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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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John Arthur Barry

1851-1911

In: *Steve Brown's Bunyip, and other stories*,
Bookstall, Sydney, 1905

ONE LURID summer, in 1873, I was crossing over from Saint George's Bridge, on the Balonne, to Mitchell, on the Maranoa. I had been to a rush at Malawal, N.S.W., but as it proved a rank duffer, got up by the local store keepers in a last effort to keep the township in existence, I made back again by 'The Bridge,' on chance of getting a job of droving with some of the mobs of sheep or cattle always passing through the Border town, bound south from the Central and Gulf stations.

Queenslanders will remember that summer, on certain days of which men were stricken down in dozens, and birds fell dead off the trees in the fierce heat.

There is no drearier track in Australia than the one I speak of—all pine-scrub, too thick for a dog to bark in, and the rest sand and ant-hills.

There was nothing doing just then in 'The Bridge,' so I pushed on for the Maranoa. It was only the beginning of summer, and I reckoned on finding water twenty five miles along the track, at a hole in the Wullumgudgeree Creek, known of aforetime.

It was a dismal ride, with nothing but walls of close-set scrub on each side, and sand, heavy underfoot, and glaring ahead. Even the horses seemed to feel its influence as they ploughed along, heads bent down, coats black with sweat, and big clusters of flies swarming thickly at their leather eye-guards. Even one's own close-knit veil was but poor protection, for the pests gathered on it in such numbers as to almost obscure the The flies and mosquitos were a caution that summer. However, slogging steadily on, with a pull at the water-bag now and then, I at length reached the creek, dry as a bone where it crossed the road. But, following it down through the scrub, I found the hole, pretty muddy and fast diminishing. Nor was it improved by the dog and the pack-horse rushing into it and rolling before I could stop them.

The sun was setting, a big red ball, over the tops of the pines as I hobbled out, pitched the tent on one side of the round open space, lit a fire, and slung the billy. There was not bad picking for the horses, and as I belled the pack I fervently trusted they would not stray far in such a God-forsaken spot.

After supper— damper, mutton and sardines, washed down by tea, boiled, skimmed and strained three times before coming to table— I felt pretty comfortable, and lay down with my head on one of the swags to enjoy a smoke

and fight the mosquitos, who were beginning to sample freely. The sun had set, but the moon, big, yellow and hot-looking, hung in a hazy sky.

But for the buzzing of the insects and the snoring of the dog, fast asleep in a deep hole scratched in the sand, everything was very quiet. The thick scrub into which the horses had retreated deadened the sound of the bell.

Presently, however, evidently compassionating my lonely state, a little bird, after partaking of the remnants of my supper, came and perched on the ridge-pole of the tent, and piped forth at short intervals in a shrill monotone. 'Pretty, creature! Sweet, pretty creature! Pretty, sweet, little creature!"

He was company of a sort, spite of his egoism. But there was other toward. The flies had, ere this, gone to roost, but the mosquitoes were troublesome. They had also taken anticipatory possession of the tent. Burning some old rags, I cleared them out of that, fixed up the netting, and was preparing to turn in, when I heard the sound of hoofs coming thump, thump, down the dry creek bed. The dog, awaking, barked loudly, and in a minute or two a man and a woman rode into the bright firelight. They each had a big swag in front of them; and at a glance I saw that their horses were not only well-bred, but had come far and fast.

'Water!' exclaimed the man.

I gave him some; and he lifted the woman off and handed her the mug.

'We're travellin', mate,' said he, as I helped him to unsaddle. 'Got bushed atween 'ere an' the Maranoa. A bit o' damned bad country!'

He had not come from that direction at all; but in such a scrub all directions were much alike. And, any how, it was no business of mine. They had plenty of tucker, and I put the billy on again.

As the woman stood at the fire, holding up her riding dress with one hand and with the other hastily fastening some stray braids of long hair that had come adrift, I saw that she was a fresh-faced, pleasant-featured girl of about eighteen or nineteen. As she presently dropped her skirt, took off her hat, and used both hands to her hair, I noticed by the flickering light a red, angry-looking scar extending from the bridge of the nose up to and across the left eyebrow.

Her companion was a type I knew well. A cattleman all over, from the long, lean, curved legs of him to the sharp-eyed, tanned, resolute face. And from the swag I saw sticking out the curiously-carved handle of a stock whip. They both seemed weary and thoughtful, and after supper I offered them the shelter of the tent. The man thanked me.

'The missus,' said he, 'll be only too glad of the chance. She ain't much used to campin' out.'

So they lugged their belongings inside, whilst, making up the fire, and throwing some green bushes on it to drive the skeeters away, I laid on my blankets, with the pack-saddle for a pillow, and the dog at my feet.

Awaking about midnight, as most bushmen do, I saw that big clouds were sailing fast across the moon. The air had become rather chilly, and, throwing more wood on the fire, I stood warming myself and filling my pipe. The dog, also getting up, yawned sleepily, and came and gazed into the blaze. The little bird from the ridge-pole still chirped its eulogistic call, but drowsily, and with effort, as of one who nods and winks. From the scrub came the faint tinkling of bells, showing that the horses were feeding steadily.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the peculiar long, rumbling whinny with which a straggling horse greets the presence of others. Then I heard the hobble-chains clanking as our horses galloped up to inspect the newcomer. Then ensued a short pause, followed by the sound of a wild snorting stampede as they crashed away, their hobbles jingling and bells ringing furiously through the scrub.

'Bother!' thought I, as the noise grew fainter and fainter, that means, most likely, a long walk in the morning. Hang all brombees!'

Preparing to lie down again, in not the best of tempers, I became aware of at least one horse steadily making towards the camp. As the steps approached, the dog, growling low, and with every hair bristling, backed towards the tent. A cold feeling of disquiet and nervous ness took possession of me as I saw this.

Turning from watching the animal, my eye caught a dark mass between scrub and fire. Just then the moon shone out from behind a bank, and, not ten yards away, stood a horseman, his head drooping on his chest, his body rocking slightly in the saddle. I gave a sigh of relief.

Drunken riders are common enough in the Bush.

And, with all trepidation vanished, I sang out gruffly enough—

'Better get off, mate, before you fall off ! Come and have a drink of tea!'

He would be a nuisance, of course, with the inevitable bottle of rum in his swag, and in his person all the loathsome imbecility inseparable from the sobering-up process. But, as an institution, he had to be attended to. And I repeated my invitation irritably to him, sitting there in the bright moonlight, one hand grasping the reins, the other resting on the wither, his chin on his breast, staring fixedly at me from under the broad-leafed hat.

'Oh,' I muttered, 'you drunken brute! I've got to lift you down, have I ! About all you're fit for is to frighten people's horses away.'

The dog, only his head protruding from under the tent, kept up a long, snarling, choking growl, broken by gasps for fresh breath.

Advancing, I placed my hand upon the horseman's. It was like ice. Looking up, I saw a black-whiskered face, ashen-grey under the hat-leaf, and apparently leaning forward to gaze into mine out of wide-open, staring, glassy eyes.

Suddenly, realising the meaning of the thing, I ran to one side and shouted hurriedly— I know not what.

Then I heard someone in the tent cursing the dog, who yelped, as from a kick, and, presently, the stranger came out and walked up to the fire. Standing away, and in deep shadow, he did not see me. But, catching sight of that dread rider, sitting motionless, he went over and peered into its face.

Then with a tremendous oath he sprang back, and I could see his sharp-cut features working with emotion as he exclaimed, 'George! What game's this?'

Advancing again he stroked the horse, and, as I had done, placed one of his hands on that other so cold one.

Apparently convinced, he ran into the tent, whence came in a minute an excited murmur of voices.

A heavy cloud was across the moon, but I could make out the pair fumbling for their bridles amongst a heap of saddlery at the foot of a sapling.

Meanwhile the horse was making ineffectual tugs at the bridle to get its head down to some dry tussocks growing near. But all its straining could not relax by one inch the steel-like grip of those dead fingers. Only the corpse at each jerk nodded in a ghastly cordial sort of fashion.

Presently, moonlight filled the little plain again, and the horse, growing impatient, turned and made off to wards the sound of the distant bells.

Taking heart of grace, I ran up and caught it. As I led it back I noticed that the rider's legs were bound tightly to the saddle by straps passed from the front D's over the thighs to the ones on the cantle.

As I began to undo them I saw the man slinging off into the scrub with the woman at his heels. I shouted to them. But they took no notice.

Working away at the knots and buckles, the chin-strap slipped, the jaw fell, and the gleaming teeth showed in such an awful grin that I involuntarily stepped back.

Now the hat tumbled off, revealing the features of a young man with coal-black hair and moustache, and beard flecked with spots of dry white foam.

Even at its best, I should have called it a hard, cruel face. It was simply hideous now.

As I stood irresolutely staring, a voice behind me made me jump. It was the woman.

'Here,' she said, as with trembling fingers she essayed to loosen the dead grasp on the reins, 'I'll help you. He was a real bad un! But he couldn't scare me

when he were alive, an' I aint goin' to let him do it now. See—' (pointing to the cut on her forehead), 'this is the last thing he done. Slip your knife through them reins,' she continued. 'He's had a fit, or a stroke o' the sun, an' he'll never slacken his grip, no more'n he would my throat if he could ha' got hold on it. He was my husband; an' jealous of his own shadder. But I never minded much till he took to knockin' me about. I couldn't stand that. So I cleared with Jim yonder.'

By this, we had undone the saddle and breast-plate itraps with which the man, feeling himself mortally struck, and wishful to avoid falling off and lying there to rot in that wild scrub, had, in perhaps his last agony, tied himself to the saddle. And between us we let him slide gently down on to the sand, whilst the horse shook itself, sniffed unconcernedly at the body, and wandered away to the others.

For a while she stood gazing on the thing as it lay there with stiffly curved legs and upturned glassy eyes. Then she smiled a little out of a white face, set hard with horror and detestation, saying—

'After all, perhaps, he thought a lot of me!'

And, going to the tent, she returned with a blanket, and carefully spread it over the corpse.

Then, as the man came up with the horses and began to saddle them, she said, holding out her hand—

'So long! an' many thanks. You've bin a real right bower. We're a-goin' into the Bridge, an' we'll send the traps out, all square an' fair. So long, agen.'

'So long, mate!' shouted the man, with a tremor in his voice lacking in the woman's. And then they rode away, two dark shapes against the moonlit scrub.

'Died by the visitation of God,' said the Coroner's Jury.

'Served him damned well right!' said the district generally, who knew the story.

But travellers along the Maranoa track make a point of giving 'Dead Man's Camp' a very wide berth.

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2: Two Rounds

Ganpat

Martin Louis Alan Gompertz, 1886-1951

Adventure, 1 May 1931

"DAMN!" said the commanding officer of the Black Belts feelingly, as he reached across the table for his pipe.

"I've said that several times, sir," remarked Major Smallwood. "It's the third theft in our lines in the last month. If only we could catch the blighter—"

Colonel Browne, the C.O, looked reflectively through the tent door at the glaring sunlit camp without, set under the frowning hills at the outer edge of Waziristan, which lies under the Afghan border. It is notoriously difficult to prevent petty thievery in a large camp where, besides the troops, there are large numbers of civilian laborers and employees under no military discipline. Wana, where this story began— a story that finished, if it is yet finished, hundreds of miles away in the Swat country— is such a camp.

Like all the northwest borderland of India, Swat is inhabited by Pathans— cheerful, laughing souls with no regard for law and order, but with much of primitive man's belief that might is more like to be right than is mere fluent talk. They do not therefore have flag days for the support of the League of Nations, but spend such money as they can save on the purchase of rifles. Of late years the Indian government has been endeavoring to promote the spread of law and order in this backward portion of the Indian Empire by the old Roman, and later Scots, method of opening up the country by making roads. Hence the existence of Wana.

"I should have a search of my company lines if I were you," said the C.O, lighting his pipe. "A wrist watch is an easy thing to hide. But if the thief is in the company, the search may frighten him "

"If he's there," answered Smallwood without enthusiasm.

He disliked the idea of searching his own men's kits, for like most officers of Indian regiments he believed very firmly in the men who followed him—in his case stout hearted, laughing Khuttacks of the Kohat district, and dour Yusufzais of Mardan and Swat beyond Peshawar where the border villages lie under the gaunt hills and the raiding gangs still sweep down from the tribal country that as yet lies void of roads— an Alsatia wherein the murderer from the settled districts finds ready shelter and where only the presence of the troops insures the would-be peaceful villager the chance to reap what he has sown.

"A search is a good idea," remarked the big subadar, the senior Indian officer of the company, as Smallwood emerged from the office. "But we shall find nothing. Even if the thief be one of ours, the son of a shameless parentage will have hidden the watch safely—" He broke off; the soldier has a peculiar

horror of theft which, possibly owing to the communal life he has to lead, he regards as one of the more disgraceful crimes.

Smallwood proceeded to search methodically, platoon by platoon, a thoroughly distasteful task that he hated more and more as man after man opened up his kit. The professional soldier has human feelings; he has his little dreams; and the possessions stowed away in his kit bag or in the cheap, gaudy tin trunk which the Indian loves mean as much to him as do the household gods to the dweller of Balham or Surbiton.

Smallwood felt literally uncomfortable as- he hunted through the tumbled heaps of mufti— the Indian soldier wears mufti always except when actually on parade— the embroidered waistcoats and the gold threaded turbans; the odd scraps of finery or cheap jewelry bought for the home folk in anticipation of leave; here and there treasured photos and tattered books in Arabic characters, thumbed almost to pieces from which word by word, almost letter by letter, the owners read aloud to entertain comrades even less literate than themselves during the long, dark winter evenings when the gates were closed and the sentries stood tensely alert, peering out into the murk for sign of hostile figures of raider or rifle thief.

As the search proceeded, feeling very much as any decent man would feel if compelled to ransack a woman's chest of drawers, Smallwood cursed the unknown thief from the bottom of his heart. But he was a conscientious soul; he had decided on a search and he would carry it through to the bitter end.

He breathed a sigh of relief as he finished with the second of his Khuttack platoons, whom he loved even more than the others of his company, and passed on to the tents of the Yusufzais who are of different breed— more silent men who laugh little and do not dance. They take life somewhat seriously, whereas the Khuttack takes nothing seriously from viceroys downward and merely shrieks with ribald laughter if you mention politicians or democratic leaders.

The search of that platoon was half finished when Smallwood's fingers struck something cold and hard in the flap of a box lid and he almost gasped as he looked at Sepoy Muhammad Ali, the owner, an old soldier of blameless character who was even that week to leave for his distant home on well earned pension. It was not the missing wrist watch of Sepoy Akhmad Gul— it was something worse: two rounds of government rifle ammunition!

Only those who know the Indian border can appreciate what that means— the border whose code demands that insults be settled in life blood, and where the man who does not so settle them will be spat upon by the women of his house, even though the revenge they demand will mean perhaps his hanging at the hands of an alien law, which does not recognize the sacredness

of the blood feud. Hidden rounds of ammunition conjure up pictures of swift impending murder...

Smallwood balanced the telltale cartridges in his hand and looked at the Yusufzai sepoy in a silence that could be felt.

"Somebody has done this thing to blacken my face," said Muhammad Ali quickly in guttural Pushtu as his thoughts sped away to his little towered house in the Swat hills, where his wife waited for his coming. In three days he should have been on the road home, and now? It would be six months in jail for sure and the loss of his pension as well.

The possession of illicit ammunition may lead a man to avenge a fancied wrong in a moment of frenzy born of brooding. The army code, seeking to protect men from worse things, punishes heavily the stealing or concealment of ammunition.

"Hell!" muttered Smallwood to himself as he looked from the man to the cartridges, and back again.

They were old rounds, dated some years before; none such as were now being issued. And the Indian border is full of government ammunition; the Mahsuds' and Wazirs', the Afridi' and Orakzais' belts are crammed with it, trophies of the fights in the early post-war days when the débris of the regular Indian army, accustomed to fight only against half trained Turks or Germans, suddenly found itself pitted once more against the natural guerrilla fighters of the Indian border, men who could shoot with the rifle.

Too, there was unlimited English ammunition of government pattern from Afghanistan where Amanullah, trying to force so-called civilization on a people unfitted and unwilling for it, had been cast forth and chaos had reigned: Doubtless Muhammad Ali had found the rounds lying out somewhere. But why on earth had he not handed them in to his platoon commander?— he was an old soldier, well aware of the strict orders on the subject.

The offense was obvious; the offender caught, so to speak, red handed. Smallwood hesitated a fraction of a second and then took the only possible course. Muhammad Ali departed stolidly in the direction of the guardroom in the charge of a file of men, and Smallwood wearily continued his search, thankful only that at the end of it there was no trace of the stolen watch.

COLONEL BROWNE considered Muhammad Ali next morning when the Yusufzai was marched into the orderly room. His memory went back to a similar cold, sunlit morning ten years before, not fifty miles away. There had been some bickering in progress and his company of the Black Belts were contesting the possession of a hill. It had been seized by night, and when day

broke the Mahsud Wazirs had realized they had been forestalled and were consequently angry.

Browne remembered well the hours that followed— they stood out as "sticky" even in his memory which enshrined many such moments. The Mahsud had come in with the short, triangular stabbing dagger under a hail of carefully directed lead. Browne's company had had to fight hand to hand as hard as they had ever fought, before they finally beat off the last of those determined attacks. And one of the most salient memories of that fight was that of Muhammad Ali doggedly clinging to his post among some boulders, firing coolly, methodically, despite the bullets slashing about him. And now— Oh, damn the fellow! Why on earth had he been such a fool?

"No, sahib," said Muhammad Ali in answer to Browne's interrogation. "Am I one who would hide or steal ammunition? Do I not know all the orders? Have I not served twelve years in the Black Belts? Some one else has done this for enmity to me."

Innocence emanated from him as he stood upright and soldierly: neatly tied turban above his oiled love locks, spotless khaki and polished leather sandals, gay medal ribbons and bright silver buttons.

"But it was your box, Muhammad Ali," remonstrated Browne. "You yourself opened it with the key on the string round your neck. Why did you hide the rounds? Tell me the truth."

The case seemed complete enough; but any one who deals with Orientals knows the commonness of skillfully trumped up cases— even to murders complete with corpse and witnesses. Still, in this matter there seemed no room for doubt.

Offended honor looked back blankly from the Yusufzai's green eyes at the uncomprehending person who sat before him. He had made his protest and there was nothing more to add, no matter what injustice should follow. Silence reigned in the office as Browne and the prisoner gazed at each other. The subadar major, an alert Punjabi Mohammedan, waited for judgement. Surely there would be a court-martial; Black Belt discipline was as strict now as it had been in the days when they were first raised by the famous men who made Sind a land of peace ninety years ago. And, because of that discipline, the border tribes feared them in war. The escort stared straight before them like trim khaki statues and Smallwood cursed the thief who had caused this mess.

"Only last week I filled out your pension papers," remarked Browne. "And now—"

He broke off, reflectively weighing things up. He could think of no one in the regiment whom Muhammad Ali might want to kill. And moreover, in Wana, where any day might mean fighting with those who objected to the

progress of the roads, every sepoy carried his hundred rounds at all times. Why, therefore, even if there were a quarrel, risk concealing a couple of extra rounds? Those two rounds were, in all probability, for some private business in Muhammad Ali's own country, among his own wild hills. Yes, that must be the solution...

Once again Browne felt the weight of responsibility, the knowledge of his own finiteness and limitations which comes often to any thinking man who wields power, who has the lives of others in his keeping, who has to act and not merely to talk. If he did not punish Muhammad Ali, it might be taken as a precedent; some one else would do the same for a worse purpose closer at hand. And the end of that— Browne had seen it before— would be an unsightly corpse or two in barrack room or tent, and a subsequent hanging. Two or three lives wasted perhaps, because, struggling to be just, he had been sentimental over an old soldier.

There was still silence in the orderly room. Smallwood shifted on his feet and the adjutant smothered a cough.

"You've earned a court-martial—" Browne was speaking again— "but instead of that I'll overlook it." He tore up the charge sheet which Smallwood had laid before him. "You can go on pension tomorrow as promised." He broke from Pushtu into English.

"Push him off on the down convoy in the morning, Smallwood, and for heaven's sake see he doesn't get into any more trouble." His glance swept round the room and he spoke in Hindustani to the subadar major for the benefit of every one who was listening inside the tent and outside. "Tell the regiment, bahadur, that this is a special case. I'll be doubly strict on any one else caught doing the same thing."

The bahadur saluted. He had known Browne for twenty-eight years. God help any foolish sepoy who took Muhammad Ali's case as a precedent permitting imitation!

"Salute!" barked the Pathan sergeant and Muhammad Ali and his escort saluted smartly, turned right, and filed out of the tent.

"Senile sentimentality on my part, I suppose— typical example of the mental deterioration the Indian army officer is supposed to achieve, according to the journalists." Browne laughed, lighting a cigarette as Smallwood gathered up his papers and the office cleared amid a sudden buzz of talk. "But I simply couldn't punish. Fancy getting caught out by sheer ill luck just as he was going! I suppose he thought an odd round or two might be handy at home. All these border men have blood feuds on hand. But he might have told me the truth."

"Having told a hurried lie he felt he must stick to it, I suppose," remarked Smallwood. "But I'm glad you let him off."

"A thoroughly reprehensible and illegal affair," commented Browne. "I ought to have jugged him for six months at least. But I've lived too long with the giddy Pathan."

"MUHAMMAD ALI, sahib," announced Smallwood's Khattack orderly that night after dinner, pushing his grinning face round the flap of the tent where Smallwood was writing his home mail.

Muhammad Ali entered in spotless regimental mufti, flowing white shirt and green and cherry silver buttoned waistcoat, jauntily tied turban and smart sandals. Smallwood looked at him, wondering what he wanted. His papers had been signed up, he had been given three months' advance of pension; officially he had said goodbye.

The Yusufzai looked round to be sure the orderly was safely gone. Then he saluted again briskly.

"My cartridges, sahib— those two rounds from my box—"

"Well, I'm damned!' exploded) Smallwood in English, pushing his writing away. "Of all the damned impudence—!"

"I must have them," continued Muhammad Ali in Pushtu, regardless of the strange noises which appeared to betoken mingled wrath and amusement on his officer's part. "They're all I have— two rounds..."

"Sit down," said Smallwood abruptly, motioning to the carpet before the fire as he wheeled round his chair and lighted a cheroot.

The Yusufzai squatted by the fire.

"Why couldn't you tell the truth to Browne sahib?"

The sepoy made a little gesture with his well shaped hand, on which glinted an odd shaped silver ring.

"How could I? The government's orders are strict and my fate was against me. Because some son of an ill reputed mother steals a watch—a shameless deed among honest men—it seemed that I must go to jail, lose my pension and, worst of all, lose my life. There was nothing to say to Browne sahib. For many months have I hidden those two rounds. But Browne sahib is a person of discernment— doubtless he understood. He knew I was not one of those shameless. ones who would blacken the regiment's name by killing in the lines against all custom and decency; he understood this was another matter, an affair of private honor." The sepoy held out his hand. "Sahib, give me back my two rounds."

"And wherefore?" asked Smallwood. "Moreover, they are not thine but the government's."

"The government is rich and I am a poor man," answered the sepoy. "My enemies wait for me on my road home once I pass the police border beyond

Dargai. I would like to see my family and my son before I die. With two rounds I might win through and clear our honor for, as the sahib knows, I am a marksman."

"Tell me the true story," said Smallwood, leaning forward and watching the man's gaunt face in the firelight. "'There are none to hear—two friends may speak heart to heart."

"Thuswise it was, then, sahib. We were four brothers; three serving in the regiments and one, the eldest, remaining on our land at home. He was to be married; we had paid the girl's parents the money for the wedding as is the custom, though we are poor folk— there is no canal in our hills as the government has made in the administered districts below, where land yields ten-fold and men grow rich. With us it is only the rain that brings crops, and when the rain fails we go hungry.

"And then Fateh Khan, whose mother was visited by the devil to produce such offspring—" the Yusufzai politely refrained from spitting in deference to the surroundings— "Fateh Khan laid claim to the girl saying, with a lie, that she had been promised to him. But he was rich with many friends and so prevailed, and her parents gave him the girl though she did not wish it. She sought to flee with my brother, but Fateh Khan and his friends discovered this and I, who was but a recruit on leave, saw my brother brought home on a bed with half his head blown away. Therefore we three had to take up the case. As the sahib knows well, there are no police and no Jaw in our hills.

"My second brother, who was now the head of us, took leave and returned home, prepared to go up against Fateh Khan with my father's old gun; but Fateh Khan slew him unawares. Then came the wars and the two of us who were left had no opportunity of leave. But during those years Fateh Khan prospered exceedingly, for none of his folk served in the army. They grew fat and rich, and made trouble for our womenfolk at home, seizing our land.

"Thus it was that when peace came and we could return home, my third brother determined to set our honor right. During the war he had saved enough to buy a good rifle of government make. He went alone and lay up on a hillside opposite Fateh Khan's house for two days and two nights, waiting his chance. Thus was the story told me by one who saw. And on the morning of the fourth day he observed our enemy at the window of his tower. There was no mistaking his turban and coat and so, taking careful aim, my brother fired.

"But such was the devil born cunning of that son of shame that it was not Fateh Khan at all. Having heard that my brother had returned and was setting out against him, he laid a trap so that my brother fired, not at him, but at a dummy which those within raised to the window. Then when my brother fired they marked the spot and ringed him. He did his best but what can one man do

against five? But he had eight bullets in him when he died and two of his enemies were sore wounded, and one will not walk again.

"Therefore the matter now fell to me— the last of us four. But my brother's rifle was taken by our enemies so that we had no weapon left at home and there was no money to buy another. As the sahib knows they are very dear, especially those of the government which have first to be stolen at the risk of men's lives. And as Fateh Khan had taken the best of our land and, save me, we have no grown men left at home, all my pay has had to go to feed them, my brothers' widows and my own family.

"But with much trouble I saved enough to buy a Kohat Pass carbine, made in the Adam Khel country— an old gun almost worn out, but taking government ammunition and good enough to fire a few rounds— and if I can get near enough I shall not need more than one. But there was no money left for ammunition, which is worth its weight in silver among us.

"Therefore, sahib, I concealed those two rounds one day when we were out field firing, and have hidden them ever since." He held out his hand again. "Sahib! Only two rounds and they have many! If I have them not I die; with them I may first slay Fateh Khan and, perhaps, even save my life for awhile. I have served well in our regiment."

He stopped and all the stolidity was gone now. In the green eyes showed something of the strain of the years, of the man who carried his life in his hand, a lonely man with women and children dependent upon him. Two rounds...

Smallwood shaded his eyes from the glare of a lamp. A most reprehensible business. Muhammad Ali was lucky not to have been court-martialed for a serious military offense. And here he was asking boldly, albeit he had carefully come late at night, for his two precious rounds of stolen ammunition.

Smallwood, who knew the Yusufzai country, pictured the scene: the lone man returning from the distant railway station in the administered country to the wild hills where the Indian government had never extended law and order; the path over the hills to the dilapidated mud tower where three women and two children eat sparingly on the savings from Muhammad Ali's scanty pay. Opposite on the more fertile hillside would lie the prosperous fields and the strong house of Fateh Khan, with half a dozen well armed men waiting joyfully to end the feud, which had occasionally caused them trouble. It had forced them to move cautiously in their ways.

But now— a lone man with a worn out Afridi made carbine and two rounds. On that slender thread hung the life of a man who had stood by him in war while, as the Yusufzai put it, others had stayed at home and grown fat and rich.

The major rose. Being a conscientious man, when he decided to do a thing he did it thoroughly. From his rifle case he extracted twenty rounds of sporting .303, soft nosed, expensive stuff of Kynoch's best, and the two old tarnished rounds of arsenal make taken from the sepoy's box. He handed them to the man.

"Shoot straight, Muhammad Ali," said he, "and God be with you!"

There was a gleam in the Yusufzai's eyes as he folded the priceless gift away under his shirt.

"May He have you in his keeping always, sahib," he answered with real feeling as he gripped Smallwood's hand.

Then, silently, he went out into the starlit night.

3: The Broken Violin

Warwick Deeping

1877-1950

Hutchinson's Story-Magazine, Aug 1929

MARTIN HARDY was in a bad temper, which state may be excusable even when a man is a successful author, and that most atrocious of outcasts a world's best-seller. The critics had begun to show prejudice against Hardy. They had praised his work when a book of his had sold some fifteen hundred copies, but now when a novel by Hardy was marketed by the hundred thousand they treated him as an excrescence.

But Hardy was not in a bad temper because of the critics. As a craftsman he knew that the work that they now belittled was better than the obscure stuff they had patronized. He was considerably rich, and in spite of it he still loved his work. He had rented for the winter the Villa Flora at Cap d'Or, and the Villa Flora was all violets and orange trees and blue sea and nicely tempered warmth.

Hardy's irritability had other origins. Probably, success lay a little heavy on his stomach. Too much dining out, too many cocktails, too many dances. The craft of the creator, delicate and whimsical, was refusing to spread its wings, because the man in Hardy was weighing it down with feet of clay.

He sat at his desk in the window of his writing-room. The garden below him was a big bowl of beauty set on the edge of the sea. The house was as silent as a sleeping cat. Yet Hardy sat and fumed and fidgeted. The stuff would not come. He had had a week of exasperating and inarticulate emptiness.

His senses felt overstrung. He was irritated by the passing of the trains a quarter of a mile away, and by the cars on the Corniche road. Angrily he had got up and swatted a sleepy and wandering fly.

And suddenly he became aware of another sound, the squeaking of a violin being played somewhere in the road at the bottom of the garden. He looked out of his window.

"Damn the fellow!"

For the itinerant fiddler had sat himself down on a camp-stool in a sunny patch just outside Hardy's gates. He was scraping away sedulously; an empty tin deposited at his feet waited for the clinking of coins.

Hardy made for the door. Here was a discord upon which he could vent his irritation, something tangible that could be dealt with, and not like the trains and the cars. He did not ring for that excellent fellow, Sandys, his valet-butler. He went down through the garden, and pushed open one leaf of the iron gates.

"Hallo! you can't make that noise here."

Even while uttering the words he realized that the violinist was blind. The raised eyes were covered with a film of whiteness which gave them a queer, staring, and almost reproachful look, and the man's blindness somehow added to Hardy's irritation, because it interposed itself between the scapegoat and his anger.

"I am sorry, monsieur."

The man was shabby and thin. He had a dim look. He wore a black felt hat, and an old frock-coat buttoned tightly. The lids had closed over his sightless eyes, and there was something about his face that both surprised and shocked Martin Hardy. The face seemed to dream; it wore an expression of gentle resignation; it had a kind of dusty radiance.

Also, it annoyed Hardy, and annoyed the angry man in him. It was as though the face of this shabby fellow accused him of a futile, fuming egotism. It made him feel inferior.

He said:

"I'm sorry, but you can't play your violin here. There are plenty of other places."

The man smiled faintly.

"Is someone ill, monsieur?"

Ill! Yes, someone was ill, the craftsman in Hardy. And with a twinge of resentment, he told a white lie. He blurted it out.

"Yes; someone is ill."

"I am sorry, monsieur. Had I known I would not have disturbed the sick person. I will go somewhere else."

The fiddle-case lay on the path beside him. He groped for it, laid it on his knees, and with a kind of loving carefulness proceeded to put his bow and violin away. One of his hands appeared to be deformed, and Hardy, watching him, was attacked by compassion and remorse.

He brought out his pocket-book, and extracted three ten-franc notes.

"Here, take these."

It was both a bribe and an offering, and as the man's fingers felt for the notes the anger in Hardy died away.

"Poor devil!" he thought.

The violinist's face was raised.

"Thank you, monsieur, thank you very much. You are very kind. I apologize for having made a disturbance."

"Oh, that's all right."

Hardy stood mute, feeling that this shabby fellow had shown a magnanimity and a sympathy that put him to shame. He, the sensitive craftsman, the man who pretended to despise material things, had bribed this

poor devil to go away. He stood and watched the man fold up his stool, and sling it round his neck by the loop of cord that was attached to it. A crooked stick hung on the railings. The violinist felt for it, and tucking his violin-case under his arm, prepared to depart.

"Good morning, monsieur."

Hardy came out of his stare.

"One moment, you have forgotten your tin."

"So I have, monsieur. But there is nothing in it."

Hardy picked up the tin. It had a loop of string attached to it, and the blind man held out the hand with the stick.

"Would you be so kind as to slip it over my wrist, monsieur."

Hardy did so.

"Thank you. Good morning, monsieur."

"Good morning."

The novelist returned to the Villa Flora feeling displeased with himself, for he realized that this shabby fellow had behaved much better than he had.

Two or three days passed and Martin Hardy's inspiration still hung in the air like a bunch of grapes beyond his reach. Something had failed in him; he could not see things vividly as he was accustomed to see them; it was as though a crust had formed upon the sensitive surface of his inner consciousness.

He was restless, troubled, and perhaps just a little scared, and suddenly haunted by the particular dread of the imaginative writer. Had he written himself out? When wealth and luxury and liberty arrived, was it possible that your familiar spirit took to flight and left you no more than a successful carcase?

Hardy walked in his garden. The flowers were there for his pleasure; the white villa was a delightful pleasure house; he had, or could command, most of the things that a man desires. And he was conscious of a feeling of emptiness, as though the joy and the virtue of creation had gone out of him.

He went out into Cap d'Or to spend a luxurious and easy hour at the barber's, and by one of the white pillars of the Hôtel Splendid he saw the blind violinist seated on his stool, and putting his violin away in its case. One of the porters of the "Splendid" stood over him. Someone in the hotel had complained, and the blind violinist was being requested to move on.

"Poor devil!" thought Hardy; "always making a noise, and always being moved on. While I—!"

He obeyed the sudden impulse. He crossed the road and spoke to the blind man.

"Excuse me, perhaps you remember playing outside the Villa Flora?"

"I remember monsieur's voice."

"If you wish you can use the villa gateway."

"Then the patient is better, monsieur?"

"Yes."

"I am glad. It is very good of monsieur."

"Not a bit."

"I should like to sit by your gate next week, monsieur, for it will be the week of the tennis tournament, and people will pass that way from the station."

"By all means use it then."

"I am grateful to monsieur."

Hardy went on to the barber's, and it seemed to him that the hands of Alphonse were more dexterous and soothing than usual; or was it that he had been inwardly soothed by the making of a magnanimous gesture? From the caresses of Alphonse he returned to lunch and the ministrations of the superlative Sandys, and after lunch he dozed in his chaise-longue in the loggia. When he woke it was with a feeling of being rested and renewed, and to the sound of a violin being played. He smiled. So the fellow had taken him at his word.

Tea arrived; and after tea Hardy lit a pipe and went to his desk in the big window to write. His inner consciousness had cleared; it was as spacious as that window and full of the sea and the sky; life came to him to be set down on paper. He was aware of the peaceful exultation of the creator, and through his imaginings the sound of the violin played like a breeze through trees. It had ceased to be noise, and discord. It made a little plaintive murmuring at the back of his mind. It was both human and mysterious.

The violinist was visible to him beyond the white gate, but instead of distracting Hardy's attention the blind man was a figure of meaning. So, life played blindly upon its fiddle, sometimes with a resigned gentleness, sometimes with notes of pathos or of passion.

Hardy's pen ran on, but happening to glance up at the end of a paragraph, he saw a woman standing beside the violinist. She, too, was dressed in black, and her back was turned towards the villa. The violinist was putting his instrument away. Obviously the woman had come to take him home.

"His wife, I suppose," thought Hardy, and went on writing till the vivid dusk, still sunset-stained, made lights inevitable.

On the following morning he wrote from nine o'clock till twelve, with the blind man's violin keeping him company. People paused occasionally and dropped coins into the violinist's tin. Lunch arrived, and the hour of the siesta,

but when Hardy woke from it he heard that thin and plaintive sound still threading the silence.

In a little while Sandys would appear with the tea-tray. The sun lay hot on Cap d'Or, but in the loggia a perfumed coolness lingered, the fragrance of mimosa, and it occurred to Hardy that the blind fellow had been sitting for hours in the sun and scraping continuously at those strings. Tea in the shade was not included in the programme of poverty. But why not ask the poor devil in and give him tea?

It seemed a sound suggestion and Hardy got out of his chaise-longue, and walked down through the garden to the white gates. He spoke to the violinist who was resting, with his instrument laid across his knees.

"Good afternoon. Don't you find it rather hot out there?"

The man's face was raised.

"It is better than the snow, when your feet ache or are dead."

"Well, that's philosophy. Would you care to come in and have some tea with me?"

"Monsieur is very kind."

"Surely not. Too much sun can make one selfish."

"I will come in with pleasure, monsieur."

"Let me give you a hand."

"Oh, I can manage, monsieur. But if you would guide me. Gardens are puzzling places to the blind."

"Of course."

Sandys, hearing the bell ring, came out to the loggia for orders, and found his master and the shabby person sitting together in the shade.

"Tea for two, Sandys."

"Yes, sir."

Now that he had him seated in a chair Hardy looked more attentively at his guest. The violinist had taken off his hat. His black hair had no grey in it, and his face was unlined; he was comparatively young, probably not more than five-and-thirty. He had an air of breeding; he sat there at his ease, as though he felt himself in pleasant surroundings and appreciated them.

"You must have a big garden, monsieur."

"Fairly so. The mimosa is smelling. The more noise there is in the world, the more one asks for the protection of flowers."

"Yes, noise; it is one of the modern catastrophes. One should have earlids as well as eyelids."

Sandys arrived with the tea-tray, and there was a lemon on the tray, for Hardy sometimes took a slice of lemon in his tea instead of milk. He sent

Sandys away, after signing to him to place a small table beside the violinist's chair.

"How do you like your tea?"

"I suppose monsieur has not a lemon?"

"But I have."

"You see, I am Russian."

"Then we will both have lemon. I expect you have recognized me as English by my French."

"Monsieur speaks French very well."

"That is very polite of you."

Hardy placed the tea-cup on the table beside the Russian's chair, and the violinist made him a little bow, and felt for the cup. His hands appeared slightly deformed, the left one more so than the right, the fingers straight and stiff and pressed together. There were scars on the man's wrists, and Hardy found himself wondering how he was able to manage his instrument.

"You have played the violin for many years?"

"Since I was seven, monsieur."

He smiled.

"You have noticed my hands, perhaps?"

"Yes; a result of the war?"

"The war after the war. I am an exile."

He sipped his tea, and his blind eyes seemed to dream.

"Man is a strange creature, monsieur. If you are interested in music you may have heard the name of Metchnikoff."

"The scientist? Yes; but I remember, too, there was a young violinist who was becoming the rage. I heard him in Paris."

"I am Metchnikoff, monsieur."

"You!"

"Yes; the ghost of him."

Hardy put down his tea-cup, and stared. The Russian spoke with a calmness that had the resigned finality of the snow-covered steppes.

"How did it happen?"

"You see— I was a bourgeois, monsieur. Also, in Russia in those days when the savage beast broke loose it was a jealous beast. I had skill, and a reputation, and in Russia the beast desired to trample upon anything that was not of the soil and the gutter. They put me in prison. They did not ask me to play the violin to them. They put out my eyes, and cut some of the tendons of my hands."

Hardy's face looked shocked.

"Good God! It sounds incredible."

"But it happened, monsieur. Such things happened in Russia. They turned me out into the streets. I wished to die."

"And yet you lived. And you are here. How?"

"I had a wife, monsieur. She rescued me. She suffered incredible things, but she managed to smuggle me away to the south. The White Army was there then. Later, we found ourselves at Constantinople. Oh, that was a terrible city, terrible for women. Among other exiles we were helped to travel to the west. My wife had some jewels left. We came here, and have been here ever since."

"And you manage to play the violin."

"I play it like a ghost, monsieur, as best I can."

"What courage!"

The words escaped from Hardy as though they had been forced from him by the pressure of this other man's tragedy, but the Russian smiled gently, and made a movement of the hands.

"Courage? Oh, well, monsieur, it is possible to come to the end of one's self, and to stand on the edge of an empty sea. But nothing remains empty. The child may be left alive in you, and the sun shines, and there may be love. And something stirs. You think and reflect; you dream. Nothing more terrible can happen to you than that which has happened. Besides, you may have somebody else to think of."

"Your wife?"

"Even so. She is a miracle. And now, monsieur, I must be returning to my place by your gate, for my wife will be coming for me, and she will wonder where I have flown."

Hardy rose from his chair. No longer did he regard the Russian as a poor, shabby scraper of fiddle strings, but as the wreck of a great artist, a man who still had music in his soul. Besides, what courage, what philosophy! He picked up the instrument case, and offered Metchnikoff his arm.

"Hold on to me; the steps are rather difficult. One, two, three, that's it. I'll guide you down to the gate."

"Thank you. You have not told me your name, monsieur."

"My name is Hardy. I write books."

"Ah, you too are a great artist. You understand."

"A little. And one learns. So you will sit here until your wife comes?"

"Vera is punctual."

"We must repeat this affair. Perhaps your wife will join us one afternoon."

Metchnikoff sat down on his stool.

"Perhaps, monsieur. But she goes out very little; she keeps very much to herself. Besides, she works; she is a seamstress. Au revoir, monsieur."

The Metchnikoffs lived in a tiny flat at the top of a tall tenement house in the working-class quarters of Cap d'Or. That they were desperately poor goes without saying, and since Paul had no eyes to see with, his wife's eyes had to look forward into that curve of shadow that was to-morrow. They were the saddest of dark eyes, and when, on the Sunday, she came with her husband to Hardy's villa, the novelist wondered at her confrontation of the world. For she was one of those very gentle creatures with a soft pallor, and without a harsh line on her face. She had white hair, and its whiteness was a most strange garland above the face of her youth.

Hardy gave them tea in the loggia. He found himself looking at Vera Metchnikoff with a sympathy that had divined in her something strange and elusive. It was as though this creature with gazelle's eyes could not bear the eyes of a man to rest too frankly upon her. It was as though she had suffered so much from men, from the brute and the hunter in man, during those Russian days and afterwards.

Hardy found himself moved to great gentleness, for it seemed to him that these two exiles were like timid creatures in a cage.

"You, too, will take lemon in your tea, madame?"

"Please, monsieur, I prefer milk."

She looked at him intently for a moment, and he thought how like her skin was to creamy milk, and those two eyes were like dark flowers floating in it. But her gaze was questioning. It appraised. It was the searching, and half-alarmed glance of the animal that has been hunted. It had both a desperate courage and the shadow of an ever present fear. It said to Hardy:

"What manner of man are you? Are you like all those others? My husband is blind. There have been those who have tried to take advantage of his blindness. Have pity."

