They strapped my arms to the ladder, and stretched so hard that they pulled me up clear of the floor. Then they strapped my legs to the ladder. The warden then picked up the whip. He said to me, 'I'll give you one more chance: will you go to work to-morrow?' I said, 'No; I won't go to work till I get my dues.' 'Very well,' said he, 'you'll get your dues now.' And then he stepped back and raised the whip. I turned my head and looked at him, and I could see it in his eyes that he meant to strike.... And when I saw that, sir, I felt that something inside of me was about to burst."

The convict paused to gather up his strength for the crisis of his story, yet not in the least particular did he change his position, the slight movement of his pointing finger, the steady gleam of his eye, or the slow monotony of his speech. I had never witnessed any scene so dramatic as this, and yet all was absolutely simple and unintentional. I had been thrilled by the greatest actors,

as with matchless skill they gave rein to their genius in tragic situations; but how inconceivably tawdry and cheap such pictures seemed in comparison with this] The claptrap of the music, the lights, the posing, the wry faces, the gasps, lunges, staggerings, rolling eyes— how flimsy and colorless, how mocking and grotesque, they all appeared beside this simple, uncouth, but genuine expression of immeasurable agony!

The stenographer held his pencil poised above the paper, and wrote no more.

"And then the whip came down across my back. The something inside of me twisted hard and then broke wide open, and went pouring all through me like melted iron. It was a hard fight to keep my head clear, but I did it. And then I said to the warden this; 'You've struck me with a whip in cold blood. You've tied me up hand and foot, to whip me like a dog. Well, whip me, then, till you fill your belly with it. You are a coward. You are lower, and meaner, and cowardlier than the lowest and meanest dog that ever yelped when his master kicked him. You were bom a coward. Cowards will lie and steal, and you are the same as a thief and liar. No hound would own you for a friend. Whip me hard and long, you coward. Whip me, I say. See how good a coward feels when he ties up a man and whips him like a dog. Whip me till the last breath quits my body: if you leave me alive I will kill you for this.'

"His face got white. He asked me if I meant that, and I said, 'Yes; before God, I do.' Then he took the whip in both hands and came down with all his might."

"That was nearly two years ago," said the chairman. "You would not kill him now, would you?"

"Yes. I will kill him if I get a chance; and I feel it in me that the chance will come."

"Well, proceed."

"He kept on whipping me. He whipped me with all the strength of both hands. I could feel the broken skin curl up on my back, and when my head got too heavy to hold it straight it hung down, and I saw the blood on my legs and dripping off my toes into a pool of it on the floor. Something was straining and twisting inside of me again. My back didn't hurt much; it was the thing twisting inside of me that hurt. I counted the lashes, and when I counted to twentyeight the twisting got so hard that it choked me and blinded me... and when I woke up I was in the dungeon again, and the doctor had my back all plastered up, and he was kneeling beside me, feeling my pulse."

The prisoner had finished. He looked around vaguely, as though he wanted to go.

"And you have been in the dungeon ever since?"

"Yes, sir; but I don't mind that"

"How long?"

"Twenty-three months."

"On bread and water?"

"Yes; but that was all I wanted."

"Have you reflected that so long as you harbor a determination to kill the warden you may be kept in the dungeon? You can't live much longer there, and if you die there you will never find the chance you want. If you say you will not kill the warden he may return you to the cells."

"But that would be a lie, sir; I will get a chance to kill him if I go to the cells. I would rather die in the dungeon than be a liar and sneak. If you send me to the cells I will kill him. But I will kill him without that. I will kill him, sir.... And he knows it."

Without concealment, but open, deliberate, and implacable, thus in the wrecked frame of a man, so close that we could have touched it, stood Murder— not boastful, but relentless as death.

"Apart from weakness, is your health good?" asked the chairman.

"Oh, it's good enough," wearily answered the convict. "Sometimes the twisting comes on, but when I wake up after it I'm all right."

The prison surgeon, under the chairman's direction, put his ear to the convict's chest, and then went over and whispered to the chairman.

"I thought so," said that gentleman. "Now, take this man to the hospital. Put him to bed where the sun will shine on him, and give him the most nourishing food."

The convict, giving no heed to this, shambled out with a guard and the surgeon.

THE WARDEN sat alone in the prison office with No. 14,208. That he at last should have been brought face to face, and alone, with the man whom he had determined to kill, perplexed the convict. He was not manacled; the door was locked, and the key lay on the table between the two men. Three weeks in the hospital had proved beneficial, but a deathly pallof was still in his face.

"The action of the directors three weeks ago," said the warden, "made my resignation necessary. I have awaited the appointment of my successor, who is now in charge. I leave the prison to-day. In the meantime, I have something to tell you that will interest you. A few days ago a man who was discharged from the prison last year read what the papers have published recently about your case, and he has written to me confessing that it was he who got your tobacco from the captain of the guard. His name is Salter, and he looks very much like you. He had got his own extra, and when he came up again and called for yours

the captain, thinking it was you, gave it to him. There was no intention on the captain's part to rob you."

The convict gasped and leaned forward eagerly.

"Until the receipt of this letter," resumed the warden, "I had opposed the movement which had been started for your pardon; but when this letter came I recommended your pardon, and it has been granted. Besides, you have a serious heart trouble. So you are now discharged from the prison."

The convict stared, and leaned back speechless. His eyes shone with a strange, glassy expression, and his white teeth glistened ominously between his parted lips. Yet a certain painful softness tempered the iron in his face.

"The stage will leave for the station in four hours," continued the warden. "You have made certain threats against my life." The warden paused; then, in a voice that slightly wavered from emotion, he continued: "I shall not permit your intentions in that regard— for I care nothing about them— to prevent me from discharging a duty which, as from one man to another, I owe you. I have treated you with a cruelty the enormity of which I now comprehend. I thought I was right. My fatal mistake was in not understanding your nature. I misconstrued your conduct from the beginning, and in doing so I have laid upon my conscience a burden which will imbitter the remaining years of my life. I would do anything in my power, if it were not too late, to atone for the wrong I have done you. If, before I sent you to the dungeon, I could have understood the wrong and foreseen its consequences, I would cheerfully have taken my own life rather than raise a hand against you. The lives of us both have been wrecked; but your suffering is in the past— mine is present, and will cease only with my life. For my life is a curse, and I prefer not to keep it."

With that the warden, very pale, but with a clear purpose in his face, took a loaded revolver from a drawer and laid if before the convict.

"Now is your chance," he said, quietly: "no one can hinder you."

The convict gasped and shrank away from the weapon as from a viper.

''Not yet— not yet," he whispered, in agony.

The two men sat and regarded each other without the movement of a muscle.

"Are you afraid to do it?" asked the warden.

A momentary light flashed in the convict's eyes.

"Nol" he gasped; "you know I am not. But I can't— not yet— not yet."

The convict, whose ghastly pallor, glassy eyes, and gleaming teeth sat like a mask of death upon his face, staggered to his feet.

"You have done it at last! you have broken my spirit. A human word has done what the dungeon and the whip could not do.... It twists inside of me now... I could be your slave for that human word." Tears streamed from his

eyes. "I can't help crying. I'm only a baby, after all— and I thought I was a man."

He reeled, and the warden caught him and seated him in the chair- He took the convict's hand in his and felt a firm, true pressure there. The convict's eyes rolled vacantly. A spasm of pain caused him to raise his free hand to his chest; his thin, gnarled fingers— made shapeless by long use in the slit of the dungeon door— clutched automatically at his shirt. A faint, hard smile wrinkled his wan face, displaying the gleaming teeth more freely.

"That human word," he whispered— "if you had spoken it long ago, if— but it's all— it's all right— now. I'll go— I'll go to work— to-morrow."

There was a slightly firmer pressure of the hand that held the warden's; then it relaxed. The fingers which clutched the shirt slipped away, and the hand dropped to his side. The weary head sank back and rested on the chair; the strange, haid smile still sat upon the marble face, and a dead man's glassy eyes and gleaming teeth were upturned toward the ceiling.

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13: That Tall Girl Belle

Beatrice Grimshaw

1870-1953

Blue Book, Nov 1932

IN the days when cotton was still king— about the beginning of this century— one remembers Mrs. Drumgold, a little gingery frightened woman with a cap worn always on one side; she was the wife of Matthew Drumgold, the cotton millionaire. One also remembers Matthew: tall, sandy and bitter— bad-tempered as the lordly fathers of big families frequently were in those Victorian days. Nobody minded it; everyone expected it of them.... But one wonders how, in Matthew's case, everyone could have been so blind.

About the neighborhood of Manchester, far into Yorkshire and the surrounding counties, the Drumgolds were well thought of. They were rich. They were respectable— of course; that was a matter of course, then. They entertained neighbors, as one ought to do; attended church, as everyone did. The girls, as they grew up, married promptly and well. The boys went into the factory; one or two into professions. Nobody was more prosperous, in those prosperous days— nobody more happy than the family of the house of Drumgold.

And all the time, Lucy lived in hell. She was meek and milk-and-watery, to look at; faded now like a reddish autumn leaf. No one, in those Edwardian days, would have suspected her of having been the beauty of Lancashire, ten years before. No one would have supposed that the little frightened creature with cap askew had thrown that cap over the windmills, in the very year of her triumphant espousal with Matthew Drumgold, millionaire.

There were private affairs then. Secrets could be kept, and were. It was understood that Lucy Drumgold was eccentric— certainly she looked it— and that she had taken a jealous dislike to her eldest child, Isabel, who from birth was extraordinarily pretty and forward. Isabel had reddish hair, but otherwise was dark as an Italian, with black diamond eyes, and limbs sturdy as a little boy's; at nine months she walked; she began to talk soon after. And in the week following the birth of her brother, Isabel was sent away to pay a visit to an old personal maid of Mrs. Drumgold's, who lived at the other side of Yorkshire. She did not come back. Whether it had been intended that she should, or not, no one can now say.

But the whole of England rang, not long after her departure, with the kidnaping of a little girl by a gypsy man, and with the hue and cry that was raised to find him. He was not found.

Mrs. Drumgold, when she heard, gave a scream, clapped her hands to her head, on which the matronly cap even then was beginning to sit askew, and

said, before the nurse could stop her, "I knew he would; I knew he would 1" The nurse begged her not to excite herself. Ladies in her condition should be careful. And talking nonsense, the nurse thought privately, was a sure sign of temperatures going up!

So Mrs. Drumgold held her peace, had many more children, lived respected— and in hell— all her life, and near the start of the Great War she was found floating face downward in the mill dam of the Drumgold cotton works. "Driven crazy by this terrible war," was the unofficial verdict. Matthew, it was noticed, spent very little money on her funeral.

And so, no more of poor little Lucy Drumgold.

It was in the twenties, before the thirties were touched; before the price of copra had gone down, melting dividends as snow melts in the fire, and making beggars of island millionaires.

Sam Hoppner of the Sheba Islands was rich in those days, and never, since first the coconut began to be called "consols of the Pacific" did anyone spend coconut money so picturesquely. He had an island of his own on Diamantina Lagoon; but that was nothing— plenty of men had islands. Sam had one of the biggest; he had plantations on the mainland too; he had wild natives from the outer islands working for him by the hundred, and kept them in order with stick and gun, with a fine disregard of the far-away District Officer. To say that Sam was hospitable is to understate grossly. Everything in his rambling, ramshackle palace of a bungalow, from beds to boots, to beer, to launches, literature, and what you would, was at your service when you called. Only the fact that Diamantina Lagoon was sparsely inhabited kept Sam from being swamped by callers. Always you put up at Sam's when traveling from island to island. If you didn't, he was quite capable of following Scriptural precedent by sending to fetch you in.

DICK AUDAYNE of Amber Island, on that evening when dark overtook him near the Diamantina passage, would have chosen to camp in the cabin of his launch; he knew, however, that if he did there would be trouble with Sam— probably a row; and he hated rows.

Everyone in the Shebas had heard that. Some of them had also heard that if you dragged him into a row against his will, it was likely to be bad for the man who did the dragging. That was the sort of pacifist Audayne was.

Sam's house, built near the beach, blared light and noise that night. Incandescent oil lamps, the brightest money could buy, glowed like small moons on the veranda. Hurricane-lamps were set in glittering rows on either side of the pathway. Two phonographs were going at once; a player-piano,

madly driven, roared like a runaway train. A barrel of beer, set up on the lawn, was surrounded by prostrate, inert worshipers.

Upon the broad veranda eight or ten Sheba girls, dressed in grass kilts and necklaces of scented flowers, danced halfheartedly ; they were Sam's slaves, more or less, and had to do as they were told; but this was not dancing, as they knew it in the hill villages from which they had been carried or sold away; this was not the magnificent stamping rush of warriors, with maidens meekly shuffling and stepping in the background, and the great feast, and the tingling horror of human slaughter waiting.... Stupidly they danced, bemused with beer. The white men cheered them, and caught at them rudely as they passed. "Put ginger in it, girls!" they cried; "—More beer!" In the islands, where beer is three and four shillings a bottle, incredibly costly in cask, he who gives or drinks most beer is the greatest man.

SAM sat in the midst of it, looking as kingly as he could; it is probable that in those days the royalty complex held him, as it has held greater men and less. He was bloated to the shape of a spider; his enormous belly, covered by a patterned island "lava-lava" that fell to his huge bare knees, seemed to dwarf the rest of his person; his shoulders looked small beneath the rich silk shirt; his head, behind, was a mere button. Reddish hair covered it thinly, but grew thick as rushes upon his bared chest and his huge legs and arms. The coronal garland of frangipanni, worn askew; the dancing-stick, carved and covered with jingling shells, which he held loosely in one hand, suggested vaguely— perhaps not unintentionally— pictures of decadent Roman emperors. He was half drunk, not more; he had been half drunk for days and nights, and would not go beyond that point for a day or two to come— not till the guests had left his lagoon, and Diamantina settled down to quiet and loneliness again. Sam had his own code of hospitality, and this was part of it.

Audayne had seen it all before, but the sight never failed to irk him. No saint himself, he despised Sam almost as much as he envied him. The fellow was so rich, and made such a mean use of his riches. "If I had half of it," Audayne thought for the fiftieth time, as he went up the lighted pathway in the dead heat of the windless night, with Sam leaning forward from his high armchair, dancing-stick in hand, to wave a beerbottle and shout a tipsy welcome, "if I had half— a quarter— a tenth of what he wastes— I'd see Sydney Heads as quick as steam could take me; I'd smell the wet woods about Plymouth Sound again. I'd— Ah!" For he knew it was all nonsense. He would never see as much as Sydney Heads again of the civilized world.... That door was closed for Audayne.

Sam got to his feet, and with the frangipanni garland falling still more crookedly above his eye, shouted out, "Come along, you— come along! We've got new visitors this time. Sit yourself; there's a lady waiting for you."

Audayne, quite sure that the "King of Diamantina" was talking nonsense— for who ever heard of a lady on that notorious lagoon?—noticed, nevertheless, that the familiar anchored schooner and cutters were not the only boats in. A new small craft, ketch-rigged, with engine and little cabin, showed dim and ghostly some way out from shore. He wondered a little, as he walked up the pathway, a slim active figure in white ducks, with helmet on his head, and nothing to be seen of his face but shadow and a chin jutting out.

So it was that Belle first saw him; the look of him pleased her, but it was not until the biggest incandescent lamp caught his features that she sat up straight in her chair, and sent a second glance that cut like a knife toward the stranger.

"This man," she said to herself, "has done something." For Audayne's was a desperate face. The eyes, caverned deep beneath thick eyelids, told little; they were well trained. The Mephistophelean eyebrows, running fiercely up and sharply down, told something; the mouth, a cut across a scraggy chin, had more to say, even though it was silent. The poise of the head, snakelike, ready to strike, upon a sinewy neck, told most of all to Belle, who knew the ugly side of life. And silently, watching the man as he came nearer into the lamplight, as the shine of it caught his ice-blue eyes and showed them hard like winter lakes, Belle said to herself, "I wonder what it was?"

Audayne's thought, in the same instant, was: "What the hell is this woman doing here?"

AT the moment Belle was sitting in a long chair, very gracefully doing nothing. Audayne could see that she was taller than himself, that she had lovely thin hands, long thighs like a racer, the breast of a young Diana; hair reddish, smooth and heavily coiled; her skin was brown as a Sheba half-caste— but she was no "breed" of any kind, not with those coin-cut features, and those well-bred hands. Lips smooth, unpainted red; eyes black, with golden lights. A lovely innocent fiery thing, she made him think of some racing filly, still unbroken; the long fine neck of her, her glancing eyes, her proudly lifted head, all carried on the simile.... Audayne had been a horseman in the days when Plymouth Sound was not as far away as heaven. "Who'll put the bridle on her?" he wondered, with a curious pang. "Who'll own her, pace her, spoil her, maybe? She'd be easy spoiled." Then he came back to himself— realized that here was a girl of breeding and distinction, let loose in one of the worst island hells of the Pacific, and he would have to do something about it. She

must have come off some boat one hadn't heard of, up from the settlements. Well, the sooner she went back, the better. He'd try to get her away before the actual rioting of the night began. Sam's was no place for her!

Sam came forward. He had dropped his dancing-stick, and the frangipanni crown lay on the floor. He looked more like a Twentieth Century trader, less like a decadent emperor of old Rome. Audayne saw that he was fairly sober. "C'mon and have a drink," bs said, as always, and then, "Got visitors; gypsy king and queen come to visit the King of Diamantina. What d'ye think of that?"

"Gypsy?" countered Audayne. "That's English talk. There are no gypsies on this side of the world! What do you—" And then he saw.

OUT of the house, into the veranda lights, came lounging an unmistakable gypsy man. He was tall, dark as a Spaniard, with a good deal of Spanish fire in his deep-set eyes; hair black as crow-feathers; lips, for all his age— and he was well on in years— vitally red. He had a faithless merry look about him, as if he found life more or less of a jest; as if he refused, indeed, to look at it otherwise. Roughly dressed in sailor dungarees, the gypsy mark was not lacking in him; he had rings in his long ears, and a red scarf about his waist with a knife ostentatiously stuck into the folds.

"Is this her husband?" thought Audayne, amazed; he would have sworn the girl was unmarried. Then he saw, by the resemblance between the two dark faces, that the man and the girl were father and daughter. "But here, in the Shebas— gypsies!" he thought, puzzled. "And looking as she looks!"

Sam Hoppner explained. "Them two," he said exultingly, "is the king and queen of the English gypsies. But they don't live there now, because Berners he pinched a launch from S'thampton Water and got away with it— thought he was drowned, did the pillice. It's as good a yarn as ever you 'eard. It would do for them movin' pickshers that they have in Sydney. Berners, he stole 'is own daughter—" The look on Audayne's face arrested Sam. "What're y' gawpin' at?" he demanded; then instantly, drunkenly, forgot and rambled on. "You tell 'im, Berners— tell 'im 'ow you pinched y'r own kid, and rim off with 'er— and all England full of it, and rewards, and the pillice and the pypers, and nobody never found anything, only they reckoned you was drownded."

Isaac Berners, smoking one of Sam's cigars, nodded silently. His eyes were very bright; he seemed to be laughing silently at the recital of these ancient misdeeds. Belle sat quite still in her chair, but Audayne could see that the gay silk dress she wore was rising and falling swiftly over her breast.

"Carried her down the Meddyterranean and put her in an Italian convent," Sam went on impressively. "Learned her everything, they did, but she up and run away when she was fifteen, and the two of 'em's been trampin' in tramp

steamers ever since. That's what I call a proper gypsy, up to the mark, nineteen-twenty-five! Why, there'll be flyin' gypsies next. You tell 'im all the countries you've seen, Belle. You wouldn't believe!"

Belle, throwing him a glance of quiet contempt, remained silent. Sam went on without heeding her.