And in Hardy, the man that loathed cruelty, the savagery of trap and gun, understood and answered. He could not put his intuitions into speech. This woman defended herself and her blind mate. She said to the savage world:

"Have pity. Do not make use of me as a thing to be hunted."

He set himself to reassure her. He talked a lot of playful nonsense, and purposely he made his French execrable; he thought it would amuse her, and put her at her ease. He apologized for not being able to speak Russian, or to read Dostoievsky in the original. He handed round cakes, and afterwards he asked Paul to play to them, but not as he played to the idlers of Cap d'Or. He stood with his back to the loggia and his eyes on the garden while the blind man gave them a thing of Stravinsky's.

At the end Hardy applauded softly.

"Madame, your husband will always have the hands of the master."

He went and patted Metchnikoff's shoulder.

"You should be in an opera house again, not on that stool. The world should be applauding your courage as well as your music."

If he spoke and behaved a little extravagantly, and shed for the occasion the exactitudes of the Englishman, he felt that the pose was of value. These people were his guests, exiles, birds in a cage, and he wanted to win their confidence.

It was he who helped the blind man down the steps and guided him to the gate.

"We must repeat this tea-party. Perhaps, some day, you would consent to play to some of my friends."

Metchnikoff looked happy.

"Monsieur understands."

Hardy held out a hand to the wife.

"I hope that madame understands— also?"

She looked up at him rather like a child whose trust has been won. She smiled.

"Yes, monsieur. In this house one is not afraid."

The week of the Tennis Tournament arrived at Cap d'Or, bringing people from Cannes and Nice and Monte Carlo and Mentone. They came by car and they came by train, the fortunate and the wealthy, crowding to be amused by Miss Molly This and Monsieur Jean That.

It was a crowd that hurried restlessly hither and thither, worshipping the god of the proud flesh. It knew nothing of the Metchnikoffs of this world, of the little broken makers of music. "Ping-pong" went the rackets on the courts of the Hôtel Splendid— "Ping-pong," and hundreds of faces turned this way and turned that, and on the first day of the tournament the blind violinist collected seventeen francs and forty-five centimes in his tin. People were in a hurry to get to their seats, or to eat and to return from eating to those same seats. Ping-Pong. Metchnikoff's violin maintained a little, gentle, sad complaining.

On the second day the tragedy occurred. Metchnikoff, venturing out by himself, fell down the steps of the apartment house and broke his violin. He broke it utterly and disastrously, and beyond all possible repair, for he had been carrying it in its cover instead of in its case. He bruised an elbow and cut his chin, but these were mere physical happenings. In breaking the violin he had broken himself.

Hardy, in whom the full tide of creation was flowing in spite of tennis tournaments and crowds of well-dressed women, missed the plaintive persuasions of the violin. Well, perhaps Metchnikoff had found a better place

for his stool, and Hardy went on working. He spent one afternoon on the courts and saw an Austrian Count lose his temper and break his racket, and was amused. Did such things matter? Rackets could be easily replaced, and tempers recovered at cocktail hour.

Four days passed, and Hardy began to wonder. He told himself that he ought to look up the Russians. He finished a chapter after tea, and put on a coat, and went out to see the moon rise. Diana was full circle. She would rise up out of the sea, shooting her arrows across the water and spreading before her the swift splendour of her silver sandals.

Hardy strolled to the Aux des Fleurs. It had avenues of palm and pepper trees and mimosa; it scattered soft shadows; it was mysterious at such an hour. It was the promenade of the lovers, and also of those exquisite ladies who went where wealth went, and who gave to the adventure of life a provoking perfume. They, too, strolled under the trees, and sat on seats, and waited with a veiled boldness for the idle male. To Hardy they were like exotic flowers offering their pale faces in the dusk. They did not tempt him; they were just part of the decorative scheme of this very artificial world.

The moon rose out of the sea. She came up all huge and gold, and Hardy, having stood to watch this birth of Venus, turned and walked on. Someone else moved, and rising from a seat under the trees, seemed fortuitously to cross his path. Two eyes looked at him from a dim, white face; almost he caught the murmur of an invitation.

He stopped, and so did the woman. The recognition was instant. Her eyes were like two circles of glass, expressionless save for a stare of dismay, and for the moment her frightened eyes paralysed Hardy. Then, he grabbed at his hat.

"Madame—"

But she turned about like a figure twirling on a string. Her divergence to accost him had been silent and sudden, and her flight was just as silent and sudden. She fled, and Hardy stood holding his hat. He was shocked, but her flight had shocked him more than her attack.

He gave way to impulse; he pursued. She could not continue to run; the very nature of things forbade such headlong confusion, and Hardy walked faster than she did. He caught her up; he trailed after her like a shadow.

"Madame, I wanted to ask you why I had not seen your husband."

She stopped; she turned about and faced him.

"What do you wish, monsieur?"

He made himself smile.

"Surely— we misunderstand each other. You ran away because you thought that I was a stranger. Oh, well, we are people of the world. I apologize for startling you. Surely, you remember?"

Her eyes were fixed on his face.

"Yes—I remember. That is why—"

And then she collapsed on a seat, the last seat but one before the shops and the hotels began. She seemed to shrink into the thin darkness, to gather it round her like an inadequate garment.

"Something has happened. That is why—"

Hardy sat down, but not too close to her.

"Perhaps I can guess. Your husband is ill."

"No, not ill."

"Tell me."

"He has broken his violin."

So, that was it! But what a tragedy; for, obviously, violins did not fall from the sky, and mute strings meant no money. Yes; but that was to regard the affair merely as a financial disaster, and it was so much more than that. How easy it was to be a little god when you happened to be one of the world's spoilt children, whereas this woman had no short stories to sell at two hundred guineas apiece.

The silence had lasted too long, and he was aware of her acute distress.

He asked her:

"How did it happen?"

"He fell down the stairs."

"And the violin was broken."

"Yes. And without it—"

Her words were like drops of blood. They made Hardy feel most intensely uncomfortable. He was accused by the fact that she should have to explain to a comparative stranger that which was so sacred and secret.

He said:

"I must discover this— I must discover this for myself."

She was puzzled.

"I will call on your husband to-morrow. He will tell me. I shall pretend not to know. You see, madame, I have been one of the fortunate people; the world insists on giving me so much money. But I shall consider it an honour if your husband will accept from me another violin."

Hurriedly he stood up. He uncovered his head, and gave her a little, self-conscious bow.

"Good night, madame. Your husband will see me to-morrow."

He walked off. He did not give her time to reply. He had a feeling that she wanted to be left there alone to settle her ruffled plumage. Besides, it was so necessary that he should make it plain to her that he did not belong to the hunting fraternity, nor to the commercialists who buy song-birds in wire cages.

He felt hot and upset.

"Damn! It is rather a beastly world at times. Of course— you might argue that one was wasting one's pity, and that the woman— But she isn't."

So Hardy called on Paul Metchnikoff and heard all about the tragedy of the broken violin, and then got into a taxi and drove to Nice. He managed to buy a violin, and he drove back with it to Cap d'Or, and climbed the stairs to the fifth story. He found Metchnikoff alone, and made his presentation.

"As one artist to another— you will permit me to replace that which was broken."

He placed the violin in the blind Russian's hands.

"Monsieur, it is incredible. You are too generous."

"Oh, no; the honour is conferred by him who accepts."

Hardy did not like seeing a man in tears. He got himself out of the room, but half way down the stairs he met Vera ascending. He became genial, boyish, casual almost.

"That's all right. I managed to get hold of a violin. Listen, I believe you can hear him playing it."

He smiled. He made way for her to pass him and go up to her husband. Her eyes were hidden. She went up three steps, and then paused to look back at him.

"You are a good man, monsieur. You have pity."

———————

4: The Lemon Drop Kid

Damon Runyon

1880-1946

Collier's, 3 Feb 1934

Made into a musical comedy movie in 1951 with Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell

I AM GOING to take you back a matter of four or five years ago to an August afternoon and the race track at Saratoga, which is a spot in New York state very pleasant to behold, and also to a young guy by the name of The Lemon Drop Kid, who is called The Lemon Drop Kid because he always has a little sack of lemon drops in the side pocket of his coat, and is always munching at same, a lemon drop being a breed of candy that is relished by many, although personally I prefer peppermints.

On this day I am talking about, The Lemon Drop Kid is looking about for business, and not doing so good for himself, at that, as The Lemon Drop Kid's business is telling the tale, and he is finding it very difficult indeed to discover citizens who are willing to listen to him tell the tale.

And of course if a guy whose business is telling the tale cannot find anybody to listen to him, he is greatly handicapped, for the tale such a guy tells is always about how he knows something is doing in a certain race, the idea of the tale being that it may cause the citizen who is listening to it to make a wager on this certain race, and if the race comes out the way the guy who is telling the tale says it will come out, naturally the citizen is bound to be very grateful to the guy, and maybe reward him liberally.

Furthermore, the citizen is bound to listen to more tales, and a guy whose business is telling the tale, such as The Lemon Drop Kid, always has tales to tell until the cows come home, and generally they are long tales, and sometimes they are very interesting and entertaining, according to who is telling them, and it is well known to one and all that nobody can tell the tale any better than The Lemon Drop Kid.

But old Cap Duhaine and his sleuths at the Saratoga track are greatly opposed to guys going around telling the tale, and claim that such guys are nothing but touts, and they are especially opposed to The Lemon Drop Kid, because they say he tells the tale so well that he weakens public confidence in horse racing. So they are casing The Lemon Drop Kid pretty close to see that he does not get some citizen's ear and start telling him the tale, and finally The Lemon Drop Kid is greatly disgusted and walks up the lawn towards the head of the stretch.

And while he is walking, he is eating lemon drops out of his pocket, and thinking about how much better off he will be if he puts in the last ten years of

his life at some legitimate dodge, instead of hop-scotching from one end of the country to the other telling the tale, although just off-hand The Lemon Drop Kid cannot think of any legitimate dodge at which he will see as much of life as he sees around the race tracks since he gets out of the orphan asylum in Jersey City where he is raised.

At the time this story starts out, The Lemon Drop Kid is maybe twenty-four years old, and he is a quiet little guy with a low voice, which comes of keeping it confidential when he is telling the tale, and he is nearly always alone. In fact, The Lemon Drop Kid is never known to have a pal as long as he is around telling the tale, although he is by no means an unfriendly guy, and is always speaking to everybody, even when he is in the money.

But it is now a long time since The Lemon Drop Kid is in the money, or seems to have any chance of being in the money, and the landlady of the boarding-house in Saratoga where he is residing is becoming quite hostile, and making derogatory cracks about him, and also about most of her other boarders, too, so The Lemon Drop Kid is unable to really enjoy his meals there, especially as they are very bad meals to start with.

Well, The Lemon Drop Kid goes off by himself up the lawn and stands there looking out across the track, munching a lemon drop from time to time, and thinking what a harsh old world it is, to be sure, and how much better off it will be if there are no sleuths whatever around and about.

It is a day when not many citizens are present at the track, and the only one near The Lemon Drop Kid seems to be an old guy in a wheel chair, with a steamer rug over his knees, and a big, sleepy-looking stove lid who appears to be in charge of the chair.

This old guy has a big white mouser, and big white bristly eyebrows, and he is a very fierce-looking old guy, indeed, and anybody can tell at once that he is nothing but a curmudgeon, and by no means worthy of attention. But he is a familiar spectacle at the race track at Saratoga, as he comes out nearly every day in a limousine the size of a hearse, and is rolled out of the limousine in his wheel chair on a little runway by the stove lid, and pushed up to this spot where he is sitting now, so he can view the sport of kings without being bothered by the crowds.

It is well known to one and all that his name is Rarus P. Griggsby, and that he has plenty of potatoes, which he makes in Wall Street, and that he is closer than the next second with his potatoes, and furthermore, it is also well known that he hates everybody in the world, including himself, so nobody goes anywhere near him if they can help it.

The Lemon Drop Kid does not realize he is standing so close to Rarus P. Griggsby, until he hears the old guy growling at the stove lid, and then The

Lemon Drop Kid looks at Rarus P. Griggsby very sympathetic and speaks to him in his low voice as follows:

'Gout?' he says.

Now of course The Lemon Drop Kid knows who Rarus P. Griggsby is, and under ordinary circumstances The Lemon Drop Kid will not think of speaking to such a character, but afterwards he explains that he is feeling so despondent that he addresses Rarus P. Griggsby just to show he does not care what happens. And under ordinary circumstances, the chances are Rarus P. Griggsby will start hollering for the gendarmes if a stranger has the gall to speak to him, but there is so much sympathy in The Lemon Drop Kid's voice and eyes, that Rarus P. Griggsby seems to be taken by surprise, and he answers like this:

'Arthritis,' Rarus P. Griggsby says. 'In my knees,' he says. 'I am not able to walk a step in three years.'

'Why,' The Lemon Drop Kid says, 'I am greatly distressed to hear this. I know just how you feel, because I am troubled from infancy with this same disease.'

Now of course this is strictly the old ackamarackus, as The Lemon Drop Kid cannot even spell arthritis, let alone have it, but he makes the above statement just by way of conversation; and furthermore he goes on to state as follows:

'In fact,' The Lemon Drop Kid says, 'I suffer so I can scarcely think, but one day I find a little remedy that fixes me up as right as rain, and I now have no trouble whatsoever.'

And with this, he takes a lemon drop out of his pocket and pops it into his mouth, and then he hands one to Rarus P. Griggsby in a most hospitable manner, and the old guy holds the lemon drop between his thumb and forefinger and looks at it as if he expects it to explode right in his pan, while the stove lid gazes at The Lemon Drop Kid with a threatening expression.

'Well,' Rarus P. Griggsby says, 'personally I consider all cures fakes. I have a standing offer of five thousand dollars to anybody that can cure me of my pain, and nobody even comes close so far. Doctors are also fakes,' he says. 'I have seven of them, and they take out my tonsils, and all my teeth, and my appendix, and they keep me from eating anything I enjoy, and I only get worse. The waters here in Saratoga seem to help me some, but,' he says, 'they do not get me out of this wheel chair, and I am sick and tired of it all.'

Then, as if he comes to a quick decision, he pops the lemon drop into his mouth, and begins munching it very slow, and after a while he says it tastes just like a lemon drop to him, and of course it is a lemon drop all along, but The Lemon Drop Kid says this taste is only to disguise the medicine in it.

Now, by and by, The Lemon Drop Kid commences telling Rarus P. Griggsby the tale, and afterwards The Lemon Drop Kid says he has no idea Rarus P.

Griggsby will listen to the tale, and that he only starts telling it to him in a spirit of good clean fun, just to see how he will take it, and he is greatly surprised to note that Rarus P. Griggsby is all attention.

Personally, I find nothing unusual in this situation, because I often see citizens around the race tracks as prominent as Rarus P. Griggsby, listening to the tale from guys who do not have as much as a seat in their pants, especially if the tale has any larceny in it, because it is only human nature to be deeply interested in larceny.

And the tale The Lemon Drop Kid tells Rarus P. Griggsby is that he is a brother of Sonny Saunders, the jock, and that Sonny tells him to be sure and be at the track this day to bet on a certain horse in the fifth race, because it is nothing but a boat race, and everything in it is as stiff as a plank, except this certain horse.

Now of course this is all a terrible lie, and The Lemon Drop Kid is taking a great liberty with Sonny Saunders's name, especially as Sonny does not have any brothers, anyway, and even if Sonny knows about a boat race the chances are he will never tell The Lemon Drop Kid, but then very few guys whose business is telling the tale ever stop to figure they may be committing perjury.

So The Lemon Drop Kid goes on to state that when he arrives at the track he has fifty bobs pinned to his wishbone to bet on this certain horse, but unfortunately he gets a tip on a real good thing in the very first race, and bets his fifty bobs right then and there, figuring to provide himself with a larger taw to bet on the certain horse in the fifth, but the real good thing receives practically a criminal ride from a jock who does not know one end of a horse from the other, and is beat a very dirty snoot, and there The Lemon Drop Kid is with the fifth race coming up, and an absolute cinch in it, the way his tale goes, but with no dough left to bet on it.

Well, personally I do not consider this tale as artistic as some The Lemon Drop Kid tells, and in fact The Lemon Drop Kid himself never rates it among his masterpieces, but old Rarus P. Griggsby listens to the tale quite intently without saying a word, and all the time he is munching the lemon drop and smacking his lips under his big white mouser, as if he greatly enjoys this delicacy, but when The Lemon Drop Kid concludes the tale, and is standing there gazing out across the track with a very sad expression on his face, Rarus P. Griggsby speaks as follows:

'I never bet on horse races,' Rarus P. Griggsby says. 'They are too uncertain. But this proposition you present sounds like finding money, and I love to find money. I will wager one hundred dollars on your assurance that this certain horse cannot miss.'

And with this, he outs with a leather so old that The Lemon Drop Kid half expects a cockroach to leap out at him, and produces a C note which he hands to The Lemon Drop Kid, and as he does so, Rarus P. Griggsby inquires:

'What is the name of this certain horse?'

Well, of course this is a fair question, but it happens that The Lemon Drop Kid is so busy all afternoon thinking of the injustice of the sleuths that he never even bothers to look up this particular race beforehand, and afterwards he is quite generally criticised for slovenliness in this matter, for if a guy is around telling the tale about a race, he is entitled to pick out a horse that has at least some kind of a chance.

But of course The Lemon Drop Kid is not expecting the opportunity of telling the tale to arise, so the question finds him unprepared, as off-hand he cannot think of the name of a horse in the race, as he never consults the scratches, and he does not wish to mention the name of some plug that may be scratched out, and lose the chance to make the C note. So as he seizes the C note from Rarus P. Griggsby and turns to dash for the bookmakers over in front of the grandstand, all The Lemon Drop Kid can think of to say at this moment is the following:

'Watch Number Two,' he says.

And the reason he says No.2, is he figures there is bound to be a No.2 in the race, while he cannot be so sure about a No.7 or a No. 9 until he looks them over, because you understand that all The Lemon Drop Kid states in telling the tale to Rarus P. Griggsby about knowing of something doing in this race is very false.

And of course The Lemon Drop Kid has no idea of betting the C note on anything whatever in the race. In the first place, he does not know of anything to bet on, and in the second place he needs the C note, but he is somewhat relieved when he inquires of the first bookie he comes to, and learns that No.2 is an old walrus by the name of The Democrat, and anybody knows that The Democrat has no chance of winning even in a field of mud turtles.

So The Lemon Drop Kid puts the C note in his pants pocket, and walks around and about until the horses are going to the post, and you must not think there is anything dishonest in his not betting this money with a bookmaker, as The Lemon Drop Kid is only taking the bet himself, which is by no means unusual, and in fact it is so common that only guys like Cap Duhaine and his sleuths think much about it.

Finally The Lemon Drop Kid goes back to Rarus P. Griggsby, for it will be considered most ungenteel for a guy whose business is telling the tale to be absent when it comes time to explain why the tale does not stand up, and about this time the horses are turning for home, and a few seconds later they

go busting past the spot where Rarus P. Griggsby is sitting in his wheel chair, and what is in front to the wire by a Salt Lake City block but The Democrat with No.2 on his blanket.

Well, old Rarus P. Griggsby starts yelling and waving his hands, and making so much racket that he is soon the centre of attention, and when it comes out that he bets a C note on the winner, nobody blames him for cutting up these didoes, for the horse is a twenty to one shot, but all this time The Lemon Drop Kid only stands there looking very, very sad and shaking his head, until finally Rarus P. Griggsby notices his strange attitude.

'Why are you not cheering over our winning this nice bet?' he says. 'Of course I expect to declare you in,' he says. 'In fact I am quite grateful to you.'

'But,' The Lemon Drop Kid says, 'we do not win. Our horse runs a jolly second.'

'What do you mean, second?' Rarus P. Griggsby says. 'Do you not tell me to watch Number Two, and does not Number Two win?'

'Yes,' The Lemon Drop Kid says, 'what you state is quite true, but what I mean when I say watch Number Two is that Number Two is the only horse I am afraid of in the race, and it seems my fear is well founded.'

Now at this, old Rarus P. Griggsby sits looking at The Lemon Drop Kid for as long as you can count up to ten, if you count slow, and his mouser and eyebrows are all twitching at once, and anybody can see that he is very much perturbed, and then all of a sudden he lets out a yell and to the great amazement of one and all he leaps right out of his wheel chair and makes a lunge at The Lemon Drop Kid.

Well, there is no doubt that Rarus P. Griggsby has murder in his heart, and nobody blames The Lemon Drop Kid when he turns and starts running away at great speed, and in fact he has such speed that finally his feet are throwing back little stones off the gravel paths of the race track with such velocity that a couple of spectators who get hit by these stones think they are shot.

For a few yards, old Rarus P. Griggsby is right at The Lemon Drop Kid's heels, and furthermore Rarus P. Griggsby is yelling and swearing in a most revolting manner. Then some of Cap Duhaine's sleuths come running up and they take after The Lemon Drop Kid too, and he has to have plenty of early foot to beat them to the race-track gates, and while Rarus P. Griggsby does not figure much in the running after the first few jumps, The Lemon Drop Kid seems to remember hearing him cry out as follows:

'Stop, there! Please stop!' Rarus P. Griggsby cries. 'I wish to see you.'

But of course The Lemon Drop Kid is by no means a chump, and he does not even slacken up, let alone stop, until he is well beyond the gates, and the sleuths are turning back, and what is more, The Lemon Drop Kid takes the road

leading out of Saratoga instead of going back to the city, because he figures that Saratoga may not be so congenial to him for a while.

In fact, The Lemon Drop Kid finds himself half-regretting that he ever tells the tale to Rarus P. Griggsby as The Lemon Drop Kid likes Saratoga in August, but of course such a thing as happens to him in calling a winner the way he does is just an unfortunate accident, and is not apt to happen again in a lifetime.

Well, The Lemon Drop Kid keeps on walking away from Saratoga for quite some time, and finally he is all tuckered out and wishes to take the load off his feet. So when he comes to a small town by the name of Kibbsville, he sits down on the porch of what seems to be a general store and gas station, and while he is sitting there thinking of how nice and quiet and restful this town seems to be, with pleasant shade trees, and white houses all around and about, he sees standing in the doorway of a very little white house across the street from the store, in a gingham dress, the most beautiful young doll that ever lives, and I know this is true, because The Lemon Drop Kid tells me so afterwards.

This doll has brown hair hanging down her back, and her smile is so wonderful that when an old pappy guy with a goatee comes out of the store to sell a guy in a flivver some gas, The Lemon Drop Kid hauls off and asks him if he can use a clerk.

Well, it seems that the old guy can, at that, because it seems that a former clerk, a guy by the name of Pilloe, recently lays down and dies on the old guy from age and malnutrition, and so this is how The Lemon Drop Kid comes to be planted in Kibbsville, and clerking in Martin Potter's store for the next couple of years, at ten bobs per week.

And furthermore, this is how The Lemon Drop Kid meets up with Miss Alicia Deering, who is nobody but the beautiful little doll that The Lemon Drop Kid sees standing in the doorway of the little house across the street.

She lives in this house with her papa, her mamma being dead a long time, and her papa is really nothing but an old bum who dearly loves his applejack, and who is generally around with a good heat on. His first name is Jonas, and he is a house painter by trade, but he seldom feels like doing any painting, as he claims he never really recovers from a terrible backache he gets when he is in the Spanish-American War with the First New York, so Miss Alicia Deering supports him by dealing them off her arm in the Commercial Hotel.

But although The Lemon Drop Kid now works for a very great old skinflint who even squawks about The Lemon Drop Kid's habit of filling his side pocket now and then with lemon drops out of a jar on the shelf in the store, The Lemon Drop Kid is very happy, for the truth of the matter is he loves Miss Alicia Deering, and it is the first time in his life he ever loves anybody, or anything.

And furthermore, it is the first time in his life The Lemon Drop Kid is living quietly, and in peace, and not losing sleep trying to think of ways of cheating somebody.

In fact, The Lemon Drop Kid now looks back on his old life with great repugnance, for he can see that it is by no means the proper life for any guy, and sometimes he has half a mind to write to his former associates who may still be around telling the tale, and request them to mend their ways, only The Lemon Drop Kid does not wish these old associates to know where he is.

He never as much as peeks at a racing sheet nowadays, and he spends all his spare time with Miss Alicia Deering, which is not so much time, at that, as old Martin Potter does not care to see his employees loafing between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., and neither does the Commercial Hotel. But one day in the spring, when the apple blossoms are blooming in these parts, and the air is chock-a-block with perfume, and the grass is getting nice and green, The Lemon Drop Kid speaks of his love to Miss Alicia Deering, stating that it is such a love that he can scarcely eat.

Well, Miss Alicia Deering states that she reciprocates this love one hundred per cent., and then The Lemon Drop Kid suggests they get married up immediately, and she says she is in favour of the idea, only she can never think of leaving her papa, who has no one else in all this world but her, and while this is a little more extra weight than The Lemon Drop Kid figures on picking up, he says his love is so terrific he can even stand for her papa, too.

So they are married, and go to live in the little house across the street from Martin Potter's store with Miss Alicia Deering's papa. When he marries Miss Alicia Deering, The Lemon Drop Kid has a bank roll of one hundred and eighteen dollars, including the C note he takes off of Rarus P. Griggsby, and eighteen bobs that he saves out of his salary from Martin Potter in a year, and three nights after the marriage, Miss Alicia Deering's papa sniffs out where The Lemon Drop Kid plants his roll and sneezes same.

Then he goes on a big applejack toot, and spends all the dough.

But in spite of everything, including old man Deering, The Lemon Drop Kid and Miss Alicia Deering are very, very happy in the little house for about a year, especially when it seems that Miss Alicia Deering is going to have a baby, although this incident compels her to stop dealing them off the arm at the Commercial Hotel, and cuts down their resources.

Now one day, Miss Alicia Deering comes down with a great illness, and it is such an illness as causes old Doc Abernathy, the local croaker, to wag his head, and to state that it is beyond him, and that the only chance for her is to send her to a hospital in New York City where the experts can get a crack at her. But by this time, what with all his overhead, The Lemon Drop Kid is as clean as a

jaybird, and he has no idea where he can get his dukes on any money in these parts, and it will cost a couple of C's, for low, to do what Doc Abernathy suggests.

Finally, The Lemon Drop Kid asks old Martin Potter if he can see his way clear to making him an advance on his salary, which still remains ten bobs per week, but Martin Potter laughs, and says he not only cannot see his way clear to doing such a thing, but that if conditions do not improve he is going to cut The Lemon Drop Kid off altogether. Furthermore, about this time the guy who owns the little house drops around and reminds The Lemon Drop Kid that he is now in arrears for two months' rent, amounting in all to twelve bobs, and if The Lemon Drop Kid is not able to meet this obligation shortly, he will have to vacate.

So one way and another The Lemon Drop Kid is in quite a quandary, and Miss Alicia Deering is getting worse by the minute, and finally The Lemon Drop Kid hoofs and hitch-hikes a matter of maybe a hundred and fifty miles to New York City, with the idea of going out to Belmont Park, where the giddy-aps are now running, figuring he may be able to make some kind of a scratch around there, but he no sooner lights on Broadway than he runs into a guy he knows by the name of Short Boy, and this Short Boy pulls him into a doorway, and says to him like this:

'Listen, Lemon Drop,' Short Boy says, 'I do not know what it is you do to old Rarus P. Griggsby, and I do not wish to know, but it must be something terrible, indeed, as he has every elbow around the race tracks laying for you for the past couple of years. You know Rarus P. Griggsby has great weight around these tracks, and you must commit murder the way he is after you. Why,' Short Boy says, 'only last week over in Maryland, Whitey Jordan, the track copper, asks me if ever I hear of you, and I tell him I understand you are in Australia. Keep away from the tracks,' Short Boy says, 'or you will wind up in the clink.'

So The Lemon Drop Kid hoofs and hitch-hikes back to Kibbsville, as he does not wish to become involved in any trouble at this time, and the night he gets back home is the same night a masked guy with a big six pistol in his duke steps into the lobby of the Commercial Hotel and sticks up the night clerk and half a dozen citizens who are sitting around in the lobby, including old Jonas Deering, and robs the damper of over sixty bobs, and it is also the same night that Miss Alicia Deering's baby is born dead, and old Doc Abernathy afterwards claims that it is all because the experts cannot get a crack at Miss Alicia Deering a matter of about twelve hours earlier.

And it is along in the morning after this night, around four bells, that Miss Alicia Deering finally opens her eyes, and see The Lemon Drop Kid sitting beside her bed in the little house, crying very hard, and it is the first time The

Lemon Drop Kid is levelling with his crying since the time one of the attendants in the orphans' asylum in Jersey City gives him a good belting years before.

Then Miss Alicia Deering motions to The Lemon Drop Kid to bend down so she can whisper to him, and what Miss Alicia Deering whispers, soft and low, is the following:

'Do not cry, Kid,' she whispers. 'Be a good boy after I am gone, Kid, and never forget I love you, and take good care of poor papa.'

And then Miss Alicia Deering closes her eyes for good and all, and The Lemon Drop Kid sits there beside her, watching her face until some time later he hears a noise at the front door of the little house, and he opens the door to find old Sheriff Higginbotham waiting there, and after they stand looking at each other a while, the sheriff speaks as follows:

'Well, son,' Sheriff Higginbotham says, 'I am sorry, but I guess you will have to come along with me. We find the vinegar barrel spigot wrapped in tin foil that you use for a gun in the back yard here where you throw it last night.'

'All right,' The Lemon Drop Kid says. 'All right, Sheriff. But how do you come to think of me in the first place?'

'Well,' Sheriff Higginbotham says, 'I do not suppose you recall doing it, and the only guy in the hotel lobby that notices it is nobody but your papa-in-law, Jonas Deering, but,' he says, 'while you are holding your home-made pistol with one hand last night, you reach into the side pocket of your coat with the other hand and take out a lemon drop and pop it into your mouth.'

I run into The Lemon Drop Kid out on the lawn at Hialeah in Miami last winter, and I am sorry to see that the twoer he does in Auburn leaves plenty of lines in his face, and a lot of grey in his hair.

But of course I do not refer to this, nor do I mention that he is the subject of considerable criticism from many citizens for turning over to Miss Alicia Deering's papa a purse of three C's that we raise to pay a mouthpiece for his defence.

Furthermore, I do not tell The Lemon Drop Kid that he is also criticised in some quarters for his action while in the sneezer at Auburn in sending the old guy the few bobs he is able to gather in by making and selling knick-knacks of one kind and another to visitors, until finally Jonas Deering saves him any more bother by up and passing away of too much applejack.

The way I look at it, every guy knows his own business best, so I only duke The Lemon Drop Kid, and say I am glad to see him, and we are standing there carving up a few old scores, when all of a sudden there is a great commotion and out of the crowd around us on the lawn comes an old guy with a big white mouser, and bristly white eyebrows, and as he grabs The Lemon Drop Kid by

the arm, I am somewhat surprised to see that it is nobody but old Rarus P. Griggsby, without his wheel chair, and to hear him speak as follows:

'Well, well, well, well, well!' Rarus P. Griggsby says to The Lemon Drop Kid. 'At last I find you,' he says. 'Where are you hiding all these years? Do you not know I have detectives looking for you high and low because I wish to pay you the reward I offer for anybody curing me of my arthritis? Yes,' Rarus P. Griggsby says, 'the medicine you give me at Saratoga which tastes like a lemon drop, works fine, although,' he says, 'my seven doctors all try to tell me it is nothing but their efforts finally getting in their work, while the city of Saratoga is attempting to cut in and claim credit for its waters.

'But,' Rarus P. Griggsby says, 'I know it is your medicine, and if it is not your medicine, it is your scallawaggery that makes me so hot that I forget my arthritis, and never remember it since, so it is all one and the same thing. Anyway, you now have forty-nine hundred dollars coming from me, for of course I must hold out the hundred out of which you swindle me,' he says.

Well, The Lemon Drop Kid stands looking at Rarus P. Griggsby and listening to him, and finally The Lemon Drop Kid begins to laugh in his low voice, ha-ha-ha-ha-ha, but somehow there does not seem to be any laughter in the laugh, and I cannot bear to hear it, so I move away leaving Rarus P. Griggsby and The Lemon Drop Kid there together.

I look back only once, and I see The Lemon Drop Kid stop laughing long enough to take a lemon drop out of the side pocket of his coat and pop it into his mouth, and then he goes on laughing, ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.

5: Kansas City Flash

Norbert Davis

1909-1949

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THE PLACE smelled of ether. The hallway had a green-carpeted floor and smooth white walls. There were doors at regular intervals along the hall, and little red bulbs above the doors. Everything was quiet.

Pete Endor came out of one of the doors carrying a white porcelain dish with a towel over it. He shut the door carefully behind him and came noiselessly down the hall on crêpe rubber soles. He was short and pale, with slicked-down black hair. He was dressed in a white duck uniform. He raised his eyebrows at Mark Hull and said:

"Be with you in a minute. Guy just shot his breakfast all over the floor."

He went on down the hall, around a turn. After a little he came back with a mop, made a sour face at Mark Hull, and went back in the room he had come out of.

Mark Hull sat down in the chair beside the glass-topped table that had more porcelain dishes and shiny steel instruments piled on top of it in orderly rows. He took a battered pack of cigarettes out of his vest pocket, selected one, and straightened it out between his thick, scarred fingers. He snapped a match on his thumbnail and blew some smoke at the white ceiling.

He was short and heavily muscled with broad, sloping shoulders and arms that were too long for the rest of him. His nose was plastered flat against his face. One cheek was criss-crossed with small white scars, and that side of his face looked slightly out of line. His eyes were small and blue and twinkling—set far apart. He appeared to be hard-boiled and good-humored at the same time. He looked like he was enjoying himself. He was a cynically tolerant spectator of the flea circus that is Hollywood.

He whistled through his teeth softly, tapping his foot on the floor. Pete Endor came out of the room again, holding the mop carefully away from him. He went down the hall. He came back without the mop.

"If this isn't a hell of a job," he said.

"That what you called me over to tell me?" Mark Hull asked, letting smoke dribble out of his flattened nostrils., "You heard anything about Doro Faliv?"

"Hell, yes," said Mark Hull. "So's everybody else that can read. What she eats, and what she thinks, and what she wears. And how it feels to get five thousand dollars a week and be a motion picture star. And what she does to get sex appeal. What do you want, an introduction?" Pete's eyes got big. "Do you know her?"

Mark Hull snorted smoke. "Only when I see her. Listen, dope, you can't sign any contracts, so she wouldn't be interested in you. Now if it's not too much trouble, just tell me what you wanted and leave the fan mail for some other time."

Pete leaned over. He looked both ways cautiously. He put his sleek head to one side and listened elaborately. He'd seen a gangster picture the night before and knew how it was done. Mark Hull waited with a pained but patient expression.

"I got a hot tip," said Pete mysteriously.

"Look out it don't burn your fingers."

"Do I get a cut?" asked Pete.

"You get a smack on the snozzle in about a minute."

"Listen," said Pete, talking out of the corner of his mouth. "Night before last they brought a little dope in here with a couple of bullets in him. He'd been shot, see?"

"Oh," Mark Hull said sarcastically. "You mean he'd been shot."

Pete nodded seriously. "Shot. Nothing the docs could do. He passed out this morning. I was there." He winked. "I was right there."

"What about it?"

"He was an autograph hound," Pete said. "He came to just before he died, and he told me all about it. Before the doc got there. He collected autographs. Autographs of all the stars. He had them in a little book. He had five hundred of 'em." Pete stopped and chewed a fingernail. "I only got three hundred."

"I suppose he tried to collect Doro Faliv's autograph, and she got sore and put a couple of bullets in him."

Pete nodded triumphantly. "That's it!"

Mark Hull choked on cigarette smoke. He coughed hackingly. When it was over he stared at Pete with amazed eyes.

"You mean that's actually what he said?"

Pete nodded again. "Yup. Only the guy that was with her did the shooting."

"My—!" said Mark Hull quietly. "My—!" He pulled up his coat sleeve and pinched himself on his hairy forearm. He took off his hat and wiped his brow. He fanned himself with his hat. Suddenly he glared at Pete with narrowed eyes.

"You mugg, are you makin' this up?"

Pete shook his head and held up his right hand. "It's the honest truth, Mr. Hull."

Mark Hull blinked his eyes and gave a long whistle. "Tell me just what he said."

"Well, he lives— lived— in an apartment house near Tenth and Western. *The Forsage Arms*. That night about eleven he was comin' out of the building to go down to a drug-store and get some smokes. Just as he was comin' down the steps a car stopped at the curb. Doro Faliv got out."

"Wait a minute," said Mark Hull. "How'd he know it was her? They look different off the screen."

"He used to hang around the *Brown Derby* all the time gettin' autographs, and he'd seen her lots of times, but there was always such a crowd around her that he couldn't get her autograph. It's terrible how that crowd pushes you around, Mr. Hull. What I mean, it really is. Why, one time I—"

"Go on, go on," said Mark Hull through clenched teeth. "What happened after he saw her?"

"He thought this was a good chance to get her autograph. He always Carried his book with him. You can't never tell when you're gonna meet a star. Why, one time I saw John Barrymore—"

Mark Hull made a strangling noise.

Pete came back to the subject hurriedly. "So he walks up to her, and he says: 'Hello, Miss Faliv. Will you sign my autograph book?' And then *blooie!* He didn't remember nothing else until he came to here just before he died. They found him up in Hollywoodland lying in some brush along the road."

"Anyone else know this?"

"No. I think it's terrible, Mr. Hull, when they shoot you for just asking for an autograph. They get awful sore sometimes, though. I remember once when I—
"

Mark Hull stood up and rammed a blunt forefinger into Pete Endor's chest.

"You keep your mouth shut about this. If it's a straight tip you get a couple hundred. If it's a phoney I'll come back here and spatter your brains all over the wall."

Mark Hull squeezed his bulk into a telephone booth in a drug-store on Sunset Boulevard, a block from the hospital. He pushed a nickel in the slot and dialed a number.

"Dolan, Scenario Department," he said when a feminine voice answered.

He waited, tapping on the top of the telephone with his fingernail and whistling softly. His eyes were gleaming. He looked like he was getting a big kick out of things in general.

"Yeah?" It was a thin, flat, very weary voice.

"Listen, Dolan, this is Mark Hull. I want to see a guy on the lot that don't want to see me. Can I use your name to get in?"

There was an audible sigh. "Yeah," said the voice tonelessly. The line went dead.

Mark Hull came out of the drugstore, got in his battered Ford coupé and drove down Sunset. He turned off on a side street, parked the Ford at the curb. He walked along a high cement wall with big signs advertising motion pictures along the top of it. He walked past an iron gate with a khaki uniformed policeman sitting on a stool beside it. He went in a glass door with an iron grilling on it.

It was a small room with a green tile floor and walls. There was a long bench along one wall, a potted plant in one corner, and a big desk in another. A closed door with three steps leading up to it was in the middle of the back wall.

The blond youth behind the desk smiled and said "Yes?" courteously.

"I want to see Mr. Dolan," Mark Hull said. "Hull's the name. He's expecting me."

The blond youth repeated: "Mr. Dolan." He picked up a telephone that was the only furnishing on the desk and said: "Mr. Dolan," into it. He waited patiently.

After a little he said: "There's a Mr. Hull to see you."

He listened. He hung up the receiver, tore a blank off a yellow pad of paper, scribbled on it.

"Through that door," he said. "You know where to go?"

Mark Hull nodded, took the slip, went up the three steps. He went through the door, closed it behind him. He was in a short, dark corridor with doors with frosted glass panes on either side. He walked down the corridor and out another door into the sunlight. He followed a cement walk through a small lawn and was in a narrow street flanked on each side by two-story, barn-like buildings with corrugated iron doors.

There were some cowboys sitting around in the shade, smoking and talking in low tones. They looked hot and tired. A soldier went by dragging his rifle behind him, his hob-nails clanking on the cement. Two girls in evening dresses followed him. In a doorway three men in horn-rimmed glasses and golf knickers were arguing earnestly. A supervisor went by, walking alone and talking to himself.

Mark Hull turned a corner and was in front of a Spanish-style building with white walls and a red tile roof. He went up the stairs, along a hall, and entered a door. A girl with honey-colored hair and very red lips sat at a big desk against one wall.

Mark Hull rested his big hands on the desk and leaned forward.

"Mr. Schrimer in?"

She was shaking her head wearily before he had even started to say anything.

"No. Have you an appointment?"

Mark Hull took one of his cards from his pocket, picked up the pencil on the desk and wrote: "Doro Faliv," on the card.

"Take this to him," he said. "Right now."

The girl looked at the card. She turned it over and read what he had written on the back. Her blue eyes got very big and round.

She said: "Sit down a moment, please," in a choked, hurried voice. She got up and went through a door with polished mahogany panels.

Mark Hull made a triumphant clicking noise with his tongue. He snapped his fingers, grinning, and winked in a knowing way at the wall opposite him.

"I got something this time!" he whispered to himself. "Hot damn!"

The girl came back.

"Mr. Schrimer will see you. Come this way, please."

Mark Hull followed her, walking with a confident, springy sway— big shoulders back, thick chest pushed out.

Schrimer's office looked almost as gaudy as the motion picture sets of motion picture magnates' offices. It was big and impressive with soft carpets and paneled walls and expensive pictures and period furniture.

Schrimer was behind the desk under a big window at the side of the room. He was small and white and pink-eyed. He looked like a scared rabbit peering over a log. He made a vague stuttering noise and waved to a chair in front of the desk.

Mark Hull waited until the girl had gone, closing the door behind her. He rocked back and forth on his heels, staring at Schrimer with one thick eyebrow cocked up quizzically. After a moment he stepped softly to the door and suddenly opened it.

A fat man was standing there, bent over, with his eyes on the level with the keyhole. His round, mournful face didn't change expression in the slightest. He straightened up and sighed sadly. Coming inside the office, he closed the door behind him and leaned against the wall with his hands in his pockets, staring glumly at Mark Hull.

Mark Hull smiled pleasantly at him and said: "Hello, McNulty. It's a wonder to me you don't get cross-eyed with all the keyhole peeping you do." He sat down in the chair in front of the desk and took out a cigarette. "Have one?" he said politely, offering the pack to Schrimer.

"Y-you know him?" Schrimer asked McNulty.

McNulty nodded gloomily. "Yeah. Name of Mark Hull. Used to be a stunt-man. Got that mugg when he jumped off a three-story building and the net busted. Picks up money now running around and doing hush-hush jobs for the studios. Tough egg."

Mark Hull bowed and smiled. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Schrimer."

Schrimer looked like a rabbit all ready to get impudent with a lion that was safely caged up.

"W-what do you know about Doro Faliv?" he asked importantly.

Mark Hull rumpled his bristly hair, frowning. "I know she's five feet three, has black hair and come-hither eyes and—"

"Cut the clowning," said McNulty.

"How much is it costing you a day?" Mark Hull asked, suddenly serious.

Schrimer waved his skinny arms. "T-ten thousand d-dollars a d-day! That's what it's costing me! T-ten thousand d-dollars every d-day! I got p-p-production schedules to meet—"

"How long has she been gone?"

"T-two days."

"How much do they want?"

"F-fifty thousand d-dollars! F-fifty thousand d-dollars! In these hard t-times—" He stopped and blinked his pink eyes at Mark Hull. "How d-did you know?"

Mark Hull leaned back in his chair and folded his arms. He smiled complacently. "I get around. I get around."

McNulty made a disgusted noise in his throat. "Listen, mugg, we haven't got time to play guessing games with you. What's the big idea?"

Mark Hull shrugged. "Maybe I could sell a story to the newspapers."

McNulty shook his head seriously. "Nix, brother. This isn't funny business. One slip, and Faliv gets it." He drew his forefinger across his throat and made a clicking noise. "She's worth a couple million dollars to this studio. We can't afford to have you running around squawking. We got lots of nice dark places to shut mouthy guys in. Get it off your chest before you get tapped on the conk and slung in one of them."

Mark Hull said: "How much for getting her back all in one piece and without any noise?"

Schrimer looked at McNulty inquiringly. McNulty nodded.

"F-five thousand d-dollars cash."

Mark Hull stood up. "Okey. Make a memorandum of that and sign it."

"Now listen," McNulty said, "you got a tip on where she is. It must be a hot one because this business is strictly under cover. We can't have you stumbling around putting your feet in things. How much will you take to go home and play solitaire and let us work your tip?"

Mark Hull shook his head. "Ixnay. I like trouble. And don't let me catch any of your bloodhounds trailing me around, either."

There were potted plants around the tiled lobby of *The Forsage Arms* and a red and black rubber rug on the floor. Over in one corner was a small desk with a switchboard at the end. A tall, bald man with a toothy grin was behind the desk. He looked over the top of his glasses at Mark Hull and made pleasant little clucking noises.

Mark Hull leaned over the desk and winked at him "Married?" he asked in a whisper.

The clerk looked wall-eyed. His lips pursed up. He nodded blankly.

Mark Hull poked him in the chest with his thumb and grinned with one side of his mouth. "I'm lookin for a guy's wife for him."

The clerk ceased to look blank. His eyes glistened. He licked his thin lips and nodded eagerly. He had the sly look of a villain in a movie serial.

Mark Hull held up a twenty-dollar bill. "She's about five-three. Slim. Swell legs. Black hair. She'd be wearing a real heavy veil. She'd be with two or maybe three guys. Hard-looking boys. Whenever she came down here one of the guys would have a good hold on her, like he was afraid she'd run away."

The clerk nodded eagerly. "Yeah. She was here. Two guys. She went out this morning with one guy. He paid his bill. Said he was moving. The other guy is up in the apartment now. Packing up, I guess. They were in a hurry."

"What apartment?"

"18-E. It's on the fifth floor."

"If he comes down while I'm going up, hold him here with some stall until I get back," Mark Hull ordered, relinquishing the twenty and exhibiting another one.

The clerk nodded again. He watched Mark Hull stalk across the lobby and enter the elevator. "These women," he said.

Mark Hull got out of the elevator and waited until the boy had sent it downward. He slid along the thickly carpeted hall, looking at door numbers. He found 18-E at the end of the corridor.

He knocked softly. His lips were drawn into a tight, lopsided grin. He blew on the knuckles of his right fist and held it poised hip-high, balancing on his toes. His eyes were wide and excited looking.

Somebody moved softly in the apartment. Mark Hull knocked again.

"Janitor," he said in a thick voice.

The door opened, and a round, greasy-looking face appeared.

"What—"

Mark Hull's knuckles connected with the face with a sound like a bursting balloon. The door jerked open. There was a gurgling noise, and the sound of a heavy fall. Mark Hull went through the door and closed it behind him.

The greasy-faced one was getting up off the floor, spitting curses. The rest of him matched his face. He was small and stoop-shouldered and bandy-legged. His hair curled in oiled ringlets. His mouth was thick-lipped, blubbery.

He found a knife somewhere and dived for Mark Hull, slashing upward. Mark Hull stepped sidewise, caught the knife hand, and twisted it until the knife clattered on the floor, blocking kicks at his abdomen with one knee. He slammed short, choppy rights into the center of the greasy face.

The other one flopped backward over a chair, crashed full length on the floor. Mark Hull got a handful of coat front, hauled him up.

"Where'd you take her?" he asked very softly holding a big fist in front of the greasy face.

The thick lips said: "Police b—!" and writhed wetly.

Mark Hull let the fist go. The other went head-first over the couch into the corner behind it. His short, crooked legs stayed in sight for an instant, then slid limply downward.

Mark Hull dragged him from under the couch and plopped him down on the cushions. He sat there and stared vacantly ahead with his big mouth twitching loosely. Mark Hull scraped a chair over and sat down facing the couch. He took a .38 Colt automatic from his shoulder-holster.

Consciousness suddenly flicked back into the greasy one's eyes.

"Police b—!" he said.

Mark Hull swiped him with the automatic. He flopped over on the couch. Mark Hull pulled him upright. He said levelly:

"I'm not from the police. I'm from the studio. We're going to play this game until you tell me where your new hide-out is."

"Go to hell!"

Mark Hull cracked him again.

"I'm not fooling. You can blow after you tell me. You mugg, don't you know a studio will never pay on a rig like this?"

Saliva made wet threads down from the blubbery lips. He sniffled, covering his face with his hands, peering at Mark Hull through stained fingers.

"Pasadena," he said thickly.

Mark Hull raised the gun. The greasy one rolled away on the couch, whining.

"No, no! Santa Monica. First and Tracy. An old white apartment house."

Mark Hull hit him carefully, calculatingly. This time on top of the head. He went down with a long, whistling sigh. Mark Hull left him there, nosed around in the apartment. He found two half-packed suit-cases on the bed, a small trunk on the floor. He came back in the front room carrying several bath towels that were wringing wet.

He tied the greasy one carefully with the towels and stuffed a handkerchief in the slack mouth.

"There, baby," he said cheerfully. "If you get out of that daddy'll give you a big red lolly-pop."

Mark Hull straightened his tie, smoothed down his bristly hair. He put his hat on carefully, tipping it down over one eye. He went to the door and opened it.

A bent little old lady with her hand cupped behind one ear nearly fell into the apartment. She straightened up quickly, making flustered sounds.

"I heard a noise. A sort of horrible bumping noise."

Mark Hull closed the door carefully behind him, making sure the lock clicked.

"Bosco," he said.

"Bosco?" the old lady repeated blankly.

Mark Hull nodded easily. "Yeah. Bosco, the Dog-Faced Boy. He's in the movies. I'm his manager. He's only half-human. He got excited a minute ago and tried to brain me with a hammer. I had quite a time with him before I could get him back in his strait-jacket. I think he got hold of some raw meat."

The old lady's eyes were like glass marbles. "Half-human," she repeated in a horrified voice. "Raw meat! Strait-jacket!" Her mouth snapped shut. She hobbled up the hall, whisked in a door. The door slammed emphatically. The key grated in the lock.

Mark Hull grinned widely. He tipped his hat further over his eye. He puffed out his big chest and strutted down the hall towards the elevator. He looked well pleased with himself.

The apartment house was a two-story, square building. It had been stuccoed, and the stucco was peeling off at the corners, showing bare brown boards underneath. Sickly looking vines on a shaky trellis curled over the front and did their best to hide the ravages of time. The lawn and the hedge needed trimming, and the two big plants on either side of the front door looked shabbily discouraged.

Mark Hull pressed his broad thumb against the button that was underneath a white card with "Manager" written on it. A small, thin woman opened the door instantly. She had stringy brown hair and mouse-like brown eyes. She watched Mark Hull timidly.

Mark Hull took off his hat and smiled. He looked genial and good-natured in a hard-boiled way. He chuckled at her.

"They get all settled?" he asked.

The landlady's lips formed the word: "Who?" noiselessly.

Mark Hull took out his wallet and found a twenty-dollar bill. The landlady's eyes got very large and wistful.

Mark Hull said: "I'm a friend of theirs. I'm sorry for them. They've had it plenty tough. Did they pay you anything in advance?"

She shook her head without taking her eyes from the twenty.

"Did they move in this morning?" he asked. "Just the two of them. The lady veiled."

She nodded.

"What room?"

"Ten. In back. On the first floor." She spoke in a barely audible monotone.

"Take this as a down payment on the rent," Mark Hull said.

The bill disappeared out of his fingers down the front of the landlady's dress in a split-second. She was gone as instantly as she had appeared. Mark Hull blinked in a surprised way.

He went silently down the gloomy hall that was thick with the smell of unventilated rooms. He found a door that had a 1 and an 0 pinned on it haphazardly. He frowned at the door. His hand started to move towards his shoulder-holster. He shook his head and took the hand away again.

"All in one piece," he whispered to himself, "and without any noise." He made a worried face at the door. The man inside was a killer. Then he shrugged. Have to take the chance.

He knocked lightly on the door. "Hey," he said, "I'm sorry to bodder yuh but de old lady says I gotta put some new light bulbs in because dem you got is all boined out."

There was a pause. Mark Hull held his breath. Then the door opened a little, and a hand appeared. A voice said:

"Give 'em to me."

Mark Hull got hold of the wrist and slammed his shoulder against the door. There was a bump and a strangled grunt. Mark Hull got inside and kicked the door shut behind him.

A thin dark-faced man twisted his wrist free with one graceful motion. In a continuation of the same motion he slammed three quick blows into Mark Hull's face. He danced away easily and lightly. He had dark, wavy hair and a thin, viciously handsome face. He was in a white shirt and dark trousers. He grinned at Mark Hull, showing white teeth through thin, red lips.

Mark Hull grunted and shook his head. There were red marks on his scarred face. He jerked off his hat and tossed it on the floor behind him. He came forward, slouched a little, thick arms swinging at his sides.

The thin man danced in again, moving with a peculiar effortless weave. His fists found Mark Hull's face, and then he was ten feet away, grinning. He was faster than greased lightning.

"Well?" he said. "Well?"

Mark Hull breathed noisily through his flattened nose. He shuffled forward, swaying a little. His eyes were coldly glinting slits. He tried to catch the thin man's arms as he came in. The thin man was too fast. A ring on his finger cut Mark Hull over one eye.

The thin man danced on his toes, weaving his shoulders loosely. Evidently he could see backward. He dodged around chairs and tables without looking behind him. He was grinning still. He was having a fine time.

"Well?" he said. "Want to quit and talk it over?"

Mark Hull kept shuffling forward. His lips were flat against his teeth in a soundless snarl. The thin man circled backward effortlessly. He was as graceful as a snake. He could move six feet to Mark Hull's one.

"Dance, damn you!" Mark Hull said thickly. "Wait till I get hold of you."

"You won't," said the thin man. "You can't touch me."

He battered Mark Hull's groping hands aside disdainfully, put three cracking blows into his face, and was leaning against the wall on the other side of the room all in the same second.

"All right," he said, sliding easily along the wall and watching Mark Hull follow him stubbornly. "Private flat-tie from the studio, aren't you, boy? You don't want a stink any worse than I do. We'll wake the whole damned place if we keep at it. I'm willing to talk business. Let's be nice."

Mark Hull shrugged and straightened up. His eyes were glittering dangerously. He wasn't used to being beaten.

"Okey," he said. "What's your proposition?"

The thin man relaxed, still grinning. Mark Hull suddenly dived at him head-first. The thin man wasn't there. Mark Hull crashed head-on into the wall. He fell heavily on his face on the floor. He rolled dizzily, and the thin man dropped on him knees first.

Mark Hull tried to twist out of it, but the thin man's fingers were digging into his throat. Mark Hull hit upward blindly. The thin man rolled his head expertly with the blows. His fingers kept digging in.

Mark Hull arched his body up on his heels and tried to get at his shoulder-holster, but the thin man blocked that with his leg. Mark Hull's tongue was big and thick in his mouth, and there was a purple haze shot with exploding orange spots in front of his eyes.

"You asked for it," the thin man said gleefully.

His voice was a squeaky whisper through the roaring in Mark Hull's ears. His dark face receded dimly through the purple haze. There were iron bands around Mark Hull's chest. He choked and writhed, suddenly frantic.

The thin man's fingers loosened. His viciously handsome face was blank, incredulous. He let go of Mark Hull's throat and got slowly and heavily to his feet. His arms were hanging limply. He turned around, and Mark Hull saw the butcher knife that was up to the hilt in his back.

The thin man took a step forward. His voice came thickly.

"You—" he said. "You—"

Doro Faliv stood ten feet away. Her slim body was erectly rigid. Her dark eyes were enormously wide. She made small, terrorized sounds in her throat—like a frightened child.

Mark Hull came out of his daze in time to hook his foot around the thin man's ankle. The thin man made no effort to catch himself, to ease his fall. He slammed down limply all at once. He moved a little on the rug. His hands went out in front of him, clutching. His feet jerked in short little kicks. He made soft, choking noises. Then he stopped moving suddenly, as though he were a mechanical toy that had run down.

Mark Hull got stiffly to hands and knees and crawled to him. He turned the thin man over. He grunted and let the thin man fall back again. He looked up at Doro Faliv.

She was still standing rigid. Tears washed wet little paths down her cheeks. She sniffled. She looked like a crying schoolgirl.

She was one of the real mysteries of Hollywood. She was thin and flat-chested, with a complexion like yellow paste. Her black hair was lifeless and dull. Her features were assembled in regular enough order, but her face gave a queer blank effect, as though there was nothing but emptiness behind it. But on the screen she was marvelous. She was the essence of allure. She could send goose-pimples along your back by just turning her head. The camera brought something out that wasn't there.

Mark Hull started to say something. He choked. He massaged his throat and tried it again.

"What happened?" he said wheezily.

"I went out to walk at night— alone." Her voice was full-throated and soft, but it, too, was lifeless. "They made me go with them. They said if I didn't they'd throw acid in my face." She looked at him slyly, like a little girl lying to her mother.

Mark Hull got slowly off the floor. He stood looking at her. One side of his wide mouth lifted a little, showing his teeth. Then he shrugged.

"You've got to get out of here. Quick."

He went scouting around, nosing in corners, under the bed, in the bathroom. He looked for quite a while at an expensive black bag he found in a closet. He found a hat and coat in the same closet and helped her put them on. He pulled the veil over her face.

She accepted all this calmly, as a matter of course.

Mark Hull took hold of both her thin shoulders. He put his tense, scarred face close to her blank one.

"Listen," he said, shaking her. "You're not to say a word about this to anyone. Understand me?"

She nodded, looking a little puzzled.

Mark Hull took a key-ring from his pocket, separated one key from the rest, and closed her hand around it. "This is the key to the ignition on my Ford. It's parked down the street that way—" he pointed "—a block. A yellow coupé. You get in it and drive straight home and stay there."

She smiled shyly at him. "I can drive a Ford," she said.

Mark Hull grunted as though someone had hit him in the stomach. He grabbed her by the shoulder and pushed her towards the window. He helped her through, caught her under the arms, and lowered her until her feet were on the ground.

"Now beat it!" he said explosively.

She looked up at him in a hurt, frightened way. He made a savage gesture, and she stumbled hurriedly along the hedge towards the front of the house.

He pulled his head back inside and shut the window. He made a wry face, shaking his head. Then he went out into the hall, locking the door behind him, and found the telephone on the table near the front door.

He looked around. Then he sat down and dialed long distance. He gave the number of the studio and waited, tapping on the table with his fingernails. His face was beginning to swell in lumpy bumps. The blood from the cut above his eye had trickled down his cheek and dried. The marks on his throat were changing from red to blue. He looked disgusted.

"Hello," he said after a while. "Give me McNulty. . .Yeah, McNulty. That fat mugg that pretends to be a detective and goes around peeking through keyholes... Well, find him... All right." He waited impatiently.

It was some time before McNulty's mournful voice answered.

"McNulty speaking."

"This is Hull. Do you know a dark, thin guy with wavy hair and a nasty grin?"

"Sure," said McNulty. "That's the Kansas City Flash. He's bad. Indicted for murder three times. Beat all three raps. Served once for peddling dope— once for white slavery. Used to be a prizefighter."

"I know that now," Mark Hull said bitterly. "He just got through pasting hell out of me and was doing a nice job of choking me to death when your cute little star stuck a butcher knife in his back."

McNulty was quiet for quite a while. Then he said:

"Where is she now?"

"On her way home in my car. She gave me a sappy song-and-dance about being snatched by this Flash guy. Only she forgot that people that get kidnaped don't pack a bag to take along with them."

"Uh-huh," McNulty said sadly. "She would forget that."

Mark Hull went on, talking in a low, vicious voice: "I collect my ten grand. She's in the clear. But the whole thing makes me sick at my stomach. By—! I never dirtied my hands like this before. The Flash knocked off a guy that recognized her. The poor little devil asked her for an autograph. It was so awful damned useless."

"Uh-huh," said McNulty. "What do you think about it?"

"Me?" asked Mark Hull savagely. "Oh, I'm just in from the sticks. I think they were going up to his apartment to have a pleasant little chat about the political situation. I think they were just playing a cute joke when they shot that little punk and tried to shake the studio down for fifty thousand on a phoney kidnaping gag. It was just good clean fun when she saw the game was up and stuck a butcher knife in her boy-friend's back."

"Yeah," McNulty said slowly. "You been around Hollywood a long time. You know lots of things that aren't on the front pages. But I'll tell you something you don't know. This Kansas City Flash was her husband."

Mark Hull made a noise like a punctured tire. He goggled blankly at the wall.

McNulty went on: "You can imagine how we felt when we found it out. A half-million in advertising all shot to hell if anybody found out she had a heel with a record like his for a husband. Of course all this stuff about her being an exiled princess from some Asiatic country is just so much crap. One of the directors spotted her in a newsreel of a marathon dance. Before that she was in a taxi dance-hall. I don't know what she was before that, but after one look at the Flash's record, I can make a pretty good guess."

Mark Hull said: "Is this straight?"

"Uh-huh. And that ain't all. He'd ditched her when she was sick about three years ago. She hadn't heard a word from him. But she was glad to see him when he turned up. He figured he was going to glom on to all her salary. But we had that fixed. She's got two contracts. One gives her fifty dollars a week. The other gives three thousand a week to a trust fund in her name controlled by a trustee appointed by the studio."

"I knew about that double contract," Mark Hull said slowly.

"Yeah. So did the Flash. That's why he tried his shake-down. We tried to tell her what he was. But it was no sale. He was her husband and he had told her he was framed, and so he was framed."

"She must be coo-coo."

"Uh-huh. Not coo-coo. Just dumb. She's got the mind of about a ten-year-old kid. You know how she looks and talks. I don't know why she is the way she is on the screen. Nobody can figure it out. She just is. All the directors are nuts to get a chance at doing one of her pictures. She'll do anything you tell her. She's got no ideas of her own. But, damn it, you can't help but like her. She tries so damned hard to please you."

Mark Hull nodded slowly. He was beginning to understand the way she had acted. That remark about knowing how to drive a Ford. A ten-year-old.

"I wonder why she stabbed him," he said, puzzled.

"She was nuts about her fans. She'd give them anything they asked for. When Flash shot the little autograph hound, it was curtains for him. She just waited for a good chance. Probably don't even realize it's murder."

"What'll we do with him?"

"I think maybe he was killed when he got drunk and fell in front of the Limited tonight somewhere out in the desert," McNulty said thoughtfully.

Mark Hull chuckled. He looked good-humored again in spite of his banged-up face. He told McNulty the address, and added: "You're not so dumb as you look, McNulty. I think if you had a real good friend that was a brain specialist, and he went down and looked in Apartment 18-E of *The Forsage Arms* he'd find a case there that should be shut in a nice, quiet place for a while, where he could cut out paper dolls without being bothered, and where people won't hear him talking to himself."

"You're not so dumb, either," said McNulty.

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6: The Gold At Santa Maria

Rafael Sabatini

1875-1950

In: *The Chronicles of Captain Blood*, 1931

THE BUCCANEER FLEET of five tall ships rode snugly at anchor in a sequestered creek on the western coast of the Gulf of Darien. A cable's length away, across gently heaving, pellucid waters, shot with opalescence by the morning sun, stretched a broad crescent of silver-grey sand; behind this rose the forest, vividly green from the rains now overpast, abrupt and massive as a cliff. At its foot, among the flaming rhododendrons thrusting forward like outposts of the jungle, stood the tents and rude log huts, palmetto thatched— the buccaneer encampment during that season of careening, of refitting, and of victualling with the fat turtles abounding thereabouts. The buccaneer host, some eight hundred strong, surged there like a swarming hive, a motley mob, English and French in the main, but including odd Dutchmen, and even a few West Indian half-castes. There were boucan-hunters from Hispaniola, lumbermen from Campeachy, vagrant seamen, runagate convicts from the plantations, and proscribed outlaws from the Old World and the New.

Out of the jungle into their midst stepped, on that glowing April morning, three Darien Indians, the foremost of whom was of a tall, commanding presence, broad in the shoulder and long in the arm. He was clad in drawers of hairy, untanned hide, and a red blanket served him for a cloak. His naked breast was streaked in black and reds in his nose he wore a crescent-shaped plate of beaten gold that hung down to his lip, and there were massive gold rings in his ears. A tuft of eagle's feathers sprouted from his sleek black hair, and he was armed with a javelin which he used as a stag.

He advanced calmly and without diffidence into their staring midst, and in primitive Spanish announced himself as the *cacique* Guanahani, called by the Spaniards Brazo Largo. He begged to be taken before their captain, to whom he referred also by his Hispanicised name of Don Pedro Sangre.

They conducted him aboard the flagship, the *Arabella*, and there, in the captain's cabin, the Indian *cacique* was courteously made welcome by a spare gentleman of a good height, very elegant in the Spanish fashion, whose resolute face, in cast of features and deep coppery tan, might, but for the eyes of a vivid blue, have been that of a Darien Indian.

Brazo Largo came to the point with a directness and economy of words to which his limited knowledge of Spanish constrained him.

"*Usted venir conmigo. Yo llevar usted mucho oro Espanol. Caramba*!" said he, in deep, guttural tones. Literally this may be rendered: "You to come with

me. I take you much Spanish gold," with the added vague expletive "*Caramba*!"

The blue eyes flashed with interest. And, in the fluent Spanish acquired in less unregenerate days, Captain Blood answered him with a laugh:

"You are very opportune. *Caramba*! Where is this Spanish gold?"

"Yonder." The *cacique* pointed vaguely westward. "March ten days."

Blood's face grew overcast. Remembering Morgan's exploit across the isthmus, he leapt at a conclusion.

"Panama?" quoth he.

But the Indian shook his head, a certain impatience in his sternly wistful features.

"No. Santa Maria."

And he proceeded clumsily to explain that there, on the river of that name, was collected all the gold mined in the mountains of the district for ultimate transmission to Panama. Now was the time when the accumulations were heaviest. Soon the gold would be removed. If Captain Blood desired it— and Brazo Largo knew that there was a prodigious store— he must come at once.

Of the Indian's sincerity and goodwill towards himself Captain Blood entertained no single doubt. The bitter hatred of Spain smouldering in the breast of all Indians under Spanish rule made them the instinctive allies of any enemy of Spain.

Captain Blood sat on the locker under the stern windows and looked out over the sun-kissed waters of the lagoon.

"How many men would be required?" he asked at last.

"Forty ten, fifty ten, perhaps," said Brazo Largo, from which the Captain adduced that he meant four or five hundred.

He questioned him closely as to the nature of the country they would have to cross and the fortifications defending Santa Maria. Brazo Largo put everything in the most favourable light, smoothed away all difficulties, and promised not only himself to guide them, but to provide bearers to convey their gear. And all the time, with gleaming, anxious eyes, he kept repeating to Captain Blood:

"Much gold. Much Spanish gold. *Caramba*!"

So often did he repeat this parrot-cry, and with such obvious intent to allure, that Blood began to ask himself did not this Indian protest too vehemently for utter honesty.

Pondering him, the Captain voiced his suspicion in a question.

"You are very eager that we should go, my friend?"

"Go. Yes. Go you," the Indian answered. "Spaniards love gold. Guanahani no love Spaniards."

"So that you want to spite them? Indeed, you seem to hate them very bitterly."

"Hate!" said Brazo Largo. His lips writhed, and he made guttural noises of emphatic affirmation. "Huh! Huh!"

"Well, well, I must consider."

He called the boatswain and delivered the *cacique* into his care for entertainment.

A council, summoned by bugle-call from the quarter-deck of the *Arabella*, was held as soon there after as those concerned were come aboard.

Assembled about the oak table in the admiral's cabin, they formed a motley group, truly representative of the motley host encamped ashore. Blood, at the table's head, looking like a grande of Spain in the sombre richness of his black and silver, the long ringlets of his sable hair reaching to his collar of fine point; young Jerry Pitt, ingenuous of face, and in plain grey homespun, like the West of England Puritan that he had been; Hagthorpe, stiffly built, stern-faced, wearing showy clothes without grace, looked the simple, downright captain of fortune he was become; Wolverstone, herculean of build, bronzed of skin, and picturesquely untidy of person, with a single eye of a fierceness far beyond his nature, was perhaps the only one whose appearance really sorted with his trade; Mackett and James had the general appearance of mariners; lastly, Yberville, who commanded a French contingent, vying in elegance with Blood, had more the air and manner of a Versailles exquisite than of a leader of desperate and bloody pirates.

The admiral— for such was the title by now bestowed by his following upon Captain Blood— laid before them the proposal brought by Brazo Largo. He merely added that it came opportunely, inasmuch as they were without immediate plans.

Opposition sprang naturally enough from those who were, first and foremost, seamen— from Pitt, Mackett, and James. Each in turn dwelt upon the hardships and the dangers attending long overland expeditions. Hagthorpe and Wolverstone, intent upon striking the Spaniard where he most would feel it, favoured the proposal, and reminded the council of Morgan's successful raid upon Panama. Yberville, a French Huguenot proscribed and banished for his faith, and chiefly intent upon slitting the throats of Spanish bigots, wherever and whenever it might be done, proclaimed himself also for the venture in accents as mild and gentle as his words were hot and bloodthirsty.

Thus stood the council equally divided, and it remained for Blood to cast the vote that should determine the matter. But the admiral hesitated, and in the end resolved to leave the decision to the men themselves. He would call

for volunteers, and if their numbers reached the necessary, he would lead them across the isthmus, leaving the others with the ships.

The captains approving this, they went ashore at once, taking the Indians with them. There Blood harangued the buccaneers, fairly expounding what was to be said for and what against the venture.

"I myself," he announced, "have resolved to go if so be that I am sufficiently supported." And then, after the manner of Pizarro on a similar occasion, he whipped out his rapier, and with the point of it drew a line in the sand. "Let those who choose to follow me across the isthmus, step now to windward of this line."

A full half of them responded noisily to his invitation. They included to a man the boucan-hunters from Hispaniola— who were by now amphibious fighters, and the hardiest of all that hardy host— and most of the lumbermen from Campeachy, for whom swamp and jungle had no terrors.

Brazo Largo, his coppery face aglow with satisfaction, departed to collect his bearers; and he marched them, fifty stalwart savages, into the camp next morning. The adventurers were ready. They were divided into three companies, each commanded respectively by Wolverstone, Yberville— who had shred his fripperies and dressed himself in the leather garb of the hunter— and Hagthorpe.

In this order they set out, preceded by the Indian bearers, who carried their heavier gear—their tents, six small brass cannons of the kind known as sakers, cans for fireballs, good store of victuals— doughboys and strips of dried turtle— and the medicine-chest. From the decks of the fleet bugles called farewell, and, in pure ostentation, Pitt, who was left in charge, fired a salute from his guns as the jungle swallowed the adventurers.

Ten days later, having covered a distance of some 160 miles, they encamped within striking distance of their destination.

The first part of the journey had been the worst, when their way lay over precipitous mountains, laboriously scaled on the one side and almost as laboriously descended on the other. On the seventh they rested in a great Indian village, where dwelt the king or chief *cacique* of the Indians of Darien, who, informed by Brazo Largo of their object, received and treated them with all honour and consideration. Gifts were exchanged, knives, scissors, and beads on the one side, against plantains and sugarcane on the other; and, reinforced here by scores of Indians, the buccaneers pushed on.

They came on the morrow to the river of Santa Maria, on which they embarked in a fleet of some seventy canoes of Indian providing. But it was a method of travelling that afforded at first little of the ease it had seemed to promise. All that day and the next they were constrained, at the distance of

every stone's cast, to turn out, to haul the boats over shallows or rocks or over trees that had fallen across the channel. At last the navigation grew clearer, and presently, the river becoming broad and deep, the Indians discarded the poles, with which hitherto they had guided the canoes, and took to paddles and oars.

And so they came at length by night within sakershot of Santa Maria. The town stood on the riverbank a half-mile beyond the next bend.

The buccaneers proceeded to unload their arms, which were fast lashed to the insides of the canoes, the locks, as well as their cartridge-boxes and powder-horns, well cased and waxed down. Then, not daring to make a fire lest they should betray their presence, they posted sentries, and lay down to rest until daybreak.

It was Blood's hope to take the Spaniards so completely by surprise as to seize their town before they could put themselves in posture of defence, and so snatch a bloodless victory. This hope, however, was dispelled at dawn, when a distant discharge of musketry, followed by a drum beating frenziedly a travailler within the town, warned the buccaneers that they had not stolen upon the Spaniards as unobserved as they imagined.

To Wolverstone fell the honour of leading the vanguard, and two score of his men were equipped with firepots— shallow cylindrical cans filled with resin and gunpowder— whilst others bore forward the sakers, which were under the special command of Ogle, the gunner from the *Arabella*. Next came Hagthorpe's company, whilst Yberville's brought up the rear.

They marched briskly through the woods to the very edge of the savannah, where, at a distance of perhaps two furlongs, they beheld their Eldorado.

Its appearance was disappointing. Here was no handsome city of New Spain, such as they had been expecting, but a mere huddle of one-storeyed wooden buildings, thatched with wild cane and palmetto royal, clustering about a church, and defended by a fort. The place existed solely as a receiving station for the gold produced by the neighbouring mountains, and it numbered few inhabitants apart from the garrison and the slaves who worked in the goldfields. Fully half the area occupied by the town was taken up by the mud fort, which, whilst built to front the river, presented its flank to the savannah. For further defence against the very hostile Indians of Darien, Santa Maria was encircled by a stout palisade, some twelve feet high, pierced by loopholes for musketry at frequent intervals.

Within the town drums had ceased, but a hum of human movement reached the buccaneers as they reconnoitred from the wood's edge before adventuring upon the open ground. On the parapet of the fort stood a little knot of men in morion and corselet. Above the palisade quivered a thin line of

smoke, to announce that Spanish musketeers were at their posts with matches ready lighted.

Blood ordered the sakers forward, having decided to breach the palisade towards the north-east angle, where a storming party would be least attainable by the gunners of the fort. Accordingly, Ogle mounted his battery at a point where a projecting spur of the forest on his left gave him cover. But now a faint easterly breeze beginning to stir carried forward the smoke of their fuses, to betray their whereabouts and invite the speculative fire of the Spanish musketeers. Bullets were already flicking and spattering through the branches about them when Ogle opened with his guns. At that short range it was an easy matter to smash a breach through wooden pales that had never been constructed to resist such weapons. Into that breach, to hold it, rushed the badly-captained Spanish troops. A withering volley from the buccaneers scattered them, whereupon Blood ordered Wolverstone to charge.

"Fireballs to the van! Scatter as you advance, and keep low. God speed you, Ned! Forward!"

Forth they leapt at the double, and they were halfway across the open before the Spaniards brought any considerable body of fire to bear upon them. Then they dropped, and lay supine in the short gamma grass until that frenzied musketry had slackened, when they leapt up again, and on at speed before the Spaniards could reload. And meanwhile Ogle had swung his sakers round to the right, and he was freely hurling his five-pound shot into the town on the flank of the advancing buccaneers.

Seven of Wolverstone's men lay on the ground where they had paused, ten more were picked off, during that second forward rush, and now Wolverstone was at the breach. Over went a score of fireballs to scatter death and terror, and before the Spaniards could recover from the confusion caused by these, the dread enemy was upon them, yelling as they burst through the cloud of smoke and dust.

Nevertheless, the Spanish commander, a courageous if unimaginative officer named Don Domingo Fuentes, rallied his men so effectively that for a quarter of an hour the battle swayed furiously backwards and forwards in the breach.

But in a battle of cold steel there were no troops in the world that, in anything approaching equality of numbers, could have stood long against these hardy, powerful, utterly reckless fellows. Gradually, but relentlessly and inevitably, the cursing, screaming Spaniards were borne back by Wolverstone, supported now by the main host, with Blood himself in command.

Back and back they were thrust, fighting with a wild fury of despair, until the beaten-out line of their resistance suddenly snapped. They broke and

scattered, to re-form again, and by a rearguard action gain the shelter of the fort, leaving the buccaneers in possession of the town.

Within the fort, with the two hundred demoralized survivors of his garrison of three hundred men, Don Domingo Fuentes took counsel, and presently sent a flag of truce to Captain Blood, offering to surrender with the honours of war.

But this was more than Blood could prudently concede. He knew that his men would probably be drunk before night, and he could not take the risk of having two hundred armed Spaniards in the neighbourhood at such a time. Being, however, averse to unnecessary bloodshed, and eager to make an end without further fighting, he returned a message to Don Domingo, pledging his word that if he would surrender at discretion, no violence should be done to the life or ultimate liberty of the garrison or the inhabitants of Santa Maria.

The Spaniards piled arms in the great square within the fort, and the buccaneers marched in with banners flying and trumpets blaring. The commander stood forward to make formal surrender of his sword. Behind him were ranged his two hundred disarmed men, and behind these again the scanty inhabitants of the town, who had sought refuge with them. They numbered not more than sixty, amongst whom were perhaps a dozen women, a few negroes, and three friars in the black-and-white habit of Saint Dominic. The black slave population, it was presently ascertained, were at the mines in the mountains, whither they had just returned.

Don Domingo, a tall, personable man of thirty, in corselet and headpiece of black steel, with a little peaked beard that added length to his long, narrow face, addressed Captain Blood almost contemptuously.

"I have accepted your word," he said, "because, although you are a pirate scoundrel and a heretic in every other way dishonourable, you have at least the reputation of observing your pledges."

Captain Blood bowed. He was not looking his best. Half the coat had been torn from his back, and he had taken a scalp wound in the battle. But, however begrimed with blood and sweat, dust and gunpowder, his grace of deportment remained unimpaired.

"You disarm me by your courtesy," said he.

"I have no courtesies for pirate rogues," answered the uncompromising Castilian. Whereupon Yberville, that fierce hater of all Spaniards, thrust himself forward, breathing hard, but was restrained by Captain Blood.

"I am waiting," Don Domingo intrepidly continued, "to learn your detestable purpose here; to learn why you, the subject of a nation at peace with Spain, dare to levy war upon Spaniards."

Blood laughed.

"Faith, now, it's just the lure of gold, which is as potent with pirates as with more respectable scoundrels all the world over— the very lure that has brought you Spaniards to plant this town conveniently near the goldfields. To be plain, Captain, we've come to relieve you of the season's yield, and as soon as ye've handed it over we'll relieve you also of our detestable presence."

The Spaniard laughed, and looked round at his men as if inviting them to laugh with him. "To be sure, you conceive me a fool!" he said.

"Far from it. I'm hoping, for your own sake, that ye're not."

"Do you think that, forewarned as I was of your coming, I kept the gold at Santa Maria?" He was derisive. "You are too late, Captain Blood. It is already on its way to Panama. We embarked it in canoes during the night, and sent a hundred men to guard it. That is how my garrison comes to be depleted, and that is why I have not hesitated to surrender."

He laughed again, observing Blood's rueful countenance.

A gust of rage swept through the ranks of the buccaneers pressing behind their leader. The news had run as swiftly as flame over gunpowder, and with similar effect in the explosion it produced. With yells of execration and sinister baring of weapons, they would have flung themselves upon the Spanish commander, who— in their view— had cheated them, and they would have torn him there and then to pieces, had not Blood swung round and made of his own body a shield for Don Domingo.

"Hold!" he commanded, in a voice that blared like a trumpet. "Don Domingo is my prisoner, and I have pledged my word that he shall suffer no violence!"

Yberville it was who fiercely voiced the common thought.

"Will you keep faith with a Spanish dog who has cheated us? Let him be hanged!"

"It was his duty, and I'll have no man hanged for doing no more than that!"

For a moment Blood's voice was drowned in uproar. But he stood his ground impassively, his light eyes stern, his hand upheld, imposing some measure of restraint upon them.

"Silence, there, and listen! You are wasting time. The harm is far from being beyond repair. The gold has but a few hours' start. You, Yberville, and you, Hagthorpe, re-embark your companies at once, and follow. You should come up with them before they reach the Gulf, but even if you don't, it is still a far cry to Panama, and you'll overtake them long before they're in sight of it. Away with you! Wolverstone's company will await your return here with me."

It was the only thing that could have stayed their fury and prevented a massacre of the unarmed Spaniards. They did not wait to be told a second time, but poured out of the fort and out of the town faster than they had

poured into it. The only grumblers were the six score men of Wolverstone's company who were bidden to remain behind. They locked up the Spaniards, all together, in one of the long pent-houses that made up the interior of the fort. Then they scattered about the little town in quest of victuals and such loot as there might be.

Blood turned his attention to the wounded. These, both his own men and the Spaniards, had been carried into another of the pent-houses, where beds of hay and dried leaves had been improvised for them. There were between forty and fifty of them in all, of which number one quarter were buccaneers. In killed and wounded the Spanish loss had been upwards of a hundred men; that of the buccaneers between thirty and forty.

With a half dozen assistants, of whom one was a Spaniard who had some knowledge of medicine, Blood went briskly to work to set limbs and patch up wounds. Absorbed in his task, he paid no heed to the sounds outside, where the Indians, who had gone to earth during the fighting, were now encamped, until suddenly a piercing scream disturbed him.

Before he could move or speak, the door of the hut was wrenched open, and a woman, hugging an infant to her breast, reeled in, calling him wildly by his Hispanicised name.

"Don Pedro! Don Pedro Sangre!" Then, as he stepped forward, frowning, she gasped for breath, clutched her throat, and fell on her knees before him, crying agonizedly in Spanish: "Save him! They are murdering him— murdering him!"

She was a lithe young thing that had scarcely yet crossed the threshold of womanhood, whom at a casual glance you might, from her apparel and general appearance, have supposed a Spaniard of the peasant class. Her blue-black hair and liquid black eyes were such as you might see in many an Andalusian, nor was her skin much swarthier. Only the high cheekbones and peculiar, dusky lips proclaimed, upon a closer inspection, her real race.

"What is it?" said Blood. "Whom are they murdering?"

A shadow darkened the sunlit doorway and Brazo Largo entered, dignified and grimly purposeful.

Overmastering terror of the advancing Indian froze the crouching woman's tongue.

Now he was standing over her. He stooped and set his hand upon her shrinking shoulder. He spoke to her swiftly in the guttural tongue of Darien, and though Blood understood no word of it, yet he could not mistake the note of stern command.

Wildly, a mad thing, she looked up at Captain Blood.

"He bids me go to see them roasting him alive! Mercy, Don Pedro! Save him!"

"Save whom?" barked the Captain, almost in exasperation.

Brazo Largo answered him, explaining:

"She to be my daughter— this. Captain Domingo, he come village, one year now, and carry her away with him. *Caramba*! Now I roast him, and take her home." He turned to the girl. "*Vamos*," he commanded, continuing to use his primitive Spanish, "you to come with me. You see him roast, then you come back village."

Captain Blood found the explanation ample. In a flash he recalled Guanahani's excessive eagerness to conduct him to the Spanish gold at Santa Maria, and how that eagerness had momentarily awakened suspicion in him. Now he understood. In urging this raid on Santa Maria, Brazo Largo had used him and his buccaneers to exploit a private vengeance and to recover an abducted daughter from Domingo Fuentes. But however deserving of punishment that abduction might appear, it was also revealed that, whether the girl had gone off willingly or not with the Spanish captain, his subsequent treatment of her had been such that she now desired to stay with him, and was concerned to the point of madness for his life and safety.

"Is it true what he says— that Don Domingo is your lover?" the Captain asked her.

"He is my husband, my married husband, and my love," she answered, a passion of entreaty in her liquid eyes. "This is our little baby. Do not let them kill him, Don Pedro! Oh, if they do," she moaned, "I shall kill myself!"

Captain Blood looked across at the grim-faced Indian.

"You hear? The Spaniard has been good to her. She desires his life. And his offence being as you say, it is her will that decked his fate. What have you done with him?"

Both clamoured at once, the father in angry, almost incoherent, remonstrance, the girl in passionate gratitude. She sprang up and caught Blood's arm to drag him thence.

But Brazo Largo, still protesting, barred the way. He conveyed that in his view Captain Blood was violating the alliance between them.

"Alliance!" snorted Blood. "You have been using me for purposes of your own. You should have been frank with me and told me of your quarrel with Don Domingo before I pledged myself that he should suffer no violence. As it is..."

He shrugged, and went out quickly with the young mother. Brazo Largo stalked after them, glowering and thoughtful.

Outside, Blood ran into Wolverstone and a score of men who were returning from the town. He ordered them to follow him, telling them that the Indians were murdering the Spanish captain.

"Good luck to them!" quoth Wolverstone, who had been drinking.

Nevertheless, he followed, and his men with him, being in reality less bloody in deed than in speech.

Beyond the breach in the palisade they came upon the Indians— some forty of them— kindling a fire. Near at hand lay the helpless Don Domingo, bound with leather thongs. The girl sped to him, crooning soft Spanish endearments. He smiled in answer out of a white face that yet retained something of scornful calm. Captain Blood, more practical, followed with a knife and slashed away the prisoner's bonds.