"Berners, he's got the old original boat, yet, that he pinched from S'thampton Water, and he took her down to Cadiz, and them Spanish gypsies they helped him to camouflage her so that the jawndarmes shouldn't spot what she was— and they got him the papers of a boat that had been sunk, only the captain got ashore with 'is box, and he was glad to sell them to Berners. So Berners, he's been gypsyin' it proper from port to port ever since; an' when Belle there joined him they went right acrost the Injin Ocean to New York and the Canal, an' they've been workin' the hislands ever since. Belle she dances a bit, and Berners sings, and they both cross yer hand with silver like they do on race-courses, and they been having a time you wouldn't believe— and Berners he got in this mornin' and he's been tellin' me about it ever since; so I says, s'l, 'Why not stop here till further orders?' s'l. 'There's always plenty to eat and drink here! ' s'l. Wal, Berners he says, 'Yes, I'll come to anchor for a bit,' s'e, 'and Belle she can have a house to herself, which I see there's some to spare,' s'e; that's what you said, wasn't it, Berners? And I says—"

THE long dark man broke in: "Cut it short, brother; you're tiring our friend here." He stood in the light of a hanging lamp, crumbling a sailor's chew on the palm of his hand; an odd, exotic figure, but not out of place here where all was exotic and odd. Sam was going on, but the long dark man broke in again, "Cut it short, brother!" He had moved forward into the range of the hanging lamps; their light shone on his brown face and glistening earrings, deepened the time-marks— "parentheses of age"— on each side of his merry, cruel mouth.

Audayne found himself wondering, as if he'd always known all about it, what sort of impression this fellow must have made on Lancashire twenty years ago. What impression he had made on Lancashire lasses, Audayne didn't need to ask. There was Belle Berners before him, as like the lounging man as a filly is like her sire— descended from the "Isopel" after whom she had been named, if all was true that had been said of Berners— a gypsy of the gypsies, and yet, with the very trick of head and hand, the shape of feature, even the voice, of his mother's family. Tales about Lucy Drumgold— born Lucy Audayne—that had been whispered here and there since her death, came into his mind. He didn't remember seeing poor little Lucy, who had made such a wreck of her life and everyone else's, but she had been a typical Audayne, he knew, and so was this— Cousin— this tall girl Belle, in the long chair; the beauty who roamed the world with her wild father, the Diana who looked as

fierce as she was pure, and as tameless as she was lovely— the old man would see to that, since she was his chief source of income— this creature was his cousin!

Upon that, a turmoil of emotion began to rise in the breast of Audayne the island outcast. If he had had any standing anywhere— if he had mattered to the authorities— if he had even been free to take ship and go down to the great cities of the south, like other men— he'd have been able to remonstrate with effect against the criminal folly of bringing a girl like Belle to Sam's notorious island. What! Did old Berners think this place was comparable even to the slums of Panama or Colon, or the "Broom Road" of Tahiti— which without doubt he knew? Did he think he could safely settle that raving beauty Belle in a reed-and-thatch house with Sam and his crew of low whites and head-hunting savages drinking and rioting a hundred feet away— with a score of ship's firemen making hell of the island on every steamer call ? It was only two days to steamer-time now— and bad as the place was, it was bound to be worse then.

His cousin! A girl was a girl in any case, but when she was of the family, no matter how come into it, it was trebly incumbent on one to take up her cause. And the first thing was to see that Berners took her back to the boat.

Somehow or other, Audayne got the gypsy away from Sam, and stood out with him beneath the pouring moonlight, on the white coral path before the house. One does not, in the islands, talk secrets within doors, or upon verandas. Interviews that must be private are held as much in the open as possible. People may look, as long as they do not hear.

"I want to tell you," Audayne said briefly, "that Sam's is no place for your daughter. They haven't begun yet. Wait till the dance warms up." He paused; a sudden twinkle had come into Berners' eye. Though distrusting him profoundly, Audayne made another effort. "She is a handsome girl," he said, "and it seems you had her brought up like— like—" "Like a lady," he meant to say, but his thought, "Like one of her mother's family," tangled with the words, and choked them.

Berners laughed, a deep throaty laugh. "The Romany chal," he said, "know how to look after their women." Audayne wanted to tell him to stop putting on the gypsy; he was as modern as a motorcar, and needn't pretend to be— What was he saying? "All the same, I'm obliged to you; you didn't tell me anything I didn't know, brother, but you meant well. I'll take Belle on board, and then amuse myself a bit. If you don't mind, that is."

The sarcasm cut. Audayne had many reasons for being sensitive to sarcasm. But he held his peace. That was one thing that Berners couldn't do, evidently— by the slack red mouth of him!

He waited there in the moonlight until he saw Berners and Belle step into the little dinghy and row aboard the launch. Then, somewhat quieter in mind, he went back to Sam's, had a drink or two, and slipped away, when Sam wasn't looking, to the little shed at the back that Sam had offered as a house for Belle. It was the regular guestroom, and fitting enough for a man, with its roughly carpaitered bed and its tin basin set on a box, its door that wasn't a door, only a couple of caselids nailed together to keep out wandering pigs— but it would never have done for a girl. Audayne was tired; he was almost always tired, as men are who tread the path of life, unhopeful and alone. He slept heavily.

IN the morning, he was wakened by shouts and screams. There had been a good deal of drunken noise during the night, which had not aroused him— but the quality of these screams pierced through his heavy sleep, and waked him instantly. Pajama-clad, he rushed out of the hut. At first he could see nothing to account for the noise. The platinumbright lagoon lay still and empty in the early daylight; die ivory beach was bare. Little of it showed this morning. There was always a big run of tide opposite Sam's place— made by the bottle-neck entrance to the lagoon— and in the night the water had risen, covering most of the beach. There was a bit of something black, like a drowned tree, sticking up a little way out from shore. Audayne saw with surprise that it was this that drew the attention of the slave-girls whose screams had wakened him. They stood in a huddled group before the house; they pointed and cried....

Following the direction of their hands, he saw with a shock of horror that the tree was no tree— it was the stern of a launch! Instantly he guessed what had happened. Berners, not knowing the lagoon, had come in at night, chosen a place too shallow for safety, and moored short. With the rising of the tide, he had been pulled under. Doubtless he had been drunk and had not realized what was happening until the cabin filled with water—he had been drowned like a rat in a trap.... And Belle?

THE morning was warm, as all mornings are, in the Shebas, but Audayne felt shivers pass down his back as he realized that in all probability Belle was lying at the bottom of the lagoon with her rascally father. Belle— that splendid creature, with the face of the Audaynes and the fine body of her gypsy ancestors! Dick Audayne was sinewy and active, but he didn't touch five feet seven; few of his people did. Belle, his cousin— even if it was on the wrong side of the blanket; worth any six of the cousins at home, to look at— and, Dick judged, as brainy and brave as she looked— dead!

A clutch of sulphur-crested cockatoos, flying out of the palm-tree tops on their early way inland, screeched at the sight of strangers as only cockatoos

can screech. Audayne was grateful to them. They expressed his feelings as no words could have done. . . .

Then he saw that one of the girls— a thin, bronzed creature in a grass skirt, with sad eyes under her shock of hair— was coming toward him. She wanted to speak.... Dick had always been kind to Sam's wretched dancing-girls; never more than kind. Perhaps that was why little Kalona took the opportunity of creeping up to him,—nervously, lest some of the sodden creatures lying on the veranda should wake up and shout to her, —and said, in a half whisper, "Marster, you look for dass w'ite girl? She no go finish."

"What!" exclaimed Audayne, his face lighting up. Belle not dead!

The little thing shook her head. With one slim hand she pointed to Sam's ironbuilt store— and then, as if fearful at what she had done, fell silent.

"Is she there?" Audayne demanded. "What— who—"

Kalona flung a scared word or two over her shoulder. "Dass w'ite girl's fader he go back an' get drunk; come on board again, w'ite girl she go long bush... Go 'way. I fright' to tell you!"

"I'll go when you've told me!" Audayne caught her and held her by one thin arm. "Is she in the store? Who put her there?"

"Sam."

The girl twisted away, and fled. But Audayne had heard enough.

It was now sunrise. The sea, applegreen in shade, apple-blossom pink where light struck the shallows, was crisping into restlessness beneath the early breeze. Smells of sandalwood and of dew came from the forest. The reef sang multitudinously. The island day was fair. Within the fence of Sam's enclosure broken bottles lay strewn; newspapers, straw and litter scattered the grass. In the midst, the beer-barrel towered like some shapeless heathen god. Men, or what passed as such, were waking upon the veranda, stretching themselves, and calling for more drink.

Sam— dressed, and apparently less affected by the orgies of the night than anyone— came out of the house, and began waddling among his guests, with a whisky decanter in his hand, and a Sheba boy laden with soda-water following behind. To Audayne, watching from the lawn, he looked like some crazy caricature of a rescue worker on a battlefield.

BUT this was no time for fancies. Audayne crossed the lawn, faced the huge figure in dirty singlet and trousers, and asked sharply: "Where is Miss Berners? Do you know her father's launch is sunk ?"

"I do," grinned Sam, showing yellow teeth. "Damn' lucky for her she'd gone ashore and took to the bush! And damn' lucky for me."

"Is it true she's in your store?" Dick glanced at the iron building, the only structure of any strength on the island. "What business—"

"Who put her there?"

"She went herself, Mr. Paul Pry. Locked herself in, she did. Just at daybreak, when she was takin' a little walk." Sam grinned again, rendered aid to another of the casualties, and helped himself liberally after.

Audayne understood. Belle had been driven ashore by her father's violence; in the morning she had ventured out of hiding, and seeing the disaster to the launch had wasted no time in vain regrets, but promptly had taken refuge in the only safe place available. How long she could stay there was another question. As to what was going to happen when she got out, there was no question at all— unless Dick could help. But Sam and his "boys"— those half-tamed, yet obedient savages from the mainland mountains— were fifty to one against him. Sam's guests were not likely to take part against their host, and if Sam thought they were, he could easily get rid of them. What chance was there for Audayne? One chance.... But there were reasons— reasons which came swiftly, bumingly, to his mind— why that chance was repugnant to him. Nevertheless—

"You'll let the girl out at once," he said, keeping his eye on Sam. "What do you mean by making her shut herself up?"

"I mean," said Sam, drawing himself up to his full height, which was greater than his globular figure suggested, "I mean to do the h-honorable thing. As soon as I can get a missionary over from the next group of hislands, we'll be married and live on the square. I mean to settle down, I do."

"You don't suppose—you don't dare to suppose—that she would marry you, if you were the last man on earth ?"

Sam looked at him with one eye half shut. "She will," he said.

For a moment the day turned black before Audayne. Then things cleared. He cast one glance out toward his launch, lying safely in deep water— toward the dinghy drawn up on the sand. He went round the corner of the house and disappeared.

Sam, rather uneasily, continued succoring his guests. "Bring the sodawater, you black swine," he told the boy. "Open another.... I wonder what that la-de-da chap means. He can't do anything. He can't." Sam tossed three fingers of whisky into a glass, and held it to be filled. "That'll do," he said hurriedly; he wanted to go and see what Audayne was really up to.

He was not left long in doubt. After a brief silence, Audayne's voice made itself heard on the far side of the house, close to the store.

"Miss Berners I" he said. "Belle!" Somebody answered inside the store. Sam couldn't hear what was said. Audayne went on, "When I give the word, unlock yourself, take my dinghy and row out to the launch. Can you run a Kelvin engine?" Again came an inaudible reply. Sam stood staring. How dared the fellow! "Very well," Audayne continued. "Start her, and keep her ready. Understand? Wait till I give the word."

"The hell you'll give words!" shouted Sam, waddling round the corner of the house. "Who are you, to—" But he stopped, aghast.

Audayne had gone to the kitchen, and come back again with two flaming brands. Swinging them up and down to keep the blaze going, he said coolly: "Miss Berners will unlock herself, come out and go to my boat. Nobody will interfere with her. If anyone does, I'll fling these into the roof before you can touch me." He backed away as he spoke; he was well within throw of the house, but out of everyone's reach.

Sam's house, the pride and glory of his life, had, like every home on the lan, a roof of sago thatch; there had n no rain for weeks, and the leaves were crackling dry; the southeast trade, that blew all day, was rising, strong and furious.

Sam knew himself caught. "Fire-bug Audayne!" he yelled furiously. "At your old tricks I 'Oo burned 'is wife alive to get the crimson insurance? 'Oo was jailed for doing it? Fire-bug!"

Audayne took no notice. In the yellow morning light, his face was sallow pale. He shouted to the girl, "Open the door. Come out. Get her going, and go out of the passage!" He was afraid of only one thing—that Belle would argue, deprecate, want to know what and why.... Most girls were like that. And a second lost might lose this deadly game. He did not know Belle, nor the training she had received from the man who lay dead at the bottom of the lagoon. No daughter of Berners' could have been slow on the uptake, given to useless argument.

Belle had the door open almost before he knew; she crossed the beach as quickly as a ruhning sandpiper, leaped into the dinghy and pushed it off with one swift motion. It was barely a minute before he heard the engine champing its teeth, and saw the launch heading out toward the passage.

"Ah, fire-bug, dirty convict!" raged Sam, with a flaming crackle of adjectives, hotter than the dying brands Audayne still held. "Ah, wait I get yeh!"

BUT Audayne had no intention of waiting. Before the flames had died, he dropped the brands, and started running hard toward the far side of the neck of land that lay beyond the passage. He could catch the launch there, swim out

to her, and get away. He hadn't any firearms, and they would have been little use against Sam's regiment if he had; he trusted to his own swiftness of foot, and the surprise he had given them all.

It held— just. Belle saw him swimming, followed by half a dozen black heads. She steered the launch in, dragged him on board, and promptly bashed the head of the nearest Sheba boy with a boat-hook. The boy turned back. The launch went on.

Until they were well clear of the shore, neither spoke. Then Audayne went into his cabin and shifted to dry clothes, took the wheel and set the bow of the launch toward his own island, lying dim and delicate blue on the horizon, a score of miles away. Holding the wheel in one hand while he lit a cigarette with his lighter, he said, between puffs:

"Thanks, Cousin Belle; you did splendidly."

She did not accept or deny the relationship. She gave him one long look— what eyes she had! True Romany, black and sweet as black honey; no trace of poor little Lucy's pale-blue eyes there! —and said surprisingly: "What did he mean by calling you—the thing he did?"

Audayne grew slowly red. "All the world knows," he told her curtly.

The long green shore of Sam's island slid past. The blue sea opened beyond. On its wide swell the launch began to dummy-shake and sway.

Slowly Belle said: "I remember; I read the newspapers."

There was silence for a minute or two. Audayne thought despairingly, "It has come again. It always comes." Before his eyes passed, in swift painting, Sydney Heads, Southampton and the ships— the wide, wet English meadows where he would never ride again. Then, his island. Beautiful, lonely— a paradise that might be— a desert that was. For how could he companion with black Sheba girls, or with the only sort of woman who would—

Belle was speaking. "I suppose," she said, "your wife must have been very badly in debt."

Audayne almost let go the wheel. The launch yawed. He swung her back; met her. He turned to Belle, still holding the wheel, and said. "In heaven's name, how did you know?''

"You aren't the kind of man," said Belle, "who would burn his home and risk his wife, for insurance."

"My good cousin Isopel," Audayne said incisively, "twelve good men and true, not to speak of the whole British Isles, believed that I was. And it wouldn't have been a bit of good telling them that she—"

"Was she careless, or only mad ?" asked Isopel.

Audayne replied, "She drank. She was caught. And— I was in debt horribly. I didn't find out till afterward, that she had debts of her own— blackmail. No

one ever believed anything but that I did it. And I don't suppose anyone ever will."

"We are hopeless vagabonds both, Cousin Audayne," Belle said. "We've got nobody to believe in us, except—"

The launch was heading out toward open sea. The distant island began to show up, long and dusky-blue. There was a brief silence. Belle broke it.

"As long as my father lived," she began,

"I thought I owed him— duty." She was silent again for a while. The launch clanked on. "He did your family— the family— a great deal of harm," she said. Then her lips closed; she looked as if she could, if she would, remain silent for evermore.

Audayne understood. He reached out one hand, and caught hers.

"If it's a sacrifice," he said, "I take it."

"It's— not," said Belle.

"Then I'll take it just the same," Audayne told her. "And maybe you know there's a mission on the island beyond mine."

If ghosts exist, they take no count of time and place. Maybe the pale little ghost of unlucky Lucy hovered above that lonely tropic sea, and— smiled.

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14: The Reincarnated Cabman

Ernest O'Ferrall

1881-1925

The Bulletin, 18 July 1912

IT was a clear, frosty night, and the cab-horses on the rank shivered and stamped under their rugs till the gloom was full of the music of jingling bits and ringing hoofs. Inside the cosy, well-lit shelter, eight heavily-wrapped and unemployed cabmen talked loudly together, and laughed at a small, red-headed horse-chauffeur who appeared to be nursing a grievance. Fragments of his story could be heard from the other side of the street whenever the running fire of rough banter slackened.

"An' ten minutes after 'e 'ad engaged me, 'e says, ' 'Ere, fer Gossake take this 'arf crown and get back ter th' rank. That there 'orse o' yours gimme th' creeps. I'll go an' get a taxi,' 'e says. An' with that 'e gets outer me cab. An' I sez, 'Orright, Mr. Wilson,' I sez, 'you gotter please yerself,' I sez. 'I bin drivin' you fer a long time now,' I sez ; 'but I s'pose that don't count no more. That there 'orse uster go fast enuf for yer; but 'e ain't no gas ingin,' I sez, 'an' I ain't goin' ter treat 'im as such, not for no one.' An' with that I leaves 'im larfin' on th' kerbstone, and comes back 'ere. Well, I 'ope 'e's satisfied with 'is stinkin' taxi!"

Out of the darkness came a friendly but imperative hail.

"Keb wanted over at th' station. 'Urry up, Jim, ol' son!"

The small cabman broke away from the group in the shelter, ran along the stamping line, cast loose the moorings of his ancient craft, and steered it across to the station, where he picked up a stout, full-bearded man who had just arrived by a late country train.

"I want to go to 40 Blankly-street, Snarling Point," boomed the fare through the window. "Mrs. Tribbens' place. D'ye know it?"

"I know it, sir," said the cabman. "I druv Mr. Wilson there often."

"Wilson," repealed the fare importantly. "I don't know anyone of that name. At least he wasn't there when I was there— I've been away a couple of months though."

" 'E's been an' gorn while you was away, sir." The cabman, who was of a gossipy disposition, turned round in his seat and let the reins hang slack. "I bleeve 'e only stayed a week, sir. 'Ad a little difference with th' landlady erbout a lion wot 'e brought 'ome with 'im w'en 'e was tight, an' fed over th' banisters with crayfish.... 'Ere! wot's up? You ain't goin' ter get out, are yer?"

But the fare was already out and heading straight for an unemployed policeman with whom he almost immediately returned.

"I call your attention to the fact that this man is not fit to be in charge of a cab. My name is Bodger— John Bodger— and I'm not going to risk my life—"

"Oose arskin' yer ter risk yer life?" burst in the indignant cabman. "W'y ain't I fit ter be in charge? Wotcher gettin' at?"

"He told me some nonsense about a person taking home a lion in his cab!"

"I never said nothin' of th' kind! 'E didn't take it 'ome in me cab at all! 'E led it 'ome thinkin' it wuz a dog, it bein' lost out of the Zoo an' 'im bein' squiffy. It's true, I tell yer, an' if yer'll only git in and lemme drive yer out to the 'ouse, yer'll 'ear it for yerself!"

There was a bewildered pause. Then:

"All right; I'll let you drive me out."

The stout Bodger was preparing to climb aboard when the stolid policeman placed a restraining hand on his arm, and asked gravely: "Are you satisfied the man isn't drunk?"

"I suppose so!"

"Very good, then. I'll take no further steps in the matter."

Bodger then climbed in, grumbling in his beard, and the ancient vehicle moved off, the driver cursing very heartily under his breath and jogging the reins.

When the watchful policeman had been lost sight of, the cabman let the weary animal choose its own pace, and turned round to have it out with his traducer.

" 'Ey! wotcher want ter go an' do that fur? You mighter got me inter trouble!"