There was a movement of anger among the Indians, instantly quelled by Brazo Largo. He spoke to them rapidly, and they stood disappointed but impassive. Wolverstone's men were there, musket in hand, blowing on their fuses.

They escorted Don Domingo back to the fort, his little wife tripping between him an the buccaneer captain, whom she enlightened on the score of the Indians' ready obedience to her father.

"He told them that you must have your way since you had pledged your word that Domingo's life should be safe. But that presently you would depart. Then they would return and deal with him and the other few Spaniards left here."

"We must provide against it," said Captain Blood, to reassure her.

When they got back to the fort they found that, in their absence, the remainder of the Indians, numbering rather more than a score, had broken into the shed where the Spaniards were confined. Fortunately the business had only just begun, and the Spaniards, although unarmed, were sufficiently numerous to offer a resistance, which, so far, had been effective. Nevertheless, Captain Blood came no more than in time to prevent a general massacre.

When he had driven off his savage allies, the Spanish commander desired a word with him.

"Don Pedro," he said, "I owe you my life. It is difficult to thank you."

"Pray don't give yourself the trouble," said Captain Blood. "I did what I did, not for your sake, but for the sake of my pledged word, though concern for your little Indian wife may have had some part in it."

The Spaniard smiled almost wistfully as his glance rested on her standing near him, her fond eyes devouring him.

"I was discourteous to you this morning. I beg your pardon."

"That is an ample amend."

The Captain was very dignified.

"You are generous. May I ask, sir, what is your intention regarding us—myself and the others?"

"Nothing against your liberty, as I promised. So soon as my men return, we shall march away and leave you."

The Spaniard sighed.

"It is what I feared. You will leave us, weakened in strength, our defences wrecked, at the mercy of Brazo Largo and his Indians, who will butcher us the moment your backs are turned. For don't imagine that they will leave Santa Maria until that is done."

Captain Blood considered, frowning.

"You have certainly stirred up a personal vengeance, which Brazo Largo will prosecute without pity. But what can I do?"

"You could suffer us to depart for Panama at once, whilst you are here to cover our retreat from your Indian allies."

Captain Blood made a gesture of impatience.

"Ah, wait, Don Pedro! I would not propose it did I not deem you, from what I have seen, to be a man of heart, a gallant gentleman, pirate though you may be. Also you will observe that, since you have disavowed any intention of retaining us as prisoners, I am really not asking for anything at all."

It was quite true, and, upon turning it over in his mind, Captain Blood came to the conclusion that they would be much better off at Santa Maria without these Spaniards, who had to be guarded on the one hand and protected on the other. Therefore he consented. Wolverstone demurred. But when Blood asked him what possible purpose could be served by keeping the Spaniards at Santa Maria, Wolverstone confessed that he did not know. All that he could say was that he trusted no living Spaniard, which did not seem to have any bearing on the question.

So Captain Blood went off to find Brazo Largo, who was sulking on the wooden jetty below the fort.

The Indian rose at his approach, an exaggerated impassivity on his countenance.

"Brazo Largo," said the Captain, "your men have set my word at naught and put my honour in danger."

"I not understand," the Indian answered him. "You make friends with Spanish thieves?"

"Make friends! No. But when they surrendered to me I promised, as the condition of their surrender, that no harm should come to them. Your men would have murdered them in violation of that promise had I not prevented it."

The Indian was contemptuous.

"Huh! Huh! You not my friend. I bring you to Spanish gold, and you turn against me."

"There is no gold," said Blood. "But I am not quarrelling on that. You should have told me, my friend, before we came this journey, that you were using me so that we might deliver up to you your Spanish enemy and your daughter. Then I should not have passed my word to Don Domingo that he would be safe, and you could have drunk the blood of every Spaniard in the place. But you deceived me, Brazo Largo."

"Huh! Huh!" said Brazo Largo. "I not say anything more."

"But I do. There are your men. After what has happened, I cannot trust them. And my pledged word compels me to defend the Spaniards so long as I am here."

The Indian bowed.

"*Perfectamente*! So long as you here. What then?"

"If there is trouble again, there may be shooting, and some of your braves may be hurt. I should regret that more than the loss of the Spanish gold. It must not happen, Brazo Largo. You must summon your men, and let me consign them to one of the huts in the fort for the present— for their own sakes."

Brazo Largo considered. Then he nodded. He was a very reasonable savage. And so the Indians were assembled, and Brazo Largo, smiling the smile of a man who knew how to wait, submitted to confinement with them in one of the pent-houses.

The assembled buccaneers murmured a little among themselves, and Wolverstone ventured to express the general disapproval.

"Ye're pushing matters rather far, Captain, to risk trouble with the Indians for the sake of those Spanish dogs!"

"Oh, not for their sake. For the sake of my pledged word, and that bit of an Indian girl with her baby. The Spanish commander has been good to her, and he's a gallant fellow."

"God help us!" said Wolverstone, and swung away in disgust.

An hour later the Spaniards were embarking from the jetty, under the eyes of the buccaneers, who, from the mud wall of the fort, watched their departure with some misgivings. The only weapons Blood allowed the voyagers were half a dozen fowling-pieces. They took with them, however, a plentiful supply of victuals, and Don Domingo, like a prudent captain, was very particular in the matter of water. Himself he saw the casks stowed aboard the canoes. Then he took his leave of Captain Blood.

"Don Pedro," he said, "I have no words in which to praise your generosity. I am proud to have had you for my enemy."

"Let us say that you are fortunate."

"Fortunate, too. I shall tell it wherever there are Spaniards to hear me that Don Pedro Sangre is a very gallant gentleman."

"I shouldn't," said Captain Blood. "For no one will believe you."

Protesting still, Don Domingo stepped aboard the piragua that carried his Indian wife and their half-caste baby. His men pushed the vessel off into the current, and he started on his journey to Panama, armed with a note in Captain Blood's hand, ordering Yberville and Hagthorpe to pass him unscathed in the event of his coming up with them.

In the cool of the evening the buccaneers sat down to a feast in the open square of the fort. They had found great stores of fowls in the town, and some goats, besides several hogsheads of excellent wine in the house of the Dominican fathers. Blood, with Wolverstone and Ogle, supped in the departed commander's well-equipped quarters, and through the open windows watched with satisfaction the gaiety of his feasting followers. But his satisfaction was not shared by Wolverstone, whose humour was pessimistic.

"Stick to the sea in future, Captain, says I," he grumbled between mouthfuls. "There's no packing off a treasure there when we come within saker-shot. Here we are, after ten days' marching, with another ten days' marching in front of us! And I'll thank God if we get back as light as we came, for as likely as not we shall have differences to sett! with old Brazo Largo, and we'll be lucky if we get back at all, ever. Ye've bungled it this time, Captain."

"Ye're just a foolish heap of brawn, Ned," said the Captain. "I've bungled nothing at all. And as for Brazo Largo, he's an understanding savage, so he is, who'll keep friends with us if only because he hates the Spaniards."

"And ye behave as if ye loved 'em," said Wolverstone. "Ye're all smirks and bows for this plaguey commander who cheated us out of the gold, and ye—"

"Sure now, he was a gallant fellow, Spaniard or no Spaniard," said Blood. "In packing off the gold when he heard of our approach he did his duty. Had he been less gallant, he would have gone off with it himself, instead of remaining here at his post. Gallantry calls to gallantry; and that's all I have to say about it."

And then, before Wolverstone could make answer, sharp and clear above the noise the buccaneers were making rang the note of a bugle from the side of the river. Blood leapt to his feet.

"It will be Hagthorpe and Yberville returning!" he cried.

"Pray God they've got the gold at last!" said Wolverstone.

They dashed out into the open and made for the parapet, to which the men were already swarming. As Blood reached it, the first of the returning canoes swung alongside of the jetty, and Hagthorpe sprang out of it.

"Ye're soon returned," cried Blood, leaping down to meet him. "What luck?"

Hagthorpe, tall and square, his head swathed in a yellow kerchief, faced him in the dusk.

"Certainly not the luck that you deserve, Captain." His tone was curious.

"Do you mean that you didn't overtake them?" Yberville, stepping ashore at that moment, answered for his fellow-leader.

"There was nobody to overtake, Captain. He fooled you, that treacherous Spaniard; he lied when he told you that he had sent off the gold; and you— you believed him— you believed a Spaniard!"

"If ye'd come to the point now!" said Captain Blood. "Did I hear ye say he had not sent off the gold? D'ye mean that it is still here?"

"No," said Hagthorpe. "What we mean is that, after he had so fooled you with his lies that ye didn't even trouble to make search, you allowed them to go off scot-free, taking the gold with them."

"What?" the Captain barked at him. "How do you know this?"

"A dozen miles or so from here we came upon an Indian village; and we had the wit to stop and inquire how long it might be since a Spanish fleet of canoes had gone that way. They answered that no such fleet had passed to-day, or yesterday, or any day since the last rains. That's how we knew that your gallant Spaniard had lied. We put about at once to return, and midway back we ran into Don Domingo's party. The meeting took him by surprise. He had not reckoned that we'd seek information so soon. But he was as smooth and specious as ever, and a deal more courteous. He confessed quite frankly that he had lied to you, adding that subsequently, after our departure, he had purchased his liberty, and that of all who accompanied him, by surrendering the gold to you. He was instructed by you, he said, to order us to return at once; and he showed us your note of hand, which made him safe."

And then Yberville took up the tale.

"But we being not quite so trustful of Spaniards, and arguing that he who lies once will lie again, took them ashore and subjected them to a search."

"And d'ye tell me that you found the gold?" cried Blood, aghast.

Yberville paused a moment and smiled.

"You had permitted them to victual themselves generously against that journey. Did you observe at what spring Don Domingo filled his water-casks?"

"His water-casks?" quoth Blood.

"Were casks of gold— there's six or seven hundred-weight of it at the least. We've brought it with us."

By the time the joyous uproar excited by that announcement had settled down, Captain Blood had recovered from his chagrin. He laughed.

"I give you best," he said to Hagthorpe and Yberville. "And the least I can do, by way of amends for having suffered myself to be so utterly fooled, is to forgo my share of the booty." And then, on a graver note: "What did you do with Don Domingo?"

"I would have shot him for his perfidy!" said Hagthorpe fiercely. "But Yberville here— Yberville, of all men— turned mawkish, and besought me to let him go."

Shamefacedly the young Frenchman hung his head, avoiding the Captain's glance of questioning surprise.

"Oh, but after all," he flung out, defiant almost in self-defence, "what would you? There was a lady in the case— his little Indian wife."

"Faith, now, it was of her that I was thinking," said Blood. "And for her sake and his— oh, and also for our own— it will be best to tell Brazo Largo that Don Domingo and his wife were slain in the fight for the gold. The sight of the recovered water-casks will amply confirm the story. Thus there should be peace for all concerned, himself included."

And so, although they brought back that rich booty from Santa Maria, Blood's part in that transaction was rated as one of his few failures. Not so, however, did he himself account it.

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7: The Snake Farm

Sapper

H. C. McNeile, 1888-1937

In: *When Carruthers Laughed*, and other stories, 1934

SANTOS was at its worst. The heat, like a stagnant pall, hung over the harbour: the few passengers who had not gone up to San Paolo lay about on deck and mopped their foreheads. And I was on the verge of dropping off to sleep when I saw them coming up the gangway.

They were new passengers and I studied them idly. The woman— she was little more than a girl— was of the fluffy type: pretty in a rather chocolate-box way, with fair hair and a charming figure. The sort that one expects to be the life and soul of the ship, dancing every dance, and, in the intervals, throwing quoits into receptacles ill-designed to receive them. And it came therefore as almost a shock when she stood close to my chair waiting for the man and I could see her face distinctly.

The expression lifeless is hackneyed, and yet I can think of no other word to describe adequately how her appearance struck me. She was wearing a wedding-ring, so presumably the man was her husband. He was arguing with a porter; perhaps it would be more correct to say that he was listening to the porter argue. And the result, as I guessed instinctively it would be, was the complete defeat of the Brazilian porter, who retired discomfited and cursing volubly.

Then the man turned round and came towards us. He was considerably older than the woman— twenty years at least, and he did not impress one favourably. Thin-lipped, thin-faced— one glance at him was enough to explain the rout of the porter. Also perchance, I reflected, his wife's expression.

As he approached her she seemed to make an effort to become more animated. She forced a smile, and the two of them went below together, leaving me wondering idly as to their story. Perhaps I was wrong; perhaps it was the overpowering heat that had made her look like a dead woman. At any rate, I should have plenty of time to study them on the way home to London. And on that I dozed off.

The next time I saw them was in the smoking-room, before dinner. He was having a drink, she was not. They were seated in a corner, and during the five minutes I was there neither of them spoke a word. In her evening frock she looked fluffier than ever, whilst the black and white of his evening clothes seemed to enhance the severity of his features. And once again I found myself wondering what lay behind it. Was it merely the old story of youth married to age, or was it something deeper?

Once or twice it seemed to me that he was watching her covertly, and that she, becoming aware of it, tried to pull herself together just as she had done on deck that afternoon. And suddenly it dawned on me. Whatever might be the cause of her depression, she was afraid of him.

The Doctor joined me, and I drew his attention to them. "They've never travelled with us before," he said, "so beyond telling you that their name is Longman, I can't help. He looks guaranteed to turn the butter rancid all right, Incidentally, they're at my table."

And after dinner I met him on deck. "There's something rum in the state of Denmark," he said. "I can't make those two out at all. I don't know whether she's been ill or what it is, but she's the dullest woman I've ever met in my life. Even young Granger couldn't get a word out of her, and he'd make the Sphinx do a music-hall turn. Just Yes and No, and not another blessed syllable. Tell you what, Parsons, she's terrified of that husband of hers."

"Just the conclusion I came to before dinner." I remarked.

"Look there," he said quietly. "Granger has asked her to dance, and she's fumed him down. Well, well, it takes all sorts to make a world, I suppose, but I'm glad some of the specimens are rare."

"I must confess I'm curious about them," I said.

"I'm afraid you'll have to remain so," he laughed. "I don't quite see anyone prattling brightly to them at breakfast and asking them the why and the wherefore."

But as it turned out, he was wrong. The first passenger to board the boat at Rio was Charlie Maxwell, who metaphorically fell into my arms on sight.

"Bill," he shouted, "surely Allah is good! My dear old boy, I had no idea you were in these parts."

"Taking a voyage for the good of my health, Charlie," I said. "What's the matter?"

For Charlie had suddenly straightened up and was staring over my shoulder with a strange look in his eyes. "So they're going home, are they?" he muttered. "That's going to make it a bit awkward for all concerned."

I looked round; a few yards away the Longmans were leaning over the rail. And at that moment the husband saw Charlie. He gave a slight start, and then his face became as mask-like as ever. His wife saw him, too, and gave a cry of delight.

"Uncle Charlie!" she cried and took a little run forward.

"Mary!" The husband's voice, harsh and imperious, cut through the air and she stopped, biting her lip.

"How are you, Mary, my dear?" said Charlie quietly. "I'd no idea you were going to be on board."

"Mary— go below." Again the husband's voice, and after a momentary hesitation she obeyed, leaving the two men facing one another.

"I believe I told you, Mr. Maxwell," said Longman, "that you were no longer included in the category of my wife's friends."

"I rather believe you did, Mr. Longman," drawled Charlie. "And my answer was that you could go to blazes, and stay there. You would merely be anticipating the ordinary course of events."

Three or four passengers were staring at the two men curiously, and for a moment I was afraid there was going to be a scene. Their voices had been low, but their attitude was obvious. And then with a shrug of his shoulders Longman turned away and followed his wife.

"Let's go and have a drink. Bill," said Charlie, "and then I must make certain that I am not at that swine's table."

"They are at the Doctor's," I told him. "But why Uncle Charlie?"

"Needless to say, she is not my niece, but I've known her since she was two. There once was a time when, if things had gone differently, she might have been my daughter. Her mother died on her arrival, and I'm fond of the kid."

"The doctor and I were puzzling over the menage last night," I said.

"One night I'll tell you about it," he said gravely, "if you'll both give me your word that you won't pass it on. It's one of life's tragedies."

The opportunity occurred a few evenings later. We had most unexpectedly run into bad weather, which kept the Doctor busy, but things settled down again after passing St. Vincent.

DON'T ASK ME why she married him,— *began Charlie Maxwell as we settled ourselves in the Doctor's cabin*— for I'm bothered if I know. I once asked her the question myself, and I don't think she knows either. As I told you, Bill, her mother died when she was born, and for some reason or other she never quite hit it off with her father. Funny thing, too, for he was a very decent fellow, but they just didn't agree.

He was a stockbroker and pretty well-to-do, with a nice house down near Surbiton. And since I bore him no malice, particularly after his wife died, for having been the favoured one, I used often to go down and spend the weekend with him and play golf. And it was because of that that I was given the honorary rank of Uncle. I watched her grow up from a little toddler, through the flapper stage till she reached the marriageable age. Of course, I was out of England a tremendous amount, but I generally saw her two or three times a year. And you two fellows who have only seen her on board here— listless, silent, dead— will hardly believe what she was like then. To say that

she was the life and soul of any show she was at is to state no more than the bare truth.

She was a topper, and the boy friends realised the fact. But strangely enough, in spite of her relations with her father, she showed no signs of accepting any of them, though I know several of 'em asked her. She used to bemoan the fact to me that they did so. 'It's never quite the same after you've given them the push' she said. 'And I don't want to get married for a long while.'

Judge, then, of my surprise when I came back to England a couple of years ago to find that she'd gone and done the deed. It was her father who told me when I met him in the club one day, and I could see at once he wasn't too pleased about it. 'Women beat me, Charlie,' he said. 'There's Mary, with a dozen fellows of her own age to be had for the lifting of a finger, goes and marries a man of our age. Financially he's a good match, and he seems devoted to her, but he ain't my idea of fun and laughter. Come down this week-end and have a look at him yourself. They're both stopping with me.'

'What's his particular worry in life?' I asked him.

'He goes in for research work,' he told me. 'He qualified as a doctor, and then some aunt died and left him a lot of money. So he doesn't practise, but devotes himself to original work on his own. A clever fellow.'

Well, I went down, and I got my first inkling into Mr. George Longman's character shortly after my arrival. Mary, as was her invariable custom, gave me a kiss, and I happened to see his face just after. And I was not surprised to overhear a remark a little later which was not intended for my ears.

'What nonsense, George,' she was saying, 'I've known Uncle Charlie since I was born.' I did not hear his reply, but the subject of their conversation was not hard to guess, and it did not start our relations too auspiciously. Of course, I was his age and all that sort of thing, and she was his wife, but for all there was to it I might really have been her uncle. Naturally, nothing was said about the matter, and neither of them had any idea that I had overheard. But— there it was.

Now both you fellows have seen Longman, and he was just the same then as he is now. He could talk well when he chose to on a variety of subjects, but it always seemed to me that behind all his conversation was a cold, analytical mind. Never once would he allow an argument of his to be influenced by the milk of human kindness. Sentiment had no place in his mental equipment; a thing was either proven or non proven. And the more I saw of him the more did I share her father's surprise at Mary having married him. On the surface she seemed happy enough, and he, in his peculiar and rather precise way, was

undoubtedly very much in love with her. But on the second day after my arrival the rocks ahead began to show pretty clearly.

Her father, as usual, was in London, and at lunch I suggested a round of golf to Mary. There was no question of a three-ball, as Longman didn't play. To my intense surprise she looked rather hesitatingly at him, and asked him if he objected. And to my even greater surprise it was quite clear he did object. He didn't say so. Knowing who I was, and the terms I was on with the family, he hadn't the face to. But his consent to our round very nearly congealed the fish on the sideboard. So I tackled her about it on the way up to the links. 'Look here, Mary, my child,' I said, 'that husband of yours seems to have a nasty mind. Does he think I'm going to kiss you on the first tee?'

For a while she didn't answer; then it came out with a rush. 'It's awful. Uncle Charlie,' she cried. 'His jealousy is something unbelievable. Do you know that this is the first game of golf I've played with a man since my marriage?'

'Great Scott!' I said. 'I thought people like that only existed in books. What does he think you're going to do on a golf-links?'

'And it's not only that,' she continued. 'It's the same over everything. Dancing, for instance; he has a fit if I dance with anyone else. And as he doesn't care about it himself, there's simply no good going to one.'

We drove on in silence for a bit, and it was then that I asked her why she married him. Couldn't help it; that question just had to be put. And as I told you before, I don't think she knew herself. I think, perhaps, she'd been flattered a bit by a man of his brains running after her. Possibly before they were married he'd been a little more human. Anyway, that was the state of affairs two years ago. Now we're coming to the point.

The branch of research in which Longman was most interested was toxicology, with special reference to snake poisons. And he had undoubtedly studied the question very thoroughly. But he was very anxious to go for a time to some place abroad where he could observe the brutes first hand. And he started pumping me on the matter. I told him that all I knew about snakes was that they made me move quicker than anything else, but that for variety of specimens, each one more pestilential than the last, Brazil was hard to beat.

Then one of those extraordinary things happened that makes one wonder who pulls the strings. The very morning after we'd been talking about it I got a letter from a pal of mine telling me that he was going out to Brazil on some form of experimental work connected with snake bites and their antidotes. It was a semi-Government job, a bit up-country from Rio, and would I look him up next time I was there? It was such an amazing coincidence that I threw the letter over to Longman to read.

'If that's any use to you,' I said, 'I can easily give you an introduction to the writer.' He was delighted, and accordingly I asked them both to meet at my club, left em together, and forgot all about it.

A few months later I butted into Mary walking down Bond Street. I hadn't seen her in the interval, or her father, so I suggested lunch. 'Or,' I said jestingly, 'will George object?'

'George is in Brazil, Uncle Charlie,' she answered with a smile. 'So it will be a bit late if he does.'

'So he went, after all!' I cried. 'I'd forgotten all about it. Perhaps I shall see him out there.'

She clapped her hands together. 'You aren't going, are you?'

'Next week,' I told her, 'by the good ship *Oregon*.'

'But it's too wonderful,' she said. 'So am I. You'll be able to help me through all the difficulties.'

I laughed. 'The difficulties, my child,' I assured her, 'of going from London to Rio will not turn your hair grey. Now tell me all about what George is doing.'

Well, it appeared that George had gone out with this other fellow, leaving Mary to follow him if accommodation was suitable. The place seemed to be a sort of glorified snake farm, and they were carrying out experimental work with antidotes. George was there on his own in an unofficial capacity, and he had managed to obtain a house not far away. I knew the country near, though not the exact spot, and I was able to assure her that she would not be eaten by cannibals or lions, nor would she find an alligator in her bed. And ten days later the *Oregon* sailed, with us both on board.

Now, we who go down to the sea in ships for most of our lives have probably forgotten the ecstatic thrill of our first long voyage. And it was her first long voyage. Moreover, dear George's influence had been absent for some months. The result was what one would have expected; she was as excited as a dog with two tails. She danced every night; she played deck-tennis every day, and except at meals I saw very little of her. I was working on a report and my nose was pretty well down to it. A pity, because I might have spotted it sooner, though I don't know if it would have done much good if I had.

There was on board a youngster called Jack Callaghan, and a more delightful boy it would have been difficult to meet. And one morning— it was after they'd triced the tarpaulin up for a swimming bath— I happened to be strolling round the deck. It was early— before breakfast— and there were very few people about. But a splash in the pool below made me look over, and there were Mary and young Jack having a bathe. They were alone; they didn't see me, and they were ragging in the water. Then they got out and sat down

side by side, and I was on the verge of calling out to them when he covered her hand with one of his and kissed her shoulder.

And Mary, to put it mildly, did not resent it.

I don't know why it came as a bit of a shock— my morals are fireproof. I suppose it was because it was Mary. However, I withdrew discreetly, and decided to keep my eyes open. Ship-board flirtations are so common and so harmless that I didn't anticipate any trouble, but I thought I'd watch 'em. And I very soon found out that this was a bit different.

It was later that very morning, in fact, that an elderly harridan with a face like a wet umbrella conceived it to be her duty, since I was Mrs. Longman's uncle, and though, of course, I would understand that she didn't want to make mischief, to tell me in the interests of all concerned, though really it was nothing to do with her and she was only too glad to see young people enjoying themselves, but that she was sure I wouldn't mind her mentioning that my charming niece was being a little indiscreet.

I didn't enlighten her on the relationship question, and pooh-poohed the whole thing. But in the course of the next two or three days I realised that the old woman was perfectly right. They were the talk of the whole ship. Literally, they were never out of one another's pockets. And I decided that it was time I did something. So I buttonholed Mary.

'Look here, my dear,' I said, 'for a few moments I'm going to be an uncle in reality. Have you forgotten that you're going out to a perfectly good husband?' I could see she understood, though she pretended not to at first. 'Your come-hither eye with young Jack is the one topic of conversation on board ship,' I went on. 'Do you think you're being quite fair to him— because it strikes me he's got it badly.'

And then she admitted it; they were in love with one another. Her marriage to George had been a hideous mistake, and all the usual palaver.

'It may have been, my dear,' I said, 'but it's a mistake which, unfortunately, cannot be rectified. Are you really serious about this, or is it just a bit of ship-board slap and tickle?'

Evidently it was not, and I began to foresee complications. What did they propose to do about it? I asked. They hadn't got as far as that yet, she told me, and I breathed again. In all probability they would never see one another again after we reached Rio, and the man who said that absence makes the heart grow fonder coined the most idiotic utterance in the language. But there was one thing that had to be seen to, and I tackled Callaghan that night. 'Look here, young feller,' I said, 'I want a few words with you. I hope you'll take em the right way, and not regard me as an impertinent outsider. Mary has told me how things are, and I'm extraordinarily sorry for both of you. However, it can't

be helped. You've got to grin and bear it, as lots of other people have done before you. But I'm going to ask you to do one thing— a very important thing— a thing for Mary's sake. She, I assume, has told you about her husband, the manner of man he is. Well, I can confirm what she says. Without exception he is the most jealous individual I have ever met. Now almost certainly he will come on board to meet his wife at Rio, which brings me to the point. I do not want there to be the slightest possible chance— don't forget he's got an eye like a gimlet— of his spotting that there is anything between you two. So, for the love of Allah, get your good-byes over the night before we arrive, and behave as casual acquaintances in front of him. No sighs and soulful glances— for if he intercepts one he'll make her suffer for it afterwards.'

'The swine,' he muttered. 'Oh, how I wish I could ask her to come away with me, but I can't arrive at Cadaga with her in tow.'

'Where did you say?' I said slowly. 'Cadaga! My sainted aunt!'

'What's the matter?' He stared at me in surprise.

'The matter, my young friend,' I said, 'is that that has put the lid on it. Cadaga is not five miles from where Mary is going. I had hoped that several hundreds were going to be between you. Brutal, I admit, but far safer.' They hadn't realised it, of course; the geography of the country was unknown to them. And their reaction was wild joy. Mine was not. But there was nothing to be done about it. I talked to them both as seriously as I could, but what was the use? They promised to be careful, and see one another as little as possible, but with a man like Longman the only hope would be if they didn't see one another at all. However, as I say, there was nothing to be done except let matters take their own course and hope for the best. Doc, I'll have a spot of that whisky of yours.

It was four months later— continued Charlie Maxwell— that I picked up the threads again. Longman had met her at Rio as I anticipated, and Jack Callaghan, realising that it wasn't good-bye, had treated Mary with a casual indifference that satisfied even me. But a lot could happen in four months, and being in their vicinity I decided to look them up and see if anything had.

I arrived at Longman's house in the afternoon, to find Mary alone. He was down with his snakes, so we could talk freely.

'It can't go on, Uncle Charlie,' she said dully. 'Jack and I both realise that now. He's coming over tomorrow, and I'm going to say good-bye to him and tell him he mustn't come over again.'

'Poor kid,' I said. 'I'm frightfully sorry for you, but it does seem the only solution. Have you seen much of him?'

'Half a dozen times,' she answered. 'That's all.'

'And George doesn't suspect?'

'Oh no! He hasn't an idea. He never will have.'

'Well done,' I said. 'For I don't mind telling you now, Mary, that I've been devilish uneasy as to what was going to happen.'

And it was a fact— I had been. I had not thought it possible for those two to see one another and not give the whole show away, which, with a man of Longman's nature, would have spelled disaster. But when he came in and we started dinner, I had to admit that on the face of it Mary was quite right. He was exactly the same as ever, cold and precise to me, courteous to her. He talked in an interesting way of experiments he was carrying out, and by the end of the meal my fears were quite allayed. And then in a flash they returned. Mary had left us, and he had just lit a cigar. I don't know why I watched the operation particularly, but I remember thinking how typical it was of his character. The meticulous care with which the end was cut the delicate way the used match was deposited in the ash-tray; the slow exhalation of the smoke— in each separate movement one saw George Longman, who was now staring fixedly at me.

'Did you,' he said, speaking with extreme deliberation, 'see much of a young man called Callaghan on the way out?'

The question was utterly unexpected, but a kindly providence has endowed me with a face which enables me to win more money than I lose at poker. And I'll guarantee he got nothing out of me.

'Callaghan,' I answered thoughtfully. 'Callaghan! I remember him. A nice boy, who was always running round after some girl whose name I forget. Why do you ask?'

'He is on a plantation close to here,' he remarked, 'and has been over to see Mary once or twice. You forget the name of the girl, you say.'

'Completely,' I answered. 'She didn't get off at Rio, but went on to Buenos.' And speaking, knew that he knew I lied.

But his voice as he continued was quite expressionless. 'He has seemed very interested in some of my experiments. Strange, too, for I have never met a human being who is in such mortal terror of a snake. It is worse than terror, it is a peculiar revulsion which comes over him if a snake is near him, even though it is shut up in a box. And so, as I say, it is strange that he should go out of his way to accompany me to the farm!'

'Perhaps he is trying to overcome it.' I said casually. I couldn't get his line of country at the moment, though it was clear Mary and young Jack had been living in a fool's paradise.

'Perhaps,' he agreed. 'Or there may be some other motive; who knows?'

'Motive?' I said. 'A rather strange way of putting it, isn't it, Longman? It may surely be that he thinks it only polite to show an interest in your hobby.'

'Politic I think is le mot juste.' he remarked, and I knew the blighter had spotted it. Jack Callaghan wasn't going trotting round a snake farm when he might have been with Mary, unless they'd both deemed it wise. The trouble was that it evidently had not deceived Longman.

'Politic,' he repeated, as if the word pleased him. 'It's astonishing how blind some people can be, Maxwell. Are you quite sure that the girl whose name you forget went on to Buenos?' He didn't wait for an answer, but pushed back his chair and rose. 'You'll excuse me if I leave you,' he continued, 'but I am in the middle of an experiment down at the farm, which I must return to.' He went out through the open window, and for a while I sat on at the table. He knew; there was not a shadow of doubt about it. And the sooner Mary was aware of the fact the better. I didn't like his manner. I'll go further and say I was frightened of his manner.

And yet, I argued with myself, what could he do? Clearly, Jack must never come over again, whatever construction Longman might put on it. And I began to wonder if that was what he had been playing for. If he had gone straight to Mary or Callaghan, it might have precipitated a crisis he was anxious to avoid. And so he had adopted the roundabout method of sending them a warning through me.

At first Mary wouldn't believe me when I told her that he suspected her and Jack. It was perfectly true that Callaghan had been two or three times to the snake farm, because they had both thought it advisable, but what was there suspicious in that? And it wasn't until I metaphorically shook her, and made her understand that I wasn't inventing it, that she began to realise the situation. Like all people in love, she had blissfully believed that no one else knew, and now she had to adjust her outlook to include the fact that the one person of all others she wanted to keep in ignorance was fully aware of her secret.

'It won't matter after tomorrow,' she said a bit pitifully. 'I don't suppose I'll ever see Jack again. And we couldn't help falling in love with one another, could we?'

'Look here, my dear,' I said, 'I don't want to be brutal, but must there be tomorrow? Can't you put him off?'

'And not say good-bye!' she cried indignantly. 'How can you suggest such a thing? Besides, George knows he's coming.'

There was no more to be said and I let the subject drop. But I was uneasy. Try as I would I couldn't get rid of a premonition of trouble. For a man of Longman's nature to know his wife was in love with another man and not forbid that man the house, seemed amazing to me.

Charlie Maxwell paused and lit a cigarette.

Then he burst out suddenly: 'My God! I wish I knew the truth of what happened next day. I'm wrong: I do know it, but I can't prove it. We had lunch as usual, and after it was over that swine went off to his snake farm. His last words as he left us were to tell Mary to ask young Callaghan to stop for dinner.'

'You must be wrong, Uncle Charlie,' she said. 'He can't suspect.' She was all excited and keyed up. There would be an hour with him alone, at any rate. But as the afternoon passed and there was no sign of him, she got more and more unsettled. Useless for me to tell her that he must have been detained: he'd have telephoned if that had been the case. There must have been an accident, or he was ill or something. So I rang through for her to his station, to find that he had left just after lunch.

'Then he's been thrown from his pony!' she cried. 'Uncle Charlie, we must go and search along the track. I know the way, and it will be dark soon.'

I pulled out my car, and we started off. I, too, was feeling a bit uneasy. The youngster might have been thrown. We'd gone about a mile when suddenly she gripped my arm. 'There is his pony,' she said tensely. 'Tethered to the gate of the snake farm.'

I stopped the car. A chestnut cob was placidly grazing by the side of the road. 'He must be with George,' I said quietly. 'I'll go and see. You stop in the car.'

I went through the gate. What had kept the youngster there for four hours? 'Longman!' I shouted, and got an answering hail.

'Come in,' he cried. 'I've just got to finish this culture and then I'm through.'

'Have you seen young Callaghan?' I said.

'Not since early this afternoon. He left here about three hours ago. Isn't he at the house?'

'He is not,' I answered. 'And his pony is still tied up to the gate.'

He pushed back his chair and rose. 'What on earth can have happened?' he cried. 'He left me to go there, and since then I've been here in the laboratory.'

We went out and shouted his name. No answer. Mary had joined us. Once again we shouted. And this time we were answered. From a building about forty yards away there came peal after peal of wild laughter— laughter that froze the blood in one's veins.

'My God! What's that?' I muttered, and as I spoke I saw Longman's face. For a second he had let himself go, and his expression was one of devilish joy. Then the mask returned, and he began to run towards the sound. 'He's in the snake house,' he shouted, 'and he can't open the door from the inside.'

It was a Yale lock which shut automatically and I still wake up sweating sometimes at night when I remember those next few minutes. Inside the room were scores of snakes hissing venomously, and the demented youngster. He

was sitting on the floor babbling foolishly, whilst every now and then he uttered a shout of laughter. He had gone mad, and when we pulled him out he struggled to get back. 'Pretty snakes,' he kept on saying. 'I like pretty snakes.'

Mary, poor child, was spared that part because she had fainted, and when we got Callaghan to the laboratory Longman and I faced one another. 'What a dreadful thing!' he said. 'And if only he had known, all those snakes are harmless. They have had their fangs removed.'

'How did he get in there?' I demanded.

'Curious, possibly, to see what was inside,' he said calmly. 'And then the door shut behind him.' And speaking, knew that I knew he lied.

CHARLIE MAXWELL leaned back in his chair. "I have said things to men in my life," he continued, "which have seared their souls. I have fought men in my life, where if there had been weapons one of us would have died. But I have never said to any man what I said to George Longman that evening, while Jack Callaghan still babbled in his corner. And I have never been nearer to murdering any man without a weapon than I was when I fought George Longman that evening. I am as certain that he decoyed that poor boy into that foul place and shut him in as I am that I am sitting in this chair. Can't you picture the hours of mental agony the poor boy went through till his brain could stand it no more and his reason snapped?"

"Is he still insane?" asked the Doctor.

Charlie nodded. "A hopeless case. Mary had brain fever, and you see what she is now. I have never said anything to her— naturally, I had not a vestige of proof— and she still thinks it was an accident. At least," he added, as he rose, "I suppose she does. But she must think it funny that her husband has forbidden her to speak to me. And once or twice this voyage I've seen her look at him as if..."

He paused and lit another cigarette.

"As if," he repeated, "she would not rush to open the door of a snake house in which he was locked, even if the snakes were not harmless."

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8: The Man Who Cut Off My Hair

Richard Marsh

Richard Bernard Heldmann. 1857-1915

Strand Magazine, Aug 1911

MY NAME is Judith Lee. I am a teacher of the deaf and dumb. I teach them by what is called the oral system— that is, the lipreading system. When people pronounce a word correctly they all make exactly the same movements with their lips, so that, without hearing a sound, you only have to watch them very closely to know what they are saying. Of course, this needs practice, and some people do it better and quicker than others. I suppose I must have a special sort of knack in that direction, because I do not remember a time when, by merely watching people speaking at a distance, no matter at what distance if I could see them clearly, I did not know what they were saying. In my case the gift, or knack, or whatever it is, is hereditary. My father was a teacher of the deaf and dumb— a very successful one. His father was, I believe, one of the originators of the oral system. My mother, when she was first married, had an impediment in her speech which practically made her dumb; though she was stone deaf, she became so expert at lip-reading that she could not only tell what others were saying, but she could speak herself— audibly, although she could not hear her own voice.

So, you see, I have lived in the atmosphere of lip-reading all my life. When people, as they often do, think my skill at it borders on the marvellous, I always explain to them that it is nothing of the kind, that mine is simply a case of "practice makes perfect." This knack of mine, in a way, is almost equivalent to another sense. It has led me into the most singular situations, and it has been the cause of many really extraordinary adventures. I will tell you of one which happened to me when I was quite a child, the details of which have never faded from my memory.

My father and mother were abroad, and I was staying, with some old and trusted servants, in a little cottage which we had in the country. I suppose I must have been between twelve and thirteen years of age. I was returning by train to the cottage from a short visit which I had been paying to some friends. In my compartment there were two persons beside myself— an elderly woman who sat in front of me, and a man who was at the other end of her seat. At a station not very far from my home the woman got out; a man got in and placed himself beside the one who was already there. I could see they were acquaintances— they began to talk to each other.

They had been talking together for some minutes in such low tones that you could not only not hear their words, you could scarcely tell that they were speaking. But that made no difference to me; though they spoke in the tiniest

whisper I had only to look at their faces to know exactly what they were saying. As a matter of fact, happening to glance up from the magazine I was reading, I saw the man who had been there first say to the other something which gave me quite a start. What he said was this (I only saw the fag-end of the sentence):

"... Myrtle Cottage; it's got a great, old myrtle in the front garden."

The other man said something, but as his face was turned from me I could not see what; the tone in which he spoke was so subdued that hearing was out of the question. The first man replied (whose face was to me):

"His name is Colegate. He's an old bachelor, who uses the place as a summer cottage. I know him well— all the dealers know him. He's got some of the finest old silver in England. There's a Charles II salt-cellar in the place which would fetch twenty pounds an ounce anywhere."

The other man sat up erect and shook his head, looking straight in front of him, so that I could see what he said, though he spoke only in a whisper.

"Old silver is no better than new; you can only melt it."

The other man seemed to grow quite warm.

"Only melt it! Don't be a fool; you don't know what you're talking about. I can get rid of old silver at good prices to collectors all over the world; they don't ask too many questions when they think they're getting a bargain. That stuff at Myrtle Cottage is worth to us well over a thousand; I shall be surprised if I don't get more for it."

The other man must have glanced at me while I was watching his companion speak. He was a fair-haired man, with a pair of light blue eyes, and quite a nice complexion. He whispered to his friend:

"That infernal kid is watching us as if she were all eyes."

The other said: "Let her watch. Much good may it do her; she can't hear a word— goggle-eyed brat!"

What he meant by "goggle-eyed" I didn't know, and it was true that I could not hear; but, as it happened, it was not necessary that I should. I think the other must have been suspicious, because he replied, if possible, in a smaller whisper than ever:

"I should like to twist her skinny neck and throw her out on to the line."

He looked as if he could do it too; such an unpleasant look came into his eyes that it quite frightened me. After all, I was alone with them; I was quite small; it would have been perfectly easy for him to have done what he said he would like to. So I glanced back at my magazine, and left the rest of their conversation unwatched.

But I had heard, or rather seen, enough to set me thinking. I knew Myrtle Cottage quite well, and the big myrtle tree; it was not very far from our own

cottage. And I knew Mr. Colegate and his collection of old silver— particularly that Charles II salt-cellar of which he was so proud. What interest had it for these two men? Had Mr. Colegate come to the cottage? He was not there when I left. Or had Mr. and Mrs. Baines, who kept house for him— had they come? I was so young and so simple that it never occurred to me that there could be anything sinister about these two whispering gentlemen.

They both of them got out at the station before ours. Ours was a little village station, with a platform on only one side of the line; the one at which they got out served for quite an important place— our local market town. I thought no more about them, but I did think of Mr. Colegate and of Myrtle Cottage. Dickson, our housekeeper, said that she did not believe that anyone was at the cottage, but she owned that she was not sure. So after tea I went for a stroll, without saying a word to anyone— Dickson had such a troublesome habit of wanting to know exactly where you were going. My stroll took me to Myrtle Cottage.

It stood all by itself in a most secluded situation on the other side of Woodbarrow Common. You could scarcely see the house from the road— it was quite a little house. When I got into the garden and saw that the front-room window was open I jumped to the very natural conclusion that some one must be there. I went quickly to the window— I was on the most intimate terms with everyone about the place; I should never have dreamt of announcing my presence in any formal manner— and looked in. What I saw did surprise me.

In the room was the man of the train— the man who had been in my compartment first. He had what seemed to me to be Mr. Colegate's entire collection of old silver spread out on the table in front of him, and that very moment he was holding up that gem of the collection— the Charles II salt-cellar. I had moved very quietly, meaning to take Mr. Colegate— if it was he— by surprise; but I doubt if I had made a noise that that man would have heard me, he was so wrapped up in that apple of Mr. Colegate's eye.

I did not know what to make of it at all. I did not know what to think. What was that man doing there? What was I to do? Should I speak to him? I was just trying to make up my mind when some one from behind lifted me right off my feet and, putting a hand to my throat, squeezed it so tightly that it hurt me.

"If you make a sound I'll choke the life right out of you. Don't you make any mistake about it— I will!"

He said that out loudly enough, though it was not so very loud either— he spoke so close to my ear. I could scarcely breathe, but I could still see, and I could see that the man who held me so horribly by the throat was the second man of the train. The recognition seemed to be mutual.