The shadowy fare cleared his throat.

"Well, my man, I thought you said this Mr. What's-his-name had taken home a lion in your cab. Naturally I concluded—"

"That I wuz shick!" interjected the driver wrathfully. "An' so off you goes an' tells a John that I'm not fit ter be in charge! Wot right 'ave you got to go an' get me inter trouble? Wot 'ave I done ter you? Gors-trooth, it's 'ard enuf ter get a livin' without bein' worried be Johns. You wanter be careful, Mister!"

"No harm done!" boomed the shadow uneasily.

"No thanks ter you!" retorted the driver. "It's th' likes o' you as makes it so 'ard fer th' likes of us—"

"Confound it, man. are you going to keep me here all night? Drive on, and let's have no more humbug!"

The cabman turned away sulkily, and urged the decayed horse on its journey with whip and reins. Thenceforward he occupied himself agreeably in directing at the stumbling animal the fierce and bitter language he would have liked to use towards his passenger. It all cannoned off the horse on to the

passenger, who gradually became restive under the shower of insults. Just as 12 o'clock struck, and they reached a lonely, ill-lit road, Bodger felt compelled to act.

"Hey!" he cried warningly. "Don't you talk like that! Your horse can get along without all that blackguardly language!"

The cabman pulled up with a jerk and a yell. "Well, if you ain't the lurid limit! First you try ter give a man in charge fer nothin', and then you won't let 'im drive 'is 'orse 'is own way. You ain't bought th' bloomin' cab, yer know!"

"I won't stand any d—d impudence!" roared Bodger. "The first constable I see I'll give you in charge for insulting language !"

"To an' 'orse! Blimey, it's a good thing Johns is so scarce! You can't pass a pleeceman, you can't, without givin' someone in charge!"

"That'll do, now!"

"Oh, rats ! I'm not goin' ter be rousted on be th' likes o' you! Ain't you ever 'ad a ride in a cab before, or wot's wrong with yer?"

"The very first constable I see—"

"Can't you think o' nothin' else but pleecemen? W'y don't you 'ave one of yer own like th' bloomin' Guvner?"

"I believe you're drunk, after all, you scoundrel!"

"P'raps you are th' bloomin' Guvner! You put on as much dog as a bloomin' king! Wot's 'appened to yer moter-car that you're messin' round in my cab?"

"Will— you— drive— on— sir?"

"Certainly, yer Excell'ncy— that is, purvidin' you let me drive in me own way!"

"Now, look here! I don't want any more of your d—d impudence. If you don't drive on—"

"*Git up*!" snarled the driver, slashing suddenly with his whip. The cab started off with such a jerk that the wrathful Bodger nearly fell sideways into the road. They rattled on for a quarter of a mile at a pace that was almost merry. But, striking a long patch of half-made road, the cab slowed down to a walk, and went rattling and lurching over the stones. Bodger, who was very tired after a long afternoon's travel, fell into a sort of half-doze in the swaying vehicle. The stoppage of the elderly bathing machine brought him back to full consciousness. He found a rather thin and shivering Mephistopheles climbing in and greeting him in friendly accents.

"Why, it's Lempson," cried the sleepy passenger, extending a large hand. "Been to some fancy dress foolery, haven't you?"

"Glad to see you home again, Mr. Bodger," said the Devil, sitting down on the opposite seat with a weary sigh. "I caught sight of you as I was walking home from the cricket club's fancy-dress affair. Someone got away with my

overcoat, and I was jolly glad when this cab overtook me. I hope you don't mind me sharing it with you?"

"Certainly not, my boy! Certainly not!"

The face of the cabman appeared at the bars.

"Drive on?" he asked sneeringly.

"Yes, of course!" shouted his ferocious hirer.

"Or-right! Or-right!" mumbled the driver, and the cab wearily resumed its bumping. But it had hardly done more than three bumps when a loud, angry shout was heard and a dead stoppage supervened.

"*Oose that*?" howled the cabman without. "Leggo that there 'orse's 'ead, will yer?"

"*Shurrup*!" yelled the highwayman. "You're dead! What d'yer mean by drivin' yer ghost round this time o' night?"

The cabman, who had been standing up and peering wildly into the gloom, sat down suddenly. "I mighter known 'oo it wuz!" he snarled.

"What have you stopped for?" bellowed Bodger.

"Becos I carn't 'elp it! 'E's got the 'orse be th' 'ead !"

"Is he a policeman?"

"Naw!"

"Well, dammit, if he won't let go, give him in charge!"

The cabman indulged in a wild, despairing laugh. "Blimey, Whiskers, you're always thinkin' o' pleecemen! You bin talkin' pleecemen an' givin' in charge ever since we started!"

"You scoundrel! If you are not more respectful I'll take your number!"

"No good doin' that," hiccupped the shadow at the horse's head. "He hasn't got a number any more— he's dead's door nail!"

"W'y don't yer give 'im in charge?" asked the cabman jeeringly. "'Im or the 'orse?"

Bodger craned his neck out the window.

"Get away from that horse, you!" he roared.

A shadow slowly approached the door of the cab. The dim interior light showed the highwayman to be a well-dressed person of large proportions. His face was flushed, and his sleepy eyes had an angry look in them. "Hullo, Father Chris'mus," he gurgled. "How long have you been dead?"

"My name," announced Bodger fiercely, "my name, sir, is Bodger, and I have engaged this man—"

"Stone dead!" breathed the large stranger, catching hold of the rails on either side of the door. "I 'sure you that I was last man to 'gage him alive. It happened some c'nsider'ble time ago. He was drivin' me 'long somewhere or other when his d—d old horse burst into flames without any warnin' 'soever,

an' 'pletely c'nsumed itself an' cab, also cabman. I only got out just in time. It made mos' dreadful smell, an' fire brigade most 'bligingly drove me back to town. What— what cem't'ry you bound for?"

The cabman started to shout excitedly.

" 'E's torkin erbout th' taxi! It muster been burnt under 'im! 'E left me ter go an' git one o' th' stinkin' things!"

"I didn't!" cried Wilson, angrily. "I won't be contradict' by ghost! I distinctly saw you burnt!"

"It's no good tryin' ter tork sense!" wailed the driver. "I know 'im! 'E won't listen ter nothing!"

Bodger took a hand. "I'm not going to be kept up all night listening to nonsense! Drive on, will you !"

The driver promptly hit the horse, and the cab jolted forward. But Wilson hopped on the step and insisted on climbing in. And when at last he had stowed himself on the seat next to Bodger, he dimly perceived Lempson in his fiendish red costume sitting opposite. After the first start of surprise, he sat quiet for awhile, and took in the situation. Then: "How's Hell, ol' man?"

"Warmer than I am!" replied Lempson with a shiver.

Wilson gravely considered a moment.

" 'Scuse me, but— are you with Chris'mus?"

Lempson guffawed. But Bodger thought it was time to show that he would stand no more nonsense. "I don't know your name, sir, but I would like to remind you that I have engaged this cab—"

"It's a rotten cab," interjected Wilson. "It wasn't much of a cab when it was real and the horse and driver were alive. Now it's jus' rotten!"

"I engaged this cab, sir, to go home in quietly!"

"Yes, so used I! But it's the sort of cab you never could go home in— even before it was burnt to ground."

"I didn't engage it to talk nonsense in, and if you will only"

"But, my dear Chris'mus, that's jus' the sort of cab it is! I mean it is just the sort of cab it used to be before—"

"Oh, th' blanky cab's still 'ere!" Thus the worn-out cabman.

"And I'm paying for it!" boomed Bodger.

"And while I'm doing that"

"You're bein' robbed!"

"While I'm doing that, I've got a right to say who is to travel in it, and have things done in a proper manner. Now, I've had a great deal of trouble and annoyance since I set out to-night in this conveyance. In the first place, the driver very impudently told me a cock-and-bull story about a boarder in our establishment taking home a lion."

"Hewmer 'im!" sneered the driver through the bars. "Hewmer 'im! 'E don't orften buy cabs!"

"I'll report you !" blustered Bodger.

"No, gimme in charge fer a change! I ain't been arrested fer a quarter of an hour. Git up, yer long-bearded, top-hatted swine!" (This last, of course, to the flagging horse.)

Bodger swallowed his wrath, and resumed with the sleepily-attentive Wilson. "In the second place, you stop me to joke with my driver—"

"That's rich, that is!" whined the cabman.

"Joke with th' driver! Liar, liar!"

"To joke with my driver and ride in my cab without introduction or invitation. Now, I'm not the sort of man to stand on ceremony, but I'm not going to be humbugged about. A joke's a joke, but this is going too far."

"Why don't you tell'm ter stop?"

"I don't mean the cab, sir! Now, don't pretend that you misunderstand me!"

Wilson looked him straight in the eye and said: "Been dead long yerself?"

Bodger stirred angrily, and muttered: "Bah! what can you expect of a man who takes home lions!"

At this Wilson sprang to his feet with a yell, crushed his hat against the roof, and fell back in his seat with another yell. "It's a lie!" he thundered. "Who's been tellin' lies 'bout me?"

The cab pulled up guiltily.

"Ask your friend, the cabman," suggested Bodger stormily.

Wilson dashed at the window. "Did you tell Chris'mus here I took home lions?"

The shrinking cabman whined: "Well, I 'eard as 'ow you took 'ome a lion and fed it with crayfish over the banisters!"

"*It was a lie*!"

"I thort it was!" cried the cabman, eager to placate the furious man. "Th' minit I 'eard it I thort it wuz a lie! It didn't sound like you, som'ow."

"That's why you told it to everyone, includin' this ol' pot!"

"*I* didn't! I didn't tell 'im nothin' of th' sort, an' if 'e says 'as I did, 'e's a blanky liar, that's all!"

"You told me so distinctly!" shouted Bodger.

"I *didn't*!"

"Some cow muster told him!" proclaimed the furious Wilson, whose rage was making the cab rock on its springs. "I didn't do it 'tall. I'd scorn to take lions home! It was done by man called Thomson— man I don't like!"

"That's th' name!" shrieked the cabman exultantly. "I remember now!"

"Why don't you 'member 'fore you libel a man behind his back? What do you mean by tellin' this ole stiff?"

The maddened roar of Bodger wrecked the peace of the night.

"I will not be insulted in my own d—d cab. *Get out*! What do you mean by thrusting yourself—"

"You said I took home lions!"

"Thrusting yourself into my cab—"

(" '*Is* cab, mind yer!")

"Into my cab and insulting me— a man old enough to be your father!"

"I don't care how old you are! You're dead now, anyhow !"

"*Bah*! I don't know why I argue with you! Here! drive on!"

"Lor lumme, ain't this where yer wanter go? We bin standing 'ere fer th' larst three minits!"

Bodger looked out in dismay and found that it was indeed true. He and Lempson thereupon disembarked, and drag ged his bag from under the cabman's feet. After a long and angry consultation in subdued voices, certain moneys were passed over and the dark transaction was closed with surly good nights. The interior of the cab maintained a thoughtful silence until Bodger and Lempson had struggled inside a dark gate and gained admission to a still darker house.

Then the cabman turned hopelessly to the bars, and said, "'Ey, wake up! Where am I ter drive yer?" Getting no reply, he inserted the thin end of his whip and stirred carefully, saying, " Wake up an' tell us where I'm ter drive ter?"

And a drowsy voice said, "To the cem'try, you ghost!"

Whereupon the driver cursed and drove slowly away.

Now their way back to town lay past a suburban cemetery, and the Jehus on the rank do say that when the red-haired cabman was driving past it, Wilson woke up and forced him to stop. Fortunately the gate was locked, so the cab could not enter. But they remained outside the place of tombs and argued fiercely in spasms until the chill wind of dawn revived Wilson's defective memory, and the thin light enabled him to see that the outfit was solid. And, when he got everything properly focussed, he turned irritably to the frozen driver, and asked in an amazed way, "Why th' blazes didn't yer tell me so?"

15: The Byzantine Omelette

"Saki"

Hector Hugh Munro, 1870-1916

The Morning Post, 25 March 1913

SOPHIE CHATTEL-MONKHEIM was a Socialist by conviction and a Chattel-Monkheim by marriage. The particular member of that wealthy family whom she had married was rich, even as his relatives counted riches. Sophie had very advanced and decided views as to the distribution of money: it was a pleasing and fortunate circumstance that she also had the money. When she inveighed eloquently against the evils of capitalism at drawing-room meetings and Fabian conferences she was conscious of a comfortable feeling that the system, with all its inequalities and iniquities, would probably last her time. It is one of the consolations of middle-aged reformers that the good they inculcate must live after them if it is to live at all.

On a certain spring evening, somewhere towards the dinner-hour, Sophie sat tranquilly between her mirror and her maid, undergoing the process of having her hair built into an elaborate reflection of the prevailing fashion. She was hedged round with a great peace, the peace of one who has attained a desired end with much effort and perseverance, and who has found it still eminently desirable in its attainment. The Duke of Syria had consented to come beneath her roof as a guest, was even now installed beneath her roof, and would shortly be sitting at her dining-table. As a good Socialist, Sophie disapproved of social distinctions, and derided the idea of a princely caste, but if there were to be these artificial gradations of rank and dignity she was pleased and anxious to have an exalted specimen of an exalted order included in her house-party. She was broad-minded enough to love the sinner while hating the sin— not that she entertained any warm feeling of personal affection for the Duke of Syria, who was a comparative stranger, but still, as Duke of Syria, he was very, very welcome beneath her roof. She could not have explained why, but no one was likely to ask her for an explanation, and most hostesses envied her.

"You must surpass yourself to-night, Richardson," she said complacently to her maid; "I must be looking my very best. We must all surpass ourselves."

The maid said nothing, but from the concentrated look in her eyes and the deft play of her fingers it was evident that she was beset with the ambition to surpass herself.

A knock came at the door, a quiet but peremptory knock, as of some one who would not be denied.

"Go and see who it is," said Sophie; "it may be something about the wine."

Richardson held a hurried conference with an invisible messenger at the door; when she returned there was noticeable a curious listlessness in place of her hitherto alert manner.

"What is it?" asked Sophie.

"The household servants have 'downed tools,' madame," said Richardson.

"Downed tools!" exclaimed Sophie; "do you mean to say they've gone on strike?"

"Yes, madame," said Richardson, adding the information: "It's Gaspare that the trouble is about."

"Gaspare?" said Sophie wanderingly; "the emergency chef! The omelette specialist!"

"Yes, madame. Before he became an omelette specialist he was a valet, and he was one of the strike-breakers in the great strike at Lord Grimford's two years ago. As soon as the household staff here learned that you had engaged him they resolved to 'down tools' as a protest. They haven't got any grievance against you personally, but they demand that Gaspare should be immediately dismissed."

"But," protested Sophie, "he is the only man in England who understands how to make a Byzantine omelette. I engaged him specially for the Duke of Syria's visit, and it would be impossible to replace him at short notice. I should have to send to Paris, and the Duke loves Byzantine omelettes. It was the one thing we talked about coming from the station."

"He was one of the strike-breakers at Lord Grimford's," reiterated Richardson.

"This is too awful," said Sophie; "a strike of servants at a moment like this, with the Duke of Syria staying in the house. Something must be done immediately. Quick, finish my hair and I'll go and see what I can do to bring them round."

"I can't finish your hair, madame," said Richardson quietly, but with immense decision. "I belong to the union and I can't do another half-minute's work till the strike is settled. I'm sorry to be disobliging."

"But this is inhuman!" exclaimed Sophie tragically; "I've always been a model mistress and I've refused to employ any but union servants, and this is the result. I can't finish my hair myself; I don't know how to. What am I to do? It's wicked!"

"Wicked is the word," said Richardson; "I'm a good Conservative and I've no patience with this Socialist foolery, asking your pardon. It's tyranny, that's what it is, all along the line, but I've my living to make, same as other people, and I've got to belong to the union. I couldn't touch another hair-pin without a strike permit, not if you was to double my wages."

The door burst open and Catherine Malsom raged into the room.

"Here's a nice affair," she screamed, "a strike of household servants without a moment's warning, and I'm left like this! I can't appear in public in this condition."

After a very hasty scrutiny Sophie assured her that she could not.

"Have they all struck?" she asked her maid.

"Not the kitchen staff," said Richardson, "they belong to a different union."

"Dinner at least will be assured," said Sophie, "that is something to be thankful for."

"Dinner!" snorted Catherine, "what on earth is the good of dinner when none of us will be able to appear at it? Look at your hair— and look at me! or rather, don't."

"I know it's difficult to manage without a maid; can't your husband be any help to you?" asked Sophie despairingly.

"Henry? He's in worse case than any of us. His man is the only person who really understands that ridiculous new-fangled Turkish bath that he insists on taking with him everywhere."

"Surely he could do without a Turkish bath for one evening," said Sophie; "I can't appear without hair, but a Turkish bath is a luxury."

"My good woman," said Catherine, speaking with a fearful intensity, "Henry was in the bath when the strike started. In it, do you understand? He's there now."

"Can't he get out?"

"He doesn't know how to. Every time he pulls the lever marked 'release' he only releases hot steam. There are two kinds of steam in the bath, 'bearable' and 'scarcely bearable'; he has released them both. By this time I'm probably a widow."

"I simply can't send away Gaspare," wailed Sophie; "I should never be able to secure another omelette specialist."

"Any difficulty that I may experience in securing another husband is of course a trifle beneath anyone's consideration," said Catherine bitterly.

Sophie capitulated. "Go," she said to Richardson, "and tell the Strike Committee, or whoever are directing this affair, that Gaspare is herewith dismissed. And ask Gaspare to see me presently in the library, when I will pay him what is due to him and make what excuses I can; and then fly back and finish my hair."

Some half an hour later Sophie marshalled her guests in the Grand Salon preparatory to the formal march to the dining-room. Except that Henry Malsom was of the ripe raspberry tint that one sometimes sees at private theatricals representing the human complexion, there was little outward sign

among those assembled of the crisis that had just been encountered and surmounted. But the tension had been too stupefying while it lasted not to leave some mental effects behind it. Sophie talked at random to her illustrious guest, and found her eyes straying with increasing frequency towards the great doors through which would presently come the blessed announcement that dinner was served. Now and again she glanced mirror-ward at the reflection of her wonderfully coiffed hair, as an insurance underwriter might gaze thankfully at an overdue vessel that had ridden safely into harbour in the wake of a devastating hurricane. Then the doors opened and the welcome figure of the butler entered the room. But he made no general announcement of a banquet in readiness, and the doors closed behind him; his message was for Sophie alone.

"There is no dinner, madame," he said gravely; "the kitchen staff have 'downed tools.' Gaspare belongs to the Union of Cooks and Kitchen Employees, and as soon as they heard of his summary dismissal at a moment's notice they struck work. They demand his instant reinstatement and an apology to the union. I may add, madame, that they are very firm; I've been obliged even to hand back the dinner rolls that were already on the table."

After the lapse of eighteen months Sophie Chattel-Monkheim is beginning to go about again among her old haunts and associates, but she still has to be very careful. The doctors will not let her attend anything at all exciting, such as a drawing-room meeting or a Fabian conference; it is doubtful, indeed, whether she wants to.

16: Through the Dragon Glass

Abraham Merritt

1884-1943

All-Story Weekly, 24 Nov 1917

HERNDON helped loot the Forbidden City when the Allies turned the suppression of the Boxers into the most gorgeous burglar-party since the days of Tamerlane. Six of his sailormen followed faithfully his buccaneering fancy. A sympathetic Russian highness whom he had entertained in New York saw to it that he got to the coast and his yacht. That is why Herndon was able to sail through the Narrows with as much of the Son of Heaven's treasures as the most accomplished laborer in Peking's mission vineyards.

Some of the loot he gave to charming ladies who had dwelt or were still dwelling on the sunny side of his heart. Most of it he used to fit up those two astonishing Chinese rooms in his Fifth Avenue house. And a little of it, following a vague religious impulse, he presented to the Metropolitan Museum. This, somehow, seemed to put the stamp of legitimacy on his part of the pillage— like offerings to the gods and building hospitals and peace palaces and such things.

But the Dragon Glass, because he had never seen anything quite so wonderful, he set up in his bedroom Where he could look at it the first thing in the morning, and he placed shaded lights about it so that he could wake up in the night and look at it! Wonderful? It is more than wonderful, the Dragon Glass! Whoever made it lived when the gods walked about the earth creating something new every day. Only a man who lived in that sort of atmosphere could have wrought it. There was never anything like it.

I was in Hawaii when the cables told of Herndon's first disappearance. There wasn't much to tell. His man had gone to his room to awaken him one morning— and Herndon wasn't there. All his clothes were, though, Everything was just as if Herndon ought to be somewhere in the house— only he wasn't.

A man worth ten millions can't step out into thin air and vanish without leaving behind him the probability of some commotion, naturally. The newspapers attend to the commotion, but the columns of type boiled down to essentials contained just two facts— that Herndon had come home the night before, and in the morning he was undiscoverable.

I was on the high seas, homeward bound to help the search, when the wireless told the story of his reappearance. They had found him on the floor of his bedroom, shreds of a silken robe on him, and his body mauled as though by a tiger. But there was no more explanation of his return than there had been of his disappearance.

The night before he hadn't been there— and in the morning there he was. Herndon, when he was able to talk, utterly refused to confide even in his doctors. I went straight through to New York, and waited until the men of medicine decided that it was better to let him see me than have him worry any longer about not seeing me.

Herndon got up from a big invalid chair when I entered. His eyes were clear and bright, and there was no weakness in the way he greeted me, nor in the grip of his hand. A nurse slipped from the room.

"What was it, Jim?" I cried. "What on earth happened to you?"

"Not so sure it was on earth," he said. He pointed to what looked like a tall easel hooded with a heavy piece of silk covered with embroidered Chinese characters. He hesitated for a moment and then walked over to a closet. He drew out two heavy bore guns, the very ones, I remembered, that he had used in his last elephant hunt.

"You won't think me crazy if I ask you to keep one of these handy while I talk, will you, Ward?" he asked rather apologetically. "This looks pretty real, doesn't it?"

He opened his dressing gown and showed me his chest swathed in bandages. He gripped my shoulder as I took without question one of the guns. He walked to the easel and drew off the hood.

"There it is," said Herndon.

And then, for the first time, I saw the Dragon Glass!

There never has been anything like that thing! Never! At first all you saw was a cool, green, glimmering translucence, like the sea when you are swimming under water on a still summer day and look up through it. Around its edges ran flickers of scarlet and gold, flashes of emerald, shimmers of silver and ivory. At its base a disk of topaz rimmed with red fire shot up dusky little vaporous yellow flames.

Afterward you were aware that the green translucence was an oval slice of polished stone. The flashes and flickers became dragons. There were twelve of them. Their eyes were emeralds, their fangs were ivory, their claws were gold. There were scaled dragons, and each scale was so inlaid that the base, green as the primeval jungle, shaded off into vivid scarlet, and the scarlet into tip's of gold. Their wings were of silver and vermilion, and were folded close to their bodies.

But they were alive, those dragons. There was never so much life in metal and wood since Al-Akram, the Sculptor of ancient Ad, carved the first crocodile, and the jealous Almighty breathed life into it for a punishment!

And last you saw that the topaz disk that sent up the little yellow flames was the top of a metal sphere around which coiled a thirteenth dragon, thin and red, and biting its scorpion-tipped tail.

It took your breath away, the first glimpse of the Dragon Glass. Yes, and the second and third glimpse, too— and every other time you looked at it.

"Where did you get it?" I asked, a little shakily.

Herndon said evenly: "It was in a small hidden crypt in the Imperial Palace. We broke into the crypt quite by"— he hesitated—"well, call it accident. As soon as I saw it I knew I must have it. What do you think of it?"

"Think!" I cried. "Think! Why, it's the most marvelous thing that the hands of man ever made! What is that stone? Jade?"

"I'm not sure," said Herndon. "But come here. Stand just in front of me."

He switched out the lights in the room. He turned another switch, and on the glass opposite me three shaded electrics threw their rays into its mirror-like oval.

"Watch!" said Herndon. "Tell me what you see!"

I looked into the glass. At first I could see nothing but the rays shining farther, farther— back into infinite distances, it seemed. And then.

"Good God!" I cried, stiffening with horror. "Jim, what hellish thing is this?"

"Steady, old man," came Herndon's voice. There was relief and a curious sort of joy in it. "Steady; tell me what you see."

I said: "I seem to see through infinite distances— and yet what I see is as close to me as though it were just on the other side of the glass. I see a cleft that cuts through two masses of darker green. I see a claw, a gigantic, hideous claw that stretches out through the cleft. The claw has seven talons that open and close— open and close. Good God, such a claw, Jim! It is like the claws that reach out from the holes in the lama's hell to grip the blind souls as they shudder by!"

"Look, look farther, up through the cleft, above the claw. It widens. What do you see?"

I said: "I see a peak rising enormously high and cutting the sky like a pyramid. There are flashes of flame that dart from behind and outline it. I see a great globe of light like a moon that moves slowly out of the flashes; there is another moving across the breast of the peak; there is a third that swims into the flame at the farthest edge—"

"The seven moons of Rak," whispered Herndon, as though to himself. "The seven moons that bathe in the rose flames of Rak which are the fires of life and that circle Lalil like a diadem. He upon whom the seven moons of Rak have shone is bound to Lalil for this life, and for ten thousand lives."

He reached over and turned the switch again. The lights of the room sprang up.

"Jim," I said, "it can't be real! What is it? Some devilish illusion in the glass?"

He unfastened the bandages about his chest.

"The claw you saw had seven talons," he answered quietly. "Well, look at this."

Across the white flesh of his breast, from left shoulder to the lower ribs on the right, ran seven healing furrows. They looked as though they had been made by a gigantic steel comb that had been drawn across him. They gave one the thought they had been ploughed.

"The claw made these," he said as quietly as before.

"Ward," he went on, before I could speak, "I wanted you to see— what you've seen. I didn't know whether you would see it. I don't know whether you'll believe me even now. I don't suppose I would if I were in your place— still—"

He walked over and threw the hood upon the Dragon Glass.

"I'm going to tell you," he said. "I'd like to go through it— uninterrupted. That's why I cover it.

"I don't suppose," he began slowly—"I don't suppose, Ward, that you've ever heard of Rak the Wonder-Worker, who lived somewhere back at the beginning of things, nor how the Greatest Wonder-Worker banished him somewhere outside the world?"

"No," I said shortly, still shaken by the sight.

"It's a big part of what I've got to tell you," he went on. "Of course you'll think it rot, but— I came across the legend in Tibet first. Then I ran across it again— with the names changed, of course— when I was getting away from China.

"I take it that the gods were still fussing around close to man when Rak was born. The story of his parentage is somewhat scandalous. When he grew older Rak wasn't satisfied with just seeing wonderful things being done. He wanted to do them himself, and he— well, he studied the method. After a while the Greatest Wonder-Worker ran across some of the things Rak had made, and he found them admirable— a little too admirable. He didn't like to destroy the lesser wonder-worker because, so the gossip ran, he felt a sort of responsibility. So he gave Rak a place somewhere— outside the world— and he gave him power over every one out of so many millions of births to lead or lure or sweep that soul into his domain so that he might build up a people— and over his people Rak was given the high, the low, and the middle justice.

"And outside the world Rak went. He fenced his domain about with clouds. He raised a great mountain, and on its flank he built a city for the men and women who were to be his. He circled the city with wonderful gardens, and he placed in the gardens many things, some good and some very— terrible. He set around the mountain's brow seven moons for a diadem, and he fanned behind the mountain a fire which is the fire of life, and through which the moons pass eternally to be born again." Herndon's voice sank to a whisper.

"Through which the moons pass," he said. "And with them the souls of the people of Rak. They pass through the fires and are born again— and again— for ten thousand lives. I have seen the moons of Rak and the souls that march with them into the fires. There is no sun in the land — only the new-born moons that shine green on the city and on the gardens."

"Jim," I cried impatiently. "What in the world are you talking about? Wake up, man! What's all that nonsense got to do with this?"

I pointed to the hooded Dragon Glass.

"That," he said. "Why, through that lies the road to the gardens of Rak!"

The heavy gun dropped from my hand as I stared at him, and from him to the glass and back again. He smiled and pointed to his bandaged breast.

He said: "I went straight through to Peking with the Allies. I had an idea what was coming, and I wanted to be in at the death. I was among the first to enter the Forbidden City. I was as mad for loot as any of them. It was a maddening sight, Ward. Soldiers with their arms full of precious stuff even Morgan couldn't buy; soldiers with wonderful necklaces around their hairy throats and their pockets stuffed with jewels; soldiers with their shirts bulging treasures the Sons of Heaven had been hoarding for centuries! We were Goths sacking imperial Rome. Alexander's hosts pillaging that ancient gemmed courtesan of cities, royal Tyre! Thieves in the great ancient scale, a scale so great that it raised even thievery up to something heroic.

"We reached the throne-room. There was a little passage leading off to the left, and my men and I took it. We came into a small octagonal room. There was nothing in it except a very extraordinary squatting figure of jade. It squatted on the floor, its back turned toward us. One of my men stooped to pick it up. He slipped. The figure flew from his hand and smashed into the wall. A slab swung outward. By a— well, call it a fluke, we had struck the secret of the little octagonal room!

"I shoved a light through the aperture. It showed a crypt shaped like a cylinder. The circle of the floor was about ten feet in diameter. The walls were covered with paintings, Chinese characters, queer-looking animals, and things I can't well describe. Around the room, about seven feet up, ran a picture. It showed a sort of island floating off into space. The clouds lapped its edges like

frozen seas full of rainbows. There was a big pyramid of a mountain rising out of the side of it. Around its peak were seven moons, and over the peak— a face!

"I couldn't place that face and I couldn't take my eyes off it. It wasn't Chinese, and it wasn't of any other race I'd ever seen. It was as old as the world and as young as tomorrow. It was benevolent and malicious, cruel and kindly, merciful and merciless, saturnine as Satan and as joyous as Apollo. The eyes were as yellow as buttercups, or as the sunstone on the crest of the Feathered Serpent they worship down in the Hidden Temple of Tuloon. And they were as wise as Fate.

" 'There's something else here, sir,' said Martin— you remember Martin, my first officer. He pointed to a shrouded thing on the side. I entered, and took from the thing a covering that fitted over it like a hood. It was the Dragon Glass!

"The moment I saw it I knew I had to have it— and I knew I would have it. I felt that I did not want to get the thing away any more than the thing itself wanted to get away. From the first I thought of the Dragon Glass as something alive. Just as much alive as you and I are. Well, I did get it away. I got it down to the yacht, and then the first odd thing happened.

"You remember Wu-Sing, my boat steward? You know the English Wu-Sing talks. Atrocious! I had the Dragon Glass in my stateroom. I'd forgotten to lock the door. I heard a whistle of sharply indrawn breath. I turned, and there was Wu-Sing. Now, you know that Wu-Sing isn't what you'd call intelligent-looking. Yet as he stood there something seemed to pass over his face, and very subtly change it. The stupidity was wiped out as though a sponge had been passed over it. He did not raise his eyes, but he said, in perfect English, mind you; 'Has the master augustly counted the cost of his possession?'

"I simply gaped at him.

" 'Perhaps,' he continued, 'the master has never heard of the illustrious Hao-Tzan? Well, he shall hear.' "

"Ward, I couldn't move or speak. But I know now it wasn't sheer astonishment that held me. I listened while Wu-Sing went on to tell in polished phrase the same story that I had heard in Tibet, only there they called him Rak instead of Hao-Tzan. But it was the same story."

" 'And,' he finished, 'before he journeyed afar, the illustrious Hao-Tzan caused a great marvel to be wrought. He called it the Gateway.' Wu-Sing waved his hand to the Dragon Glass. 'The master has it. But what shall he who has a Gateway do but pass through it? Is it not better to leave the Gateway behind— unless he dare go through it?' "

"He was silent. I was silent, too. All I could do was wonder where the fellow had so suddenly got his command of English. And then Wu-Sing straightened. For a moment his eyes looked into mine. They were as yellow as buttercups, Ward, and wise, wise! My mind rushed back to the little room behind the panel. Ward— the eyes of Wu-Sing were the eyes of the face that brooded over the peak of the moons!"

"And all in a moment, the face of Wu-Sing dropped back into its old familiar stupid lines. The eyes he turned to me were black and clouded. I jumped from my chair."

"'What do you mean, you yellow fraud!' I shouted. 'What do you mean by pretending all this time that you couldn't talk English?'"

"He looked at me stupidly, as usual. He whined in his pidgin that he didn't understand; that he hadn't spoken a word to me until then. I couldn't get anything else out of him, although I nearly frightened his wits out. I had to believe him. Besides, I had seen his eyes. Well, I was fair curious by this time, and I was more anxious to get the glass home safely than ever."

"I got it home. I set it up here, and I fixed those lights as you saw them. I had a sort of feeling that the glass was waiting— for something. I couldn't tell just what. But that it was going to be rather important, I knew—"

He suddenly thrust his head into his hands, and rocked to and fro.

"How long, how long," he moaned, "how long, Santhu?"

"Jim!" I cried. "Jim! What's the matter with you?"

He straightened. "In a moment you'll understand," he said.

And then, as quietly as before: "I felt that the glass was waiting. The night I disappeared I couldn't sleep. I turned out the lights in the room; turned them on around the glass and sat before it. I don't know how long I sat, but all at once I jumped to my feet. The dragons seemed to be moving! They were moving! They were crawling round and round the glass. They moved faster and faster. The thirteenth dragon spun about the topaz globe. They circled faster and faster until they were nothing but a halo of crimson and gold flashes. As they spun, the glass itself grew misty, mistier, mistier still, until it was nothing but a green haze. I stepped over to touch it. My hand went straight on through it as though nothing were there.

"I reached in— up to the elbow, up to the shoulder. I felt my hand grasped by warm little fingers. I stepped through—"

"Stepped through the glass?" I cried.

"Through it," he said, "and then— I felt another little hand touch my face. I saw Santhu!

"Her eyes were as blue as the corn flowers, as blue as the big sapphire that shines in the forehead of Vishnu, in his temple at Benares. And they were set

wide, wide apart. Her hair was blue- black, and fell in two long braids between her little breasts. A golden dragon crowned her, and through its paws slipped the braids. Another golden dragon girded her. She laughed into my eyes, and drew my head down until my lips touched hers. She was lithe and slender and yielding as the reeds that grow before the Shrine of Hathor that stands on the edge of the Pool of Djeeba. Who Santhu is or where she came from— how do I know? But this I know— she is lovelier than any woman who ever lived on earth. And she is a woman!

"Her arms slipped from about my neck and she drew me forward. I looked about me. We stood in a cleft between two great rocks. The rocks were a soft green, like the green of the Dragon Glass. Behind us was a green mistiness. Before us the cleft ran only a little distance. Through it I saw an enormous peak jutting up like a pyramid, high, high into a sky of chrysoprase. A soft rose radiance pulsed at its sides, and swimming slowly over its breast was a huge globe of green fire. The girl pulled me towards the opening. We walked on silently, hand in hand. Quickly it came to me— Ward, I was in the place whose pictures had been painted in the room of the Dragon Glass!

"We came out of the cleft and into a garden. The Gardens of Many-Columned Iram, lost in the desert because they were too beautiful, must have been like that place. There were strange, immense trees whose branches were like feathery plumes and whose plumes shone with fires like those that clothe the feet of Indra's dancers. Strange flowers raised themselves along our path, and their hearts glowed like the glow-worms that are fastened to the rainbow bridge to Asgard. A wind sighed through the plumed trees, and luminous shadows drifted past their trunks. I heard a girl laugh, and the voice of a man singing.

"We went on. Once there was a low wailing far in the garden, and the girl threw herself before me, her arms outstretched. The wailing ceased, and we went on. The mountain grew plainer. I saw another great globe of green fire swing out of the rose flashes at the right of the peak. I saw another shining into the glow at the left. There was a curious trail of mist behind it. It was a mist that had tangled in it a multitude of little stars. Everything was bathed in a soft green light— such a light as you would have if you lived within a pale emerald.

"We turned and went along another little trail. The little trail ran up a little hill, and on the hill was a little house. It looked as though it was made of ivory. It was a very odd little house. It was more like the Jain pagodas at Brahmaputra than anything else. The walls glowed as though they were full light. The girl touched the wall, and a panel slid away. We entered, and the panel closed after us.

"The room was filled with a whispering yellow light. I say whispering because that is how one felt about it. It was gentle and alive. A stairway of ivory ran up to another room above. The girl pressed me toward it. Neither of us had uttered a word. There was a spell of silence upon me. I could not speak. There seemed to be nothing to say. I felt a great rest and a great peace— as though I had come home. I walked up the stairway and into the room above. It was dark except for a bar of green light that came through the long and narrow window. Through it I saw the mountain and its moons. On the floor was an ivory head- rest and some silken cloths. I felt suddenly very sleepy. I dropped to the cloths, and at once was asleep.

"When I awoke the girl with the cornflower eyes was beside me! She was sleeping. As I watched, her eyes opened. She smiled and drew me to her—"

"I do not know why, but a name came to me. 'Santhu!' I cried. She smiled again, and I knew that I had called her name. It seemed to me that I remembered her, too, out of immeasurable ages. I arose and walked to the window. I looked toward the mountain. There were now two moons on its breast. And then I saw the city that lay on the mountain's flank. It was such a city as you see in dreams, or as the tale-tellers of El-Bahara fashion out of the mirage. It was all of ivory and shining greens and flashing blues and crimsons. I could see people walking about its streets. There came the sound of little golden bells chiming."

"I turned toward the girl. She was sitting up, her hands clasped about her knees, watching me. Love came, swift and compelling. She arose— I took her in my arms—"

"Many times the moons circled the mountains, and the mist held the little, tangled stars passing with them. I saw no one but Santhu; no thing came near us. The trees fed us with fruits that had in them the very essences of life. Yes, the fruit of the Tree of Life that stood in Eden must have been like the fruit of those trees. We drank of green water that sparkled with green fires, and tasted like the wine Osiris gives the hungry souls in Amenti to strengthen them. We bathed in pools of carved stone that welled with water yellow as amber. Mostly we wandered in the gardens. There were many wonderful things in the gardens. They were very unearthly. There was no day nor night. Only the green glow of the ever-circling moons. We never talked to each other. I don't know why. Always there seemed nothing to say."

"Then Santhu began to sing to me. Her songs were strange songs. I could not tell what the words were. But they built up pictures in my brain. I saw Rak the Wonder-Worker fashioning his gardens, and filling them with things beautiful and things— evil. I saw him raise the peak, and knew that it was Lalil; saw him fashion the seven moons and kindle the fires that are the fires of life. I

saw him build his city, and I saw men and women pass into it from the world through many gateways."

"Santhu sang— and I knew that the marching stars in the mist were the souls of the people of Rak which sought rebirth. She sang, and I saw myself ages past walking in the city of Rak with Santhu beside me. Her song wailed, and I felt myself one of the mist-entangled stars. Her song wept, and I felt myself a star that fought against the mist, and, fighting, break away — a star that fled out and out through immeasurable green space—"

"A man stood before us. He was very tall. His face was both cruel and kind, saturnine as Satan and joyous as Apollo. He raised his eyes to us, and they were yellow as buttercups, and wise, so wise! Ward, it was the face above the peak in the room of the Dragon Glass! The eyes that had looked at me out of Wu- Sing's face! He smiled on us for a moment and then— he was gone!"

"I took Santhu by the hand and began to run. Quite suddenly it came to me that I had enough of the haunted gardens of Rak; that I wanted to get back to my own land. But not without Santhu. I tried to remember the road to the cleft. I felt that there lay the path back. We ran. From far behind came a wailing. Santhu screamed— but I knew the fear in her cry was not for herself. It was for me. None of the creatures of that place could harm her who was herself one of its creatures. The wailing drew closer. I turned."