"If it isn't that infernal brat! She seemed to be all eyes in the railway carriage, and, my word, she seems to have been all ears too."

The first man had come to the window.

"What's up?" he asked. "Who's that kid you've got hold of there?"

My captor twisted my face round for the other to look at.

"Can't you see for yourself? I felt, somehow, that she was listening."

"She couldn't have heard, even if she was; no one could have heard what we were saying. Hand her in here." I was passed through the window to the other, who kept as tight a grip on my throat as his friend had done.

"Who are you?" he asked, "I'll give you a chance to answer, but if you try to scream I'll twist your head right off you."

He loosed his grip just enough to enable me to answer if I wished. But I did not wish. I kept perfectly still. His companion said:

"What's the use of wasting time? Slit her throat and get done with it."

He took from the table a dreadful-looking knife, with a blade eighteen inches long, which I knew very well. Mr. Colegate had it in his collection because of its beautifully chased, massive silver handle. It had belonged to one of the old Scottish chieftains; Mr. Colegate would sometimes make me go all over goose-flesh by telling me of some of the awful things for which, in the old, lawless, blood-thirsty days in Scotland, it was supposed to have been used. I knew that he kept it in beautiful condition, with the edge as sharp as a razor. So you can fancy what my feelings were when that man drew the blade across my throat, so close to the skin that it all but grazed me.

"Before you cut her throat," observed his companion, "we'll tie her up. We'll make short work of her. This bit of rope will about do the dodge."

He had what looked to me like a length of clothes-line in his hand. With it, between them, they tied me to a great oak chair, so tight that it seemed to cut right into me, and, lest I should scream with the pain, the man with the blue eyes tied something across my mouth in a way which made it impossible for me to utter a sound. Then he threatened me with that knife again, and just as I made sure he was going to cut my throat he caught hold of my hair, which, of course, was hanging down my back, and with that dreadful knife sawed the whole of it from my head.

If I could have got within reach of him at that moment I believe that I should have stuck that knife into him. Rage made me half beside myself. He had destroyed what was almost the dearest thing in the world to me— not because of my own love of it, but on account of my mother's. My mother had often quoted to me, "The glory of a woman is her hair," and she would add that mine was very beautiful. There certainly was a great deal of it. She was so proud of my hair that she had made me proud of it too— for her sake. And to

think that this man could have robbed me of it in so hideous a way! I do believe that at the moment I could have killed him.

I suppose he saw the fury which possessed me, because he laughed and struck me across the face with my own hair.

"I've half a mind to cram it down your throat," he said. "It didn't take me long to cut it off, but I'll cut your throat even quicker— if you so much as try to move, my little dear."

The other man said to him:

"She can't move and she can't make a sound either. You leave her alone. Come over here and attend to business."

"I'll learn her," replied the other man, and he lifted my hair above my head and let it fall all over me.

They proceeded to wrap up each piece of Mr. Colegate's collection in tissue paper, and then to pack the whole into two queer-shaped bags— pretty heavy they must have been. It was only then that I realized what they were doing— they were stealing Mr. Colegate's collection; they were going to take it away. The fury which possessed me as I sat there, helpless, and watched them! The pain was bad enough, but my rage was worse. When the man who had cut off my hair moved to the window with one of the bags held in both his hands— it was as much as he could carry— he said to his companion, with a glance towards me: "Hadn't I better cut her throat before I go?"

"You can come and do that presently," replied the other, "you'll find her waiting." Then he dropped his voice and I saw him say: "Now you quite understand?" The other nodded. "What is it?"

The face of the man who had cut my hair was turned towards me. He put his lips very close to the other, speaking in the tiniest whisper, which he never dreamed could reach my ears: "Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station Brighton Railway."

The other whispered, "That's right. You'd better make a note of it; we don't want any bungling."

"No fear, I'm not likely to forget." Then he repeated his previous words: "Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway."

He whispered this so very earnestly that I felt sure there was something about the words which was most important; by the time he had said them a second time they were printed on my brain quite as indelibly as they were on his. He got out of the window and his bag was passed to him; then he spoke a parting word to me.

"Sorry I can't take a lock of your hair with me; perhaps I'll come back for one presently."

Then he went. If he had known the passion which was blazing in my heart! That allusion to my desecrated locks only made it burn still fiercer. His companion, left alone, paid no attention to me whatever. He continued to secure his bag, searched the room, as if for anything which might have been overlooked, then, bearing the bag with the other half of Mr. Colegate's collection with him, he went through the door, ignoring my presence as if I had never existed. What he did afterwards I cannot say; I saw no more of him; I was left alone— all through the night.

What a night it was. I was not afraid; I can honestly say that I have seldom been afraid of anything— I suppose it is a matter of temperament— but I was most uncomfortable, very unhappy, and each moment the pain caused me by my bonds seemed to be growing greater. I do believe that the one thing which enabled me to keep my senses all through the night was the constant repetition of those mystic words: "Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway." In the midst of my trouble I was glad that what some people call my curious gift had enabled me to see what I was quite sure they had never meant should reach my understanding. What the words meant I had no notion; in themselves they seemed to be silly words. But that they had some hidden, weighty meaning I was so sure that I kept saying them over and over again lest they should slip through my memory.

I do not know if I ever closed my eyes; I certainly never slept. I saw the first gleams of light usher in the dawn of another morning, and I knew the sun had risen. I wondered what they were doing at home— between the repetitions of that cryptic phrase. Was Dickson looking for me? I rather wished I had let her know where I was going, then she might have had some idea of where to look. As it was she had none. I had some acquaintances three or four miles off, with whom I would sometimes go to tea and, without warning to anyone at home, stay the night. I am afraid that, even as a child, my habits were erratic. Dickson might think I was staying with them, and, if so, she would not even trouble to look for me. In that case I might have to stay where I was for days.

I do not know what time it was, but it seemed to me that it had been light for weeks, and that the day must be nearly gone, when I heard steps outside the open window. I was very nearly in a state of stupor, but I had still sense enough to wonder if it was that man who had cut my hair come back again to cut my throat. As I watched the open sash my heart began to beat more vigorously than it had for a very long time. What, then, was my relief when there presently appeared, on the other side of it, the face of Mr. Colegate, the owner of Myrtle Cottage. I tried to scream— with joy, but that cloth across my mouth prevented my uttering a sound.

I never shall forget the look which came on Mr. Colegate's face when he saw me. He rested his hands on the sill as if he wondered how the window came to be open, then when he looked in and saw me, what a jump he gave.

"Judith!" he exclaimed. "Judith Lee! Surely it is Judith Lee!"

He was a pretty old man, or he seemed so to me, but I doubt if a boy could have got through that window quicker than he did. He was by my side in less than no time; with a knife which he took from his pocket he was severing my bonds. The agony which came over me as they were loosed! It was worse than anything which had gone before. The moment my mouth was free I exclaimed— even then I was struck by the funny, hoarse voice in which I seemed to be speaking:

"Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway."

So soon as I had got those mysterious words out of my poor, parched throat I fainted; the agony I was suffering, the strain which I had gone through, proved too much for me. I knew dimly that I was tumbling into Mr. Colegate's arms, and then I knew no more.

When I came back to life I was in bed. Dickson was at my bedside, and Dr. Scott, and Mr. Colegate, and Pierce, the village policeman, and a man who I afterwards knew was a detective, who had been sent over post-haste from a neighbouring town. I wondered where I was, and then I saw I was in a room in Myrtle Cottage. I sat up in bed, put up my hands— then it all came back to me.

"He cut off my hair with MacGregor's knife!" MacGregor was the name of the Highland chieftain to whom, according to Mr. Colegate, that dreadful knife had belonged.

When it did all come back to me and I realized what had happened, and felt how strange my head seemed without its accustomed covering, nothing would satisfy me but that they should bring me a looking-glass. When I saw what I looked like, the rage which had possessed me when the outrage first took place surged through me with greater force than ever. Before they could stop me, or even guess what I was going to do, I was out of bed and facing them. That cryptic utterance came back to me as if of its own initiative; it burst from my lips.

"'Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway!' Where are my clothes? That's where the man is who cut off my hair."

They stared at me. I believe that for a moment they thought that what I had endured had turned my brain, and that I was mad. But I soon made it perfectly clear that I was nothing of the kind. I told them my story as fast as I could speak; I fancy I brought it home to their understanding. Then I told them of the words which I had seen spoken in such a solemn whisper, and how sure I was that they were pregnant with weighty meaning.

" 'Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway'— that's where the man is who cut my hair off— that's where I'm going to catch him."

The detective was pleased to admit that there might be something in my theory, and that it would be worth while to go up to Victoria Station to see what the words might mean. Nothing would satisfy me but that we should go at once. I was quite convinced that every moment was of importance, and that if we were not quick we should be too late. I won Mr. Colegate over— of course, he was almost as anxious to get his collection back as I was to be quits with the miscreant who had shorn me of my locks. So we went up to town by the first train we could catch— Mr. Colegate, the detective, and an excited and practically hairless child.

When we got to Victoria Station we marched straight up to the cloak-room, and the detective said to one of the persons on the other side of the counter:

"Is there a parcel here for the name of Cotterill?"

The person to whom he had spoken did not reply, but another man who was standing by his side.

"Cotterill? A parcel for the name of Cotterill has just been taken out— a hand-bag, scarcely more than half a minute ago. You must have seen him walking off with it as you came up. He can hardly be out of sight now." Leaning over the counter, he looked along the platform.

"There he is— some one is just going to speak to him."

I saw the person to whom he referred— a shortish man in a light grey suit, carrying a brown leather hand-bag. I also saw the person who was going to speak to him; and thereupon I ceased to have eyes for the man with the bag. I broke into exclamation.

"There's the man who cut my hair!" I cried. I went rushing along the platform as hard as I could go. Whether the man heard me or not I cannot say; I dare say I had spoken loudly enough; but he gave one glance in my direction, and when he saw me I had no doubt that he remembered. He whispered to the man with the bag. I was near enough to see, though not to hear, what he said. In spite of the rapidity with which his lips were moving, I saw quite distinctly.

"Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street." That was what he said, and no sooner had he said it than he turned and fled— from me; I knew he was flying from me, and it gave me huge satisfaction to know that the mere sight of me had made him run. I was conscious that Mr. Colegate and the detective were coming at a pretty smart pace behind me.

The man with the bag, seeing his companion dart off without the slightest warning, glanced round to see what had caused his hasty flight. I suppose he saw me and the detective and Mr. Colegate, and he drew his own conclusions.

He dropped that hand-bag as if it had been red-hot, and off he ran. He ran to such purpose that we never caught him— neither him nor the man who had cut my hair. The station was full of people— a train had just come in. The crowd streaming out covered the platform with a swarm of moving figures. They acted as cover to those two eager gentlemen— they got clean off. But we got the bag; and, one of the station officials coming on the scene, we were shown to an apartment where, after explanations had been made, the bag and its contents were examined.

Of course, we had realized from the very first moment that Mr. Colegate's collection could not possibly be in that bag, because it was not nearly large enough. When it was seen what was in it, something like a sensation was created. It was crammed with small articles of feminine clothing. In nearly every garment jewels were wrapped, which fell out of them as they were withdrawn from the bag. Such jewels! You should have seen the display they made when they were spread out upon the leather-covered table— and our faces as we stared at them.

"This does not look like my collection of old silver," observed Mr. Colegate.

"No," remarked a big, broad-shouldered man, who I afterwards learned was a well-known London detective, who had been induced by our detective to join our party.

"This does not look like your collection of old silver, sir; it looks, if you'll excuse my saying so, like something very much more worth finding. Unless I am mistaken, these are the Duchess of Datchet's jewels, some of which she wore at the last Drawing Room, and which were taken from Her Grace's bedroom after her return. The police all over Europe have been looking for them for more than a month."

"That bag has been with us nearly a month. The party who took it out paid four-and-sixpence for cloak-room charges— twopence a day for twenty-seven days."

The person from the cloak-room had come with us to that apartment; it was he who said this. The London detective replied:

"Paid four-and-sixpence, did he? Well, it was worth it— to us. Now, if I could lay my hand on the party who put the bag in the cloak-room, I might have a word of a kind to say to him."

I had been staring, wide-eyed, as piece by piece the contents of the bag had been disclosed; I had been listening, open-eared, to what the detective said; when he made that remark about laying his hands on the party who had deposited that bag in the cloak-room, there came into my mind the words which I had seen the man who had cut my hair whisper as he fled to the man with the bag. The cryptic sentence which I had seen him whisper as I sat tied to

the chair had indeed proved to be full of meaning; the words which, even in the moment of flight, he had felt bound to utter might be just as full. I ventured on an observation, the first which I had made, speaking with a good deal of diffidence.

"I think I know where he might be found— I am not sure, but I think."

All eyes were turned to me. The detective exclaimed:

"You think you know? As we haven't got so far as thinking, if you were to tell us, little lady, what you think, it might be as well, mightn't it?"

I considered— I wanted to get the words exactly right.

"Suppose you were to try"— I paused so as to make quite sure— "Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street."

"And who is Bantock?" the detective asked. "And what do you know about him anyhow?"

"I don't know anything at all about him, but I saw the man who cut my hair whisper to the other man just before he ran away, 'Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street'— I saw him quite distinctly."

"You saw him whisper? What does the girl mean by saying she saw him whisper? Why, young lady, you must have been quite fifty feet away. How, at that distance, and with all the noise of the traffic, could you hear a whisper?"

"I didn't say I heard him; I said I saw him. I don't need to hear to know what a person is saying. I just saw you whisper to the other man, 'The young lady seems to be by way of being a curiosity.'"

The London detective stared at our detective. He seemed to be bewildered.

"But I— I don't know how you heard that; I scarcely breathed the words."

Mr. Colegate explained. When they heard they all seemed to be bewildered, and they looked at me, as people do look at the present day, as if I were some strange and amazing thing. The London detective said: "I never heard the like to that. It seems to me very much like what old-fashioned people called 'black magic.'"

Although he was a detective, he could not have been a very intelligent person after all, or he would not have talked such nonsense. Then he added, with an accent on the "saw":

"What was it you said you saw him whisper?"

I bargained before I told him.

"I will tell you if you let me come with you."

"Let you come with me?" He stared still more. "What does the girl mean?"

"Her presence," struck in Mr. Colegate, "may be useful for purposes of recognition. She won't be in the way; you can do no harm by letting her come."

"If you don't promise to let me come I shan't tell you."

The big man laughed. He seemed to find me amusing; I do not know why. If he had only understood my feeling on the subject of my hair, and how I yearned to be even with the man who had wrought me what seemed to me such an irreparable injury, I dare say it sounds as if I were very revengeful. I do not think it was a question of vengeance only; I wanted justice. The detective took out a fat notebook.

"Very well; it's a bargain. Tell me what you saw him whisper, and you shall come." So I told him again, and he wrote it down. "'Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street.' I know Harwood Street, though I don't know Mr. Bantock, But he seems to be residing at what is generally understood to be an unlucky number. Let me get a message through to the Yard— we may want assistance. Then we'll pay a visit to Mr. Bantock— if there is such a person. It sounds like a very tall story to me."

I believe that even then he doubted if I had seen what I said I saw. When we did start I was feeling pretty nervous, because I realized that if we were going on a fool's errand, and there did turn out to be no Bantock, that London detective would doubt me more than ever. And, of course, I could not be sure that there was such a person, though it was some comfort to know that there was a Harwood Street. We went four in a cab— the two detectives, Mr. Colegate and I. We had gone some distance before the cab stopped. The London detective said:

"This is Harwood Street; I told the driver to stop at the corner— we will walk the rest of the way. A cab might arouse suspicion; you never know."

It was a street full of shops. No. 13 proved to be a sort of curiosity shop and jeweller's combined; quite a respectable-looking place, and sure enough over the top of the window was the name "Bantock."

"That looks as if, at any rate, there were a Bantock," the big man said; it was quite a weight off my own mind when I saw the name.

Just as we reached the shop a cab drew up and five men got out, whom the London detective seemed to recognize with mingled feelings.

"That's queered the show," he exclaimed. I did not know what he meant. "They rouse suspicion, if they do nothing else— so in we go."

And in we went— the detective first, and I close on his heels. There were two young men standing close together behind the counter. The instant we appeared I saw one whisper to the other:

"Give them the office— ring the alarm-bell— they're 'tecs!"

I did not quite know what he meant either, but I guessed enough to make me cry out:

"Don't let him move— he's going to ring the alarm-bell and give them the office."

Those young men were so startled— they must have been quite sure that I could not have heard— that they both stood still and stared; before they had got over their surprise a detective— they were detectives who had come in the second cab— had each by the shoulder.

There was a door at the end of the shop, which the London detective opened.

"There's a staircase here; we'd better go up and see who's above. You chaps keep yourselves handy, you may be wanted— when I call you come."

He mounted the stairs— as before, I was as close to him as I could very well get. On the top of the staircase was a landing, on to which two doors opened. We paused to listen: I could distinctly hear voices coming through one of them.

"I think this is ours," the London detective said.

He opened the one through which the voices were coming. He marched in— I was still as close to him as I could get. In it were several men, I did not know how many, and I did not care; I had eyes for only one. I walked right past the detective up to the table round which some of them were sitting, some standing, and stretching out an accusatory arm I pointed at one.

"That's the man who cut off my hair!"

It was, and well he knew it. His conscience must have smitten him; I should not have thought that a grown man could be so frightened at the sight of a child. He caught hold, with both hands, of the side of the table; he glared at me as if I were some dreadful apparition— and no doubt to him I was. It was only with an effort that he seemed able to use his voice.

"Good night!" he exclaimed, "it's that infernal kid!"

On the table, right in front of me, I saw something with which I was only too familiar. I snatched it up.

"And this is the knife," I cried, "with which he did it!"

It was; the historical blade, which had once belonged to the sanguinary and, I sincerely trust, more or less apocryphal MacGregor. I held it out towards the gaping man.

"You know that this is the knife with which you cut off my hair," I said, "You know it is."

I dare say I looked a nice young termagant with my short hair, rage in my eyes, and that frightful weapon in my hand. Apparently I did not impress him quite as I had intended— at least, his demeanour did not suggest it.

"By the living Jingo!" he shouted, "I wish I had cut her throat with it as well!"

It was fortunate for him that he did not. Probably, in the long run, he would have suffered for it more than he did— though he suffered pretty badly as it was. It was his cutting my hair that did it. Had he not done that I have little

doubt that I should have been too conscious of the pains caused me by my bonds— the marks caused by the cord were on my skin for weeks after— to pay such close attention to their proceedings as I did under the spur of anger. Quite possibly that tell-tale whisper would have gone unnoticed. Absorbed by my own suffering, I should have paid very little heed to the cryptic sentence which really proved to be their undoing. It was the outrage to my locks which caused me to strain every faculty of observation I had. He had much better have left them alone.

That was the greatest capture the police had made for years. In one haul they captured practically every member of a gang of cosmopolitan thieves who were wanted by the police all over the world. The robbery of Mr. Colegate's collection of old silver shrank into insignificance before the rest of their misdeeds. And not only were the thieves taken themselves, but the proceeds of no end of robberies.

It seemed that they had met there for a sort of annual division of the common spoil. There was an immense quantity of valuable property before them on the table, and lots more about the house. Those jewels which were in the bag which had been deposited at the cloak-room at Victoria Station were to have been added to the common fund— to say nothing of Mr. Colegate's collection of old silver.

The man who called himself Bantock, and who owned the premises at 13 Harwood Street, proved to be a well-known dealer in precious stones and jewellery and bric-a-brac and all sorts of valuables. He was immensely rich; it was shown that a great deal of his money had been made by buying and selling valuable stolen property of every sort and kind. Before the police had done with him it was made abundantly clear that, under various *aliases*, in half the countries of the world, he had been a wholesale dealer in stolen goods. He was sentenced to a long term of penal servitude. I am not quite sure, but I believe that he died in jail.

All the men who were in that room were sent to prison for different terms, including the man who cut my hair— to say nothing of his companion. So far as the proceedings at the court were concerned, I never appeared at all. Compared to some of the crimes of which they had been guilty, the robbery of Mr. Colegate's silver was held to be a mere nothing. They were not charged with it at all, so my evidence was not required. But every time I looked at my scanty locks, which took years to grow to anything like a decent length— they had reached to my knees, but they never did that again— each time I stood before a looking-glass and saw what a curious spectacle I presented with my closely clipped poll, something of that old rage came back to me which had been during that first moment in my heart, and I felt— what I felt when I was

tied to that chair in Myrtle Cottage. I endeavoured to console myself, in the spirit of the Old World rather than the New, that, owing to the gift which was mine, I had been able to cry something like quits with the man who, in a moment of mere wanton savagery, had deprived me of what ought to be the glory of a woman.

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9: The Gombeen Man

Bram Stoker

1847-1912

First published as a short story in The People *in 1889, "The Gombeen Man" was afterwards incorporated into Stoker's novel* The Snake's Pass*, 1890.*

"GOD SAVE all here," said the man as he entered.

Room was made for him at the fire. He no sooner came near it and tasted the heat than a cloud of steam arose from him.

"Man! but ye're wet," said Mrs. Kelligan. "One'd think ye'd been in the lake beyant!"

"So I have," he answered, "worse luck! I rid all the way from Galway this blessed day to be here in time, but the mare slipped coming down Curragh Hill and threw me over the bank into the lake. I wor in the wather nigh three hours before I could get out, for I was foreninst the Curragh Rock an' only got a foothold in a chink, an' had to hold on wid me one arm for I fear the other is broke."

"Dear! dear! dear!" interrupted the woman. "Sthrip yer coat off, acushla, an' let us see if we can do anythin'."

He shook his head, as he answered:—

"Not now, there's not a minute to spare. I must get up the Hill at once. I should have been there be six o'clock. But I mayn't be too late yit. The mare has broke down entirely. Can any one here lend me a horse?"

There was no answer till Andy spoke:—

"Me mare is in the shtable, but this gintleman has me an' her for the day, an' I have to lave him at Carnaclif to-night."

Here I struck in:—

"Never mind me, Andy! If you can help this gentleman, do so: I'm better off here than driving through the storm. He wouldn't want to go on, with a broken arm, if he hadn't good reason!"

The man looked at me with grateful eagerness:—

"Thank yer honour, kindly. It's a rale gintleman ye are! An' I hope ye'll never be sorry for helpin' a poor fellow in sore throuble."

"What's wrong, Phelim?" asked the priest. "Is there anything troubling you that any one here can get rid of?"

"Nothin', Father Pether, thank ye kindly. The throuble is me own intirely, an' no wan here could help me. But I must see Murdock to-night."

There was a general sigh of commiseration; all understood the situation.

"Musha!" said old Dan Moriarty, sotto voce. "An' is that the way of it! An' is he too in the clutches iv that wolf? Him that we all thought was so warrum.

Glory be to God! but it's a quare wurrld it is; an' it's few there is in it that is what they seems. Me poor frind! is there any way I can help ye? I have a bit iv money by me that yer welkim to the lend iv av ye want it."

The other shook his head gratefully:—

"Thank ye kindly, Dan, but I have the money all right; it's only the time I'm in trouble about!"

"Only the time! me poor chap! It's be time that the divil helps Black Murdock an' the likes iv him, the most iv all! God be good to ye if he has got his clutch on yer back, an' has time on his side, for ye'll want it!"

"Well! anyhow, I must be goin' now. Thank ye kindly, neighbours all. When a man's in throuble, sure the goodwill of his frinds is the greatest comfort he can have."

"All but one, remember that! all but one!" said the priest.

"Thank ye kindly, Father, I shan't forget. Thank ye Andy: an' you, too, young sir, I'm much beholden to ye. I hope, some day, I may have it to do a good turn for ye in return. Thank ye kindly again, and good night." He shook my hand warmly, and was going to the door, when old Dan said:—

"An' as for that black-jawed ruffian, Murdock—" He paused, for the door suddenly opened, and a harsh voice said:—

"Murtagh Murdock is here to answer for himself!"— It was my man at the window.

There was a, sort of paralyzed silence in the room, through which came the whisper of one of the old women:—

"Musha! talk iv the divil!"

Joyce's face grew very white; one hand instinctively grasped his riding switch, the other hung uselessly by his side. Murdock spoke:—

"I kem here expectin' to meet Phelim Joyce. I thought I'd save him the throuble of comin' wid the money." Joyce said in a husky voice:—

"What do ye mane? I have the money right enough here. I'm sorry I'm a bit late, but I had a bad accident— bruk me arrum, an' was nigh dhrownded in the Curragh Lake. But I was goin' up to ye at once, bad as I am, to pay ye yer money, Murdock." The Gombeen Man interrupted him:—

"But it isn't to me ye'd have to come, me good man. Sure, it's the sheriff, himself, that was waitin' for ye', an' whin ye didn't come"— here Joyce winced; the speaker smiled— "he done his work."

"What wurrk, acushla?" asked one of the women. Murdock answered slowly:—

He sould the lease iv the farrum known as the Shleenanaher in open sale, in accordance wid the terrums of his notice, duly posted, and wid warnin' given to the houldher iv the lease."

There was a long pause. Joyce was the first to speak:—

"Ye're jokin', Murdock. For God's sake say ye're jokin'! Ye tould me yerself that I might have time to git the money. An' ye tould me that the puttin' me farrum up for sale was only a matther iv forrum to let me pay ye back in me own way. Nay! more, ye asked me not to te tell any iv the neighbours, for fear some iv them might want to buy some iv me land. An' it's niver so, that whin ye got me aff to Galway to rise the money, ye went on wid the sale, behind me back— wid not a soul by to spake for me or mine— an' sould up all I have! No! Murtagh Murdock, ye're a hard man I know, but ye wouldn't do that! Ye wouldn't do that!"

Murdock made no direct reply to him, but said seemingly to the company generally:—

"I ixpected to see Phelim Joyce at the sale to-day, but as I had some business in which he was consarned, I kem here where I knew there'd be neighbours— an' sure so there is."

He took out his pocket-book and wrote names, "Father Pether Ryan, Daniel Moriarty, Bartholomew Moynahan, Andhrew McGlown, Mrs. Katty Kelligan— that's enough! I want ye all to see what I done. There's nothin' undherhand about me! Phelim Joyce, I give ye formial notice that yer land was sould an' bought be me, for ye broke yer word to repay me the money lint ye before the time fixed. Here's the Sheriff's assignmint, an' I tell ye before all these witnesses that I'll proceed with ejectment on title at wanst."

All in the room were as still as statues. Joyce was fearfully still and pale, but when Murdock spoke the word "ejectment" he seemed to wake in a moment to frenzied life. The blood flushed up in his face and he seemed about to do something rash; but with a great effort he controlled himself and said:—

"Mr. Murdock, ye won't be too hard. I got the money to-day— it's here— but I had an accident that delayed me. I was thrown into the Curragh Lake and nigh drownded an' me arrum is bruk. Don't be so close as an hour or two— ye'll never be sorry for it. I'll pay ye all, and more, and thank ye into the bargain all me life; ye'll take back the paper, won't ye, for me childhren's sake— for Norah's sake?

"He faltered; the other answered with an evil smile:—

"Phelim Joyce, I've waited years for this moment— don't ye know me betther nor to think I would go back on meself whin I have shtarted on a road? I wouldn't take yer money, not if ivery pound note was spread into an acre and cut up in tin-pound notes. I want yer land— I have waited for it, an' I mane to have it!— Now don't beg me any more, for I won't go back— an' tho' its many a grudge I owe ye, I square them all before the neighbours be refusin' yer

prayer. The land is mine, bought be open sale; an' all the judges an' coorts in Ireland can't take it from me! An' what do ye say to that now, Phelim Joyce?

"The tortured man had been clutching the ash sapling which he had used as a riding whip, and from the nervous twitching of his fingers I knew that something was coming. And it came; for, without a word, he struck the evil face before him— struck as quick as a flash of lightning— such a blow that the blood seemed to leap out round the stick, and a vivid welt rose in an instant. With a wild, savage cry the Gombeen Man jumped at him; but there were others in the room as quick, and before another blow could be struck on either side both men were grasped by strong hands and held back.

Murdock's rage was tragic. He yelled, like a wild beast, to be let get at his opponent. He cursed and blasphemed so outrageously that all were silent, and only the stern voice of the priest was heard:—

"Be silent Murtagh Murdock! Aren't you afraid that the God overhead will strike you dead? With such a storm as is raging as a sign of His power, you are a foolish man to tempt Him."

The man stopped suddenly, and a stern dogged sullenness took the place of his passion. The priest went on:—

"As for you, Phelim Joyce, you ought to be ashamed of yourself; ye're not one of my people, but I speak as your own clergyman would if he were here. Only this day has the Lord seen fit to spare you from a terrible death; and yet you dare to go back of His mercy with your angry passion. You had cause for anger— or temptation to it, I know— but you must learn to kiss the chastening rod, not spurn it. The Lord knows what He is doing for you as for others, and it may be that you will look back on this day in gratitude for His doing, and in shame for your own anger. Men, hold off your hand's— let those two men go; they'll quarrel no more— before me at any rate, I hope."

The men drew back. Joyce held his head down, and a more despairing figure or a sadder one I never saw. He turned slowly away, and leaning against the wall put his face between his hands and sobbed. Murdock scowled, and the scowl gave place to an evil smile as looking all around he said:—

"Well, now that me work is done, I must be gettin' home."

"An' get some wan to iron that mark out iv yer face," said Dan. Murdock turned again and glared around him savagely as he hissed out:—

"There'll be iron for some one before I'm done. Mark me well! I've never gone back or wakened yit whin I promised to have me own turn. There's thim here what'll rue this day yit! If I am the shnake on the hill— thin beware the shnake. An' for him what shtruck me, he'll be in bitther sorra for it yit— him an' his!" He turned his back and went to the door.

"Stop!" said the priest. "Murtagh Murdock, I have a word to say to you— a solemn word of warning. Ye have to-day acted the part of Ahab towards Naboth the Jezreelite; beware of his fate! You have coveted your neighbour's goods— you have used your power without mercy; you have made the law an engine of oppression. Mark me! It was said of old that what measure men meted should be meted out to them again. God is very just. 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.' Ye have sowed the wind this day— beware lest you reap the whirlwind! Even as God visited his sin upon Ahab the Samarian, and as He has visited similar sins on others in His own way— so shall He visit yours on you. You are worse than the land-grabber— worse than the man who only covets. Saintough is a virtue compared with your act! Remember the story of Naboth's vineyard, and the dreadful end of it. Don't answer me! Go and repent if you can, and leave sorrow and misery to be comforted by others— unless you wish to undo your wrong yourself. If you don't— then remember the curse that may come upon you yet!"

Without a word Murdock opened the door and went out, and a little later we heard the clattering of his horse's feet on the rocky road to Shleenanaher.

When it was apparent to all that he was really gone a torrent of commiseration, sympathy and pity broke over Joyce. The Irish nature is essentially emotional, and a more genuine and stronger feeling I never saw. Not a few had tears in their eyes, and one and all were manifestly deeply touched. The least moved was, to all appearance, poor Joyce himself. He seemed to have pulled himself together, and his sterling manhood and courage and pride stood by him. He seemed, however, to yield to the kindly wishes of his friends; and when we suggested that his hurt should be looked to, he acquiesced:—

"Yes, if you will. Betther not go home to poor Norah and distress her with it. Poor child! she'll have enough to bear without that."

His coat was taken off, and between us we managed to bandage the wound. The priest, who had some surgical knowledge, came to the conclusion that there was only a simple fracture. He splinted and bandaged the arm, and we all agreed that it would be better for Joyce to wait until the storm was over before starting for home. Andy said he could take him on the car, as he knew the road well, and that, as it was partly on the road to Carnaclif, we should only have to make a short detour and would pass the house of the doctor, by whom the arm could be properly attended to.

So we sat around the fire again, whilst, without, the storm howled and the fierce gusts which swept the valley seemed at times as if they would break in

the door, lift of the roof, or in some way annihilate the time-worn cabin which gave us shelter.

There could, of course, be only one subject of conversation now, and old Dan simply interpreted the public wish, when he said:—

"Tell us, Phelim, sure we're all friends here! how Black Murdock got ye in his clutches? Sure any wan of us would get you out of thim if he could."

There was a general acquiescence. Joyce yielded himself, and said:—

"Let me thank ye, neighbours all, for yer kindness to me and mine this sorraful night. Well! I'll say no more about that; but I'll tell ye how it was that Murdock got me into his power. Ye know that boy of mine, Eugene?"

"Oh! and he's the fine lad, God bless him! an' the good lad too!"— this from the women.

"Well! ye know too that he got on so well whin I sint him to school that Dr. Walsh recommended me to make an ingineer of him. He said he had such promise that it was a pity not to see him get the right start in life, and he gave me, himself, a letther to Sir George Henshaw, the great ingineer. I wint and seen him, and he said he would take the boy. He tould me that there was a big fee to be paid, but I was not to throuble about that— at any rate, that he himself didn't want any fee, and he would ask his partner if he would give up his share too. But the latther was hard up for money. He said he couldn't give up all fee, but that he would take half the fee, provided it was paid down in dhry money. Well! the regular fee to the firm was five hundhred pounds, and as Sir George had giv up half an' only half th' other half was to be paid, that was possible. I hadn't got more'n a few pounds by me— for what wid dhrainin' and plantin' and fencin' and the payin' the boy's schoolin', and the girl's at the Nuns' in Galway, it had put me to the pin iv me collar to find the money up to now. But I didn't like to let the boy lose his chance in life for want of an effort, an' I put me pride in me pocket an' kem an' asked Murdock for the money. He was very smooth an' nice wid me— know why now— an' promised he would give it at wanst if I would give him security on me land. Sure he joked an' laughed wid me, an' was that cheerful that I didn't misthrust him. He tould me it was only forrums I was signin' that'd never be used"— Here Dan Moriarty interrupted him:—

"What did ye sign, Phelim?"

"There wor two papers. Wan was a writin' iv some kind, that in considheration iv the money lent an' his own land— which I was to take over if the money wasn't paid at the time appointed— he was to get me lease from me: an' the other was a power of attorney to Enther Judgment for the amount if the money wasn't paid at the right time. I thought I was all safe as I could repay him in the time named, an' if the worst kem to the worst I might borry

the money from some wan else— for the lease is worth the sum tin times over— an' repay him. Well! what's the use of lookin' back, anyhow! I signed the papers— that was a year ago, an' one week. An' a week ago the time was up!" He gulped down a sob, and went on:—

"Well! ye all know the year gone has been a terrible bad wan, an' as for me it was all I could do to hould on— to make up the money was impossible. Thrue the lad cost me next to nothin', for he arned his keep be exthra work, an' the girl, Norah, kem home from school and laboured wid me, an' we saved every penny we could. But it was all no use!— we couldn't get the money together anyhow. Thin we had the misfortin wid the cattle that ye all know of; an' three horses, that I sould in Dublin, up an' died before the time I guaranteed them free from sickness" Here Andy struck in:—

"Thrue for ye! Sure there was some dhreadful disordher in Dublin among the horse cattle, intirely; an' even Misther Docther Perfesshinal Ferguson himself couldn't git undher it!" Joyce went on:—

"An' as the time grew nigh I began to fear, but Murdock came down to see me whin I was alone, an' tould me not to throuble about the money an' not to mind about the sheriff, for he had to give him notice. 'An',' says he, 'I wouldn't, if I was you, tell Norah anythin' about it, for it might frighten the girl— for weemin is apt to take to heart things like that that's only small things to min like us.' An' so, God forgive me, I believed him; an' I niver tould me child anything about it— even whin I got the notice from the sheriff. An' whin the Notice tellin' of the sale was posted up on me land, I tuk it down meself so that the poor child wouldn't be frightened— God help me!" He broke down for a bit, but then went on:—

"But somehow I wasn't asy in me mind, an' whin the time iv the sale dhrew nigh I couldn't keep it to myself any longer, an' I tould Norah. That was only yisterday, and look at me to-day! Norah agreed wid me that we shouldn't trust the Gombeen, an' she sent me off to the Galway Bank to borry the money. She said I was an honest man an' farmed me own land, and that the bank might lind the money on it. An' sure enough whin I wint there this mornin' be appointment, wid the Coadjuthor himself to inthroduce me, though he didn't know why I wanted the money— that was Norah's idea, and the Mother Superior settled it for her— the manager, who is a nice gintleman, tould me at wanst that I might have the money on me own note iv hand. I only gave him a formal writin', an' I took away the money. Here it is in me pocket in good notes; they're wet wid the lake but I'm thankful to say all safe. But it's too late, God help me!" Here he broke down for a minute, but recovered himself with an effort:—

"Anyhow the bank that thrusted me musn't be wronged. Back the money goes to Galway as soon as iver I can get it there. If I am a ruined man I need'nt be a dishonest wan! But poor Norah! God help her! it will break her poor heart."

There was a spell of silence only broken by sympathetic moans. The first to speak was the priest.

"Phelim Joyce, I told you a while ago, in the midst of your passion, that God knows what He is doin', and works in His own way. You're an honest man, Phelim, and God knows it, and, mark me, He won't let you nor yours suffer. 'I have been young,' said the Psalmist, 'and now am old; and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread.' Think of that, Phelim!— may it comfort you and poor Norah. God bless her! but she's the good girl. You have much to be thankful for, with a daughter like her to comfort you at home and take the place of her poor mother, who was the best of women; and with such a boy as Eugene, winnin' name and credit, and perhaps fame to come, even in England itself. Thank God for His many mercies, Phelim, and trust Him."

There was a dead slience in the room. The stern man rose, and coming over took the priest's hand.

"God bless ye, Father!" he said, "it's the true comforter ye are."

The scene was a most touching one; I shall never forget it. The worst of the poor man's trouble seemed now past. He had faced the darkest hour; he had told his trouble, and was now prepared to make the best of everything— for the time at least— for I could not reconcile to my mind the idea that that proud, stern man, would not take the blow to heart for many a long day, that it might even embitter his life.

Old Dan tried comfort in a practical way by thinking of what was to be done. Said he:—

"Iv course, Phelim, it's a mighty throuble to give up yer own foine land an' take Murdock's bleak shpot instead, but I daresay ye will be able to work it well enough. Tell me, have ye signed away all the land, or only the lower farm? I mane, is the Cliff Fields yours or his?"

Here was a gleam of comfort evidently to the poor man. His face lightened as he replied:—

"Only the lower farm, thank God! Indeed, I couldn't part wid the Cliff Fields, for they don't belong to me— they are Norah's, that her poor mother left her— they wor settled on her, whin we married, be her father, and whin he died we got them. But, indeed, I fear they're but small use be themselves; shure there's no wather in them at all, savin' what runs off me ould land; an' if we have to carry wather all the way down the hill from— from me new land"— this was said with a smile, which was a sturdy effort at cheerfulness— "it will

be but poor work to raise anythin' there— ayther shtock or craps. No doubt but Murdock will take away the sthrame iv wather that runs there now. He'll want to get the cliff lands, too, I suppose."

I ventured to ask a question:—

"How do your lands lie compared with Mr. Murdock's?"

There was bitterness in' his tone as he answered, in true Irish fashion:

"Do you mane me ould land, or me new?"

"The lands that were— that ought still to be yours," I answered.

He was pleased at the reply, and his face softened as he replied:—

"Well, the way of it is this. We two owns the West side of the hill between us. Murdock's land— I'm spakin' iv them as they are, till he gets possession iv mine— lies at the top iv the hill; mine lies below. My land is the best bit on the mountain, while the Gombeen's is poor soil, with only a few good patches here and there. Moreover, there is another thing. There is a bog which is high up the hill, mostly on his houldin', but my land is free from bog, except one end of the big bog, an' a stretch of dry turf, the best in the counthry, an' wid' enough turf to last for a hundhred years, it's that deep."

Old Dan joined in:—

"Thrue enough! that bog of the Gombeen's isn't much use anyhow. It's rank and rotten wid wather. Whin it made up its mind to sthay, it might have done betther!"

"The bog? Made up its mind to stay! What on earth do you mean?" I asked. I was fairly puzzled.

"Didn't ye hear talk already," said Dan, "of the shiftin' bog on the mountain?"

"I did."

"Well, that's it! It moved an' moved an' moved longer than anywan can remimber. Me grandfather wanst tould me that whin he was a gossoon it wasn't nigh so big as it was when he tould me. It hasn't shifted in my time, and I make bould to say that it has made up its mind to settle down where it is. Ye must only make the best of it, Phelim. I daresay ye will turn it to some account."

"I'll try what I can do, anyhow. I don't mane to fould me arms an' sit down op-pawsit me property an' ate it!" was the brave answer.

For myself, the whole idea was most interesting. I had never before even heard of a shifting bog, and I determined to visit it before I left this part of the country.

By this time the storm was beginning to abate. The rain had ceased, and Andy said we might proceed on our journey. So after a while we were on our way; the wounded man and I sitting on one side of the car, and Andy on the

other. The whole company came out to wish us God-speed, and with such comfort as good counsel and good wishes could give we ventured into the inky darkness of the night.

Andy was certainly a born car-driver. Not even the darkness, the comparative strangeness of the road, or the amount of whisky-punch which he had on board could disturb his driving in the least; he went steadily on. The car rocked and swayed and bumped, for the road was a bye one, and in but poor condition— but Andy and the mare went on alike unmoved. Once or twice only, in a journey of some three miles of winding bye-lanes, crossed and crossed again by lanes or water-courses, did he ask the way. I could not tell which was road-way and which water-way, for they were all water-courses at present, and the darkness was profound. Still, both Andy and Joyce seemed to have a sense lacking in myself, for now and again they spoke of things which I could not see at all. As, for instance, when Andy asked:—

"Do we go up or down where the road branches beyant?" Or again: "I disremimber, but is that Micky Dolan's ould apple three, or didn't he cut it down? an' is it Tim's fornent us on the lift?"

Presently we turned to the right, and drove up a short avenue towards a house. I knew it to be a house by the light in the windows, for shape it had none. Andy jumped down and knocked, and after a short colloquy, Joyce got down and went into the Doctor's house. I was asked to go too, but thought it better not to, as it would only have disturbed the Doctor in his work; and so Andy and I possessed our souls in patience until Joyce came out again, with his arm in a proper splint. And then we resumed our journey through the inky darkness.

However, after a while either there came more light into the sky, or my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, for I thought that now and again I beheld "men as trees walking."

Presently something dark and massive seemed outlined in the sky before us— a blackness projected on a darkness— and, said Andy, turning to me:—

"That's Knockcalltecrore; we're nigh the foot iv it now, and pretty shortly we'll be at the enthrance iv the boreen, where Misther Joyce'll git aff."

We plodded on for a while, and the hill before us seemed to overshadow whatever glimmer of light there was, for the darkness grew more profound than ever; then Andy turned to my companion:—

"Sure, isn't that Miss Norah I see sittin' on the sthyle beyant?" I looked eagerly in the direction in which he evidently pointed, but for the life of me I could see nothing.

"No! I hope not," said the father, hastily. "She's never come out in the shtorm. Yes! It is her, she sees us."

Just then there came a sweet sound down the lane:—

"Is that you, father?"

"Yes! my child; but I hope you've not been out in the shtorm."

"Only a bit, father; I was anxious about you. Is it all right, father; did you get what you wanted?" She had jumped off the stile and had drawn nearer to us, and she evidently saw me, and went on in a changed and shyer voice:—

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I did not see you had a stranger with you."

This was all bewildering to me; I could hear it all— and a sweeter voice I never heard— but yet I felt like a blind man, for not a thing could I see, whilst each of the three others was seemingly as much at ease as in the daylight.

"This gentleman has been very kind to me, Norah. He has given me a seat on his car, and indeed he's come out of his way to lave me here."

"I am sure we're all grateful to you, sir; but, father where is your horse? Why are you on a car at all? Father, I hope you haven't met with any accident— I have been so fearful for you all the day." This was spoken in a fainter voice; had my eyes been of service, I was sure I would have seen her grow pale.

"Yes, my darlin', I got a fall on the Curragh Hill, but I'm all right. Norah dear! Quick, quick! catch her, she's faintin'!— my God! I can't stir!"

I jumped off the car in the direction of the voice, but my arms sought the empty air. However, I heard Andy's voice beside me:—

"All right! I have her. Hould up, Miss Norah; yer dada's all right, don't ye see him there, sittin' on me car. All right, sir, she's a brave girrul! she hasn't fainted."

"I am all right," she murmured faintly; "but, father, I hope you are not hurt?"

"Only a little, my darlin', just enough for ye to nurse me a while; I daresay a few days will make me all right again. Thank ye, Andy; steady now, till I get down; I'm feelin' a wee bit stiff." Andy evidently helped him to the ground.

"Good night, Andy, and good night you too, sir, and thank you kindly for your goodness to me all this night. I hope I'll see you again." He took my hand in his uninjured one, and shook it warmly.

"Good night," I said, and "good-bye: I am sure I hope we shall meet again."

Another hand took mine as he relinquished it— a warm, strong one— and a sweet voice said, shyly:—

"Good night, sir, and thank you for your kindness to father."

I faltered "Good night," as I raised my hat; the aggravation of the darkness at such a moment was more than I could equably bear. We heard them pass up the boreen, and I climbed on the car again.

The night seemed darker than ever as we turned our steps towards Carnaclif, and the journey was the dreariest one I had ever taken. I had only one thought which gave me any pleasure, but that was a pretty constant one through the long miles of damp, sodden road— the warm hand and the sweet voice coming out of the darkness, and all in the shadow of that mysterious mountain, which seemed to have become a part of my life. The words of the old story-teller came back to me again and again:—

"The Hill can hould tight enough! A man has raysons— sometimes wan thing and sometimes another— but the Hill houlds him all the same!"

And a vague wonder grew upon me as to whether it could ever hold me, and how!

———————————

10: Claude Tyack's Ordeal

Grant Allen

1848-1899

Longman's Magazine, Feb 1887

CLAUDE TYACK was the tallest and handsomest man of my time at Harvard. And when I saw him walking one day with Elsie Marple through the college avenue, I felt really and truly jealous about Elsie.

Those were the dear old days before the war, and Professor Marple then taught Greek to freshmen and sophomores in Cambridge lecture-halls. Elsie was still the belle of Cambridge, and I was Elsie's favoured admirer. But that afternoon, when I met Elsie a little later, alone, by the old Law School, near the Agassiz Museum, I was half angry with her for talking to Tyack. She blushed as I came up, and I put the wrong interpretation on her blushes. "Elsie," I said, for I called her even then by her Christian name, "that fellow Claude's been here walking with you!"

She looked me full in the face with her big brown eyes, and answered softly, "He has, Walter, and I'm very sorry for him."

"Sorry for him!" I cried, somewhat hot in the face. "Why sorry? What's he been doing or saying that you should be sorry for?"

I spoke roughly, I suppose. I was young, and I was angry. Elsie turned her big brown eyes upon me once more and said only, "I'm *very* sorry for him. Poor, poor fellow! I'm very sorry."

"Elsie," I answered, "you've no right to speak so about any other fellow. Tyack's been making love to you. I'm sure of that. Why did you let him? You're mine now, and I claim the whole of you."

To my great surprise, Elsie suddenly burst into tears, and walked away without answering me anything. I was hot and uncomfortable, but I let her go. I didn't even try in any way to stop her or ask her why she should cry so strangely. I only knew, like a foolish boy as I was, that my heart was full of wrath and resentment against Tyack.

That evening I met him again in the dining-hall— the old hall on the college square that preceded the big memorial building we of the Harvard brigade set up long afterwards in honour of the Boys who fell in the great struggle.

I looked at him angrily and spoke angrily. After hall we went out together into the cool air. Tyack was flushed and still angrier than I. "You want to triumph over me," he said in a fierce way, as we reached the door. "That is mean and ungenerous. You might do better. In your place I would have more magnanimity."

I didn't know what on earth he meant, but my hot French blood boiled up at once— the Ponsards came over with the first Huguenot refugees in the

Evangile to New England— and I answered hastily, "No man calls me mean for nothing. Blow follows word with men of my sort, Tyack. Insult me again, and you know what you'll get for it."

"You are a fool and a coward," he cried through his clenched teeth. "No gentleman would so treat a conquered rival. Isn't it enough that you have beaten me and crushed me? Need you dance upon me and kick my corpse afterwards?"

I don't know what I answered back. I failed to understand him still, but I saw he was furious, and I only felt the angrier for that; but I struck him in the face, and I told him if he wished it to be open war, war it should be with no quarter.

I could hardly believe my eyes when he drew himself up to his full height and without uttering a word stalked haughtily off, his face purple with suppressed wrath, and his lips quivering, but self-controlled and outwardly calm in his gait and movement. I thought he must be going to challenge me— in those days duelling was not yet utterly dead even in the North— and I waited for his note with some eagerness; but no challenge ever came. I never saw Claude Tyack again till I met him in the Second Connecticut regiment, just before the battle of Chattawauga.

Late that night I went round to the Marples', trembling with excitement, and after our easy American fashion asked at the door to see Miss Elsie. Elsie came down to me alone in the dining-room; her eyes were still a little swollen with crying, but she looked even lovelier and gentler than ever. I asked her what had passed between her and Tyack, and she told me in simple words a story that, angry as I was, sent a thrill of regret and remorse through my inmost being. Tyack had come up to her that afternoon in the elm avenue, she said, and after gently leading up to it by half-hints, whose meaning she never perceived till afterwards, had surprised her at last by asking her outright to be his wife and make him happy for ever and ever. Elsie was so breathless at this unexpected declaration that she had not even presence of mind to tell him at once of our virtual engagement; and Tyack seeing her hesitate and temporize, went on begging her in the profoundest terms of love and affection, till her woman's heart was touched with pity. "He said he could never know another happy moment," she whispered, "unless I would have him, Walter; and as he said it I knew by his eyes he really meant it."

"And what did you answer?" I asked, in an agony of doubt, my heart misgiving me for my anger that evening.

"I said to him, 'Oh, Mr. Tyack, I know you mean it, and if it weren't that I love Walter Ponsard with all my soul, I think out of very pity I should have to marry you.' "

"You said that," I cried, the devil within me getting the better of me for a moment.

"Yes, Walter, I said that. And Mr. Tyack gave a sort of low, suppressed, sobbing cry, like a man whose heart is thrust through, I should think, and pressed his two hands hard upon his bosom and staggered away as if I had shot him."

"Elsie," I said, taking her white hand in mine in a fit of remorse, "I understand it all now. I hope to Heaven we haven't, between us, sent that man Tyack to blow his brains out, or jump into the river."

WHEN I got back to my rooms at a little past midnight I found a note lying on my table. I took it up and read it eagerly. This is what it said—

Walter Ponsard,

You have treated me brutally. No honourable man would act as you have done. Yet, for her sake, I refrain from returning the blow you gave me. But whenever my own turn comes, without hurting her, trust me, you will find you have provoked a dangerous enemy.

Claude Tyack.

I breathed freer. Then he would not kill himself. I didn't mind his threat of vengeance, but I should have been sorry to bear the guilt of his blood upon me.

Next morning, Tyack had gone from Cambridge, and nobody knew where he had betaken himself.

ii

BEFORE Chattawauga, I was passing through camp, in my uniform as a sergeant in the Harvard battalion of the Third Massachusetts, when I saw an orderly coming from Holditch's regiment, with a note for the general from Colonel Holditch. He wore the grey stuff, with blue facing, of the Second Connecticut. We recognized each other at the first glance. It was Claude Tyack.

Everybody in the North volunteered in those days, and some of us who volunteered rose fast to be field officers, while others of us, equally well born and bred, remained in the ranks for months together. Tyack and I were among the residuum. He glanced at me curtly and passed on. I somehow felt, I don't know why, that the hour of his revenge could not be far distant.

I sat down in my tent that night and wrote to Elsie. It was Elsie who had wished me to volunteer. I wrote to her whenever an occasion offered. A mail was going that evening from the field. I told her all about the expected battle, but I said never a word about poor Tyack.

Just as we were turning in for the night, a United States mail was distributed to the detachment. I opened my letter from Elsie with trembling fingers. She wrote, as ever, full of fears and hopes. A little postscript ended the letter. "I hear," she said, "that poor Claude Tyack is with you in Burnside's division. I shall never cease to be sorry for him. If possible, try and make your quarrel up before the battle. I couldn't bear to think he might be killed, and you unforgiven."

I sat long with the letter in my hand. A battle is a very serious thing. If Tyack had been there in the tent that evening I think I should have taken Elsie's advice and made it all up with him. And then things would have been very different.

As I sat there musing, with the letter still in my fingers, the drum beat suddenly, and we heard the signal for forming battalion. It was the night surprise: Whelock and Bonséjour were upon us suddenly.

Everybody knows what Chattawauga was like. We fought hard, but the circumstances were against the Harvard battalion. Though Burnside held his own in the centre, to be sure, the right wing had a bad time of it; and seventy-two of us Harvard Boys were taken prisoners. I am not writing a history of the war— I leave that to *Harper's* and the *Century*— so I shall only say, without attempting to explain it, that we were marched off at once to Bonséjour's rear, and sent by train next day to Richmond. There we remained for five months, close prisoners, without one word from home, and, what to me was ten thousand times worse, without possibility of communicating with Elsie. Elsie, no doubt, would think I was dead. That thought alone was a perpetual torture to me. Would Tyack take advantage of my absence? Elsie was mine: I knew I could trust her.

At the end of five months the other men were released on parole. They offered me the same terms, but I refused to accept them. It seemed to me a question of principle. I had pledged my word already to fight to the death for my country, and I couldn't forswear myself by making terms with rebels. We of the old New England stock took a serious view of the war and its meaning: we didn't look upon it as a vast national armed picnic party. Even for Elsie's sake, I would not consent to purchase a useless freedom by what I regarded as a public treachery. I could not have loved Elsie so much, "loved I not honour more," as the poet of our common country phrases it.

I was left the only prisoner in the old barracks in Clay Street, Richmond, and of course I was accordingly but little guarded. A few weeks later an opportunity occurred for me to get away. A wounded soldier from the front, straggling in by himself from the entrenchments, fainted opposite the Clay Street Barracks, and was hastily brought in and put to bed there, the hospital

accommodation in the city being already more than overcrowded. In the dusk of evening I conveyed his clothes to my own room, and next day I put them on, a tattered and bloodstained Confederate uniform. Then, having shaved off my beard with a piece of hoop-iron, well sharpened against a hone, I passed out boldly before the very eyes of the lounging sentry, and made my way across the streets of the half-beleaguered city. I waited till nightfall in the rotunda of the Exchange Hotel in Franklin Street, where men sat and smoked and discussed the news; and when the lamps began to be lighted around the State Capitol, I slank off along the riverside, so as to avoid being hailed and challenged by the sentries, who held all the approaches from the direction of Washington.

In those days, I need hardly say, strong lines of earthworks were drawn around Richmond city on the north, east, and west, where Lee was defending it; and it was only along the river southward that any road was left fairly open into the country. I went by the river bank, therefore, onward and onward, till the city lights faded slowly one by one into the darkness behind me. I passed a few soldiers here and there on the road, but my Confederate uniform sufficiently protected me from any unfavourable notice. If any of them hailed me with a "Hullo, stranger! where are you off this time of evening?" my answer was easy, "Straight from the front. Sick leave. Just discharged from hospital in Lee's division." Southern chivalry nodded and passed on without further parley. I was going, in fact, in the wrong direction for many questions to be asked me in passing. Everybody from the South was hurrying up to the front: a wounded soldier, straggling homeward, attracted then but little attention.

I walked on and on, always along the bank of the dark river, till I had almost reached the point where the Appomatox falls into the James. I wanted to reach the Northern lines, and to get to them I must somehow cross the river. It was pitch dark now, a moonless night in early December, and even in Virginia the water at that season was almost ice-cold in the tidal estuary. But I knew I must swim it, sooner or later, and the sooner I tried it the better were my chances. I had eaten nothing since leaving the barracks, and I should probably get nothing to eat until I reached Burnside's army. To-night, therefore, I was comparatively strong: the longer I delayed, the weaker would my muscles grow with hunger. To lie out all night on the ground in the cold is not the best way of preparing one's self for swimming a mile's width of chilly river. Besides, I was almost certain to be observed in the daytime, and shot like a dog, by the one side as a spy, or by the other as a deserter. My only chance lay in trying it by night, so I plunged in boldly just as I found myself.

I shall never forget that awful swim in the dead of night across the tidal water of the James River. The stars were shining dimly overhead through the valley mist, and by the aid of the Great Bear (for I did not know the pole-star then) I swam roughly in what I took to be a general north-eastward direction towards the shore opposite. In a hundred yards or so the southern bank became quite invisible, and I could not hope to see the northern until I had come within about the same distance of it. All the rest of the way I swam by the aid of the stars alone, so far as guidance or compass went, and this compelled me to keep my eyes straining pretty steadily upward, and to hold my head in a most difficult and unnatural position on the surface of the water. The ice-cold stream chilled my frozen limbs, and the gloom and the silence overawed and appalled me.

I don't know how long I took swimming across; time in such circumstances cannot be measured by mere minutes. I only know it seemed to me then a whole eternity. Stroke after stroke, I swam mechanically on, each movement of my thighs coming harder and harder. My trousers impeded my movement terribly; and though I had thrown off my coat on the further bank, to leave the arms free, the boots which I had tied around my neck made swimming more difficult, and weighted my head from observing my star-guides. Still I went on and on in a dogged fashion, my limbs moving as if by clockwork. I must have been nearly three-quarters of the way across when I became aware of a new terror unexpectedly confronting me. My eyes had been fixed steadily upon the stars, so I had not noticed it before; and the noiseless working of the little screw had escaped my ears even in that ghastly silence. But, casting a hasty glance down the river sideways, I noticed all at once, with a thrill of horror, that a small steam-launch, making up-stream, was almost upon me. I knew immediately what she must be— the launch of the *Rapahannock*, Confederate ironclad, on her way up from Chesapeake Bay to the quays at Richmond.

I must live it out, to get back to Elsie. That was the one thought that made up my whole being, as I lay there motionless, floating on the still water, numbed with cold, and half dead with my exertions.

I dared not move lest the launch should see, by the dancing reflection of her light on the rippled waves I made, there was something astir ahead, and should give me chase and capture me as a deserter. I floated like a log on the silent surface, and waited with upturned face and closed eyes for the launch to pass by me— or run over me.

As I floated I heard her screw draw nearer and nearer. I wondered whether I lay direct in her course. If so, no help for it; she must run me down. It was safer so than to swim away and attract attention.

I turned my eyes sideways and opened them cautiously as the noise came close. By heavens, yes! She was heading straight for me!

At Harvard I had always been a good diver. I dived now, noiselessly and imperceptibly; it would almost be truer to say, I let myself go under without conscious movement. The water closed above my face at once. I seemed to feel something glide above me. I was dimly aware of the recoil from the screw. I shut my eyes once more, and held my breath in my full chest. Next instant I was whirled by the after-current back to the surface in the wake of the screw, and saw the white stars still shining above me.

"Something black on the water," shouted a voice behind. "Otter, I take it; or might be a nigger, contraband bound North. Whichever it is, I'll have a cock-shot at it, captain, anyway."

I dived again at the word, half dead with cold and fear; and even as I dived felt rather than heard the thud and hiss of a rifle bullet ricochetting on the water, just at the very point where my head had rested an instant earlier.

"Otter!" the voice said again as I reached the surface, numbed and breathless, more dead than alive, and afraid to let anything but my mouth and ears rise above the black level of the water. And the steam-launch moved steadily on her way without waiting to take any further notice of me.

The danger was past once more for the moment, but I was too exhausted to swim any further, deadened in my limbs with cold as I was, and cramped with my exertions. I could only float face upward on my back, and soon became almost senseless from exposure. Every now and again, indeed, consciousness seemed to return fitfully for a moment, and I struck out in blind energy with my legs, I knew not in what direction; but for the most part I merely floated like a log down-stream, allowing myself to be carried resistlessly before the sluggish current.

As day broke I revived a little. I must then have been at least three hours in the ice-cold water. I saw land within a hundred yards of me. With one despairing final effort, I know not how, I struck out with my legs like galvanized limbs, and made for it— for land and Elsie.

Would Federal pickets be guarding the shore? That was now my next anxiety. If so, my doom was sealed. They would challenge me at once, and, as I could not give the countersign, would shoot me down without a thought or a question as a spy from Richmond.

Fortunately the shore was here unguarded; below Mitchell's redoubt, indeed, attack from southward was always held impossible. I dragged myself on land, over the muddy tidal flat, and found myself in the midst of that terrible, desolate, swampy region known as the Wilderness, the scene of the

chief early conflicts in the struggle for disruption, and of the battle-fields where Lee and Stonewall Jackson stood at bay like wounded tigers.

When I came to realize my actual plight I began to feel what a fool I had been to run away from Richmond. I sat there on the bank, frozen and wet, dripping from head to foot, my soaked boots hanging useless round my neck, my blood chilled, my limbs shivering, my heart almost dead, and yet with a terrible sense of fever in my cold lips, and a fierce throbbing in my aching head. I had no food, and no chance of getting any. Around me stretched that broken marshy country, alternating between pine barrens and swampy bottoms. Scouts and pickets held the chief points everywhere: to show myself before them in my wet and ragged Confederate uniform would be to draw fire at a moment's notice. What to do I had no conception: I merely sat there, my head in my hands, and waited, and waited, and waited still, till the sun was high up in the blank-blue heavens.

I won't describe the eight days of speechless agony that followed in the Wilderness. I wandered up and down through scrub and pine-woods, not daring at first to show myself openly; and then, when hunger and fatigue at last conquered my fear, not knowing where to look for the Federal outposts. Night after night I lay upon the bare ground, in the highest and driest part of the wild pine-barrens, and saw the cold stars shining above, and heard the whip-poor-will scream shrill overhead in the thick darkness. It was an awful time: I dare not trust myself even now to recall it too vividly. If it had not been for the wild persimmon trees, indeed, I might have starved in that terrible week. But luckily the persimmons were very plentiful; and though a man can't live on them for ever with absolute comfort, they will serve to keep body and soul together somehow for a longer time than any other wild berry or fruit I know of.

At last, on the eighth morning, as I lay asleep on the ground, wearied and feverish, I felt myself rudely shaken by a rough hand, and, opening my eyes with a start, saw to my joy the Northern uniform on the three men who stood around me.

"Spy!" the sergeant said briefly. "Tie his hands, O'Grady. Lift him up. March him before you."

I told them at once I was a soldier in the Harvard battalion, escaped from Richmond; but of course they didn't and couldn't believe me. My Confederate uniform told too false a story. However, I was far too weak to march, and the men carried me, one of them going on to get me food and brandy; for, spy or no spy, one thing was clear past all doubting, that I was so faint and ill with hunger and exposure that to make me walk would have been sheer cruelty.

"Take him to head-quarters," my captor or my rescuer said, in a short voice, as soon as I had eaten and drunk greedily the bread and meat and brandy the first man had brought up for me.

They carried me to head-quarters and brought me up before three officers. The officers questioned me closely and incredulously. They would hear nothing of my being a Federal prisoner. The uniform alone was enough to condemn me. "Take him away and search him," they said peremptorily. The sergeant took me to a tent and searched me; and found nothing.

I knew then what would happen next. They would try me by a rude rough-and-ready court-martial, and hang me for a spy that very morning.

As I marched out from the sergeant's tent again, absolutely despondent with fatigue and fever, an officer in a major's uniform strolled casually towards us. Promotion was often quick in those days. The major, I saw at a glance, was Claude Tyack.

He stopped and gazed at me sternly for a moment. Not a muscle of his face stirred or quivered. "Sergeant," he said, in a cold unconcerned tone, eyeing me from head to foot, "who's your prisoner?"

"One of Lee's spies," the sergeant answered carelessly. "Took him this morning out on the Wilderness. Fourth we've taken this week, anyhow. The Rebs are getting kinder desperate, I reckon."

I looked Claude Tyack back in the face. He knew me perfectly, but never for one instant quailed or faltered. "What will you do with him? Shoot him?" he inquired.

"String him up," the sergeant replied, with a quiet grin.

I stood still and said nothing.

They took me back and held a short informal drum-head court-martial. It all occupied five minutes. A man's life counts for so little in war time. I was half dead already, and never listened to it. The bitterness of death was past for me long ago. I stood bolt upright, my arms folded desperately in front, and faced Claude Tyack without ever flinching. Claude Tyack, who only looked on as a mere spectator, faced me in return, mute and white, in solemn expectation.

"Do you admit you are a spy?" the presiding officer asked me.

"No," I replied, "I am a Federal prisoner from Richmond, late sergeant in the Massachusetts contingent."

"Can you get any one to identify you?"

"In Burnside's division— yes; hundreds."

The presiding officer smiled grimly. "Burnside's division is a long way off now," he said calmly. "It moved a month ago. We can't bring men all the way from Kentucky, you know, to look at you."

I bowed my head. It mattered little. I was too wearied out to fight for life any longer. I only thought of Elsie's misery.

Then I became aware that Claude Tyack had joined the ring a little closer, and was looking at me with fixed and rigid attention.

"Nobody nearer?" the officer asked.

I kept my eyes riveted on Tyack's. I could not appeal to him; not even for Elsie. He would not help me. I never knew till that moment I was a thought-reader; but in Tyack's face I read it all— all he was thinking as it passed through his mind: read it, and felt certain I read it correctly.

If he allowed me to be shot then and there, he would not only wipe out old scores, but would also in time marry Elsie.

I saw those very words passing rapidly through his angry mind— "If it weren't that I love Walter Ponsard with all my soul, I think, Mr. Tyack, for very pity I should have to marry you."

She would have to marry him! He would go back, certain of my death; he would tell her all, save this one episode; he would plead hard, as he had pleaded before; and then, for pity, Elsie would marry him!

Our eyes met still; I returned his stare: tall and pale he stood confronting me: he gloated over my misfortune: we spoke never a word to one another; and yet, we two men knew perfectly in our own hearts each what the other was thinking.

There was a deadly pause. The presiding officer waited patiently. The words seemed to stick in my throat. I moistened my lips with my tongue, and wetted my larynx by swallowing. Then I said slowly, "Nobody nearer."

The presiding officer waited again. Clearly he was loth himself to condemn a man so weak and ill as I was. At last he cleared his throat nervously, and turned to the court with an inquiring gesture.

Then Claude Tyack took three paces forward and stood before him. The man seemed taller and paler than ever. Great drops of sweat gathered on his brow. His lips and nostrils quivered with emotion. A frightful struggle was going on within him. The demon of revenge— just revenge, if revenge is ever just— for an undeserved insult— I recognized that— fought for mastery in his soul with right and mercy. "I need not identify him," he cried aloud, clasping his two hands one over the other, and talking as in a dream. "I am not called to give evidence. He has never asked me!"

"I will never ask you," I replied, with dogged despair. "You have found me, oh my enemy! I have wronged you bitterly. I know it, and regret it. I will ask your forgiveness, but never your mercy."

Claude Tyack held up his hands, like a child, to his face. He was a rugged man now, though still young and handsome; but the tears rolled slowly, very

slowly, one after another, down his bronzed cheeks. "You shall have my mercy," he answered at last, with a groan, "because you do not ask it; but never, never, never, my forgiveness. For Elsie's sake, I cannot let her lover be shot for a traitor."

The presiding officer caught at it all as if by instinct. "You know this man, Major Tyack?" he asked quietly.

"I know him, Colonel Sibthorpe."

"Who is he?"

The words came as if from the depths of the grave. "Walter Ponsard, sergeant of the Harvard battalion Third Massachusetts infantry, Burnside's division. He was missing seven months ago, after Chattawauga."

"The name and description he gave himself. That is quite sufficient. The prisoner is discharged. Sergeant Ponsard, you shall be taken care of. Tyack, a word with you."

iii

WHEN I next was conscious, I found myself lying in hospital at Washington. Elsie, in a nurse's dress, was leaning over my bed. She kissed me on the forehead. "How about Tyack?" I asked eagerly.

"Hush, hush!" she whispered, soothing my cheek with her hand. "You mustn't talk, darling. The fever has been terrible. We never thought your life would be spared for me."

"But Tyack!" I cried, "I *must* hear of him! He hasn't shot himself? His face was so terrible! I could never live if I thought I had killed him."

"He is there," Elsie whispered, pointing with her hand to the adjoining bed. "Wounded the very next day in the fight at Fredericksburg. I have nursed you both. Hush, now, hush, darling!"

I said no more, but cried silently. I was glad his blood was not on my head. If he died now, he died for his country, in the only just war ever waged on this world of ours. He had had his ordeal, and passed through it like a man and a soldier.

Late that night I heard a noise and bustle at my bedside. Somebody was talking low and earnestly. I turned round on my side and listened. Elsie was standing by Tyack's bed, and holding his hand tenderly in hers. I knew why, and was not surprised at her.

"Elsie, Elsie," he said in a tremulous tone, "press me tighter. It will not be long now. I feel it creeping over me. Is Ponsard conscious?"

I sat up in my bed with delirious strength, in spite of Elsie, and cried aloud in a clear voice, "Tyack, I hear you."

"Ponsard," he said, turning his eyes and, without moving his neck, looking across at me, "I said once I would never forgive you. I am sorry I said so. If there is anything to forgive, I forgive it freely.... Before I die, give me your hand, Walter!"

He had never called me Walter before. The hot tears rose fast in my eyes. Feeble and ill as I was, I sprang from my bed. Elsie clasped my left hand tight and flung the coarse coverlet loosely around me. I sat on the edge of Tyack's bed, and grasped his hand hard in my other. Elsie laid hers over both. She kissed me tenderly with her trembling lips; then she bent down and kissed the dying man too on his white forehead. His hand relaxed; his lips quivered: "Elsie, good-bye!" he said slowly; and all was over.

Elsie flung her arms wildly around my neck. "He saved your life, my darling," she cried. "Walter, I hoped I might have saved his for him."

"It is better so, Elsie," I answered, with an effort; and then I fell back fainting beside him.

11: The Ruby of Khitmandu

Hugh Kingsmill

Hugh Kingsmill Lunn, 1889-1949
The Bookman, April 1932

An engaging satire/spoof of both Raffles and Sherlock Holmes….

(SYNOPSIS — The Maharajah of Khitmandu, who is staying at Claridge's, is robbed of the famous Ruby of Khitmandu. Sherlock Holmes traces the theft to Raffles, who agrees to hand over the ruby to Holmes, on condition that he and his confederate Bunny are not proceeded against. Raffles has just explained the situation to Bunny. They are in the rooms of Raffles in the Albany.)

CHAPTER XV: Bunny's 'Narrative'

MY HEART froze at the incredible words which told me that Raffles, of all men, was throwing up the sponge without a struggle, was tamely handing over the most splendid of all the splendid trophies of his skill and daring to this imitation detective, after outwitting all the finest brains of the finest crime-investigating organization in the world. Suddenly the ice turned to fire, and I was on my feet, speaking as I had never spoken to living man before. What I said I cannot remember. If I could, I would not record it. I believe I wept. I know I went down on my knees. And Raffles sat there with never a word! I see him still, leaning back in a luxurious armchair, watching me with steady eyes sheathed by drooping lids. There was a faint smile on the handsome dare-devil face, and the hands were raised as if in deprecation; nor can I give my readers a more complete idea of the frenzy which had me in its grip than by recording the plain fact that I was utterly oblivious to the strangeness of the spectacle before me. Raffles apologetic, Raffles condescending to conciliate me— at any other time such a reversal of our natural roles had filled me with unworthy exultation for myself, and bitter shame for him. But I was past caring now.

And then, still holding his palms towards me, he crossed them. I have said that during the telling of his monstrous decision he had the ruby between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. Now the left hand was where the right had been, and the ruby was in it. I suppose I should have guessed at once, I suppose I should have read in his smile what it needed my own eyes to tell me, that there was a ruby in his right hand too! So that was the meaning of the upraised hands! I swear that my first sensation was a pang of pure relief that Raffles had not stooped to conciliate me, my second a hot shame that I had

been idiot enough even for one moment to believe him capable of doing so. Then the full significance of the two rubies flashed across me.

"An imitation?" I gasped, falling back into my chair.

"An exact replica."

"For Holmes?"

He nodded.

"But supposing he—"

"That's a risk I have to take."

"Then I go with you."

A savage gleam lit up the steel-blue eyes.

"I don't want you."

"Holmes may spot it. I must share the risk."

"You fool, you'd double it!"

"Raffles!" The cry of pain was wrung from me before I could check it, but if there was weakness in my self-betrayal, I could not regret it when I saw the softening in his wonderful eyes.

"I didn't mean it, Bunny," he said.

"Then you'll take me!" I cried, and held my breath through an endless half-minute, until a consenting nod brought me to my feet again. The hand that shot out to grasp his was met half-way, and a twinkling eye belied the doleful resignation in his "What an obstinate rabbit it is!"

Our appointment with Holmes was for the following evening at nine. The clocks of London were striking the half-hour after eight when I entered the Albany. My dear villain, in evening dress, worn as only he could wear it, was standing by the table; but there was that in his attitude which struck the greeting dumb upon my lips. My eyes followed the direction of his, and I saw the two rubies side by side in their open cases.

"What is it, Raffles?" I cried. "Has anything happened?"

"It's no good, Bunny," he said, looking up. "I can't risk it. With anyone else I'd chance it, and be damned to the consequences, too. But Holmes — no, Bunny! I was a fool ever to play with the idea."

I could not speak. The bitterness of my disappointment, the depth of my disillusion, took me by the throat and choked me. That Raffles should be knocked out I could have borne, that he should let the fight go by default — there was the shame to which I could fit no words.

"He'd spot it, Bunny. He'd spot it." Raffles picked up one of the cases. "See this nick?" he asked lightly, for all the world as if blazing eyes and a scarlet face were an invitation to confidences. "I've marked this case because it holds the one and only Ruby of Khitmandu, and on my life I don't believe I could tell which ruby was which, if I once got the cases mixed."

"And yet," I croaked from a dry throat, "you think Holmes can do what you can't!"

"My dear rabbit, precious stones are one of his hobbies. The fellow's written a monograph on them, as I discovered only to-day. I'm not saying he'd spot my imitation, but I am most certainly not going to give him the chance," and he turned on his heel and strode into his bedroom for his overcoat.

The patient readers of these unworthy chronicles do not need to be reminded that I am not normally distinguished for rapidity of either thought or action. But for once brain and hand worked as surely and swiftly as though they had been Raffles's own, and the rubies had changed places a full half-minute'before Raffles returned to find me on my feet, my hat clapped to my head, and a look in my eyes which opened his own in enquiry.

"I'm coming with you," I cried.

Raffles stopped dead, with an ugly glare.

"Haven't you grasped, my good fool, that I'm handing Holmes the real stone?"

"He may play you false."

"I refuse to take you."

"Then I follow you."

Raffles picked up the marked case, snapped it to, and slipped into his overcoat pocket. I was outwitting him for his own good, yet a pang shot through me at the sight, with another to follow when the safe closed on the real ruby in the dummy's case. And the eyes that strove to meet his fell most shamefully as he asked if I still proposed to thrust my company upon him. Through teeth which I could hardly keep from chattering I muttered that it was a trap, that Holmes would take the stone and then call in the police, that I must share the danger as I would have shared the profits. A contemptuous shrug of the splendid shoulders, and a quick spin on his heel, were all the answer he vouchsafed me, and not a word broke the silence between us as we strode northwards through the night.

There was no tremor in the lean strong hand which raised the knocker on a door in Baker Street. He might have been going to a triumph instead of to the bitterest of humiliations. And it might be a triumph, after all! And he would owe it to me! But there was little enough of exultation in the heart which pounded savagely as I followed him upstairs, my fingers gripped tightly round the life-preserver in my pocket.

"Two gentlemen to see you, sir," wheezed the woman who had admitted us.

"And one of them," drawled an insufferably affected voice, as we walked in, "is very considerately advertising the presence of a medium-sized life-

preserver in his right overcoat pocket. My dear Watson, if you must wave a loaded revolver about, might I suggest that you do so in the passage? Thank you. It is certainly safer in your pocket. Well, Mr. Raffles, have you brought it?"

Without a word, Raffles took the case out, and handed it across to Holmes. As Holmes opened it, the fellow whom he had addressed as Watson leaned forward, breadiing noisily. Criminals though we were, I could not repress a thrill of pride as I contrasted the keen bronze face of my companion with the yellow cadaverous countenance of Holmes, and reflected that my own alas indisputably undistinguished appearance could challenge a more than merely favourable comparison with the mottled complexion, bleared eyes, and ragged moustache of the detective's jackal.

"A beautiful stone, eh, Watson?" Holmes remarked, in the same maddening drawl, as he held the ruby to the light. "Well, Mr. Raffles, you have saved me a good deal of unnecessary trouble. The promptitude with which you have bowed to the inevitable does credit to your quite exceptional intelligence. I presume that you will have no objection to my submitting this stone to a brief examination?"

"I should not consider that you were fulfilling your duty to your client if you neglected such an elementary precaution."

It was perfectly said, but then was it not Raffles who said it? And said it from the middle of the shabby bear-skin rug, his legs apart and his back to the fire. Now, as always, the center of the stage was his at will, and I could have laughed at the discomfited snarl with which Holmes rose, and picking his way through an abominable litter of papers disappeared into the adjoining room. Three minutes, which seemed to me like twice as many hours, had passed by the clock on the mantelpiece, when the door opened again. Teeth set, and nerves strung ready, I was yet, even in this supreme moment, conscious of a tension in Raffles which puzzled me, for what had he, who believed the stone to be the original ruby, to fear? The menacing face of the detective brought my life-preserver half out of my pocket, and the revolver of the man Watson wholly out of his. Then, to my unutterable relief, Holmes said, "I need not detain you any longer, Mr. Raffles. But one word in parting. Let this be your last visit to these rooms."

There was a threat in the slow-dropping syllables which I did not understand, and would have resented, had I had room in my heart for any other emotion than an overwhelming exultation. Through a mist I saw Raffles incline his head with a faintly contemptuous smile. And I remember nothing more, till we were in the open street, and the last sound I expected startled me back into my senses. For Raffles was chuckling.

"I'm disappointed in the man, Bunny," he murmured with a laugh. "I was convinced he would spot it. But I was ready for him."

"Spot it?" I gasped, fighting an impossible suspicion.

"Yes, spot the dummy which my innocent rabbit was so insultingly sure was the one and only Ruby of Khitmandu."

"What!" My voice rose to a shriek. "Do you mean it was the dummy which was in the marked case?"

He spun round with a savage "Of course!"

"But you said it was the real one."

"And again, of course!"

Suddenly I saw it all. It was the old, old wretched story. He would trust no one but himself. He alone could bluff Holmes with a dummy stone. So he had tried to shake me off with the lie about restoring the real stone. And my unwitting hand had turned the he to truth! As I reeled, he caught my arm.

"You fool! You infernal, you unutterable fool!" He swung me round to face his blazing eyes. "What have you done?"

"I swapped them over. And be damned to you!"

"You swapped them over?" The words came slowly through clenched teeth.

"When you were in your bedroom. So it was the one and only ruby you gave him after all," and the hand that was raised to strike me closed on my mouth as I struggled to release the wild laughter which was choking in my throat.

CHAPTER XVI (Dr. Watson's Narrative)

I MUST CONFESS that as the door closed on Raffles and his pitiful confederate I felt myself completely at a loss to account for the unexpected turn which events had taken. There was no mistaking the meaning of the stern expression on the face of Holmes when he rejoined us after examining the stone. I saw at once that his surmise had proved correct, and that Raffles had substituted an imitation ruby for the original. The almost laughable agitation with which the lesser villain pulled out his life-preserver at my friend's entrance confirmed me in this supposition. It was clear to me that he was as bewildered as myself when Holmes dismissed Raffles instead of denouncing him. Indeed, his gasp of relief as he preceded Raffles out of the room was so marked as to bring me to my feet with an ill-defined impulse to rectify the extraordinary error into which, as it seemed to me, Holmes had been betrayed.

"Sit down!" Holmes snapped, with more than his usual asperity. "But Holmes!" I cried. "Is it possible you do not realize—"

"I realize that, as usual, you realize nothing. Take this stone. Guard it as you would guard the apple of your eye. And bring it to me here at eight to-morrow morning."

"But Holmes, I don't understand—"

"I have no time to discuss the limitations of your intelligence."

I have always been willing to make allowances for my friend's natural impatience with a less active intelligence than his own. Nevertheless, I could not repress a feeling of mortification as he thrust the case into my hand, and propelled me into the passage. But the night air, and the brisk pace at which I set out down Baker Street, soon served to restore my equanimity. A long experience of my friend's extraordinary powers had taught me that he often saw clearly when all was darkness to myself. I reflected that he had no doubt some excellent reason for letting the villains go. No man could strike more swiftly and with more deadly effect than Holmes, but equally no man knew better how to bide his time, or could wait more patiently to enmesh his catch beyond the possibility of escape. While these thoughts were passing through my mind, I had been vaguely conscious of two men walking ahead of me, at a distance of about a hundred yards. Suddenly one of them reeled, and would have fallen had not his companion caught his arm. My first impression was that I was witnessing the spectacle, alas only too common a one in all great cities, of two drunken men assisting each other homewards. But as I observed the couple in pity mingled with repulsion, the one who had caught the other's arm raised his hand as if to deliver a blow. I felt for my revolver, and was about to utter a warning shout, when I perceived that they were the very men who had just been occupying my thoughts.

The need for caution instantly asserted itself. Halting, I drew out my pipe, filled it, and applied a match. This simple stratagem enabled me to collect my thoughts. It was plain that these rascals had quarrelled. I recalled the familiar adage that when thieves fall out honest men come by their own, and I summoned all my powers to imagine what Holmes would do in my place. To follow the rogues at a safe distance, and act as the development of the situation required, seemed to me the course of action which he would pursue. But I could not conceal from myself that his view of what the situation might require would probably differ materially from my own.

For an instant I was tempted to hasten back to him with the news of this fresh development. But a moment's reflection convinced me that to do so would be to risk the almost certain loss of my quarry. I had another, and I fear a less excusable, motive for not returning. The brusquerie of my dismissal still rankled a little. It would be gratifying if I could, this once, show my imperious friend that I was capable of making an independent contribution to the

unravelling of a problem. I therefore quickened my steps, and soon diminished the distance between myself and my quarry to about fifty yards. It was obvious that the dispute was still in progress. Raffles himself maintained a sullen silence, but the excitable voice and gestures of his accomplice testified that the quarrel, whatever its nature, was raging with unabated vehemence.

They had entered Piccadilly, and I was still at their heels, when they turned abruptly into Albany Courtyard. By a fortunate coincidence I had for some weeks been visiting the Albany in my professional capacity, having been called in by my old friend General Macdonagh, who was now at death's door. I was therefore known to the commissionaire, who touched his hat as I hastened past him. With the realization that this was where Raffles lived, the course of action I should adopt became clear to me. He had the latchkey in his door, as I came up.

"By Heavens!" his companion cried. "It's Watson!"

"Dr. Watson, if you please, Bunny." The scoundrel turned to me with a leer. "This is indeed a charming surprise, Doctor."

Ignoring the covert insolence of the man, I demanded sternly if he would accord me a brief audience in his rooms.

"But of course, my dear Doctor. Any friend of Mr. Holmes is our friend, too. You will excuse me if I lead the way."

My hand went to my revolver, and as the door of his rooms closed behind us, I whipped it out, at the same time producing the case which contained the imitation ruby.

"Here is your imitation stone," I cried, tossing the case on to the table. "Hand over the real one, or I shall shoot you like a dog."

Accomplished villain though he was, he could not repress a start of dismay, while his miserable confederate collapsed on a sofa with a cry of horror.

"This is very abrupt, Doctor," Raffles said, picking the case up and opening it. "May I ask if you are acting on the instructions of Mr. Holmes? It is, after all, with Mr. Holmes that I am dealing."

"You are dealing with me now. That is the only fact you need to grasp."

"But Mr. Holmes was entirely satisfied with the stone I handed to him.

"I am not here to argue. Will you comply with my request?"

"It is disgraceful of Holmes to send you to tackle the pair of us single-handed."

"Mr. Holmes, you blackguard! And he knows nothing of what I am doing."

"Really ? Then I can only say he does not deserve such a lieutenant. Well, Bunny, our triumph was, I fear, a little premature."

A minute later, I was in the passage, the case containing the genuine stone in my breast pocket. Through the closed door there rang what I took to be the

bitter, baffled laugh of an outwitted scoundrel. In general, I am of a somewhat sedate temper, but it was, I confess, in a mood which almost bordered on exultation that I drove back to Baker Street, and burst in on Holmes.

"I've got it! I've got it!" I cried, waving the case.

"Delirium tremens?" Holmes enquired coldly, from his arm-chair. I noticed that he was holding a revolver.

"The original ruby, Holmes!"