"Winging down through the green air was a beast, an unthinkable beast, Ward! It was like the winged beast of the Apocalypse that is to bear the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet. It was beautiful even in its horror. It closed its scarlet and golden wings, and its long, gleaming body shot at me like a monstrous spear."

"And then— just as it was about to strike— a mist threw itself between us! It was a rainbow mist, and it was— cast. It was cast as though a hand had held it and thrown it like a net. I heard the winged beast shriek its disappointment, Santhu's hand gripped mine tighter. We ran through the mist."

"Before us was the cleft between the two green rocks. Time and time again we raced for it, and time and time again that beautiful shining horror struck at me— and each time came the thrown mist to baffle it. It was a game! Once I heard a laugh, and then I knew who was my hunter. The master of the beast and the caster of the mist. It was he of the yellow eyes— and he was playing me— playing me as a child plays with a cat when he tempts it with a piece of meat and snatches the meat away again and again from the hungry jaws!"

"The mist cleared away from its last throw, and the mouth of the cleft was just before us. Once more the thing swooped— and this time there was no mist. The player had tired of the game! As it struck, Santhu raised herself before it. The beast swerved— and the claw that had been stretched to rip me

from throat to waist struck me a glancing blow. I fell — fell through leagues and leagues of green space."

"When I awoke I was here in this bed, with the doctor men around me and this—" He pointed to his bandaged breast again.

"That night when the nurse was asleep I got up and looked into the Dragon Glass, and I saw— the claw, even as you did. The beast is there. It is waiting for me!"

Herndon was silent for a moment.

"If he tires of the waiting he may send the beast through for me," he said. "I mean the man with the yellow eyes. I've a desire to try one of these guns on it. It's real, you know, the beast is— and these guns have stopped elephants."

"But the man with the yellow eyes, Jim," I whispered—"who is he?"

"He," said Herndon—"why, he's the Wonder-Worker himself!"

"You don't believe such a story as that!" I cried. "Why, it's— it's lunacy! It's some devilish illusion in the glass. It's like the— crystal globe that makes you hypnotize yourself and think the things your own mind creates are real. Break it, Jim! It's devilish! Break it!"

"Break it!" he said incredulously. "Break it? Not for the ten thousand lives that are the toll of Rak! Not real? Aren't these wounds real? Wasn't Santhu real? Break it! Good God, man, you don't know what you say! Why, it's my only road back to her! If that yellow-eyed devil back there were only as wise as he looks, he would know he didn't have to keep his beast watching there. I want to go, Ward; I want to go and bring her back with me. I've an idea, somehow, that he hasn't— well, full control of things. I've an idea that the Greatest Wonder-Worker wouldn't put wholly in Rak's hands the souls that wander through the many gateways into his kingdom. There's a way out, Ward; there's a way to escape him. I won away from him once, Ward. I'm sure of it. But then I left Santhu behind. I have to go back for her. That's why I found the little passage that led from the throne-room. And he knows it, too. That's why he had to turn his beast on me."

"And I'll go through again, Ward. And I'll come back again— with Santhu!"

But he has not returned. It is six months now since he disappeared for the second time. And from his bedroom, as he had done before. By the will that they found— the will that commended that in event of his disappearing as he had done before and not returning within a week I was to have his house and all that was within it— I came into possession of the Dragon Glass. The dragons had spun again for Herndon, and he had gone through the gateway once more. I found only one of the elephant guns, and I knew that he had had time to take the other with him.

I sit night after night before the glass, waiting for him to come back through it— with Santhu. Sooner or later they will come. That I know.

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17: The Veiled Lady and the Shadow

George Barr McCutcheon

1866-1928

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A VEILED LADY is not, in ordinary circumstances, an object of concern to anybody. Circumstances, however, are sometimes so extraordinary that a veiled lady becomes an object of concern to everybody. If the old-time novelists are to be credited, an abundantly veiled lady is more than a source of interest; she is the vital, central figure in a mystery that continues from week to week, or month to month, as the case may be, until the last chapter is reached and she turns out to be the person you thought she was all the time.

Now, the village of Tinkletown is a slow-going, somnolent sort of place in which veils are worn by old ladies who wish to enjoy a pleasant snooze during the sermon without being caught in the act. That any one should wear a veil with the same regularity and the same purpose that she wears the dress which renders the remainder of her person invisible is a circumstance calculated to excite the curiosity of even the most indifferent observers in the village of Tinkletown.

So when the news travelled up and down Main Street, and off into the side-streets, and far out beyond Three Oaks Cemetery to the new division known as Oak Park, wherein reside four lonely pioneer families, that the lady who rented Mrs. Nixon's house for the month of September was in a "perpetual state of obscurity" (to quote Mr. Harry Squires, the *Banner* reporter), the residents of Tinkletown admitted that they didn't know what to make of it.

The Nixon cottage was a quaint, old-fashioned place on the side of Battle Hill, looking down upon the maples of Sickle Street. The grounds were rather spacious, and the house stood well back from the street, establishing an aloofness that had never been noticed before. A low stone wall guarded the lawn and rose-garden, and there was an iron gate at the bottom of the slope. The front porch was partly screened by "Dutchman's Pipe" vines. With the advent of the tenant, smart Japanese sun-curtains made their appearance, and from that day on no prying eye, no matter how well-trained it may have been, could accomplish anything like a satisfactory visit to the regions beyond.

Mrs. Nixon usually rented her house for the summer months. The summer of 1918 had proved an unprofitable season for her. It was war-time, and the people who lived in the cities proved unduly reluctant to venture far from their bases of supplies. Consequently Mrs. Nixon and her daughter Angie remained in occupancy, more heartsick than ever over the horrors of war. Just as they were about to give up hope, the unexpected happened. Joseph P. Singer, the

real-estate agent, offices in the Lamson Block, appeared bright and early one morning to inquire if the cottage could be had for the month of September and part of October.

"You may ask any price you like, Abbie," he said. "The letter I received this morning was written on the paper of the Plaza Hotel in New York. Anybody who can afford to put up at the Plaza, which is right on Central Park,— and also on Fifth Avenue,— ain't going to haggle about prices. The party wants a bathroom with hot and cold water and electric lights. Well, you've got all these improvements, and—"

"I've got to have references," said Mrs. Nixon firmly.

"I guess if the Plaza is willing to rent a room to a party, there oughtn't to be any question as to the respectability of the said party," said Mr. Singer. "They're mighty particular in them New York hotels."

"Well, you write and tell the party—"

"I am requested to telegraph, Abbie," said he. "The party wants to know right away."

As the result of this conversation and a subsequent exchange of telegrams, the "party" arrived in Tinkletown on the first day of September. Mr. Singer's contentions were justified by the manner in which the new tenant descended upon the village. She came in a maroon-and-black limousine with a smart-looking chauffeur, a French maid, a French poodle and what all of the up-to-date ladies in Tinkletown unhesitatingly described as a French gown *à la mode*.

Miss Angie Nixon, who had never been nearer to Paris than Brattleboro, Vermont, said to her customers that from what she had seen of the new tenant's outfit, she was undoubtedly from the Tooleries. Miss Angie was the leading dressmaker of Tinkletown. If she had said the lady was from Somaliland, the statement would have gone unchallenged.

The same day, a man cook and a "hired girl" arrived from Boggs City, having come up by rail from New York.

The tenant was a tall, slender lady. There could be no division of opinion as to that. As to whether she was young, middle-aged or only well-preserved, no one was in a position to asseverate. As a matter of fact, observers would have been justified in wondering whether she was black or white. She was never abroad without the thick, voluminous veil, and her hands were never ungloved. Mrs. Nixon and Angie described her voice as refined and elegant, and she spoke English as well as anybody, not excepting Professor Rank of the high school.

By the end of her first week in the Nixon cottage, there wasn't a person in Tinkletown, exclusive of small babies, who had not advanced a theory

concerning Mrs. Smith, the new tenant. On one point all agreed; she was the most "stuck-up" person ever seen in Tinkletown.

She resolutely avoided all contact with her neighbours. On several occasions, polite and cordial citizens had bowed and mumbled "Howdy-do" to her as she passed in the automobile, but there is no record of a single instance in which she paid the slightest heed to these civilities. All of her marketing was done by the man cook, and while he was able to speak English quite fluently when objecting to the quality, the quantity and the price of everything, he was singularly unable to carry on a conversation in that language when invited to do so by friendly clerks or proprietors.

As for the French chauffeur, his knowledge of English appeared to be limited to an explosive sort of profanity. Lum Gillespie declared on the third day after Mrs. Smith's car first came to his garage for live storage, that "that feller Francose" knew more English cuss-words than all the Irishmen in the world.

The veiled lady did a good many surprising things. In the first place, she had been in the Nixon cottage not more than an hour when she ordered the telephone taken out— not merely discontinued, but taken out. She gave no reason, and satisfied the telephone-company by making the local manager a present of ten dollars. She kept all of the green window-shutters open during the day, letting the sunshine into the rooms to give the carpets the first surprise they had had in years, and at night she sat out on the screened-in porch, with a reading-lamp, until an hour when many of the residents of Tinkletown were looking out of their windows to see what sort of a day it was going to be. She paid cash for everything, and always with bright, crisp banknotes, "fresh from the mint." She slept till noon. She went out every afternoon about four, rain or shine, for long motor-rides in the country. The queerest thing about her was that she never went near the "movies."

Nearly every afternoon, directly after luncheon— they called it dinner in Tinkletown— she appeared in the back yard and put her extraordinarily barbered dog through a raft of tricks. Passers-by always paused to watch the performance. She had him walking first on his hind legs, then on his front legs; then he was catching a tennis-ball which she tossed every which way (just as a woman would, said Alf Reesling); and when he wasn't catching the ball, he was turning somersaults, or waltzing to the tune she whistled, or playing dead. The poodle's name was Snooks.

The venerable town marshal, Anderson Crow, sat in front of Lamson's store one hot evening about a week after the advent of the mystery. He was the center of a thoughtful, speculative group of gentlemen representing the first families of Tinkletown. Among those present were: Alf Reesling, the town

drunkard; Harry Squires, the reporter; Ed Higgins, the feed-store man; Justice of the Peace Robb; Elmer K. Pratt, the photographer; Situate M. Jones; and two or three others of less note. The shades of night had just descended; some of the gentlemen had already yawned three or four times.

"There ain't no law against wearin' a veil," said the Marshal, reaching out just in time to pluck a nice red apple before Lamson's clerk could make up his mind to do what he had come out of the store expressly to do— that is, to carry inside for the night the bushel basket containing, among other things, a plainly printed placard informing the public that "No. 1 Winesaps" were "2 for 5c."

Crow inspected the apple critically for a moment, looking for a suitable place to begin; then, with his mouth full, he went on: "The only thing I got ag'inst her is that she's settin' a new style in Tinkletown. In the last two-three days I've seen more'n one of our fair sex lookin' at veils in the Five an' Ten Cent Store, and this afternoon I saw somebody I was sure was Sue Becker walkin' up Maple Street with her head wrapped up in something as green as grass. Couldn't see her face to save my soul, but I recognized her feet. My daughter Caroline was fixin' herself up before the lookin'-glass last night, seein' how she'd look in a veil, she said. It won't be long before we won't any of us be able to recognize our own wives an' daughters when we meet 'em on the street."

"My girl Queenie's got a new pink one," said Alf Reesling. "She made it out of some sort of stuff she wore over her graduatin' dress three years ago."

"Maybe she's got a bad complexion," ventured Mr. Jones.

"Who? My girl Queenie? Not on your—" began Alf, bristling.

"I mean the woman up at Mrs. Nixon's," explained Mr. Jones hastily.

Harry Squires had taken no part in the conversation up to this juncture. He had been ruminating. His inevitable— you might almost say, his indefatigable— pipe had gone out four or five times.

"Say, Anderson," he broke in abruptly, "has it ever occurred to you that there might be something back of it that ought to be investigated?" The flare of the match he was holding over the bowl of his pipe revealed an eager twinkle in his eyes.

"There you go, talkin' foolishness again," said Anderson. "I guess there ain't anything back of it 'cept a face, an' she's got a right to have a face, ain't she?"

"I mean the reason for wearing a veil that completely obscures her face— all the time. They say she never takes it off, even in the house."

"Who told you that?"

"Angie Nixon. She says she believes she sleeps in it."

"How does she deduce that?" demanded Anderson, idly fingering the badge of the New York Detective Association, which for obvious reasons,—it being a very hot night,— was attached to his suspenders.

"She deduced it through a keyhole," replied Mr. Squires. "Angie was up at the cottage last night to get something she had left in an upstairs hall closet. She just happened to stoop over to pick up something on the floor right in front of Mrs. Smith's door. The strangest thing occurred. She said it couldn't occur again in a thousand years, not even if she tried to do it. Her left ear happened to stop not more than half an inch from the keyhole. She just couldn't help hearing what Mrs. Smith said to her maid. Angie says she said, plain as anything: 'You couldn't blame me for sitting up all night, if you had to sleep in a thing like this.' She didn't hear anything more, because she hates eavesdropping. Besides, she thought she heard the maid walking toward the door. Now, what do you make of that, Mr. Hawkshaw?"

"If you don't stop callin' me Hawkshaw, I'll—"

"I apologize. An acute case of *lapsus lingua*, Mr. Crow. But wasn't that remark significant?"

"I am a friend of Mrs. Nixon's, an' I must decline to criticize her beds," said Mr. Crow rather loftily. "I ain't ever slept in one of 'em, but I'd do it any time before I'd set up all night."

"Granting that the bed was all right, then isn't it pretty clear that she was referring to something else? The veil, for instance?"

"Sounds reasonable," said Newt Spratt, and then, after due reflection,—"mighty reasonable."

"I'd hate to sleep in a veil," said Alf Reesling. "It's bad enough to try to sleep with a mustard poultice on your jaw, like I did last winter when I had that bad toothache. Doc Ellis says he never pulled a bigger er a stubborner tooth in all his experience than—"

"I think you ought to investigate the Veiled Lady of Nixon Cottage," said Harry Squires, lowering his voice and glancing over his shoulder. "You can't tell what she's up to, Anderson. It wouldn't surprise me if she's a woman with a past. She may be using that veil as a disguise. What's more, there may be a price on her head. The country is full of these female spies, working tooth and nail for Germany. Suppose she should turn out to be that society woman the New York papers say the Secret Service men are chasing all over the country and can't find— the Baroness von Slipernitz."

"What fer kind of a dog is that you got, Ed?" inquired Mr. Crow, calmly ignoring the suggestion.

Mr. Higgins' new dog was enjoying a short nap in the middle of the sidewalk, after an apparently fatiguing effort to dislodge something in the neighbourhood of his left ear.

"Well," began Ed, eyeing the dog doubtfully, "all I know about him is that he's a black dog. My wife has been sizin' him up for a day or two, figgerin' on having him clipped here and there to see if he can't be made to look as respectable as that dog of Mrs. Smith. Hetty Adams has clipped that Newfoundland dog of hers. Changed him something terrible. When I come across them on the street today, I declare I only recognized half of him—an' I wouldn't have recognized that much if he hadn't wagged it at me. It beats all what women will do to keep up with the styles."

"I seen him today," said Mr. Spratt, "an' I never in all my life see a dog that looked so mortified. I says to Hetty, says I: 'In the name o' Heaven, Hetty,' says I, 'what you been doin' to Shep?' An' she says: 'I'd thank you, Newt Spratt, not to call my dog Shep. His name is Edgar.' So I says to Shep: 'Come here, Edgar—that's a good dog.' An' he never moved. Then I says: 'Hyah, Shep!' an' he almost jumped out of his hide, he was so happy to find somebody that knowed who he was. 'Edgar, your granny!' says I to Hetty. 'What's the use of ruinin' a good dog by calling him Edgar?' An' Hetty says: 'Come here, Edgar! Come here, I say!' But Edgar, he never paid any attention to her. He just kep' on tryin' to lick my hand, an' so she hit him a clip with her parysol an' says: 'Edgar, must I speak to you again? Come here, I say! Behave like a gentleman!' 'There ain't no dog livin' that's goin' to behave like a gentleman if you call him names like that,' says I. 'It ain't human nature,' says I. An' just to prove it to her, I turned an' says to Shep: 'Ain't that so, Shep, old sport?' An' what do you think that poor old dog done? He got right up on his hind legs and tried to kiss me."

"No wonder she wants to call him Edgar," said Harry Squires. "That's just the kind of thing an Edgar sort of dog would do."

"I was just going to say," said Mr. Crow, twisting his whiskers reflectively, "that maybe she does it because she's had smallpox, or been terribly scalded, or is cross-eyed, or something like that."

Mr. Squires inwardly rejoiced. He knew that the seed had been planted in the Marshal's fertile brain, that it would thrive in the night and sprout on the morrow. He saw delectable operations ahead; he was fond of the old man, but nothing afforded him greater entertainment than the futile but vainglorious efforts of Anderson Crow to achieve renown as a detective.

The reporter was a constant thorn in the side of Crow, who both loved and feared him. The *Banner* seldom appeared without some sarcastic advice to the Marshal of Tinkletown, but an adjoining column invariably contained something of a complimentary character, the one so adroitly offsetting the

other that Mr. Crow never knew whether he was "afoot or horseback," to quote him in his perplexity.

Harry Squires had worked on a New York morning paper in his early days. His health failing him, he was compelled to abandon what might have become a really brilliant career as a journalist. Lean, sick and disheartened, he came to Bramble County to spend the winter with an old aunt, who lived among the pine-covered hills above the village of Tinkletown. That was twenty years ago. For nineteen years he had filled the high-sounding post of city editor on the *Banner*. He always maintained that the most excruciating thing he had ever written was the line at the top of the first column of the so-called editorial page, which said: "City Editor— Harry Sylvester Squires." Nothing, he claimed, could be more provocative of hilarity than that.

In his capacity as city editor, he wrote advertisements, personals, editorials, news-items, death-notices, locals and practically everything else in the paper except the poetry sent in by Miss Sue Becker. He even wrote the cable and telegraph matter, always ascribing it to a "Special Correspondent of the *Banner*." In addition to all this, he "made-up" the forms, corrected proof, wrote "heads," stood over the boy who ran the press and stood over him when he wasn't running the press, took all the blame and none of the credit for things that appeared in the paper, and once a week accepted currency to the amount of fifteen dollars as an honorarium.

Regarding himself as permanently buried in this out-of-the-way spot on the earth's surface, he had the grim humour to write his own "obituary" and publish it in the columns of the *Banner*. He began it by saying that he was going to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the "deceased." He had written hundreds of obituaries during his career as city editor, he said, and not once before had he been at liberty to tell the truth. In view of the fact that he had no relations to stop their subscriptions to the paper, he felt that for once in his life he could take advantage of an opportunity to write exactly as he felt about the deceased.

He left out such phrases as "highly esteemed citizen," "nobility of character," "loss to the community," "soul of integrity" and other stock expressions. At the end he begged to inform his friends that flowers might be deposited at the *Banner* office or at his room in Mrs. Camp's boarding-house, as he was buried in both places. Buttonhole bouquets could be pinned upon him any day by simply stopping his customary funeral procession about town. Such attentions should always be accompanied by gentle words or exclamations of satisfaction, as for example: "How natural you look!" or "You owed me ten dollars, but I forgive you," or "It's a pity your friends allowed you to to be laid away in a suit of clothes like that," or "I don't believe half the

things people said about you," or "It's a perfect shame you don't feel like resting in peace," or "Did you leave anything worth mentioning?" He also suggested that he would rest much easier in his grave if a slight increase in salary attended the obsequies.

From this it may be gathered that Harry Squires was a man who made the most out of a very ordinary situation.

Marshal Crow's suggestion met with instant response. "On the other hand, Anderson, the lady may be as beautiful as the fabulous houri and as devilish as Delilah. I don't want to take any steps in the matter without giving you your chance." He spoke darkly.