With a bound as of a panther Holmes leaped from his chair and snatched the case from my hand.

"You idiot!" he snarled. "What have you done?"

Vexed and bewildered, I told my story, while Holmes stared at me with heaving chest and flaming eyes. My readers will have guessed the truth, which Holmes flung at me in a few disconnected sentences, interspersed with personal observations of an extremely disparaging nature. It was indeed the original ruby which Raffles had brought with him, and which Holmes, suspecting that Raffles would attempt to retrieve it while he slept, had entrusted to my keeping. The warning which Holmes had given Raffles not to visit him again was now explained, as was also the vigil with a loaded revolver on which my friend had embarked when I burst in on him.

THE ARREST a fortnight later of Raffles and the man Bunny, and the restoration of the famous ruby to its lawful owner, will be familiar to all readers of the daily papers. During this period the extremely critical condition of General Macdonagh engaged my whole attention. His decease was almost immediately followed by the unexpected deaths of two other patients, and in the general pressure of these sad events I was unable to visit Holmes in order to learn from his own lips the inner story of the final stages in this remarkable case.

While we're on the subject of Sherlock Holmes spoofs…

12: The Case of The Missing Patriarchs

Logan Clendening, M.D.

1884-1945

Private print in 1934 of just 30 copies, as a "Sherlockiana" leaftlet. Printed in book form for the first time in the anthology "The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes", 1944. The author was a noted medical writer.

SHERLOCK HOLMES is dead. At the age of eighty he passed away quietly in his sleep. And at once ascended to Heaven.

The arrival of few recent immigrants to the celestial streets has caused so much excitement. Only Napoleon's appearance in Hell is said to have equaled the great detective's reception. In spite of the heavy fog which rolled in from the Jordan, Holmes was immediately bowled in a hansom to audience with the Divine Presence. After the customary exchange of amenities, Jehovah said:

"Mr. Holmes, we too have our problems. Adam and Eve are missing. Have been, as a matter of fact, for nearly two aeons. They used to be quite an attraction to visitors and we would like to commission you to discover them."

Holmes looked thoughtful for a moment.

"We fear that their appearance when last seen would furnish no clue," continued Jehovah. "A man is bound to change in two aeons."

Holmes held up his long, thin hand. "Could you make a general announcement that a contest between an immovable body and an irresistible force will be staged in that large field at the end of the street— Lord's, I presume it is?"

The announcement was made and soon the streets were filled with a slowly moving crowd. Holmes stood idly in the divine portico watching them.

Suddenly he darted into the crowd and seized a patriarch and his whimpering old mate; he brought them to the Divine Presence.

"It is," asserted Deity. "Adam, you have been giving us a great deal of anxiety. But, Mr. Holmes, tell me how you found them."

"Elementary, my dear God," said Sherlock Holmes, "they have no navels."

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13: Bilter's Bargain

Seward W. Hopkins

1864-1919

Popular Magazine July 1904

BILTER sat on the unpainted back stoop of his cottage with his head resting in his two hands.

The dejected expression on his face would have made the gloom of a stormy night seem sunshine by comparison.

A woman passing him with a pail of water stopped. Resting the pail on the ground, she said:

"Cheer up, father, it may not be as bad as we think. There may be a living on the place."

"Livin'!" snorted the thin-faced farmer, without changing his attitude, "ef ther was a livin' do ye think I'd be settin' here? Kin we eat sand and clay? Kin we sell stones? I'll bet that agent down at the Forks is a laughin' at me fur a fool. Well, he kin. It's his turn now. But wait, Mandy! I've ben swindled out of all the savin's of a hard life. An' now, thinkin' to better us, I buy a place that won't raise snake grass. I'II kill him yit!"

Fired by the idea that he had been wrongly dealt with, the man rose. His six feet of roughly clad form unbent, and there was a determination in his eye that boded ill to that one who had won by unfair means his only possessions.

"Father, you won't. Just sit down and think it out. Anyhow it is ours, and no mortgage on it. We may be able to raise the creek and irrigate. At least once before we did that."

"Irrigate! Irrigate a sand heap? Well, Mandy!"

"I've thought about it, and while I know we have been swindled, there may be a way out of it after all."

"But think of it, Mandy! If I can't make the first year pay, how'll I keep Lizzie where she is? The gal can't finish at school, an' that'll break her heart an' yours."

"Oh, hearts don't break so easy; Come, cheer up. I'll get supper now, and you'll feel better."

It was not long before the savory odor of bacon came floating out to him, and corn wafers were good, as he admitted to himself. They wouldn't starve, if it came to that.

The sound of a slowly traveling horse came from the side of the cottage. A well-groomed black mare came into sight, mounted by a tall and cheerfullooking young man.

"Stranger," he said, "may I ask for a bite to eat?"

"Stranger," replied Silas, "ye kin have anything in sight."

"You are welcome, sir," called out Mrs. Bilter. "Father is rather blue tonight. We've just moved here, you see, and things are not quite what they ought to be."

Before he dismounted the young man surveyed the place. He could see acres of land that his practiced eye told him was almost unsalable. Afar there was a scrubby growth of trees, and small fruit might do well on the sandy soil. But the work of preparing the farm would be stupendous.

"What under the sun the man wanted to buy this place for, I can't see," he said to himself. Then he swung down at the stoop and tied the mare. "My name is Tom Danket," he said, cheerily. "I think I can see that you have been caught. Came from farther East, eh?"

"Yes," said Mr. Bilter, laconically. "Wish I was back East ag'in."

"Supper's ready," called Mrs. Bilter, and Mr. Bilter stumped in, leading the more modernly clad guest.

"Make yourself at home," said Mrs. Bilter, kindly. "We haven't much— yet, but we'll do all right. But it was a mean trick."

"Had you seen the place?" asked Danket.

"No."

"Do you mean to say you bought a piece of land without examining it?"

"It was too fur to come. I seen a good advertisement, and wrote the agent at Twin Creeks Forks, an' he answered saying it was one o' the best farms in Missouri. How was I to know? He's got my money, an' I've got the farm. I've got to put up with it."

"It was a mean trick. I think you could do something in law."

"No, I ain't got no money to spend in law. Gosh! They'd git away the farm."

Mr. Danket laughed.

"There are some honest lawyers," he said. "But I know that some are rogues."

"Ye see, it ain't so much fur the old woman an' me I care, as fur Lizzie. Lizzie's proud, she is, an' wanted to be a teacher. I sent her to Jefferson City to school, an' now if this don't pay she can't finish. Lord! Think of Lizzie comin' back here to live!"

Mr. Danket rather drew in his breath quickly.

"Do you mean to say you are the parents of Lizzie Bilter at Mrs. Simms' school in Jefferson City !"

"The same."

"Do you know our Lizzie?" asked the anxious mother, taking stock of Mr. Danket's handsome face and stylish clothes. A look of doubt came into her eyes.

"I have met Miss Bilter," he answered, and the look of doubt deepened. "I think she is a very charming girl."

"Hope you've made out," said Bilter, as Danket drew away from the table. "Ain't none the best, but plenty of it."

"Oh, I think it is good, and am glad there is plenty. Will you smoke a cigar, Mr. Bilter?"

The two men sat on the porch and smoked. The cigar was a luxury Mr. Bilter was not accustomed to and he soon had it chewed to a pulp, and sought his pipe for comfort.

"How far is it to the nearest village— that way?" asked Mr. Danket, pointing south.

"Bout ten mile, I should say."

"My mare is pretty well played out. If you will permit me, I would like to remain. I will pay you fairly."

"Sir," and the horny hand came down with a slap on the jeans. "I'm a ignorant man, sir, an' a poor. But I ain't that kind. There's a bed upstairs, an' you are welcome. I'll take care o' the horse."

The mare was soon in a comfortable stall, and by the time the two men returned to the house, Mrs. Bilter had finished her evening work and gone to bed.

"I reckon you ought to be tired, too," said Mr. Bilter. "Like to go up?"

"Yes, I think I will," said Danket, with a yawn.

Mr. Bilter, whenever anything delayed him in his evening chores, usually found his amiable spouse asleep. But this night she was sitting waiting for him, with a shawl around her.

"Has he gone to bed?" she asked, in a low voice. "Father, I've been thinking. I don't like such men knowing Lizzie. A young man that smokes cigars and wears fine clothes."

"Pshaw! Lizzie ain't no fool! She kin take care of herself. Don't be worryin' about them things. Anyhow, he's down here, an' she is way up in Jefferson City."

"Well— I don't know," said Mrs. Bilter, and she lay awake longer than usual that night.

THE following morning Mr. Danket arose as early as Mr. Bilter and strolled outside. He walked some distance from the house, then took a small map from his pocket, which he studied carefully.

"This is the right neighborhood," he said, kicking the gravel with the toe of his riding boot. "I'll take a look after breakfast."

"Are you going to be busy for an hour or two?" he asked the farmer. "If not, I would like to stroll about and examine this purchase of yours. If it is bad as it looks I may help you some."

"I'll go as fur as East Twin Creek," said Bilter, and they went.

Mr. Danket seemed to be more interested than a stranger should. He carefully examined the ground, and, when they reached the creek, actually got down on his knees and kneaded some of the wet clay that formed the bed. He rolled it between his hands, and then between his thumb and finger,

"Think that stuff could keep my Lizzie in school?" asked Mr. Bilter.

Mr. Danket stood looking along the creek.

"How far does your land run?" he asked.

"Well, about a thousand feet the way you are lookin', an' mebbe five hundred the other."

Mr. Danket grunted.

"You asked me if this stuff would keep your daughter in school. In reply permit me to say that it will. Mr. Bilter, I will deal fairly with you. I know Miss Bilter very well. Had it not been for that I might not feel so generous. This is not generosity, either, but I could do worse. And now I will explain. My father and myself are in the business of manufacturing fancy tiling for expensive work in fine residences or public buildings. We have rivals which are sometimes difficult to defeat. Some time ago a stranger came to us with some clay. He said he knew where there were lots of it, but in his ignorant description there were flaws that made it impossible for us to understand. We found that this clay was the best for fancy tiling that we had ever seen. What we used of it was liked, and when we wanted more, we could not find the man. I heard he had been shot in a row. The next thing was to find the clay. It is my belief that this is the very clay. I will send some to my father and see what he has to say."

Mr. Bilter seemed dazed. He stood blinking his eyes a few minutes, and then managed to blurt out a few jerky sentences.

"That stuff! Ye use that to make things! An' it's worth money? How much is a barrel worth?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," he answered. "But tons and tons of it would be. That is if it is what I think it is."

Mr. Danket returned to the house, got a spade and pail, and returned to dig some of the clay. He made arrangements to leave his horse behind, and have Mr. Bilter drive him to the station. The clay was too heavy to carry on horseback.

On his return Mr. Bilter stopped at the post office and found a letter from Lizzie:

"Dear father and mother," it ran. "I am so sorry to learn how you have been tricked. But never mind, I graduate in a week and will help all I can."

"Where in God's name kin she teach? An' how did she graduate so soon?" the bewildered farmer asked himself.

The week passed, and nothing was heard from Mr. Danket. The first days had been passed in wonderful visions— pictures of the future happiness, and no further want, between the plodding farmer and his cheerful wife. But as the days wore on these visions were not so bright, and at last they decided that Mr. Danket had not been satisfied with the clay.

THEN came the day that Lizzie was to come, and Mr. Bilter drove to mect her. It was a happy meeting, full of explanations and questions and plans.

"An' so you know Mr. Danket. Well! well! Mother didn't like it at first, but now he seems so good— so willin' to tell the truth, I guess she likes it better."

Lizzie blushed.

"I know Mr. Danket," she said. "I've met him at parties."

The old farmer's eyes did not fail to catch the blush, and something down in his weather-beaten old heart tickled.

At home there were more greetings, and more plans. Lizzie was a tall, handsome girl, just the one to command the respect of her scholars. She surveyed the farm.

"Well," she said, "it is all right now; but if it wasn't for the clay!"

The day after Lizzie came home, a team drove rapidly up the road. It stopped at Bilter's and a man stepped from the dust-covered carriage.

"There's that damn agent Harper again!" said Mr. Bilter. "Ill kill him! Vl a

"Why, father!" laughed Lizzie. "You must remember he has sold you a fortune."

Mr. Harper was a brusque and not over-polite man. He merely nodded to Mrs. Bilter and Lizzie, and turned to Mr. Bilter.

"See here, Bilter,' he said, "I've heard you were dissatisfied with your bargain here. Not that it would make any difference to me, but it just happens I find there's a flaw in the title, so the sale is off. I will pay you your money back at my office to-morrow."

"Flaw!" gasped Mr. Bilter, rising, and shaking like a leaf. "Ye sold me a farm without a title! Is that true?"

"Well, I thought it was good. But there's something about a missing heir. I want to close up the matter because I've got an offer for the clay on East Twin Creek."

"Say it ag'in! A offer fur the clay? The only good thing on it? My God! What rascals in this world! An' we so good to young Danket!"

Lizzie sat white and cold. Her eyes were riveted on Harper's face.

"I don't believe a word about that title," said Mrs. Bilter. "I just think that Danket wants to buy the farm."

"But he could buy from me," said Bilter.

"Yes, but he told you that it was worth money."

"I'll see you to-morrow about noon in my office, Bilter," said Harper, as he turned to leave.

"No, you hound!" cried the exasperated man. "You fooled me twice. You'd take the bread from the mouths of my women folks! Take that from me!"

His heavy hand smote Harper under the chin, and the agent rolled backward to the ground. In an instant his driver, seeing what had happened, ran in.

"I'll kill you," shouted Mr. Bilter, in his wrath.

"I'll send you to jail for this!" said Harper, wiping the blood from his face.

Mr. Bilter made an attempt to repeat his attack, but the wife and daughter rushed in between.

"Father! Have you lost your you lost your senses?" asked Mrs. Bilter, striving heroically to be calm.

Harper got into his carriage, and Lizzie went to her room.

Here, throwing herself on the bed, she burst into a desperate fit of sobbing.

"Oh, that he would use me so!" she cried. "Oh, that he could do this after. telling me he loved me! He knew I was a poor girl and helpless! Oh, Tom! Tom! Tom! my heart is breaking!"

Days passed. Nothing was heard from Harper, nor from Danket. Then one day as they were all sitting in the shade before the cottage, two men came riding from Twin Creeks Forks.

"That's the sheriff," said Mr. Bilter. A tremor of terror and apprehension ran through both wife and daughter.

The sheriff dismounted and strode toward them.

"I've come for you, Bilter," he said. "Pm sorry fur the ladies, but I've got to do my duty."

"Fur what?" faltered Bilter, thinking the old blow had been overlooked.

"Fur the murder of Jim Harper. He was found dead near. Sidwell's Junction on West Twin Creek yesterday. Don't make a fuss. Better come along."

"He never killed him!" screamed Mrs. Bilter. The sheriff bowed.

"I ain't said he did, ma'am. I ain't judge or jury. I'm only the sheriff, sworn to do my duty. It has been sworn that Bilter was heard to threaten Harper, and the law must do the rest."

Lizzie sprang to her mother's side as she saw her eyes closing, and Bilter, with a face like a dead man's, rose.

"I'll git my horse," he said, and after kissing his wife and Lizzie, in ten minutes was on his way to Twin Creeks Forks.

THE MURDER of Harper caused a sensation. Men rode in from all directions, and women drove past the Bilter home and pointed out the place where the murderer lived. Mrs. Bilter was confined to her bed, and Lizzie, with her heart torn with anguish for her father, and bitter with grief over the actions of Danket, courageously held down her own feelings and administered to her mother's wants.

The day came for the examination of Bilter. Mrs. Bilter could not go, but Lizzie insisted upon being with him in his bitter hour of trial.

Coroner Ulmer presided. He picked his jury from among the men haphazard, for he knew they were a sturdy race of justice-loving people. He was one of these himself.

"Now, Bilter," he said, "this is an inquest on the body of Jim Harper. By the decision of this jury you will either be set free or held for trial on the charge of murder. I warn you that anything you say may be used against you at the trial. Are you ready?"

"Yes," almost whispered Bilter. Lizzie sat by his side, white and frightened. The jury seemed to watch her more than they did the man whom they might indict.

"Now, Bilter," continued the coroner, "you were heard to say you would kill Harper. Is that so, Burton?"

A young man stood up.

"Swear the witness."

Burton, being sworn, testified:

"Mr. Harper knew that Bilter was dissatisfied with a place we sold him. We drove out there one day to offer to take back the place. We had a chance to sell at a better price. I didn't hear what was said, but I saw Bilter knock Harper down. I ran to him, and heard Bilter say he would kill Harper. The women prevented another attack."

"And was that all there was in the nature of the business that took you out there— simply to take back what Bilter did not want?"

"That was all, sir."

"May I say something, Coroner Ulmer," asked Lizzie, pleadingly.

A man, covered with dust, with pieces of plaster almost obliterating his face, limped in and stood for a moment as if about to fall. He sank into a chair unnoticed, for all eyes were forward on the girl who wanted to speak.

"My father is not a business man," she went on, after having been sworn regularly as a witness. "He is uneducated, as many here are, but none the less

honorable and worthy. We lived in Illinois, and he thought we could better our chances out here. I had gone to Jefferson City to Mrs. Simms, whom we knew, to study. Father wished to be near me. He saw an advertisement of this place on East Twin Creek and answered it. The reply brought such a flattering description of the farm and the price was so little that he bought it, using all he had in the world. When he reached it he found it worthless.

"A gentleman from Jefferson City came there looking for a certain kind of clay. He found it on my father's farm. He promised to let father know more about it, but we have not heard from him since. Mr. Harper said it was this gentleman who wished to buy the farm."

The man in the rear stood up and Lizzie saw him.

"Is that true, Mr. Burton?" asked the coroner.

"It is true," said Burton. "The firm of Danket & Son, of Jefferson City."

"That's a damned lie!" came from the man in the rear of the room. Lizzie knew the voice.

"Tom! Tom! Tom!" she cried, and every man in the room stood up.

Danket came limping forward. He shook Bilter's hand and kissed Lizzie.

"Little girl, did you really think I'd do it?" he asked, and then to the coroner: "I am the man who killed Jim Harper."

Lizzie trembled.

"How and why ?" asked the coroner.

Danket was sworn.

"It takes some time to decide whether clay used for fine tiling is the right kind, and our experiments are carefully made. We discovered that this clay was just what we wanted. I thought it would be a good scheme to locate another bed of it before its quality became known. I tried West Twin Creek, and found a farm there on which no one had lived for years, it being about as barren as Mr. Bilter's. But there was clay there, and plenty of it. I followed West Twin Creek to the Forks, and offered Harper a price for it. He was amazed at the offer, because he had had the thing on his hands so long. He asked me what I wanted of such a place, and told him there was value in it to me. I thought he was an honorable man, and explained about the clay. He said he would take the offer provided I would take others he could find with the clay on at the same price. I said I would. Yesterday I was riding along West Twin Creek again, and met Harper looking over some poor farms there. He had a contract with him he had brought along for me to sign. It was for the purchase of Mr. Bilter's farm. I knew Mr. Bilter had no idea of selling, and said so. Harper said I knew nothing about it, and we quarreled. I left him, and rode on. On my return toward the farmhouse where I was stopping, I was shot from ambush. The bullet pierced my leg and killed my horse. I fell, and probably under the

impression that I was dead, Harper came toward me. I drew my revolver and shot him. He was not killed that time, and fired, his bullet cutting through my cheek. I fired the second time and he dropped dead. That is my testimony, I had no witnesses. I dragged myself to the nearest house, where they patched me up. I knew there would be an inquest and came to offer myself up."

A hard breath came from everybody in the room.

"It seems that the value of this inquest depends on the validity of Bilter's title," said the coroner. "If Harper was rascal enough to work that game, he would do almost anything. Burton, is that title good or not?"

Burton was young. He shuffled and showed his disinclination to answer.

"You may answer safely," said the coroner. "You are not interested in this. You were Harper's clerk and in no way responsible for his acts. There can be no trial, for Harper is dead."

"Well, then, all I can say is that the title to the Bilter place dates back to a very old territorial grant, and is probably as good as any in the Louisiana purchase."

A howl went up from the crowd, and Danket was a hero.

That night there was a meeting and a greeting in Bilter's home such as few have ever seen. And now— well everybody knew it would come to that, of course, but it may as well be told— Lizzie is the happy wife of Danket, and the clay has made them rich.

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14: Tale of Two Towns

Roy W. Hinds

1887-1930

Popular Magazine, 20 Dec 1920

I GAVE up smoking that morning. After lunch I sallied out for a supply of tobacco. A man has a right to change his mind. My quest led me to the cut-rate tobacco store of Cameron Firlock, who used to sell less valuable commodities at a much greater profit. To get him started, I inquired:

"What is the one thing you had rather do? I have read somewhere that all men, deep down in their hearts, would rather live differently than they do. What would you rather do— or are you perfectly contented in your tobacco store?"

Mr. Finlock meditated profoundly for about two seconds, and then replied somewhat irrelevantly:

"Take that chair over there— the other one's broke."

An hour later I returned home with my tobacco habit fully resuscitated, and with a new record for my typewriter, the air of which, from the lips of Mr. Finlock, went about as follows:

THE ONLY mortal that has definite ideas as to what he wants to do is a boy. When a boy says he wants to be an outlaw, you can figure that he means it for the time being. But the ambitions of boys skip from one thing to another. Sooner or later, every boy has an ambition to travel with a circus. I had that ambition when I was a boy. I had it when I grew up, and I still got it, though it ain't no soft snap to travel with a circus, no matter what your job is. It's a tough life.

But tell me, is there anything more luxurious to the imagination than the bustle of a circus lot in the forenoon; the glitter of the parade at noon; the roar of the lion, the trumpet of the elephant, the guffaw of the hyena, and the gasp of the spectator, fighting for supremacy over the gentle zephyrs from the monkey cage; the side-show ballyhoos, and the crash of the band and the crush of humanity in the big top in the afternoon, with horses plunging and trapezes swinging; the perfume of gasoline torches and slaughtered peanuts mixed with the smell of bruised grass and torn earth, when the dew falls on the lot at night and mingles with the red lemonade; the stupendous scurry to get the show onto the train; the outlandish procession of elephants and camels and Missouri mules and giraffes and zebras and press agents, through the dark streets to the railroad yards, and finally the getaway, when all the world is solemn and asleep?

No wonder circus folks have a sneaking pity for the townspeople left behind, to go to the same old shops, the same old stores, and the same old offices! That's the lure of the circus.

Sounds fine, don't it? Well, I traveled with a circus one time, but not in the way I wanted to when I was a boy. I wanted to travel as an animal trainer, or a peanut peddler, or a lemonade ladler, or a bareback rider. When I grew up and found my chance it was nothing so nice as that. I owned the show.

My circus experience happened in the old days when circuses wasn't so big as they are now, and when men drank whisky because they liked it and not because it was prohibited.

One raw winter's day in June I was standing in the depot, in a town out in Indiana, waiting for yesterday's train. It had rained steady for a week, and the air was cold and wet. I finished reading a summer-resort advertisement in a newspaper and was about halfway through a news item predicting a blizzard when a hand was laid on my shoulder.

Now in them days I was mighty tender on the shoulders. I was superstitious, too, and had an idea that if a man come up behind me and laid his hand on my shoulder it was a sign that I would soon have to hire a lawyer. In the space of a few seconds my immediate past went through my mind. A couple of hours before I had sold the song rights to the Wabash River to one of the townsmen, and, thinks I, my zeal as a salesman might have led me into indiscretions specifically mentioned in the revised statues of Indiana. However, I turned around.

It was an old friend of mine by the name of Frank Sparkle.

"Thank you for liberating me from jail," says I,

"What do you mean— jail?" he asks, as we shook hands.

"I mean the jail I thought I was going to be in when you laid your hand on my shoulder. You've been roaming over the country for only twenty years now, and I couldn't expect you to know that it's a foolish trick to lay your hand on a friend's shoulder unexpectedly."

"Excuse me, Cam," Frank apologizes. "I should have known better; but I was so glad to see you that I didn't think what I was doing."

"It's all right, Frank. Where're you bound for?"

"What's the destination line on your ticket?" he asks.

"Chicago."

"Let me take three dollars," says he. "I have urgent business in Chicago."

So me and Frank Sparkle got on the Chicago train when it come along a few minutes later. We got into the chair car, because it was easier to talk privately. The train no more than pulled out before Frank's mouth begun to

open and shut in a manner which permitted a lot of words to escape. Among other things he mentioned the Wixon Circus.

"That show," says Frank, "'is stalled down at Tuller, Indiana. You know the show. It used to be a good one for grafters to follow, until "Old Man" Wixon put the bars up. Out in Missouri one day he run us all off the lot, and said he'd never allow another grafter to make a spread within gunshot of his canvas.

"But times has changed with Old Man Wixon. He's had a terrible year—cold and rainy, and now he's up against it. He's willing to take anybody or anything into camp providing they turn up money. But he's stalled, and can't move the show."

"What's the matter with him?" I asks.

"He's in arrears. This total eclipse of the sun has about ruined him. I left the show with a few dollars, and skated around over Indiana till I went flat. I didn't even have car fare when I met you." Frank Sparkle was quiet then, for a minute or two, and then sweeps down on me with a pertinent question. "Cam," he asks, "have you got five thousand dollars?"

"Yes," I tells him, "I got a trifle more than that. I've had a good spring and summer."

"Old Man Wixon," he says, "wants to peddle the season's lease on his show."

"I wish him luck, and a Merry Christmas."

"A man can get a lease on the show by paying him out of debt and getting the exhibition rolling from one town to another."

"I wish him a Happy New Year."

"It's a six-car show, all in good shape."

"Many happy returns of the day."

"Roughly speaking, that lease can be acquired for five thousand dollars."

"Speaking roughly, it can't be acquired with my five thousand dollars."

Frank studies a minute, and then asks: "Why?"

"Because," I informs him, "I don't know anything about the circus business. It's too long a shot, and

"But, listen," he interrupts, "you wouldn't have to know anything about it—if I was along. I know the business. I know every lot in the Middle West, and I know to a penny how much can be taken from every adult man in the four surrounding States."

"I know your capabilities, Frank," I tell him, "but I'm afraid of things that I know nothing about. I'll bet you enough banknotes to paper a room in the poor house that Old Man Wixon sees calamity ahead, and that he's trying to get out from under."

"Wixon," says Frank, "is an old man. He wants a rest. The man who gets his show for the season will have his staff and his performers, and it's a good show, too. It can't rain all summer, Cam."

"It can do anything it's a mind to. That's another thing I won't do— gamble on the weather."

Frank's voice grew soft and coaxing.

"Cam," says he, "your mind is running along one track. I don't mean that you don't know how to think, but you're not thinking straight on this circus proposition. There's other things to a circus, you know, besides the elephant and the ringmaster, and in the side lines you're no amateur. Tell me, Cam, isn't this little game we call living nothing more or less than a problem in addition and subtraction?"

"That's one way of putting it."

"That's the best way to put it. Every man is trying to add to what he's got and subtract from what the other fellow's got. It's a problem that's never fully solved— we're always working at it. And now I ask you, is there a better classroom than a circus lot for working on that little example in arithmetic?"

"A circus lot is a likely place," I admits.

"A circus lot," Frank goes on, "is the greatest producer in the world for men like you and me. People that have money to lose in our little pastimes are pretty much scattered most of the time. We go fishing for 'em on the farm, in the shops and offices, in hotels, railroad depots, and like places. We have to go to them, and weed 'em out from all the unlikely possibilities.

"But when the circus comes to town, they get together in a bunch. They congregate, thus making things easier for us. They line up, as it were, and we can take 'em one at a time and leisurely. Yes, Cam, they congregate— and they congregate on the circus lot. Think it over!"

The answer: I took the show.

News is about the fastest thing there is in the world. Every grafter in the Middle West and points east knew about my connection with that circus as quick as I did. Here's a chance for a killing, think they. Cameron Finlock will run a wide-open circus lot. Everything goes! That gang descended on me with an idea that they could commit arson, larceny, and grand larceny with perfect impunity on my circus lot.

Now, I never did favor low forms of graft. And neither did I earn every penny I got by the sweat of my brow. I aspired to the géhtler arts of getting the wherewithal. I liked to talk for my profits in a soft tone of voice, and I didn't play for the blind widows and crippled orphans, nor for the trusting farmer boy of small means, either. I cashed in on folks who could spare it, and as a general

thing I picked the ones that would prick my bubble of wealth, if they got a chance. I was a believer in a lawful system of unlawfulness.

But a man can't live the life I did without accumulating friends and acquaintances that wasn't so particular. They flocked to my show in droves. There was more than one reason, at the time, why I couldn't drive 'em away. That would make sore spots, and I couldn't afford sore spots among that bunch. My life had not been altogether blameless, and that layout knew it. My best bet was to tolerate them and their devices till such time as I could ease 'em away gently— or maybe scare 'em off,

The show stuck in Tuller, Indiana, for two weeks after I took it over. We had to have time to bill the grand and glorious exhibition.

I must tell you about that circus. The menagerie for the most part had been captured in the jungles of the Shetland Islands, or ransomed from those wild-animal hunters of North America commonly known as dog catchers. Yes, the Great Wixon Railroad Shows mainly was a dog and pony outfit, although an effort had been made to inject a little ferocity into the menagerie.

For instance, we had a lion. He was a good-sized beast, with a roar that answered all purposes. His only bad habit was sleeping. He'd paced himself out before the Wixon Shows got him. And we had a couple of black bears in cages. Besides that we had one flea-bitten elephant that suffered some sort of a blight when he was young and hadn't attained any dimensions to speak of. Finally come the camel, a disdainfullooking beast with a flabby hump and an unsociable disposition,

The big animal attraction of that show was the Shetland ponies and the dogs, all of 'em trained. The human exhibits consisted of a crew of second-rate performers, good enough for the general classification of the show.

And we had a wild man, too, along with other side-show exhibits. The wild man used to be a Pullman porter on the Missouri Pacific, and I guess that's what made him wild. He was a ferocious individual when he had his make-up on and his false tusks working good, but the only thing he was wild about outside of exhibition hours was a set of dice. His regular name was Alfred something or other, but on the bills he was "Umpus the Untamable." On duty he lacerated huge chunks of raw meat, but he preferred pork chops fried brown.

Now there wasn't a fortune in that show, but it was good, small-town stuff, if it was handled right, weather permitting. Frank Sparkle was my right-hand man. The show made good from the start-out. The sun smiled and the moon laughed. The first four days proved to me that we would finish the season way ahead of my investment, and it was a softer job than dodging around the country working first one game and then another.

When the show was loading on the fiith night me and Frank Sparkle had a conference.

"Frank," says I, "I don't object to lawful and merciful lines of graft. We had them things in mind when we took this show over. We estimated that it might give us a chance to work a few deep and profitable stunts on the side. Recollect?"

"Sure," Frank agrees. "But we've been so busy getting started that we haven't had time for anything but circus stuff."

"That's the point I'm coming to. I've about come to the conclusion that we'll run this show on the square. There's money in it for both of us, as a legitimate game. Why should we reach out for anything uncertain, and maybe dangerous, when we got this?"

"That suits me," says Frank.

"That question being settled," I goes on, "the next thing is to clean out the grafters. I doubt if there's a show on rails to-day that's jetting 'em get by with such raw stuff."

"They're even picking pockets on the lot," Frank declares, "and it won't be long before they start the strong-arm business."

"Yes," says I, "and they're picking on the show people, too. Ed Spade, who knows more about dice than an Emancipation Day committee on arrangements, has got a mortgage on the wild man's salary for the next sixty days. He says it's borrowed money, but I know Ed Spade. All he needs is two dice and a colored man with money."

"I think there's some crooked poker games going on, too," Frank suggests. "The show people are dipping in and losing their money. I can't figure how a grafter can take a showman— but there's some clever grafters following this layout. They broke the snake charmer. That's the reason she got drunk and now has the delirium tremens."

"It's the rawest bunch that ever followed a show," I declares, "and they're taking advantage of you and me."

"It's a bad layout, Cam. Most of 'em know you and me, and they know too much about us. That is— well, I suppose they suspect you, too, of various indiscretions, eh?"

"Some of 'em could cause me trouble, all right— and that's what we'll have to dodge. I ain't reforming or getting good or anything like that— but I want a vacation from graft this summer; and I got a right to take it without interference. We've got to shuck these grafters off from the show— and cl ean 'em out so they won't know the facts. We've got to disgust 'em with the show, Irank. Now, listen—"

And unto him I unfolded a thing or two.

Then I sent Frank Sparkle ahead of the show. We altered our route a trifle, fixing it so that we was scheduled to play several towns on the State line between Indiana and Illinois, jumping back and forth from one town to another, and. finally making four or five long jumps and landing in Missouri. That show dodged around like a fugitive from justice. Finally we jumped over the State line into Illinois, and unloaded in a ittle town called Fairberry.

The show went fine, but the graft kept going finer. The grafters got so they didn't care whether the menfolk went to the show or not. All they wanted 'em to do was come on the lot, send the women and children into the big top, and gather around their devices and games in financial clusters. At night they didn't even bother to spread their games. They pulled snappy confidence stunts, and picked pockets— anything to clean up. The show was getting a bad reputation, and when that reputation gets so it beats a show into town, you might's well close up.

When the show was loading that night Ed Spade, who was the "bell" for the grafters, come down to the train.

"Cam," says he, "this town of Fairberry has about cleaned us up."

"That's tough, Ed," I smiles,

"I just been studying that schedule of yours," he goes on, "and I see this show is routed to dodge back and forth between Indiana and Illinois, like it was a checker trying to get into the king row."

"I didn't make the schedule," I tells him. "I'm just following the route laid out by Old Man Wixon before I took over the show."

"I ain't blaming you, Cam," he assures me, "but it's unfortunate. You know how superstitious grafters are about State lines, and I don't know as I can hold 'em."

"I'm sorry about that."

"It's a profitable business for me," Ed declares, ''and you're getting your rake-off. I know that you want fo hold the graft. Now, can't you change that schedule?"

"I can't do that— the time's too short."

"This crossing State lines so much— I don't like it, and the boys don't like it. A State line is always a jinx to a grafter— you know that; and this first stop in Illinois proves it."

"What happened here?" I asks him.

"What happened! Nothing except that we got cleaned out of all the money we made in Indiana. This townful of chumps beat every game we spread. Besides that, some of the boys had their pockets picked, two or three of 'em got hit on the head to-night and robbed, and five of 'em got arrested."

"This seems to be a fast town, eh?"

"No," Ed says, "it ain't a fast town. It's just the jinx of crossing a State line. Well," he adds, "we'll try it a few days longer; but I never did like to buck a jinx."

"I don't believe in that stuff, Ed," I tells him. "It just happened to be a tough spot. Maybe it won't happen again."

"We'll see. Me and the boys would like to stick with you, Cam, but I don't think we can hold 'em if we run across one or two more towns like this one. Good night, Cam!"

"Good night, Ed!"

Well, we zigzagged down that State line, one day in Illinois and the next in Indiana. Our path looked like the trail of a drunken man down Broadway when the saloons was open on both sides of the street. In a few days we come to a town called Finch, also in Illinois.

It's on account of them two towns, Fairberry and Finch, that my show got rid of the grafters, and went through the season as a profitable and legal enterprise. The crowd in Finch put the finishing touches onto it. They cleaned up what Fairberry left. They took everything away from them grafters but their bad habits. And the grafters was overcome by the jinx, and deserted that show the same as they would a county jail.

Was it a jinx? Well, the grafters thought it was. They hate to cross State lines. It's a superstition of the business, and grew up, I expect, because most of 'em are wanted in the States immediately adjoining, no matter where they are. Didn't you know that? Maybe it was a jinx, but J got another idea.

I happen to know that the State of Illinois at that time was doing a lot of work on-the roads, especially in the neighborhood of Fairberry and Finch. Most of the road gangs was composed of prisoners from the State institutions. The men was trusties and worked under the honor system.

At Fairberry and Finch, Ed Sparkle got the foremen of the road gangs to declare a circus holiday, and give all them prisoners free tickets.

Well, that's all we wanted. We wanted the honor prisoners on our circus lot, and them birds knew as much about grafting and similar arts as the grafters that followed the show. They come to the lot dressed in their overalls, an innocent-looking bunch— and just walked away with the graft. It was a big holiday for them honor men, and good practice.

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15: Mutual Exchange

A. T. Quiller-Couch

1863-1944

The Red Book Magazine Dec 1915

A Christmas yarn with a touch of strangeness.

MILLIONAIRE though he was, Mr. Markham, "the Insurance King," never let a small opportunity slip. To be sure, the enforced idleness of an Atlantic crossing bored him and kept him restless: it affected him with malaise to think that for these five days, while the solitude of ocean swallowed him, men on either shore with cables at their command were using them to get rich on their own account— it might even be at his expense.

The first day out from New York he had spent in his cabin, immersed in correspondence. Having dealt with this and exhausted it, on the second, third and fourth days he found nothing to do. He never played cards; he eschewed all acquaintance with his fellow men except in the way of business: he had no vanity, and to be stared at on the promenade deck because of the fame of his wealth merely annoyed him. On the other hand he had not the smallest excuse to lock himself up in his stuffy stateroom. He enjoyed fresh air, and had never been seasick in his life.

It was just habit— the habit of never letting a chance go, or the detail of a chance— that on the fourth morning carried him the length of the liner, to engage in talk with the fresh-colored young third officer busy on the high deck forward.

"A young man, exposed as you are, ought to insure himself," said Mr. Markham.

The third officer—by name Dick Rendal— knew something of the inquisitiveness and idle ways of passengers. This was his fifth trip in the *Carnatic*. He took no truck in passengers beyond showing them the patient politeness enjoined by the Company's rules. He knew nothing of Mr. Markham, who dispensed with the services of a valet and dressed with a shabbiness only pardonable in the extremely rich.

Mr. Markham, "the Insurance King," had arrayed himself this morning in gray flannel, with a hand-me-down overcoat, cloth cap and house slippers that betrayed his flat instep. Dick Rendal sized him up for an insurance tout, but behaved precisely as he would have behaved on better information. He refrained from ordering the intruder aft, but eyed him less than amiably— being young, keen on his ship and just now keen on his job.

"I saw you yesterday," said Mr. Markham. (It had blown more than half a gale, and late in the afternoon three heavy seas had come aboard. The third

officer at this moment was employed with half a dozen seamen in repairing damages). "I was watching. As I judged, it was the nicest miss you weren't overboard. Over and above employers' liability you should insure. The Hands Across Mutual Exchange— that's your office."

Mr. Markham leaned back and put a hand up to his inner breast-pocket—it is uncertain whether for his cigar-case, or for some leaflet relating to the Hands Across.

"Take care, sir!" said the third officer sharply. "That stanchion—"

He called too late. The hand, as it touched the breast-pocket, shot up and clawed at the air. With a voice that was less a cry than a startled grunt, Mr. Markham pitched backwards off the fore-deck into the sea.

The third officer stared just for a fraction of a second, ran, seized a lifebelt as the liner's length went shooting past, and hurled it— with pretty good aim, too— almost before a man of his working party had time to raise the cry of "Man overboard!" Before the alarm reached the bridge, he had kicked off his shoes; and the last sound in his ears as he dived was the *ping* of the bell ringing down to the engine-room— a thin note, infinitely distant, speaking out of an immense silence.

It was a beautifully clean dive, but in the flurry of the plunge the third officer forgot for an instant the right upward slant of the palms, and went a great way deeper than he had intended. By the time he rose to the surface the liner had slid by, and for a moment or two he saw nothing; for instinctively he came up facing aft, towards the spot where Mr. Markham had fallen, and the long sea running after yesterday's gale threw up a ridge that seemed to take minutes— though in fact it took but a few seconds— to sink and heave up the trough beyond. By-and-by a life-belt swam up into sight, then another,—at least a dozen had been flung,— and beyond these at length, on the climbing crest of the swell two hundred yards away, the head and shoulders of Mr. Markham.

By great good luck, the first life-belt had fallen within a few feet of him, and Mr. Markham had somehow managed to get within reach and clutch it— a highly creditable feat when it is considered that he was at best a poor swimmer, that the fall had knocked more than half the breath out of his body, that he had swallowed close on a pint of salt water and that a heavy overcoat impeded his movements.

But after this fair first effort, Mr. Markham, as his clothes weighed him down, began— as the phrase is— to make very bad weather of it. He made worse and worse weather of it as Dick Rendal covered the distance between them with a superlatively fine side-stroke, once or twice singing out to him to

hold on, and keep a good heart. Mr. Markham, whether he heard or no, held on with great courage, and even coolness—up to a point.

Then of a sudden his nerve deserted him. He loosed his hold of the life-belt, and struck out for his rescuer. Worse, as he sank in the effort, and Dick gripped him, he closed and struggled. For half a minute Dick, shaking free of the embrace— and this only by striking him on the jaw and half stunning him as they rose on the crest of a swell— was able to grip him by the collar and drag him within reach of the life-belt. But here the demented man managed to wreath his legs and arms in another and more terrible hold. 'The pair of them were now cursing horribly, cursing whenever a wave quit choking them and allowed them to cough and sputter for breath. They fought as two men whose lives had pent up an unsparing hate for this moment. They fought, neither losing his hold, as their strength ebbed, and the weight of their clothes dragged them lower. When the liner's boat at length reached the spot, Dick Rendal's hand still clutched the cord of the life-belt, but both bodies were under water, fast locked. They were hauled on board, as on a long-line you haul a fish with a crab fastened upon him, and laid in the sternsheets, where their grip was with some difficulty loosened.

IT may have happened in the struggle.

Or again, it may have happened when they were hoisted aboard and laid, for a minute or so, side by side on the deck. Both men were insensible, so far gone indeed that the Doctor looked serious as he began to induce artificial respiration.

The young third officer "came round" after five minutes of this; but strangely enough, in the end he was found to be suffering from a severer shock than Mr. Markham, on whom the Doctor operated for a full twenty minutes before a flutter of the eyelids rewarded him. They were carried away— the third officer, in a state of collapse, to his modest berth, Mr. Markham to his white-and-gold deck-cabin. On his way thither, Mr. Markham protested cheerily that he saw no reason for all this fuss; he was as right now, or nearly as right, as the Bank; and anyway it was all in the day's work.

"How's Rendal getting on?"

Captain Holditch, skipper of the *Carnatic*, put this question next morning to the Doctor, and was somewhat surprised by the answer.