Mr. Crow pricked up his ears. "What do you mean by that?"

"As a newspaper man, I am determined to clear up the mystery of the Veiled Lady. If you persist in sitting around twiddling your thumbs and looking like a primeval goat, I shall send to New York and engage a detective to work on the case exclusively for the *Banner*. The *Banner* is enterprising. We intend to give our subscribers the news, no matter what it costs. If you—"

The Marshal swallowed the bait, hook and all. He arose from his chair and faced Mr. Squires. "I'll thank you, Harry Squires, to keep out of this. I didn't mean to say a word about it to you or anybody else until I had gone a little further with my investigations, but now I've got to let the cat out of the bag. I've been working day and night on her case ever since she came to town. Never mind, Newt— don't ask me. I'll announce the result of my investigations at the proper time an' not a minute sooner. Now I guess I'll be moseyin' along. It's gettin' purty late, an' I've got a lot of work to do before midnight."

He started down the steps. Harry Squires leaned back in his chair and scratched a match on the leg of his trousers. By the time he raised the lighted match to the bowl of his pipe, the smile had left his lips.

An uneventful week passed. The Veiled Lady made her daily excursions in the big high-powered car, pursued her now well-known domestic habits, retained her offensive aloofness, played games with the astounding Snooks, suffered no ill effects whatsoever from the inimical glares of the natives; and above all, she continued to set the fashions in Tinkletown.

Mr. Crow stalked the streets early and late. He lurked behind the corners of buildings; he peered sharply from the off-side of telephone poles as the big limousine swept haughtily by. He patrolled the Nixon neighbourhood by day and haunted it by night. On occasion he might have been observed in the act of scrutinizing the tracks of the automobile over recently sprinkled streets.

One evening, just after dusk,— after a sharp encounter with Harry Squires, who bluntly accused him of loafing on the job,— he sauntered past the Nixon cottage. His soul was full of bitterness. He was baffled. Harry Squires was right;

he had accomplished nothing— and what was worse, he wasn't likely to accomplish anything. He sauntered back, casting furtive glances into the spacious front-yard, and concluded to ease his restless legs by leaning against a tree and crossing them in an attitude of profound nonchalance. The tree happened to be almost directly in front of the Nixon gate. Not to seem actually employed in shadowing the house, he decided to pose with his back to the premises, facing down the street, twisting his whiskers in a most pensive manner.

Suddenly a low, musical voice said:

"Good evening!"

Mr. Crow looked up into the thick foliage of the elm, then to the right and left, and finally in the direction of the cottage, out of the corner of his eye, after a sudden twist of the neck that caused him to wonder whether he had sprained it.

The Veiled Lady was standing at the gate. In the gathering darkness her figure seemed abnormally tall.

The Marshal hastily faced about and stared hard at the mystery.

"Evening," he said, somewhat uncertainly. Then he lifted his hat a couple of inches from his head and replaced it at an entirely new angle, pulling the rim down so far over the left eye that the right eye alone was visible. This shift of the hat instantly transformed him into a figure of speech; he became as "cunning as a fox." People in Tinkletown had come to recognize this as an unfailing symptom of shrewdness on his part. He always wore his hat like that when he was deep in the process of "ferreting something out."

"Have I the honour of addressing Mr. Anderson Crow?" inquired the lady.

"You have," said he succinctly.

"Field Marshal Crow?"

"Ma'am?"

"Or is it Town Marshal? I am quite ignorant about titles."

"That's the name I go by, ma'am."

"Your name is very familiar to me. Are you in any way related to the great detective?"

This was unexpected tribute. The only thing he could think up to say was, "I'm him," and then, apologetically: "—unless some one's been usin' my name without authority."

"Are you actually the great Anderson Crow? Do you know, I have always thought of you as a fictitious character— like Sherlock Holmes. Are you really real? Do I look upon you in the flesh?"

Mr. Crow was momentarily overwhelmed.

"Oh, I— I guess I'm not much different from other men, ma'am. I'm not half as important as folks make me out to be."

"How nice and modest you are! That is the true sign of greatness, Mr. Crow. I might have known that you would be simple."

"Simple?" murmured Anderson, to whom the word had but one meaning. He thought of Willie Jones, the village idiot.

"'Simplicity, thou art a jewel,'" observed the Veiled Lady. "Will you pardon a somewhat leading question, Mr. Crow?"

"Lead on," said he, still a trifle uncertain of himself.

"Who is that man standing against the tree beside you? Is he a friend of yours?"

"Who is— is my what?"

"Your companion. Now he has moved over behind the tree."

Anderson shot a startled look over his shoulder.

"There ain't any man behind the tree. I'm all alone."

"Are you trying to make sport of me, Mr. Crow?"

"I should say not. I been standin' here fer some time, an' I guess I'd know if anybody was—"

"Do you think I am blind?" demanded the lady quite sharply.

"Not if you c'n see a man behind this tree," said he, with conviction. "You got the best eyesight of anybody I ever come across— that's all I got to say."

"I see him very distinctly."

Anderson obligingly circled the tree.

"Do you see him now?" he inquired in an amused tone.

"Certainly. He walked around the tree just ahead of you."

"What the—" began Anderson angrily, but checked the words in time. "You are mistaken. There ain't no one here, 'cept me."

"Is he one of your subordinates?" queried the woman, leaning forward in the attitude of one peering intently.

"Must be a shadow you're seein', ma'am," he suggested, and suddenly was conscious of the queer sensation that some one was on the opposite side of the tree.

"That's it!" she exclaimed eagerly. "A shadow! Aren't you detectives always shadowing some one?"

"Yes, but we don't turn into shadows to do it, ma'am. We just—"

"There he is! Standing directly behind you. What object can you possibly have, Mr. Crow, in lying to me about—"

"Lying?" gasped Anderson, after a swift, apprehensive glance over his shoulder. "I'm tellin' you the gospel truth. Maybe that confounded veil's botherin' your eyesight. Take it off, an' you'll see there ain't no one—"

"Ah! What a remarkable leap! He must be possessed of wings."

Mr. Crow himself moved with such celerity that one might have described the movement as a leap. He was within a yard of her when he next spoke; his back was toward her, his eyes searching the darkness from which he had sprung.

"Good Lord! You— you'd think there was some one there by the way you talk."

"He leaped from behind that tree to this one over here. It must be thirty feet. How perfectly amazing!"

By this time the good Marshal was noticeably impressed. There was no denying the fact that his voice shook.

"Now who's lying?" he cried out.

She took no offence. Instead she pointed down the dark sidewalk. It seemed to him that her arm was six feet long. He was fascinated by it.

"Now he is climbing up the tree— just like a squirrel. Look!"

Anderson felt the cold perspiration starting out all over his body.

"I— I swear I can't see anybody at all," the Marshal croaked weakly.

"Run over to that tree and look up, Mr. Crow," she whispered in great agitation. "He is sitting on that big limb, looking at us—his eyes are like little balls of fire. Send him away, please."

Haltingly the Marshal edged his way toward the tree. Coming to its base, he peered upward. He saw nothing that resembled a human figure.

"Be careful!" called out the Veiled Lady. "He is about to swing down upon your head. Hurry! There! Didn't you feel that?"

Anderson Crow made a flying leap for safety. He had the uncanny feeling that his hair was slowly lifting the hat from his head.

"Feel— feel what?" he gasped.

"He swung down by his hands and kicked at you. I was sure his foot struck your head. Ah! There he goes again. See him? He is climbing over my wall— no, he is running along the top of it. Like the wind! And he—"

"Good heavens! Am I— am I goin' blind?" groaned Mr. Crow, his eyes bulging.

"Now he has disappeared behind the rosebushes down in the corner of the lot. He must be the same man I have seen— always about this time in the evening. If he isn't one of your men, Mr. Crow, who in Heaven's name is he?"

"You— you have seen him before?" murmured the Marshal, reaching up to make sure that his hat was still in place.

"Four or five times. Last night he climbed up and stood beside that big chimney up there— silhouetted against the sky. He looked very tall— much taller than any ordinary man. The night before, he was out here on the lawn,

jumping from bush to bush, for all the world like a harlequin. Once he actually leaped from the ground up to the roof of the porch, as easily as you would spring— Where are you going, Mr. Crow?"

"I— I thought I saw him runnin' down the street just now," said Anderson Crow, quickening his pace after a parting glance over his shoulder at the tall lady in the gateway. "Maybe I can overtake him if I— if I— But I guess I'd better hurry. He seems to be runnin' mighty fast."

He was twenty feet away when she called after him, a note of warning in her voice:

"You are mistaken! He is following you— he is right at your heels, Mr. Crow."

This was quite enough for Anderson Crow. He broke into a run. As he clattered past the lower end of the garden wall, a low, horrifying chuckle fell upon his ears. It was not the laugh of a human being. He afterwards described it as the chortle of a hyena— hoarse and wild and full of ghoulish glee.

Alf Reesling's house was two blocks down the street. Mr. Reesling was getting a bit of fresh air in his front yard. The picket gate was open, probably to let in the air, and he was leaning upon one of the posts. His attention was attracted by the sound of approaching footsteps. Almost before he knew what had happened, they were receding. Anderson swept past; his chin up, his legs working like piston-rods.

The astonished Alf recognized his friend and adviser.

"Hey!" he shouted.

It was a physical impossibility for Anderson to slacken his speed. At the same time, it was equally impossible for him to increase it. Alf, scenting excitement, set out at top speed behind him, shouting all the time.

Pursued and pursuer held their relative positions until they rounded into Main Street. Reaching the zone of light— and safety— produced by show-windows and open doors, the Marshal put on the brakes and ventured a glance over his shoulder. Alf, lacking the incentive that spurred Anderson, lagged some distance behind. A second glance reassured the Marshal. Alf was lumbering heavily past Brubaker's drugstore, fully revealed.

Observing an empty chair on the sidewalk in front of Jackson's cigar-store, Mr. Crow directed his slowing footsteps toward it. He flopped down with an abruptness that almost dismembered it. He was fanning himself with his hat when Alf came up.

Alf leaned against the wooden Indian that guarded the portals. Presently he wheezed:

"Wha— what's— all— the— rumpus?"

Instead of replying, Mr. Crow pressed his hand to his heart and shook his head.

"Take your time," advised Alf sympathetically; whereupon Anderson nodded his head.

Sim Jackson ambled to the front door, and Mort Fryback hobbled across the street from his hardware store. Lum Gillespie dropped the hose with which he was sousing an automobile in front of his garage and approached the group.

In less than three minutes all of the nighthawks of Main Street were gathered about Anderson Crow, convinced that something unusual was in the air despite his protests.

Suddenly the Marshal's manner changed. He swept the considerable group with an appraising eye, and then in a tone of authority said:

"Now that I've got you all together, I hereby order you in my capacity as an official of the State and county, to close up your stores an' consider yourselves organized into a posse. You will close up immejately an' report to me here, ready for active work."

Shortly after ten o'clock a group of fifteen or eighteen men moved silently away from Jackson's cigar-store, led by their commander-in-chief. He was flanked on one side by Bill Kepsal, the brawny blacksmith, and on the other by Sim Jackson, who happened to possess a revolver.

After the posse had turned into the unrelieved shades of Maple Street, Mr. Crow halted every few yards and said: "Sh!"

He had related a portion but not all of his experiences, winding up with the statement that poor Mrs. Smith had been terribly frightened by the mysterious prowler, and that it was their duty as citizens to put an end to his activities if possible.

"Her description of him don't fit anybody livin' in this town," he had said during the course of his narrative. "We ain't got anybody who c'n jump thirty foot, or who c'n shin up a chimbly like a squirrel. You never saw anybody as quick as he is, either. Supposin' you think you see him standin' right beside you. Zip! Before you could blink an eye, he's over there in front of Mort's store— just like that. Or up a tree! Spryest cuss I ever laid eyes on. Made me think of a ghost."

"Ghost?" said Newt Spratt, pausing in the act of rolling up his sleeves.

"You say you saw him, Anderson?" inquired Alf Reesling.

"Course I did. Tall feller with—"

"And the lady saw him too?"

"She saw him first, I been tellin' you. She seemed to be able to see quicker'n I could, 'cause she saw nearly every move he made. My eyesight ain't as good as it used to be, an' besides, she could see plainer from where she

stood. Come on now— no time to waste. We got to post ourselves all around the place an'— an' nab him if he shows himself again. All you fellers have got to do is to obey orders."

At the corner of Maple and Sickle streets, a few hundred feet from the Nixon cottage, the cavalcade received a whispered order to halt. The Marshal, enjoining the utmost stealth, instructed his men where to place themselves about the grounds they were soon to invest from various approaches. After stealing over the stone wall, they were to crawl forward on hands and knees until each man found a hiding-place behind a bush or flower-bed. There he was to wait and watch. The first glimpse of the mysterious intruder was to be the signal for a shout of alarm; whereupon the whole posse was to close in upon him without an instant's delay.

In course of time, the posse successfully debouched upon the lawn and occupied crouching positions behind various objects of nature. The minutes slowly consolidated themselves into half an hour; they were pretty well started on the way toward the three-quarter mark, and still no sign of the sprightly stranger. Lights were gleaming behind the yellow shades of the downstairs window in the cottage; through the Japanese curtains enveloping the veranda a dull, restricted glow forced its way out upon the bordering flower-beds.

Suddenly out of what had become an almost sepulchral silence, came the sound of a woman's voice. The words she uttered were so startling that the listeners felt the flesh on their bones creep.

"But wouldn't poisoning be the surer and quicker way? Slip a few drops of prussic acid into his food, and death would be instantaneous."

Marshal Crow clutched Bill Kepsal's arm. "Did you hear that?" he whispered. She had spoken in hushed, quavering tones.

Then came a man's voice from the porch above, low and suppressed.

"Why not wait till he is asleep and let me sneak up to him and put the revolver to his head—"

"But— but suppose he should awake and—"

"He'll never open his eyes again, believe me. Poison isn't always sure to work quickly or thoroughly. We don't want a struggle."

"You may be right. I— I leave it to you."

"Good! The sooner the better, then. If we do it at once, François and Henry can bury him before morning. I think—"

"I cannot bear to talk about it. Creep in and see if he is asleep. Don't make the slightest noise. He— he must never know!"

Stealthy footsteps, as of one tiptoeing, were heard by the listeners below the porch. Then, a moment later, the sound of a woman sobbing.

The foregoing conversation was distinctly heard by at least half of Marshal Crow's posse. Three of the watchers, crouching not far from Anderson Crow and his two supporters, abruptly left their hiding-places and started swiftly toward the front gate. The Marshal intercepted them.

"Where are you going?" he whispered, grabbing the foremost, who happened to be Elmer K. Pratt, the photographer.

"I was sure I saw that feller you were telling about skipping down toward the street," whispered Mr. Pratt, his voice shaking. "I'm going after him. I—"

"Keep still! Stay where you are. Alf, you round up the boys—collect 'em up here, quiet as possible. We got to prevent this terrible murder. You heard what they were plottin' to do. Surround the house. Close every avenue of escape. Three or four of us will bust in through the porch an'— You stay with me, Sim, an' you too, Bill. Get your pistol ready, Sim. When I give the word— foller me! Where's Alf? Is he surrounding the house? Sh! Don't speak!

Shadowy figures began scuttling about the lawn, darting from bush to bush, advancing upon the house.

"Now— get ready, Sim," whispered Anderson.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a dull, smothered report, as of one striking the side of a barrel, reached the ears of the assembling forces. Then a sharp, agonized cry from the lady in the veranda.

"Too late!" cried the Marshal, and dashed clumsily up the front steps, followed by four or five of his henchmen.

Yanking open the screen-door, he plunged headlong into the softly lighted veranda. Behind him came Sim Jackson, brandishing a revolver, and Bill Kepsal, clutching the hammer he had brought from his forge.

They stopped short. A woman in a filmy white gown, cut extremely low in the neck, confronted them, an expression of alarm in her wide dark eyes. She was very beautiful. They had never seen any one so beautiful, so striking, or so startlingly dressed. She had just arisen from the comfortable wicker chair beside the table, the surface of which was littered with magazines, papers and documents in all sorts of disorder.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" she demanded, recovering her composure after the first instant of alarm.

Mr. Crow found his voice. "Surrender peaceable," he said. "I've got you completely surrounded. Won't do any good to resist. My men are everywhere. Your partner will be shot down if he—"

"Why, you— you old goose!" cried out the lady, and forthwith burst into a merry peal of laughter.

The Marshal stiffened.

"That kind of talk won't—" he began, and then broke off to roar: "Quit your laughin'! You won't be gigglin' like that when you're settin' in the 'lectric chair. Hustle inside there, men! Take her paramour, dead or alive!"

"Oh, what a stupendous situation!" cried the beautiful lady, her eyes dancing. "You really are a darling, Mr. Crow— a perfect, old dear. You—"

"None o' that now— none o' that!" Mr. Crow warned, taking a step backward. "Won't do you any good to talk sweet to me. I've got the goods on you. A dozen witnesses have heard you plottin' to murder. Throw up your hands! Up with 'em! Now, keep 'em up! An' stop laughin'! You'll soon find out you can't murder a man in cold blood, even if he is a trespasser on your property. You can't go around killin'— Say, where is Mrs. Smith? Where's the lady of the house?"

"I am the lady of the house, Mr. Crow," said the lady, performing a graceful Delsartian movement with her long bare arms. Mr. Crow and his companions stared upward at her arms as if fascinated. "I am Mrs. Smith— Mrs. John Smith."

"I guess not," said Anderson sharply. "She wears a veil, asleep an' awake. Hold on! Put your hands down! She's signalin' somebody, sure as you're alive," he burst out, turning to the group of mouth-sagging, eye-roving gentlemen who followed every graceful curve and twist of those ivory arms. "What's the matter with you, Sim? Didn't I order you to go in there an' grab that bloody assassin? What—"

"Not on your life! He's got a gun," exclaimed Sim Jackson. "S'pose I'm goin' in there, an'— Oh, fer gosh sake!"

A man appeared in the door leading to the interior of the house.

"For the love o' Mike!" issued from the lips of the newcomer. "What in thunder— what's all this?"

It was Harry Squires.

He gazed open-mouthed, first at the beautiful, convulsed lady, and then at the huddled group of men.

"We are caught red-handed, Mr. Squires," said the beautiful lady. "Shall we go to the electric chair hand in hand?"

A slow grin began to reach out from the corners of Harry's mouth as if its intention was to connect with his ears.

"My God, Harry— you ain't mixed up in this murder?" bleated Anderson.

The old man's dismay was so genuine, his distress so pitiful, that the heart of Harry Squires was touched. His face sobered at once. Stepping forward, he held out his hand to the Marshal.

"Good old Anderson! It's all right. Buck up, old top! I'm sorry to say that blood has been shed here tonight. Come with me; I'll show you the corpse."

Mr. Crow was not to be caught napping. "Some of you fellers stay here an' guard this woman. Don't let her get away."

A few minutes later he stood beside Harry Squires in the cellar below the kitchen. There was a smell of gunpowder on the close, still air. They looked down upon the black, inanimate form of the French poodle.

"There, Mr. Hawkshaw," said Harry, "there lies all that is mortal of the finest little gentleman that ever wore a collar. Take off your hat, Sim— and you too, Bill— all of you. You are standing in the presence of death. Behold in me the assassin. I am the slayer of yon grisly corpse. Shackle me, Mr. Marshal. Lead me to the gallows. I am the guilty party."

Marshal Crow took off his hat with the rest— but he did it the better to mop his forehead.

"Do you mean to tell me there ain't been any man slew in this house?" he inquired slowly.

"Up to the hour of going to press," said the city editor of the *Banner*, "no human remains have been unearthed."

"Then, where in thunder is the feller who's been foolin' around Mrs. Smith's front yard, the—"

"Last I saw of him he was beating it down the street about two hours ago, and you were giving him the run of his life. I don't believe the rascal will ever dare come around here again. The chances are he's still running."

The Marshal muttered something under his breath, and shot a pleading look at Harry.

"Yes, sir," continued Harry solemnly, "I'll bet my head he'll never be seen in these parts again."

"If he hadn't got such a start of me," said Anderson, regaining much of his aplomb, "I'd 'a nabbed him, sure as you're alive. He could run like a whitehead. I never seen such—"

"Shall we go upstairs, gentlemen, and relieve the pressure on Miss Hildebrand? She is, I may say, the principal mourner, poor lady."

"Miss Who?"

"Gentlemen, the lady up there is no other than the celebrated actress, Juliet Hildebrand. The Veiled Lady and she are one and the same. Before we retire from this spot, let me explain that Mr. Snooks, the deceased, was run over by her automobile an hour or so ago. His back was broken. I merely put an end to his suffering. Now come—"

"Mister Snooks?" inquired Anderson quickly. "Well, that solves one of the mysteries that's been botherin' me. An'— an' you say she's the big actress whose picture we see in the papers every now an' again?"

"The same, Mr. Crow. She has done me the honour to accept a play that I have been guilty of writing. She came up here to go over it with me before putting it into rehearsal, and incidentally to enjoy a month's vacation after a long and prosperous season in New York."

"Do you mean to say you've knowed all along who she was?" demanded Anderson. "Been comin' up here to see her every night or so, I suppose."

"More or less."

"That settles it!" said the Marshal sternly. "You are under arrest, sir. Have you got anybody to bail you out, er are you goin' to spend the night in the lock-up?"

"What's the charge, Mr. Hawkshaw?" inquired Harry, amiably.

"Practisin' without a dicense."

"Practising what?" asked Harry.

"Jokes!" roared Anderson gleefully, and slapped him on the back.

Again the Marshal slapped the culprit's back. "Yes, sir, the joke's on me. I admit it. I'll set up the seegars for everybody here. Sim, send a box of them 'Uncle Tom' specials round to my office first thing in the mornin'. Yes, sir, Harry, my boy, you certainly caught me nappin' good and plenty. Tain't often I git—"

"If you don't mind, Anderson," interrupted Elmer K. Pratt, "I'll take a nickel's worth of chewin'-tobacco. My wife don't like me to smoke around the house."

"Gentlemen," said Harry Squires, "there are a few bottles of beer in the icebox, and the cook will make all the cheese and ham sandwiches we can eat. I am sure Miss Hildebrand will be happy to have you partake of her—"

"Hold on a minute, Harry," broke in the Marshal hastily. His face was a study. The painfully created joviality came to a swift and uncomfortable end, and in its place flashed a look of embarrassment. He simply couldn't face the smiling Miss Hildebrand.

"If it's all the same to you," he went on, lowering his voice and glancing furtively over his shoulder at the departing members of his posse, "I guess I'll go out the back way." Seeing the surprised look-on Harry's face, he floundered badly for a moment or two, and then concluded with the perfectly good excuse that it was his duty to lead Alf Reesling, the one-time town drunkard, away from temptation. In support of this resolve, he called out to Alf: "Come here, Alf. None o' that, now! You come along with me."

"I ain't goin' to touch anything but a ham sandwich," protested Alf with considerable asperity.

"Never mind! You do what I tell you, or I'll run you in. Remember, you got a wife an' daughter, an'—"

"Inasmuch as Alf has been on the water-wagon for twenty-seven years, Mr. Marshal, I think you can trust him—" began Harry, but Anderson checked him with a resolute gesture.

"Can't take any chances with him. He's got to come with me."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Harry.

"An' besides," said Anderson, "a man in my position can't afford to be seen associatin' with actresses— an' you know it, Harry Squires. Come on, Alf!"

18: The Mystery of Joseph Laquedem

A. T. Quiller-Couch

1863-1944

The Cornish Magazine, July 1898

A JEW, unfortunately slain on the sands of Sheba Cove, in the parish of Ruan Lanihale, August 15, 1810: or so much of it as is hereby related by the Rev. Endymion Trist, B.D., then vicar of that parish, in a letter to a friend.

MY DEAR J——,

—You are right, to be sure, in supposing that I know more than my neighbours in Ruan Lanihale concerning the unfortunate young man, Joseph Laquedem, and more than I care to divulge; in particular concerning his tragical relations with the girl Julia Constantine, or July, as she was commonly called. The vulgar knowledge amounts to little more than this— that Laquedem, a young Hebrew of extraordinary commercial gifts, first came to our parish in 1807 and settled here as managing secretary of a privateering company at Porthlooe; that by his aptitude and daring in this and the illicit trade he amassed a respectable fortune, and at length opened a private bank at Porthlooe and issued his own notes; that on August 15, 1810, a forced "run" which, against his custom, he was personally supervising, miscarried, and he met his death by a carbine-shot on the sands of Sheba Cove; and, lastly, that his body was taken up and conveyed away by the girl Julia Constantine, under the fire of the preventive men.

The story has even in our time received what I may call some fireside embellishments; but these are the facts, and the parish knows little beyond them. I (as you conjecture) know a great deal more; and yet there is a sense in which I know nothing more. You and I, my old friend, have come to an age when men do not care to juggle with the mysteries of another world, but knowing that the time is near when all accounts must be rendered, desire to take stock honestly of what they believe and what they do not. And here lies my difficulty. On the one hand I would not make public an experience which, however honestly set down, might mislead others, and especially the young, into rash and mischievous speculations. On the other, I doubt if it be right to keep total silence and withhold from devout and initiated minds any glimpse of truth, or possible truth, vouchsafed to me. As the Greek said, "Plenty are the thyrsus-bearers, but few the illuminate"; and among these few I may surely count my old friend.

It was in January 1807— the year of the abominable business of Tilsit— that my churchwarden, the late Mr. Ephraim Pollard, and I, in cleaning the south wall of Lanihale Church for a fresh coat of whitewash, discovered the

frescoes and charcoal drawings, as well as the brass plaque of which I sent you a tracing; and I think not above a fortnight later that, on your suggestion, I set to work to decipher and copy out the old churchwardens' accounts. On the Monday after Easter, at about nine o'clock p.m., I was seated in the Vicarage parlour, busily transcribing, with a couple of candles before me, when my housekeeper Frances came in with a visiting-card, and the news that a stranger desired to speak with me. I took the card and read "Mr. Joseph Laquedem."

"Show the gentleman in," said I.

Now the fact is, I had just then a few guineas in my chest, and you know what a price gold fetched in 1807. I dare say that for twelve months together the most of my parishioners never set eyes on a piece, and any that came along quickly found its way to the Jews. People said that Government was buying up gold, through the Jews, to send to the armies. I know not the degree of truth in this, but I had some five and twenty guineas to dispose of, and had been put into correspondence with a Mr. Isaac Laquedem, a Jew residing by Plymouth Dock, whom I understood to be offering 25*s.* 6*d.* per guinea, or a trifle above the price then current.

I was fingering the card when the door opened again and admitted a young man in a caped overcoat and tall boots bemired high above the ankles. He halted on the threshold and bowed.

Mr.—?"

"Joseph Laquedem," said he in a pleasant voice.

"I guess your errand," said I, "though it was a Mr. Isaac Laquedem whom I expected.— Your father, perhaps?"

He bowed again, and I left the room to fetch my bag of guineas. "You have had a dirty ride," I began on my return.

"I have walked," he answered, lifting a muddy boot. "I beg you to pardon these."

"What, from Torpoint Ferry? And in this weather? My faith, sir, you must be a famous pedestrian!"

He made no reply to this, but bent over the guineas, fingering them, holding them up to the candlelight, testing their edges with his thumbnail, and finally poising them one by one on the tip of his forefinger.

"I have a pair of scales," suggested I.

"Thank you, I too have a pair in my pocket. But I do not need them. The guineas are good weight, all but this one, which is possibly a couple of grains short."

"Surely you cannot rely on your hand to tell you that?"

His eyebrows went up as he felt in his pocket and produced a small velvet-lined case containing a pair of scales. He was a decidedly handsome young

man, with dark intelligent eyes and a slightly scornful— or shall I say ironical?— smile. I took particular note of the steadiness of his hand as he adjusted the scales and weighed my guinea.

"To be precise," he announced, "1.898, or practically one and nine-tenths short."

"I should have thought," said I, fairly astounded, "a lifetime too little for acquiring such delicacy of sense!"

He seemed to ponder. "I dare say you are right, sir," he answered, and was silent again until the business of payment was concluded. While folding the receipt he added, "I am a connoisseur of coins, sir, and not of their weight alone."

"Antique, as well as modern?"

"Certainly."

"In that case," said I, "you may be able to tell me something about this": and going to my bureau I took out the brass plaque which Mr. Pollard had detached from the planks of the church wall. "To be sure, it scarcely comes within the province of numismatics."

He took the plaque. His brows contracted, and presently he laid it on the table, drew my chair towards him in an absent-minded fashion, and, sitting down, rested his brow on his open palms. I can recall the attitude plainly, and his bent head, and the rain still glistening in the waves of his black hair.

"Where did you find this?" he asked, but without looking up.

I told him. "The engraving upon it is singular. I thought that possibly—"

"Oh, that," said he, "is simplicity itself. An eagle displayed, with two heads, the legs resting on two gates, a crescent between, an imperial crown surmounting—t hese are the arms of the Greek Empire, the two gates are Rome and Constantinople. The question is, how it came where you found it? It was covered with plaster, you say, and the plaster whitewashed? Did you discover anything near it?"

Upon this I told him of the frescoes and charcoal drawings, and roughly described them.

His fingers began to drum upon the table.

"Have you any documents which might tell us when the wall was first plastered?"

"The parish accounts go back to 1594— here they are: the Registers to 1663 only. I keep them in the vestry. I can find no mention of plastering, but the entries of expenditure on whitewashing occur periodically, the first under the year 1633." I turned the old pages and pointed to the entry "*Its' paide to George mason for a dayes work about the churche after the Jew had been, and white wassche* i^{s} vj^{d}."

"A Jew? But a Jew had no business in England in those days. I wonder how and why he came." My visitor took the old volume and ran his finger down the leaf, then up, then turned back a page. "Perhaps this may explain it," said he. "*Ite' deliuēd Mr. Beuill to make puīsion for the companie of a fforeste barke y*^{e} *came ashoare* iii^{s} iv^{d}." He broke off, with a finger on the entry, and rose. "Pray forgive me, sir; I had taken your chair."

"Don't mention it," said I. "Indeed I was about to suggest that you draw it to the fire while Frances brings in some supper."

To be short, although he protested he must push on to the inn at Porthlooe, I persuaded him to stay the night; not so much, I confess, from desire of his company, as in the hope that if I took him to see the frescoes next morning he might help me to elucidate their history.

I remember now that during supper and afterwards my guest allowed me more than my share of the conversation. He made an admirable listener, quick, courteous, adaptable, yet with something in reserve (you may call it a facile tolerance, if you will) which ended by irritating me. Young men should be eager, fervid, *sublimis cupidusque*, as I was before my beard grew stiff. But this young man had the air of a spectator at a play, composing himself to be amused. There was too much wisdom in him and too little emotion. We did not, of course, touch upon any religious question— indeed, of his own opinions on any subject he disclosed extraordinarily little: and yet as I reached my bedroom that night I told myself that here, behind a mask of good manners, was one of those perniciously modern young men who have run through all beliefs by the age of twenty, and settled down to a polite but weary atheism.

I fancy that under the shadow of this suspicion my own manner may have been cold to him next morning. Almost immediately after breakfast we set out for the church. The day was sunny and warm; the atmosphere brilliant after the night's rain. The hedges exhaled a scent of spring. And, as we entered the churchyard, I saw the girl Julia Constantine seated in her favourite angle between the porch and the south wall, threading a chain of daisies.

"What an amazingly handsome girl!" my guest exclaimed.

"Why, yes," said I, "she has her good looks, poor soul!"

"Why 'poor soul'?"

"She is an imbecile, or nearly so," said I, fitting the key in the lock.

We entered the church. And here let me say that, although I furnished you at the time of their discovery with a description of the frescoes and the ruder drawings which overlay them, you can scarcely imagine the grotesque and astonishing *coup d'œil* presented by the two series. To begin with the frescoes, or original, series. One, as you know, represented the Crucifixion. The head of the Saviour bore a large crown of gilded thorns, and from the wound in His left

side flowed a continuous stream or red gouts of blood, extraordinarily intense in colour (and intensity of colour is no common quality in fresco-painting). At the foot of the cross stood a Roman soldier, with two female figures in dark-coloured drapery a little to the right, and in the background a man clad in a loose dark upper coat, which reached a little below the knees.

The same man reappeared in the second picture, alone, but carrying a tall staff or hunting spear, and advancing up a road, at the top of which stood a circular building with an arched doorway and, within the doorway, the head of a lion. The jaws of this beast were open and depicted with the same intense red as the Saviour's blood.

Close beside this, but further to the east, was a large ship, under sail, which from her slanting position appeared to be mounting over a long swell of sea. This vessel had four masts; the two foremost furnished with yards and square sails, the others with lateen-shaped sails, after the Greek fashion; her sides were decorated with six gaily painted bands or streaks, each separately charged with devices— a golden saltire on a green ground, a white crescent on a blue, and so on; and each masthead bore a crown with a flag or streamer fluttering beneath.

Of the frescoes these alone were perfect, but fragments of others were scattered over the wall, and in particular I must mention a group of detached human limbs lying near the ship—a group rendered conspicuous by an isolated right hand and arm drawn on a larger scale than the rest. A gilded circlet adorned the arm, which was flexed at the elbow, the hand horizontally placed, the forefinger extended towards the west in the direction of the picture of the Crucifixion, and the thumb shut within the palm beneath the other three fingers.

So much for the frescoes. A thin coat of plaster had been laid over them to receive the second series, which consisted of the most disgusting and fantastic images, traced in black. One of these drawings represented Satan himself— an erect figure, with hairy paws clasped in a supplicating posture, thick black horns, and eyes which (for additional horror) the artist had painted red and edged with a circle of white. At his feet crawled the hindmost limb of a peculiarly loathsome monster with claws stuck in the soil. Close by a nun was figured, sitting in a pensive attitude, her cheek resting on the back of her hand, her elbow supported by a hideous dwarf, and at some distance a small house, or prison, with barred windows and a small doorway crossed with heavy bolts.

As I said, this upper series had been but partially scraped away, and as my guest and I stood at a little distance, I leave you to imagine, if you can, the incongruous tableau; the Prince of Darkness almost touching the mourners beside the cross; the sorrowful nun and grinning dwarf side by side with a ship

in full sail, which again seemed to be forcing her way into a square and forbidding prison, etc.

Mr. Laquedem conned all this for some while in silence, holding his chin with finger and thumb.

"And it was here you discovered the plaque?" he asked at length.

I pointed to the exact spot.

"H'm!" he mused, "and that ship must be Greek or Levantine by its rig. Compare the crowns on her masts, too, with that on the plaque…" He stepped to the wall and peered into the frescoes. "Now this hand and arm—"

"They belong to me," said a voice immediately behind me, and turning, I saw that the poor girl had followed us into the church.

The young Jew had turned also. "What do you mean by that?" he asked sharply.

"She means nothing," I began, and made as if to tap my forehead significantly.

"Yes, I do mean something," she persisted. "They belong to me. I remember—"

"What do you remember?"

Her expression, which for a moment had been thoughtful, wavered and changed into a vague foolish smile. "I can't tell… something… it was sand, I think…"

"Who is she?" asked Mr. Laquedem.

"Her name is Julia Constantine. Her parents are dead; an aunt looks after her— a sister of her mother's."

He turned and appeared to be studying the frescoes. "Julia Constantine— an odd name," he muttered. "Do you know anything of her parentage?"

"Nothing except that her father was a labourer at Sheba, the manor-farm. The family has belonged to this parish for generations. I believe July is the last of them."

He faced round upon her again. "*Sand*, did you say? That's a strange thing to remember. How does *sand* come into your mind? Think, now."

She cast down her eyes; her fingers plucked at the daisy-chain. After a while she shook her head. "I can't think," she answered, glancing up timidly and pitifully.

"Surely we are wasting time," I suggested. To tell the truth I disapproved of his worrying the poor girl.

He took the daisy-chain from her, looking at me the while with something between a "by-your-leave" and a challenge. A smile played about the corners of his mouth.

"Let us waste a little more." He held up the chain before her and began to sway it gently to and fro. "Look at it, please, and stretch out your arm; look steadily. Now your name is Julia Constantine, and you say that the arm on the wall belongs to you. Why?"

"Because… if you please, sir, because of the mark."

"What mark?"

"The mark on my arm."

This answer seemed to discompose as well as to surprise him. He snatched at her wrist and rolled back her sleeve, somewhat roughly, as I thought. "Look here, sir!" he exclaimed, pointing to a thin red line encircling the flesh of the girl's upper arm, and from that to the arm and armlet in the fresco.

"She has been copying it," said I, "with a string or ribbon, which no doubt she tied too tightly."

"You are mistaken, sir; this is a birthmark. You have had it always?" he asked the girl.

She nodded. Her eyes were fixed on his face with the gaze of one at the same time startled and confiding; and for the moment he too seemed to be startled. But his smile came back as he picked up the daisy-chain and began once more to sway it to and fro before her.

"And when that arm belonged to you, there was sand around you— eh! Tell us, how did the sand come there?"

She was silent, staring at the pendulum-swing of the chain. "Tell us," he repeated in a low coaxing tone.

And in a tone just as low she began, "There was sand … red sand … it was below me… and something above … something like a great tent." She faltered, paused and went on, "There were thousands of people…." She stopped.

"Yes, yes— there were thousands of people on the sand—"

"No, they were not on the sand. There were only two on the sand… the rest were around … under the tent… my arm was out… just like this…."

The young man put a hand to his forehead. "Good Lord!" I heard him say, "the amphitheatre!"

"Come, sir," I interrupted, "I think we have had enough of this jugglery."

But the girl's voice went on steadily as if repeating a lesson:—

"And then you came "

"*I!*" His voice rang sharply, and I saw a horror dawn in his eyes, and grow. "I!"

"And then you came," she repeated, and broke off, her mind suddenly at fault. Automatically he began to sway the daisy-chain afresh. "We were on board a ship… a funny ship… with a great high stern…."

"Is this the same story?" he asked, lowering his voice almost to a whisper; and I could hear his breath going and coming.

"I don't know… one minute I see clear, and then it all gets mixed up again… we were up there, stretched on deck, near the tiller… another ship was chasing us… the men began to row, with long sweeps…."

"But the sand," he insisted, "is the sand there?"

"The sand?… Yes, I see the sand again… we are standing upon it… we and the crew… the sea is close behind us … some men have hold of me… they are trying to pull me away from you…. Ah!—"

And I declare to you that with a sob the poor girl dropped on her knees, there in the aisle, and clasped the young man about the ankles, bowing her forehead upon the insteps of his high boots. As for him, I cannot hope to describe his face to you. There was something more in it than wonder— something more than dismay, even— at the success of his unhallowed experiment. It was as though, having prepared himself light-heartedly to witness a play, he was seized and terrified to find himself the principal actor. I never saw ghastlier fear on human cheeks.

"For God's sake, sir," I cried, stamping my foot, "relax your cursed spells! Relax them and leave us! This is a house of prayer."

He put a hand under the girl's chin, and, raising her face, made a pass or two, still with the daisy-chain in his hand. She looked about her, shivered and stood erect. "Where am I?" she asked. "Did I fall? What are you doing with my chain?" She had relapsed into her habitual childishness of look and speech.

I hurried them from the church, resolutely locked the door, and marched up the path without deigning a glance at the young man. But I had not gone fifty yards when he came running after.

"I entreat you, sir, to pardon me. I should have stopped the experiment before. But I was startled— thrown off my balance. I am telling you the truth, sir!"

"Very likely," said I. "The like has happened to other rash meddlers before you."

"I declare to you I had no thought—" he began. But I interrupted him:

"'No thought,' indeed! I bring you here to resolve me, if you can, a curious puzzle in archæology, and you fall to playing devil's pranks upon a half-witted child. 'No thought!'— I believe you, sir."

"And yet," he muttered, "it is an amazing business: the sand— the *velarium*— the outstretched arm and hand— *pollice compresso*— the exact gesture of the gladiatorial shows—"

"Are you telling me, pray, of gladiatorial shows under the Eastern Empire?" I demanded scornfully.

"Certainly not: and that," he mused, "only makes it the more amazing."

"Now, look here," said I, halting in the middle of the road, "I'll hear no more of it. Here is my gate, and there lies the highroad, on to Porthlooe or back to Plymouth, as you please. I wish you good morning, sir; and if it be any consolation to you, you have spoiled my digestion for a week."

I am bound to say the young man took his dismissal with grace. He halted then and there and raised his hat; stood for a moment pondering; and, turning on his heel, walked quickly off towards Porthlooe.

It must have been a week before I learnt casually that he had obtained employment there as secretary to a small company owning the *Lord Nelson* and the *Hand-in-hand* privateers. His success, as you know, was rapid; and naturally in a gossiping parish I heard about it— a little here, a little there—in all a great deal. He had bought the *Providence* schooner; he had acted as freighter for Minards' men in their last run with the *Morning Star;* he had slipped over to Cork and brought home a Porthlooe prize illegally detained there; he was in London, fighting a salvage case in the Admiralty Court; … Within twelve months he was accountant of every trading company in Porthlooe, and agent for receiving the moneys due to the Guernsey merchants. In 1809, as you know, he opened his bank and issued notes of his own. And a year later he acquired two of the best farms in the parish, Tresawl and Killifreeth, and held the fee simple of the harbour and quays.

During the first two years of his prosperity I saw little of the man. We passed each other from time to time in the street of Porthlooe, and he accosted me with a politeness to which, though distrusting him, I felt bound to respond. But he never offered conversation, and our next interview was wholly of my seeking.

One evening towards the close of his second year at Porthlooe, and about the date of his purchase of the *Providence* schooner, I happened to be walking homewards from a visit to a sick parishioner, when at Cove Bottom, by the miller's footbridge, I passed two figures— a man and a woman standing there and conversing in the dusk. I could not help recognising them; and halfway up the hill I came to a sudden resolution and turned back.

"Mr. Laquedem," said I, approaching them, "I put it to you, as a man of education and decent feeling, is this quite honourable?"

"I believe, sir," he answered courteously enough, "I can convince you that it is. But clearly this is neither the time nor the place."

"You must excuse me," I went on, "but I have known Julia since she was a child."

To this he made an extraordinary answer. "No longer?" he asked; and added, with a change of tone, "Had you not forbidden me the vicarage, sir, I might have something to say to you."

"If it concern the girl's spiritual welfare— or yours— I shall be happy to hear it."

"In that case," said he, "I will do myself the pleasure of calling upon you— shall we say to-morrow evening?"

He was as good as his word. At nine o'clock next evening— about the hour of his former visit— Frances ushered him into my parlour. The similarity of circumstance may have suggested to me to draw the comparison; at any rate I observed then for the first time that rapid ageing of his features which afterwards became a matter of common remark. The face was no longer that of the young man who had entered my parlour two years before; already some streaks of grey showed in his black locks, and he seemed even to move wearily.

"I fear you are unwell," said I, offering a chair.

"I have reason to believe," he answered, "that I am dying." And then, as I uttered some expression of dismay and concern, he cut me short. "Oh, there will be no hurry about it! I mean, perhaps, no more than that all men carry about with them the seeds of their mortality— so why not I? But I came to talk of Julia Constantine, not of myself."

"You may guess, Mr. Laquedem, that as her vicar, and having known her and her affliction all her life, I take something of a fatherly interest in the girl."

"And having known her so long, do you not begin to observe some change in her, of late?"

"Why, to be sure," said I, "she seems brighter."

He nodded. "*I* have done that; or rather, love has done it."

"Be careful, sir!" I cried. "Be careful of what you are going to tell me! If you have intended or wrought any harm to that girl, I tell you solemnly—"

But he held up a hand. "Ah, sir, be charitable! I tell you solemnly our love is not of *that* kind. We who have loved, and lost, and sought each other, and loved again through centuries, have out-learned that rougher passion. When she was a princess of Rome and I a Christian Jew led forth to the lions—"

I stood up, grasping the back of my chair and staring. At last I knew. This young man was stark mad.

He read my conviction at once. "I think, sir," he went on, changing his tone, "the learned antiquary to whom, as you told me, you were sending your tracing of the plaque, has by this time replied with some information about it."

Relieved at this change of subject, I answered quietly (while considering how best to get him out of the house), "My friend tells me that a similar design

is found in Landulph Church, on the tomb of Theodore Paleologus, who died in 1636."

"Precisely; of Theodore Paleologus, descendant of the Constantines."

I began to grasp his insane meaning. "The race, so far as we know, is extinct," said I.

"The race of the Constantines," said he slowly and composedly, "is never extinct; and while it lasts, the soul of Julia Constantine will come to birth again and know the soul of the Jew, until—"

I waited.

"—Until their love lifts the curse, and the Jew can die."

"This is mere madness," said I, my tongue blurting it out at length.

"I expected you to say no less. Now look you, sir— in a few minutes I leave you, I walk home and spend an hour or two before bedtime in adding figures, balancing accounts; to-morrow I rise and go about my daily business cheerfully, methodically, always successfully. I am the long-headed man, making money because I know how to make it, respected by all, with no trace of madness in me. You, if you meet me to-morrow, shall recognise none. Just now you are forced to believe me mad. Believe it then; but listen while I tell you this:— When Rome was, I was; when Constantinople was, I was. I was that Jew rescued from the lions. It was I who sailed from the Bosphorus in that ship, with Julia beside me; I from whom the Moorish pirates tore her, on the beach beside Tetuan; I who, centuries after, drew those obscene figures on the wall of your church—the devil, the nun, and the barred convent—when Julia, another Julia but the same soul, was denied to me and forced into a nunnery. For the frescoes, too, tell *my* history. *I* was that figure in the dark habit, standing a little back from the cross. Tell me, sir, did you never hear of Joseph Kartophilus, Pilate's porter?"

I saw that I must humour him. "I have heard his legend," said I; * "and have understood that in time he became a Christian."

** The legend is that as Christ left the judgment hall on His way to Calvary, Kartophilus smote Him, saying, "Man, go quicker!" and was answered, "I indeed go quickly; but thou shalt tarry till I come again."*

He smiled wearily. "He has travelled through many creeds; but he has never travelled beyond Love. And if that love can be purified of all passion such as you suspect, he has not travelled beyond forgiveness. Many times I have known her who shall save me in the end; and now in the end I have found her and shall be able, at length, to die; have found her, and with her all my dead loves, in the body of a girl whom you call half-witted— and shall be able, at length, to die."

And with this he bent over the table, and, resting his face on his arms, sobbed aloud. I let him sob there for a while, and then touched his shoulder gently.

He raised his head. "Ah," said he, in a voice which answered the gentleness of my touch, "you remind me!" And with that he deliberately slipped his coat off his left arm and, rolling up the shirt sleeve, bared the arm almost to the shoulder. "I want you close," he added with half a smile; for I have to confess that during the process I had backed a couple of paces towards the door. He took up a candle, and held it while I bent and examined the thin red line which ran like a circlet around the flesh of the upper arm just below the apex of the deltoid muscle. When I looked up I met his eyes challenging mine across the flame.

"Mr. Laquedem," I said, "my conviction is that you are possessed and are being misled by a grievous hallucination. At the same time I am not fool enough to deny that the union of flesh and spirit, so passing mysterious in everyday life (when we pause to think of it), may easily hold mysteries deeper yet. The Church Catholic, whose servant I am, has never to my knowledge denied this; yet has providentially made a rule of St. Paul's advice to the Colossians against intruding into those things which she hath not seen. In the matter of this extraordinary belief of yours I can give you no such comfort as one honest man should offer to another: for I do not share it. But in the more practical matter of your conduct towards July Constantine, it may help you to know that I have accepted your word and propose henceforward to trust you as a gentleman."

"I thank you, sir," he said, as he slipped on his coat. "May I have your hand on that?"

"With pleasure," I answered, and, having shaken hands, conducted him to the door.

FROM THAT DAY the affection between Joseph Laquedem and July Constantine, and their frequent companionship, were open and avowed. Scandal there was, to be sure; but as it blazed up like straw, so it died down. Even the women feared to sharpen their tongues openly on Laquedem, who by this time held the purse of the district, and to offend whom might mean an empty skivet on Saturday night. July, to be sure, was more tempting game; and one day her lover found her in the centre of a knot of women fringed by a dozen children with open mouths and ears. He stepped forward. "Ladies," said he, "the difficulty which vexes you cannot, I feel sure, be altogether good for your small sons and daughters. Let me put an end to it." He bent forward and reverently took July's hand. "My dear, it appears that the depth of my respect

for you will not be credited by these ladies unless I offer you marriage. And as I am proud of it, so forgive me if I put it beyond their doubt. Will you marry me?" July, blushing scarlet, covered her face with her hands, but shook her head. There was no mistaking the gesture: all the women saw it. "Condole with me, ladies!" said Laquedem, lifting his hat and including them in an ironical bow; and placing July's arm in his, escorted her away.

I need not follow the history of their intimacy, of which I saw, indeed, no more than my neighbours. On two points all accounts of it agree: the rapid ageing of the man during this period and the improvement in the poor girl's intellect. Some profess to have remarked an equally vehement heightening of her beauty; but, as my recollection serves me, she had always been a handsome maid; and I set down the transfiguration— if such it was— entirely to the dawn and growth of her reason. To this I can add a curious scrap of evidence. I was walking along the cliff track, one afternoon, between Porthlooe and Lanihale church-town, when, a few yards ahead, I heard a man's voice declaiming in monotone some sentences which I could not catch; and rounding the corner, came upon Laquedem and July. She was seated on a rock; and he, on a patch of turf at her feet, held open a small volume which he laid face downwards as he rose to greet me. I glanced at the back of the book and saw it was a volume of Euripides. I made no comment, however, on this small discovery; and whether he had indeed taught the girl some Greek, or whether she merely listened for the sake of hearing his voice, I am unable to say.

Let me come then to the last scene, of which I was one among many spectators.

On the morning of August 15th, 1810, and just about daybreak, I was awakened by the sound of horses' hoofs coming down the road beyond the vicarage gate. My ear told me at once that they were many riders and moving at a trot; and a minute later the jingle of metal gave me an inkling of the truth. I hurried to the window and pulled up the blind. Day was breaking on a grey drizzle of fog which drove up from seaward, and through this drizzle I caught sight of the last five or six scarlet plumes of a troop of dragoons jogging down the hill past my bank of laurels.

Now our parish had stood for some weeks in apprehension of a visit from these gentry. The riding-officer, Mr. Luke, had threatened us with them more than once. I knew, moreover, that a run of goods was contemplated: and without questions of mine— it did not become a parish priest in those days to know too much— it had reached my ears that Laquedem was himself in Roscoff bargaining for the freight. But we had all learnt confidence in him by this time— his increasing bodily weakness never seemed to affect his cleverness and resource— and no doubt occurred to me that he would

contrive to checkmate this new move of the riding-officer's. Nevertheless, and partly I dare say out of curiosity, to have a good look at the soldiers, I slipped on my clothes and hurried downstairs and across the garden.

My hand was on the gate when I heard footsteps, and July Constantino came running down the hill, her red cloak flapping and her hair powdered with mist.

"Hullo!" said I, "nothing wrong, I hope?"

She turned a white, distraught face to me in the dawn.

"Yes, yes! All is wrong! I saw the soldiers coming— I heard them a mile away, and sent up the rocket from the church-tower. But the lugger stood in— they *must* have seen!— she stood in, and is right under Sheba Point now— and *he*—"

I whistled. "This is serious. Let us run out towards the point; we— you, I mean— may be in time to warn them yet."

So we set off running together. The morning breeze had a cold edge on it, but already the sun had begun to wrestle with the bank of sea-fog. While we hurried along the cliffs the shoreward fringe of it was ripped and rolled back like a tent-cloth, and through the rent I saw a broad patch of the cove below; the sands (for the tide was at low ebb) shining like silver; the dragoons with their greatcoats thrown back from their scarlet breasts and their accoutrements flashing against the level rays. Seaward, the lugger loomed through the weather; but there was a crowd of men and black boats— half a score of them— by the water's edge, and it was clear to me at once that a forced run had been at least attempted.

I had pulled up, panting, on the verge of the cliff, when July caught me by the arm.

"*The sand!*"

She pointed; and well I remember the gesture— the very gesture of the hand in the fresco— the forefinger extended, the thumb shut within the palm. "*The sand*… he told me…"

Her eyes were wide and fixed. She spoke, not excitedly at all, but rather as one musing, much as she had answered Laquedem on the morning when he waved the daisy-chain before her.

I heard an order shouted, high up the beach, and the dragoons came charging down across the sand. There was a scuffle close by the water's edge; then, as the soldiers broke through the mob of free-traders and wheeled their horses round, fetlock deep in the tide, I saw a figure break from the crowd and run, but presently check himself and walk composedly towards the cliff up which climbed the footpath leading to Porthlooe. And above the hubbub of

oaths and shouting, I heard a voice crying distinctly, "Run, man! 'Tis after thee they are! *Man, go faster!*"

Even then, had he gained the cliff-track, he might have escaped; for up there no horseman could follow. But as a trooper came galloping in pursuit, he turned deliberately. There was no defiance in his attitude; of that I am sure. What followed must have been mere blundering ferocity. I saw a jet of smoke, heard the sharp crack of a firearm, and Joseph Laquedem flung up his arms and pitched forward at full length on the sand.

The report woke the girl as with the stab of a knife. Her cry— it pierces through my dreams at times— rang back with the echoes from the rocks, and before they ceased she was halfway down the cliffside, springing as surely as a goat, and, where she found no foothold, clutching the grass, the rooted samphires and sea pinks, and sliding. While my head swam with the sight of it, she was running across the sands, was kneeling beside the body, had risen, and was staggering under the weight of it down to the water's edge.

"Stop her!" shouted Luke, the riding-officer. "We must have the man! Dead or alive, we must have'n!"

She gained the nearest boat, the free-traders forming up around her, and hustling the dragoons. It was old Solomon Tweedy's boat, and he, prudent man, had taken advantage of the skirmish to ease her off, so that a push would set her afloat. He asserts that as July came up to him she never uttered a word, but the look on her face said "Push me off," and though he was at that moment meditating his own escape, he obeyed and pushed the boat off "like a mazed man." I may add that he spent three months in Bodmin Gaol for it.

She dropped with her burden against the stern sheets, but leapt up instantly and had the oars between the thole-pins almost as the boat floated. She pulled a dozen strokes, and hoisted the mainsail, pulled a hundred or so, sprang forward and ran up the jib. All this while the preventive men were straining to get off two boats in pursuit; but, as you may guess, the free-traders did nothing to help and a great deal to impede. And first the crews tumbled in too hurriedly, and had to climb out again (looking very foolish) and push afresh, and then one of the boats had mysteriously lost her plug and sank in half a fathom of water. July had gained a full hundred yards' offing before the pursuit began in earnest, and this meant a good deal. Once clear of the point the small cutter could defy their rowing and reach away to the eastward with the wind just behind her beam. The riding-officer saw this, and ordered his men to fire. They assert, and we must believe, that their object was merely to disable the boat by cutting up her canvas.

Their first desultory volley did no damage. I stood there, high on the cliff, and watched the boat, making a spy-glass of my hands. She had fetched in

close under the point, and gone about on the port tack— the next would clear— when the first shot struck her, cutting a hole through her jib, and I expected the wind to rip the sail up immediately; yet it stood. The breeze being dead on-shore, the little boat heeled towards us, her mainsail hiding the steerswoman.

It was a minute later, perhaps, that I began to suspect that July was hit, for she allowed the jib to shake and seemed to be running right up into the wind. The stern swung round and I strained my eyes to catch a glimpse of her. At that moment a third volley rattled out, a bullet shore through the peak halliards, and the mainsail came down with a run. It was all over.

The preventive men cheered and pulled with a will. I saw them run alongside, clamber into the cutter, and lift the fallen sail.

And that was all. There was no one on board, alive or dead. Whilst the canvas hid her, in the swift two minutes between the boat's putting about and her running up into the wind, July Constantine must have lifted her lover's body overboard and followed it to the bottom of the sea. There is no other explanation; and of the bond that knit these two together there is, when I ask myself candidly, no explanation at all, unless I give more credence than I have any wish to give to the wild tale which Joseph Laquedem told me. I have told you the facts, my friend, and leave them to your judgment.

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ERNEST FAVENC

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FRANCIS FLAGG (GEORGE HENRY WEISS)

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EDGAR JEPSON

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ERNEST O'FERRALL

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"FRANK REID"

(Alexander Vindex Vennard)

The Skeleton of Paradise Island, and other stories

1: Easy Going
2: The Genius of Dakaru Island
3: The Skeleton of Paradise Island
4: Come-To-Grief Creek
5: The Gamble
6: The Moorhead Legacy
7: The Pearls of Manomoa
8: The Green Parrot
9: The Parrot and the Pearls
10: The Madonna of the Thousand Isles
11: The Prince of Wandabilla
12: The Pink Death
13: Fingers of Death
14: The Green Umbrella
15: The Pearler of Pomete
16: The Curse of the Poppy
17: Cave of Death
18: The Creeping Death
19: Three Teeth
20: The Afterglow
21: Scalyback
22: The Plague Ship
23: Long Pig: The Mate's Adventure

24: The Pearls of Jacob Le Maire
25: The Mutiny on the Cypress
26: The Resurrection of Peter Breen
27: The Orang-Utan
26: A Home for Marie Ellen

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ETHEL LINA WHITE

The Uninvited Guest and other stories

1: Cheese
2: Waxworks
3: The Scarecrow
4: An Unlocked Window
5: White Cap
6: Falling Downstairs
7: Green Ginger
8: The Holiday
9: The Sham Shop
10: The Call of the Tiger
11: At Twilight
12: The Uninvited Guest

The Ghost Gavotte and other stories

1: The Ghost Gavotte
2: The Unknown
3: Catastrophe
4: Thumbs Down
5: Underground
6: The Seven Years' Secret
7: A Bad-Good Woman
8: Noblesse Oblige
9: The Pillow
10: Maids of Honour
11: The Day
12: The Suicide and the Saint
13: The Counter-Irritant
14: The Cellar
15: Don't Dream on Midsummer's Eve
16: The Fairy Pot
17: If You Can... Lose

18: It Hung on a Thread

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HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

Thirty-Two Uncanny Tales

1: The Door / Nov 1924
2: The Fireplace / Jan 1925
3: The Wonderful Thing / July 1925
4: Across The Gulf / Weird Tales, May 1926.
5: Jumbee / Sep 1926
6: The Projection of Armand Dubois / Oct 1926
7: West India Lights / April 1927
8: The Left Eye / June 1927
9: The Shadows / Weird Tales Nov 1927
10: The Cult of the Skull / Dec 1928
11: The People of Pan / March 1929
12: Black Tancrède / June 1929
13: Sweet Grass / July 1929
14; The Lips / Sep 1929.
15: The Tabernacle / Jan 1930
16: The Shut Room / April 1930
17: Passing of a God / Jan 1931
18: The Tree-Man / Feb-March 1931
19: Black Terror / Oct 1931
20: Cassius / Nov 1931
21: The Moon-Dial / Jan 1932
22: The Trap / March 1932
23: Mrs. Lorriquer / April 1932
24: The Great Circle / June 1932
25: Seven Turns in a Hangman's Rope / 15 July 1932
26: No Eye-Witnesses / Aug 1932
27: The Napier Limousine/ Jan 1933
28: The Chadbourne Episode / Feb 1933
29: Bothon / Aug 1946
30: The Ravel Pavane / 1946
31: Scar-Tissue / 1946
32: "—In Case of Disaster Only" / 1946

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