"Oh, Rendal's all right. That is to say, he will be all right. Just now he's suffering from shock. My advice— supposing, of course, you can spare him—is to pack him straightway off to his people on a week's leave. In a week, he'll be fit as a fiddle." The Doctor paused and added: "Wish I could feel as easy about the millionaire."

"Why, what's the matter with him? Struck me he pulled round wonderfully, once you'd brought him to. He talked as cheery as a grig."

"H'm— yes," said the Doctor. "He has been talking like that ever since, only he hasn't been talking sense. Calls me names for keeping him in bed, wants to get out and repair that stanchion. I told him it was mended. 'Nothing on earth is the matter with me,' he insisted, till I had to quiet him down with bromide. By the way, did you send off any account of the accident ?"

"By wireless? No, I took rather particular pains to stop that— gets into the papers; only frightens the family and friends, who conclude things to be ten times worse than they are. Plenty of time at Southampton. Boat-express'll take him home ahead of the scare."

"Lives in Park Lane, doesn't he— that big corner house like a game-pie?... Ye-es, you were thoughtful as usual... Only some one might have been down to the docks to meet him. Wish I knew his doctor's address. Well, never mind— I'll fix him up so that he reaches Park Lane, anyway."

"He ought to do something for Rendal," mused Captain Holditch.

"He will, you bet, when his head's right— that's if a millionaire's head is ever right," added the Doctor, who held radical opinions on the distribution of wealth.

The Captain ignored this. He never talked politics, even when ashore. "As plucky a rescue as ever I witnessed," he went on. ''Yes, of course I'll spare the lad. Slip a few clothes into his bag, and tell him he can get off by the first train. Oh, and by the way— you might ask him if he's all right for money. Say he can draw on me if he wants any."

The Doctor took his message down to Dick Rendal.

"We're this moment passing Hurst Castle," he announced cheerfully, "and you may tumble out if you like. But first I'm to pack a few clothes for you— if you let me. I'll do it better than the steward. Shore-going clothes, my boy— where d'you keep your cabin trunk? Eh? Suit-case, is it?— best leather, nickel locks— no, silver, as I'm a sinner! Hullo, my young friend!" Here the Doctor looked up, mischief in his eye. "You never struck me as that sort of dude; and fathers and mothers don't fit their offspring out with silver locks to their suit-cases— or they've altered since my time. Well, you'll enjoy your leave all the better; and give her my congratulations. The Old Man says you may get off as soon as we're docked, and stay home till you've recovered. I daresay it wont be long before you feel better," he wound up with a glance at the suit-case.

"The Old Man? Yes— yes— Captain Holditch, of course," muttered Dick from his berth.

The Doctor looked at him narrowly for a moment, but, when he spoke again, kept by intention the same easy, rattling tone. "Decent of him, eh? Yes,

and by the way, he asked me to tell you that, if you shouldn't happen to be flush of money just now, it needn't hinder you five minutes. He'll be your banker, and make it right with the Board."

Dick lay still for half a dozen seconds, as though the words took that time in reaching him. Then he let out a short laugh from somewhere high in his nose. "My banker? Will he?— good Lord!"

"Maybe," said the Doctor dryly, laying out a suit of mufti at the foot of the bed, "the Old Man and I belong to the same date. I've heard that youngsters save money nowadays. But when I was your age, that sort of offer would have hit the mark nine times out of ten."

He delivered this as a parting shot. Dick, lying on his back and staring up at a knot in the woodwork over his bunk, received it placidly. Probably he did not hear. His brow was corrugated in a frown, as though he were working out a sum or puzzling over some problem. The Doctor closed the door softly, and some minutes later paid a visit to Mr. Markham, whom he found stretched on the couch of the white-and-gold deck-cabin, attired in a gray flannel sleeping-suit, and wrapped around the legs with a traveling rug of dubious hue.

"That's a good deal better," the Doctor said after an examination in which, while seeming to be occupied with pulses and temperature, he paid particular attention to the pupils of Mr. Markham's eyes. "We are nosing up the Solent fast— did you know it? Ten minutes ought to see us in Southampton Water— and I suppose you will be wanting to catch the first train."

"I wonder, said Mr. Markham vaguely, "if the Old Man will mind."

The Doctor stared for a moment. "I think we may risk it," he said, after a pause, "though I confess that, last night, I was doubtful. Of course, if you're going to be met, it's right enough."

"Why should I be met?"

"Well, you see— I couldn't know, could I? Anyway, you ought to see your own doctor as soon as you get home. Perhaps, if you gave me his name, I might scribble a note to him, just to say what has happened. Even big-wigs, you know, don't resent being helped with a little information."

Mr. Markham stared. "Lord!" said he. "You're talking as if I kept a tame doctor! Why, man, I've never been sick nor sorry since I went to school!"

"That's not hard to believe. I've ausculated you— sound as a bell, you are; constitution strong as a horse's. Still, a shock is a shock. You've a family doctor, I expect—some one you ring up when your liver goes wrong, and you want to be advised to go to Marienbad or some such place— I'd feel easier if I could shift the responsibility on to him."

Still Mr. Markham stared. "I've heard about enough of this shock to my system," said he at length. "But have it your own way. If you want me to

recommend a doctor, my mother swears by an old boy in Craven Street, Strand. I don't know the number, but his name's Leadbetter, and he's death on croup."

"Craven Street? That's a trifle off Park Lane, isn't it? Still, 'Leadbetter,' you say? I'll get hold of the directory, look up his address and drop him a note or two on the case by this evening's post."

A COUPLE of hours later Mr. Markham and Dick Rendal almost rubbed shoulders in the crowd of passengers shaking hands with the ever polite Captain Holditch, and bidding the Carnatic good-by with the usual parting compliments; but in the hurry and bustle no one noted that the pair exchanged neither word nor look of recognition. The Skipper gave Dick an honest clap on the shoulder. "Doctor's fixed you up, then? "That's right. Make the best of your holiday, and I'll see that the Board does you justice." And with that, he turned away for more handshaking. One small thing he did remark. When it came to Mr. Markham's turn, that gentleman, before extending a hand, lifted it to his forehead and gravely saluted. But great men— as Captain Holditch knew— have their eccentric ways.

Nor was it remarked, when the luggage came to be sorted out and put on board the Boat Express, that Dick's porter, under his direction, collected and wheeled off Mr. Markham's; while Mr. Markham picked up Dick's suit-case, walked away with it unchallenged to a third-class smoking compartment and deposited it on the rack. There were three other passengers in the compartment. "Good Lord!" ejaculated one, as the millionaire stepped out to purchase an evening paper. "Isn't that Markham? Well!— and traveling third!" "Saving habit— second nature," said another. "That's the way to get rich, my boy."

Meanwhile Dick, having paid for four places, and thereby secured a first-class solitude, visited the telegraph office and shrank the few pounds in his pocket by sending a number of cablegrams.

On the journey up, Mr. Markham took some annoyance from the glances of his fellow passengers. They were furtive, almost reverential, and this could only be set down to his exploit of yesterday. He thanked Heaven they forbore to talk of it.

IN the back-parlor of a bookseller's shop, between the Strand and the Embankment, three persons sat at tea: the proprietor of the shop,— a gray little man with round spectacles and bushy eyebrows,— his wife and a pretty girl of twenty or twenty-one. The girl apparently was a visitor, for she wore her hat, and her jacket lay across the arm of an old horsehair sofa that stood

against the wall in the lamp's half-shadow : and yet the gray little bookseller and his little Dresden-china wife very evidently made no stranger of her. They talked, all three, as members of a family talk, when contented and affectionate— at haphazard, taking one another for granted, not raising their voices.

The table was laid for a fourth; and by and by they heard him coming through the shop—in a hurry, too. The old lady, always sensitive to the sound of her boy's footsteps, looked up almost in alarm ; but the girl half-rose from her chair, her eyes eager.

"I know," she said breathlessly. "Jim has heard—"

"Chrissy here? That's right!" A young man broke into the room, and stood waving a newspaper. "The *Carnatic*'s arrived! Here it is under 'Late News,' —I bought the paper as I came by Somerset House,— '*Carnatic* arrived Southampton three-forty-five this afternoon. Her time from Sandy hook, five days, six hours, forty-five minutes.' "

"Then she hasn't broken the record this time, though Dick was positive she would," put in the old lady.

"You bad little mother!"— Jim wagged a forefinger at her. "You don't deserve to hear another word."

"Is there any more?"

"More? Just you listen to this: 'Reports heroic rescue. Yesterday afternoon Mr. Markham, the Insurance King, accidentally fell overboard from the fore-deck, and was gallantly rescued by a young officer named Kendal'— you bet that's a misprint for Rendal— error in the wire, perhaps. We'll get a later edition after tea— 'who leaped into the sea and swam to the sinking millionaire, supporting him until assistance arrived. Mr. Markham had by this afternoon recovered sufficiently to travel home by the Boat Express.' "

"But don't they say anything about Dick?" quavered the mother, fumbling with her glasses, while Miss Chrissy stared at the print with shining eyes.

"Dick's not a millionaire, Mother— thought it seems he has been supporting one— for a few minutes, anyway. Well, Chrissy, how does that make you feel ?"

"You see, my dear," said the little bookseller softly, addressing his wife, "if any harm had come to the boy, they would have reported it for certain."

They talked over the news while Jim drank his tea. A warm flush showed on the cheeks of both the women, and the little bookseller found it necessary to take out his handkerchief at intervals and wipe his round spectacles.

He was wiping them perhaps for the twentieth time, and announcing that he must go and relieve his assistant in the shop, when the assistant's voice was heard uplifted close outside— as it seemed, in remonstrance with a customer.

"Hullo!" said the little bookseller, and was rising from his chair, when the door opened. A middle-aged man, carrying a suit-case, stood on the threshold and regarded the little party.

"Mother!" cried Mr. Markham, "Chrissy!"

He set down the suit-case and took two eager strides. Old Mrs. Rendal, the one immediately menaced, shrank back into Jim's arms as he started up with his throat working to bolt a mouthful of cake. Chrissy caught her breath.

"Who in thunder are you, sir?" demanded Jim. "Get out of this, unless you want to be thrown out!"

"Chrissy!" again appealed Mr. Markham, but in a fainter voice. He had come to a standstill, and his hand went slowly up to his forehead.

Chrissy pointed to the suit-case. "It's— it's Dick's!" she gasped. Jim did not hear. "Mr. Wenham," he said to the white-faced assistant in the doorway, "will you step out, please, and fetch a policeman?"

"Excuse me." Mr. Markham took his hand slowly from his face, and spread it behind him, groping as he stepped backwards to-the door. "I— I am not well, I think." He spoke precisely, as though each word as it came had to be ` held and gripped. "The address," (here he turned on. Chrissy with a vague, apologetic smile) "— faces— clear in my head. Mistake— I really beg your pardon."

"Get him some brandy, Jim," said the little bookseller. "The gentleman is ill, whoever he is."

But Mr. Markham turned without another word and lurched past-the assistant, who flattened himself against a bookshelf to give him room. Jim saw him cross the doorstep and turn away down the pavement to the left, and returned, softly whistling, to the little parlor.

"Drunk's the simplest explanation," he announced.

"But how did he know my name?" demanded Chrissy. "And the suit-case!"

"Eh? He's left it—well, if this doesn't beat the band! Here, Wenham— nip after the man and tell him he left his luggage behind!" Jim stooped to lift the case by the handle.

"But it's Dick's!"

"Dick's?"

"It's the suit-case I gave him— my birthday present last April. See, there are his initials!"

DICK RENDAL, alighting at Waterloo, collected his luggage— or rather, Mr. Markham's— methodically, saw it hoisted on a four-wheeler and handing the cabby two shillings, told him to deliver it at an address in Park Lane, where the

butler would pay him his exact fare. This done, he sought the telegraph office and sent three more cablegrams, the concise wording of which he had carefully evolved on the way up from Southampton. These do not come into. the story, which may digress, however, so far as to tell that on receipt of one of them the vice-president of the Hands Across New York office remarked to his secretary that "the old warrior was losing no time. Leisure and ozone would appear to have bucked him up." To which the secretary answered that it was lucky for civilization if Mr. Markham missed suspecting their effect, or he'd infallibly make a 'corner' in both.

Having despatched his orders, Dick Rendal felt in his pockets for a cigar case, was annoyed and amused (in a subconscious sort of way) to find only a briar pipe and a pocketful of coarse-cut tobacco. He filled and lighted his pipe, and started to walk.

His way led him across Westminster Bridge, up through Whitehall, and brought him to the steps of that building which, among all the great London clubs, most exorbitantly resembles a palace. He mounted its perron with the springy, confident step of youth; and that same spring and confidence of gait carried him past the usually vigilant porter. A marble staircase led him to the lordliest smoking-room in London. He frowned, perceiving that his favourite armchair was occupied by a somnolent judge of the High Court, and catching up *The Revue des Deux Mondes*, settled himself in a window-bay commanding the great square of the Horse Guards, and the lamp-lit Mall.

He had entered the smoking-room lightly, almost jauntily, but— not a doubt of it— he was tired, so tired that he shuffled his body twice and thrice in the armchair before discovering the precise angle that gave superlative comfort.

"I beg your pardon, sir."

Dick opened his eyes. A liveried footman stood over his chair and was addressing him.

"Eh? Did I ring? Yes, you may bring me a glass of liqueur brandy. As quickly as possible, if you please. To tell the truth, George, I'm not feeling very well."

The man started at hearing his name, but made no motion to obey the order.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but the Secretary wishes to see you in his room."

"The Secretary? Mr. Hood? Yes, certainly." Dick rose. "I— I am afraid you must give me your arm, please. A giddiness— the ship's motion, I suppose."

The Secretary was standing at his door in the great vestibule as Dick came down the staircase on the man's arm. "I beg your pardon," he said, "but may I

have your name? The porter does not recognize you, and I fear that I am equally. at fault.

"My name?" With the same gesture that Mr. Markham had used in the little back parlor, Dick passed a hand over his eyes. He laughed, and even to his own ears the laugh sounded vacant, foolish.

"Are you a member of the club, sir?"

"I— I thought I was." The marble pillars of the atrium were swaying about him like painted cloths, the tesselated pavement heaving and rocking at his feet. "Abominably stupid of me," he muttered, "unpardonable, you must think." The Secretary looked at him narrowly, and decided that he was really ill; that there was nothing in his face to suggest the impostor. "Come into my room for a moment," he said, and sent the footman upstairs to make sure that no small property of the club was missing. "Here, drink down the brandy— feeling better? You are aware, no doubt, that I might call in the police and have you searched ?"

For a moment Dick did not answer, but stood staring. At length—

"They— won't— find— what— I— want," he said slowly, dropping out the words one by one. The Secretary now felt certain that here was a genuine case of mental derangement. With such he had no desire to be troubled; and so, the footman bringing word that nothing had been stolen, he dismissed Dick to the street.

THE brandy steadying him, Dick went down the steps with a fairly firm tread.

The streets, the traffic, meant nothing to him. Their roar was within his head, and on his ears, nostrils, chest, lay a pressure as of mighty waters. Rapidly as he walked, he felt himself all the while to be lying fathoms deep in those waters, face downwards, with drooped head, held motionless there: while something within him struggled impotently to rise to the surface.

The houses, the shop-fronts, the street-lamps, the throng of dark figures, passed him in unmeaning procession. Yet all the time, his feet, by some instinct, were leading him towards the water: and by and by he found himself staring— still face downwards— into a black, inverted heaven wherein the lights had become stars and swayed only a little.

He had, in fact, halted, and was leaning over the parapet of the Embankment, a few yards from Cleopatra's Needle. And as he passed the plinth, some impression of it must have bitten itself on the retina, for coiled among the stars lay two motionless. sphinxes, green-eyed,. with sheathed claws, watching lazily while the pressure bore him down to them, and still down.

Suddenly on this dome of night, there broke the echo of a footfall. A thousand footsteps had passed him, and he had heard none of them. But this one, springing out of nowhere, sang and repeated itself and re-echoed across the dome, and from edge to edge. Dick's fingers drew themselves up like the claws of the sphinx. The footsteps drew nearer while he crouched— they were close to him. Dick leaped at them, with murder in his spring.

Where the two men grappled, the parapet of the Embankment opens on a flight of river-stairs. Mr. Markham had uttered no cry; nor did a sound escape either man as, locked in that wrestle, they swayed over the brink.

They were hauled up, unconscious, still locked in each other's arms.

"Queer business," said one of the rescuers as he helped to loosen their clasp, and lift the bodies on board the Royal Humane Society's barge. "Looks like murderous assault. But which of 'em done it, by the looks, now?"

Five minutes later Dick's eyelids fluttered. For a moment he stared up at the dingy lamp swinging overhead; then his lips parted in a cry, faint yet sharp:

"Take care, sir! That stanchion—"

But Mr. Markham's first words were:

"Plucky! devilish plucky!— owe you my life, my lad."

———————

16: Reflected Evidence

Scott Campbell

1858-1933

Detective Story Magazine 27 Jan 1920

"WHO is the woman? Found dead where?”

Mr. Clyde Glynn, private detective, leaned nearer his desk telephone. He was talking with Sergeant Joe Dakin of the city police, who had just rung him up from the precinct station.

“You've seen her— Nanette Blair,” Dakin told him. “In the theaters and cabarets. Magazine artist and story writer. Lives alone in the Waldmere. I’ve seen a friend of yours with her, Doctor Wells Curry, at—"

“I know,” Glynn interrupted. “But I don’t know her. Found where?”

“In her apartment at nine o’clock this morning. I just heard of it, or would have told you earlier. It’s said to be a sure case of murder. Bruce Ordway, headquarters detective, now is looking into it. I’m told— listen!” Dakin emphasized. “Doctor Curry is suspected. He is, in fact, charged with having killed her.”

“Wells Curry— impossible!” Glynn exclaimed. His fine, clean-cut face went grave, nevertheless, and a bit apprehensive. “That’s absurd. Curry wouldn’t kill a mouse. I know him from A to Z. He’s one of my closest friends.”

“That’s why I rang you up. I knew you’d want to know,” Dakin rejoined, “It looks bad for him, as I get it from others. I don’t yet know of what the evidence consists, or why—"

“I'll soon find out,” Glynn cut in abruptly. “Curry will expect no less of me, as you probably inferred. Much obliged, Joey. I'll go right up there.”

It was eleven o’clock, two hours after the fatality was discovered, when Detective Glynn entered the Waldmere, an uptown apartment house of moderate size and very good reputation. He could conceive of no cause for Doctor Wells Curry to have murdered Nanette Blair. He had known him since college days.

Wells Curry was a very prosperous physician of thirty-five, frank and genial, stalwart and strikingly handsome, very popular with the men, and one whom most women found particularly fascinating. Glynn knew, too, that his engagement to charming Portia Floyd, a very beautiful and accomplished society girl, was soon to be announced; and he felt reasonably sure, though he knew they had been quite friendly, that no unfortunate entanglement with Nanette Blair was a threatening factor, much less an occasion for murder. All that was very unlike Wells Curry, wholly unlike him, in fact, and Clyde Glynn knew it. That was the only advantage the detective had over Bruce Ordway, of headquarters, who also was at work on the case.

Glynn found him with several others in the sitting room of an attractive apartment on the third floor, the last in a side corridor, with windows overlooking a side street and a rear court. The roller shades had been raised and the morning sunlight streamed into the room. To the right was a small dining room and a kitchenette. To the left was a bedroom and an adjoining bathroom. Through an arched doorway, the portiére of which was drawn completely aside, could be seen most of the bedroom—and the victim of the crime.

She was lying on a half-size bed in a small alcove, a handsome girl of twenty-five, a pronounced brunette, with luxuriant dark hair and long, drooping lashes, which accentuated the death pallor that had settled on her face. She was clad in a beautiful evening gown, and wore jewels of moderate value; they sparkled on the marble whiteness of her still neck and shapely hands, and seemed to mock the cold clay with a living light all their own.

Clyde Glynn took in with a glance these features of the scene, when a policeman stationed in the corridor admitted him. He was well acquainted with Ordway, who viewed him with a momentary look of surprise when he entered,

“What’s this I hear about my friend Curry?” Glynn inquired, after greeting him. “I heard it only by telephone. Is there anything in it?”

Detective Ordway, a large, rugged man of fifty, suspected his mission and motive, but he showed no resentment. He had a cold, blunt way of speaking, nevertheless, that told of covert egotism, faith in his own discernment and acumen, and which quite often was strongly tinged with irony and subtle contempt.

“Very much in it,” he replied. “Your friend Curry is in wrong. There’s no question about it.”

“Pretty conclusive, eh?”

“Absolutely. It would have been scarcely more so, Glynn, if he had been caught in the act. He was nearly as good as seen killing her, at that.”

“This seems incredible.” Glynn confined himself to a mild disagreement, “What do you mean, Ordway, by nearly as good as seen? Won’t you kindly state the circumstances and let me view the evidence?”

‘“What’s the idea? Do you expect to discover something that I’m too blind to see?’ Ordway questioned sarcastically.

“Curry is a very dear friend of mine, Glynn told him simply.

“Sure! I know that.” Ordway nodded and turned toward the bedroom, “Certainly, Glynn, I'll inform you. The crime was discovered by a chambermaid about nine o’clock. There is no house detective. I happened to be in the precinct station when the murder was reported, so I came here at once and found the body. “

"Just as I see it?" Glynn interposed. He had followed Ordway into the bedroom.

"Exactly," said the latter. "It's not been touched except by Doctor Birk, who briefly examined it. He states positively that the girl has been dead at least twelve hours."

"There is no question about it," said the physician, approaching. "Rigor mortis is very pronounced. Twelve hours, Mr. Glynn, at least. I would stake my reputation on it."

"That fixes the time of the crime at about ten o'clock last evening," Ordway proceeded. "We know she was alive at that time. Doctor Curry came here about half past nine. He was seen by two women in the hall below. He did not come in through the main entrance, but by a side door; nor did he take the elevator. He hastened up the stairs to this flat."

"Is it known how long he remained here?"

"He left about half past ten," Ordway said, nodding. "He went down a side stairway and out through the side door. He was met on the lower stairway by a Mr. Rudd and his wife, who have apartments below. He was very pale and agitated, and apparently 'in much haste, all of which was noticed by both Rudd and his wife."

"Your notion is, I suppose, that he tried to sneak out unseen." Glynn eyed him a bit coldly.

"It's a conviction, not a notion," Ordway retorted. "When he saw that a meeting with the couple was unavoidable, he whipped out his handkerchief and pretended to use it, aiming to hide his face and prevent subsequent identification. Both knew him by sight, however, and his design was so obvious that both saw and spoke of it."

"Did you refer to them when you said he was nearly as good as seen killing this girl?"

"Humph! Not much! Come here, Baldwin."

Ordway beckoned to a tall young man in the sitting room. "Stage again what you saw last evening. No doubt, Glynn, you prefer to get it first hand," he added, with cynical insinuation.

Clyde Glynn did not reply. Baldwin pointed from the bedroom window to one in the end wall of a brick block in the rear. It was directly opposite across the court mentioned, and about twelve feet away.

"That's the side window of my room," he stated. "I came in at a quarter to ten last evening. I saw before lighting my room that this one was lighted, and I was startled by moving shadows on the roller shade, which was drawn completely down. They were quite clearly defined, and I saw them very distinctly.

“Shadows of what?” Glynn asked him.

“This woman, sir, one of them,” Baldwin said confidently. “I could not mistake her figure. She was struggling in the grasp of a man. He had her by the throat with his left hand, as near as I could tell, and was covering her mouth with his right, evidently to prevent any outcry. Miss Blair was grasping his wrist and trying vainly to escape. The struggle was very brief, however, unless I saw only the end of it, for the girl either was overcome, or suddenly fainted; she sank almost immediately in the man’s arms.”

“Go on,” Ordway urged. “Tell him the whole of it.”

“There’s not much more, sir,” said Baldwin. “I saw the man bring her into this room, and then the shadows left the curtain and I could see no more. I watched and listened till my clock struck ten, or about fifteen minutes, but I saw or heard no further disturbance of any kind. Then I went to bed. I thought I had misinterpreted the scene, perhaps, and I did nothing about it. When informed of the murder this morning, however, I came here at once and told Detective Ordway.”

Clyde Glynn did not reply for a moment. He glanced sharply around the bedroom, at the arched entrance from the sitting room, and at a dressing stand against the wall near it, both of which were directly opposite the bedroom window. He could not deny the significance of what he had heard, nor could he conceive of any warrantable occasion for it.

“The struggle, then, or as much as you saw of it projected on the curtain, did not occur in this room,” he remarked to Baldwin. “Are you sure of that ?”

“Yes, sir, absolutely sure,” Baldwin said emphatically. “It took place in the sitting room, but close to the doorway between the two rooms. I could plainly see the shape of a portion of the arched doorway projected on the curtain.”

“You could, eh?” Glynn gazed at it again,

“That’s perfectly natural," Ordway bluntly asserted. “Note that the doorway is nearly in a direct line from the sitting-room table to the bedroom window. If the lamp on the table was lighted, as of course it must have been, the rays of light through the doorway would certainly show an_ illuminated contour of a portion of it on the bedroom curtain,” he pointed out. “Any object in the doorway, therefore, would be between the lamp and the curtain, and would cast a shadow on it. That’s as plain as twice two. Obviously, Glynn, your friend Curry was trying to force the girl into this room. He succeeded after she fainted, or was overcome, as the shadows showed when he came through the doorway and then disappeared to one side, or in the direction of the bed.”

“Exactly!” Baldwin quickly agreed. “That’s precisely how it looked to me. The shadows were somewhat reduced in size and more sharply defined, moreover, as he came nearer the curtain when coming through the doorway.

That's just what he did, sir," he again asserted confidently, gazing at the frowning face of the private- detective.

"Don't you be so sure of it." Glynn's voice hardened ominously. "Wells Curry's life may hang upon your assertions, and a human life must not be jeopardized too confidently. The impressions derived from a shadow pantomime are not always reliable."

"I'm reasonably sure," Baldwin still asserted, a bit nettled by the sharp rebuke.

"Are you acquainted with Curry?" Glynn demanded. "Do you know him even by sight?"

"No, I don't," Baldwin curtly admitted. "Nor have I said that the man was Curry. It may for all I know have been some other man. All I've said is that he was tall and stalwart, as I knew from a comparison with Miss Blair's figure, and Detective Ordway assumed that it was Doctor Curry."

"It's not an assumption," Ordway bluntly corrected. "I know positively that Curry was here at precisely that time. It's absurd to suppose, in view of all of the other incriminating circumstances, that another man entered and killed this girl after Curry departed, His own conduct confirms—"

"Oh, I don't question the veracity of the persons who informed you, nor doubt that you questioned them carefully," Glynn interrupted. "What did the chambermaid say? Did she find any lights burning here this morning?"

"Not a light. They were out and the curtains drawn down."

"The bedroom curtain?"

"Certainly. I raised it myself," Ordway said impatiently. "The chambermaid was so frightened when she saw the body that she rushed out at once to tell the office clerk. He's now in the sitting room if you want to question him, though he already has assured me that nothing in either room was touched before I arrived here."

"Did you find any other evidence?" Glynn gazed at the lifeless girl on the bed. "There are no marks on her neck, Ordway, denoting that Curry had her by the throat, as Baldwin has stated."

"What of it?' Ordway asked curtly. "That's not material. The girl may have fainted immediately, or died in his arms from fright and heart failure, perhaps, when she realized his knavish design. Curry then planted the evidence which ordinarily would indicate suicide and eliminate him from suspicion, if he had got away unseen, as he attempted to do."

"Planted evidence!" Glynn exclaimed, frowning. "What do you mean? Curry is incapable of that."

"Incapable be hanged!" Ordway retorted derisively. "A man in a bad mess, with his reputation and whole future at stake, is capable of anything," he

forcibly argued. He turned to a small table near the head of the bed, pointing and adding quickly “I mean these. The tumbler was lying on the bed a few inches from her hand, as if she had dropped it after taking a fatal dose. This paper wrapper is one like druggists use for inclosing powders. It contained the ingredient and was lying open on the floor near the table.”

“Cyanide of potassium is what it contained,” Doctor Birk volunteered. “It was dissolved in the tumbler. The faint odor of burned almonds, which is characteristic of that deadly poison, may still be detected in it.”

Glynn glanced sharply at the empty tumbler and restrained the physician from taking it from the table. Near it lay the open wrapper, a piece of plain white paper about three inches square. Sharply defined creases in it showed just how it had been folded to inclose the deadly powder.

“I see.” Glynn’s brows had been knitting closer. If he saw any way of breaking the incriminating network that was closing around the suspected physician, there was no sign of it in his grave, apprehensive face. “Just what do you deduce, Ordway, from all this?” he asked, turning a bit abruptly to the detective. “Do you suspect that Wells Curry had some felonious design in coming here, or that he already had planned to commit this crime?”

"Both!" Ordway bluntly told him. “There’s no question about it in my mind.”

“I don’t agree with you. I think you're going too fast, Ordway, and going too far,” Glynn protested with some feeling. “I know Wells Curry better than you, very much better, and you certainly misjudge him and—”

“Stop a bit!’ Ordway’s strong, determined face took on a darker frown. He was a man few ventured to oppose. “I don’t care a rap whether you agree with me or not, nor how well you know this man Curry,” he said sternly, with a threatening forefinger on Clyde Glynn’s breast. “I’m not banking on your opinion, but on the many significant circumstances and this very convincing evidence. Don’t ask me to believe that this girl had poison here and took it voluntarily.”

“She may have done so by mistake,” Glynn suggested.

“Nonsense!” Ordway growled derisively. “Curry sneaked up here like a thief, as he afterward tried to sneak out. I don’t know just what came off here, but a shadow pantomime is reliable enough for me. Shadows don’t lie, Glynn, any more than the objects which cast them,” he forcibly argued. “Curry had a struggle with this girl, and he murdered her after she fainted, or was overcome. He’s the one who had the poison and he took a chance with it. He knew he had gone too far, that his honor, reputation, and whole future were at stake, and under desperation’s spur he removed the menace,”

“But that theory—"

“It’s the only one consistent with all of the circumstances,” Ordway rasped insistently. ‘Even if she died of fright, which is most improbable, he then tried to shield himself by pouring the poison into her mouth and leaving this evidence of suicide. That’s the case in a nutshell, I'll cram it down Curry’s throat, too, when I get him, and force him to admit it,” he sternly threatened. “That won't be long unless he already has bolted. In that case—"

Detective Ordway broke off as if suddenly tongue-tied. There was a momentary disturbance in the hall; they heard the voice of the policeman in brief protest, and then the door was hurriedly opened, the officer thrust aside, and Doctor Wells Curry himself, almost ghastly white, but ominously grave and determined, forced his way into the sitting room. He ignored the astonished gaze of his startled observers, as he strode straight across the room and confronted the frowning detective.

“I heard about this while on my morning round of calls,” he said deliberately. “I also heard what you said just before I entered. What is it you are going to cram down my throat, Detective Ordway, and force me to admit?”

Bruce Ordway was not staggered. He had set up a case against this man which he felt reasonably sure was correct, and with dogged determination very characteristic of him, he was resolved that it should not be shaken. The physician’s somewhat aggressive attitude, moreover, was like a spur jabbed into him.

“The truth!” he said sternly, eyes blazing. “That’s what I’ll force you to admit. The truth is—"

“One moment!" Doctor Curry checked him haughtily. “I’m right here to tell the truth. Force, Detective Ordway, is entirely unnecessary.”

Doctor Wells Curry did not wait for a reply from the detective. He turned and entered the bedroom, where he gazed for several moments at the lifeless form of Nanette Blair, with his head bowed and a look of profound sadness on his pale, strikingly handsome face.

Detective Ordway had a more threatening gleam in his eyes. He resented being put aside so haughtily. He immediately reasoned, too, that the physician was merely taking a bold step to avert suspicion, apprehending that he might have been recognized by Rudd and his wife when departing the previous night. He glanced at Clyde Glynn, then strode nearer to ,him, frowning darkly.

“Don’t you butt into this,” he sternly warned him, voice lowered. “It’s my case, not yours, and you keep out of it. I'll call his bluff, all right, if that’s what he’s handing me. Don’t you interfere.”

Clyde Glynn heard him without a change of countenance. Only a subtle gleam deep down in his cold blue eyes told of any subdued feelings.

“I was told, but could not really believe it, that I am suspected of having killed this girl," Doctor Curry turned and said gravely, but with brows knitting perceptibly when he saw the threatening expression on Ordway’s dark face. “I immediately came here, therefore, to set myself right. Why am I suspected? What evidence is there? Surely, Glynn, you don’t think for a moment that I—”

“Wait!’ Ordway cut in curtly. “Never mind what Detective Glynn thinks. I am investigating this case, not he, Doctor Curry, and you had better answer my questions instead of asking any, if you want to set yourself right. You were here last evening, weren’t you?” he bluntly inquired.

“I admit that I was.” Doctor Curry bowed and eyed him coldly.

“What occurred here that led to the killing of this girl?”

“I can tell you only what occurred while I was here. Let me inform you to begin with, however,” Curry quickly added, “that my relations with Nanette Blair have always been strictly honorable and entirely conventional. We have been very good friends, but nothing more than that, and I never have in any way encouraged her to believe that we might become anything more. Bear that in mind, Detective Ordway, whatever your personal opinion may be,” he said a bit sharply.

“I'll try to,” Ordway retorted. “Why did you come here last evening ?”

“My visit was a professional one,” Doctor Curry told him more calmly. “She telephoned to my office about nine o’clock, stating that she had broken a needle while sewing, and that a fragment of the steel had entered one of her eyes. severely, and she begged me to come at once to remove it.”

“While sewing, eh?’ Ordway gazed around incredulously. “There’s no evidence of it in sight. Women occupied with sewing, moreover, are not often so elaborately clad. In which eye was the bit of steel?” he asked curtly.

“Her left eye,” Doctor Curry coldly informed him.

“Won't you examine it, Doctor Birk, and see whether there is any evidence of it?” Ordway turned to the elderly physician. “There should be some sign of inflammation, at least.”

Doctor Birk complied a bit reluctantly. He shook his head gravely when he straightened up and turned from the bed.

“I do not find any indication of it,” he slowly admitted. “But Doctor Curry succeeded, no doubt, in removing the bit of steel, and any inflammation it may have caused would very likely have disappeared by this time,” he added, with professional consideration.

“Possibly,” Ordway grimly allowed. “But I think it much more likely that some evidence of it would still be perceptible,” he bluntly added. “Now, Doctor Curry, answer my questions. Was Miss Blair alone here when you arrived ?”

“She was, and I left her alone here, alive and well, when I departed.”

“What occasioned the struggle she had with you?”

“Struggle!” Doctor Curry exclaimed. “She had no struggle with me. What do you mean?” he demanded.

“No struggle, eh?”

“None whatever. Nor was there any occasion for one,” Curry forcibly added, irritated by the detective’s incredulous query. “Don’t question me in that way. I haven’t the least idea what you mean. If you suppose—”

“Never mind what I suppose. Facts are what I want,” Ordway sternly interrupted. “You say there was no struggle. Tell me precisely what occurred, then, after you entered. Omit none of the details.”

The physician drew himself up a little. He seemed to realize, now, that there were grounds for serious suspicion, indeed, of which he was entirely ignorant, and which Detective Ordway evidently was determined not to reveal before having heard his own statement of the circumstances. He hesitated for a moment. He glanced again at Clyde Glynn, but could detect no encouraging sign in his gravely attentive face, nor in those of the several persons listening with morbid curiosity in the adjoining sitting room. The flush of brief resentment had faded from his cheeks, leaving him almost ghastly pale again, while in his fine dark eyes was a look of mingled anguish and regret which he made no effort to conceal.

“I cannot imagine what you have on me, Detective Ordway, and you evidently don’t mean to inform me,” he said more calmly. .““As much as it pains me, therefore, for none could regret it more deeply, in view of what seems to have followed, I will tell you precisely what occurred here. I found Miss Blair in considerable pain, as she had stated, and I at once tried to relieve her,” Doctor Curry continued. “I examined her eye, but could not locate the bit of steel. It appeared to be under the upper lid, however, which I could not see plainly in the overhead light from the chandelier. Nanette lit the reading lamp on the table, therefore, and I took it into the bedroom—"

“Wait!” Ordway cut in curtly. “What’s the idea? Why into the bedroom?”

“I wanted to place it on the dressing stand, directly in front of the vertical mirror, in order to get more light and also an upward reflection under the eyelid,” Doctor Curry explained, pointing to the large plate-glass mirror attached to the back edge of the dressing stand. “With Miss Blair standing in front of it, I could see much more distinctly, and I succeeded after a few moments in removing the bit of steel. Miss Blair nearly fainted and would have fallen, however, if I had not caught her in my arms and placed her on the bed.”

“Well, what then?” Ordway’s heavy brows knit closer over his eyes. Not for an instant had they left the grave white face of the physician. “State what followed.”

“I regret the necessity,” Doctor Curry replied. “Only the circumstances so seriously involving me could cause me to do so. I regret having to picture this poor dead girl in an act which I know, God hearing me, was that of a momentary, irresistible impulse only, and should not be wrongly interpreted,” he said, with much more feeling. “She put her arms around my neck and kissed me several times before I could prevent her. I was so amazed that I hardly knew what it meant, in fact, until I saw that she was in tears from mingled humiliation and confusion. She apologized and begged me to forgive her, and I then saw only too plainly what I never had dreamed of before, that this girl was in love with me, so deeply in love that she had lost her head as well as her heart for that one moment.”

“Did you resent it?” Ordway bluntly questioned. “Did you resent it, or—”

“Stop right there!” Curry cut in quickly. He strode nearer to the detective, with his strong, strikingly handsome face gone white with suppressed anger. “Whatever your opinion of me may be, Ordway, or of whatever you think me guilty, don’t you cast any scurrilous reflections upon this lead girl, I’ll not stand for it for an instant,” he said, with voice quivering. “I told you in the beginning that my relations with her have always been strictly honorable.”

“You remained here—”

“I remained here only to express my regret,” Curry sharply interjected. “I remained to comfort and advise her, to tell her that love between us was impossible, that I already am engaged to another, a fact of which she was entirely ignorant. I then left her sitting there, Ordway, where she now lies dead, and that’s all I know about her death or what caused it.”

Detective Ordway heard him with cold-eyed tolerance, but plainly enough he did not believe him. He shrugged his broad shoulders, venting an incredulous growl, and shook his head derisively.

“That’s a fine story, Curry, and very well told, but it’s wholly incredible,” he said with some vehemence. “You can’t get by with it. It’s not consistent with all of the circumstances. Tell me!” he sternly commanded. “Why did you use the side entrance when coming here, and walk upstairs, instead of using the elevator? Why, when leaving, did you steal down to the side door and try to hide your face from the couple you unexpectedly met on the stairs? Hand it to me straight! Weren’t you afraid in both cases that you might be seen and recognized?”

“I was," Curry quickly admitted. “That’s precisely the reason.”

“What's the idea?” snapped Ordway. “Why were you so anxious to avoid observation?”

“For only one reason,” said the physician. “The young lady to whom I am engaged has a very jealous disposition. She knows of my friendly relations with

Miss Blair, of whom she is particularly jealous, and I preferred that my call here last evening, even though it was a professional one, should not reach her ears. I tried to avoid being seen, therefore, by any person who perhaps would inform her."

"Humph! That's a likely story," Ordway said derisively. "You mean to tell me, Doctor Curry, that you did not return to the sitting room with this girl after removing the steel from her eye?"

"I did not. We remained in this room."

"And you still assert that she had no struggle with your"

"None whatever!" Curry declared. "There was no struggle, nor any occasion for one."

"That's not true," Ordway cried sternly. "Your flimsy story hasn't feet to stand on. There is no evidence of a bit of steel in the girl's eye. I doubt that you were called here for any such cause. You came here voluntarily. You had much better admit it, Curry, and come across with the whole truth," he said, with increasing vehemence and with a threatening forefinger shaken nearly under the physician's nose. "There was a struggle here. It's useless for you to deny it. You were seen, or as good as seen, grasping this girl by the throat and forcing her through the arched entrance from the sitting room, in spite of her desperate efforts to resist. You were seen—"

"Seen doing that— impossible!" Curry drew back, staring amazedly, protesting indignantly. "Who says so is a liar. Nothing of the sort—"

"Wait!" Ordway checked him sharply. "You'll have to prove that to a judge and jury," he said sternly, abruptly ending his inquiries. "You are under arrest, Doctor Curry, and that settles it. Take him in custody, Morgan." He swung round to the waiting policeman. "Take him to headquarters at once—"

"Don't do it, Morgan!" Detective Glynn startled all with his sudden forceful interruption. "You hold your horses, Ordway, before landing yourself in a ditch. This matter must be settled in quite a different way."

"Different way!" Ordway had turned on the private detective as if pricked with a knife. "What do you mean, different way?"

"Just what I say." Glynn's subdued voice had a threatening ring. "It must be settled right."

"Settled right, eh?' Ordway glared at him. His query was little more than a frigid sneer. "I told you not to interfere, not to butt into this."

"I heard you." Glynn nodded. "a matter of fact, however, I haven't butted into it. I was in it from the moment I arrived, Ordway, in the interest of a friend in whom I have absolute confidence, and I've been waiting only to hear his own statement of last night's unfortunate affair, not because you ordered me to keep out of the case," he said pointedly. "I'm not the kind that keeps out

when such a friend of mine is threatened, even though ordered to by a headquarters detective. Butt into it, eh? Take it from me, Ordway, if you arrest Wells Curry for this fatality, I'll make you the butt of ridicule from every man on the force."

"You will, eh?' Ordway growled incredulously, but there was a significant change of expression in his frowning eyes. "That's some threat, Glynn, coming from a private detective. Can you make good?" he demanded. "What do you mean by it?"

"Settled right, Ordway, is precisely what I mean," Glynn told him less aggressively. "But you're wrong, entirely wrong."

"You'll have to show me!"

"I propose to do so. You're banking too strongly on— stop a moment!" Glynn digressed abruptly and turned to the physician. "Tell me, Curry, was the reading lamp still on the dressing stand when you left here last evening?"

"It was just where I had placed it," Doctor Curry said quickly. His was fairly transfigured by the sudden interposition of his devoted friend.

"But it now is on the sitting-room table." Glynn pointed to it, while the intensely interested group in the arched doorway hastened to draw aside. "Nanette Blair put it back there after the physician departed. It's absurd to suppose, Ordway, that any person has transferred it this morning. Here is evidence, moreover, that will convince you. You know very well, of course, that oil in a lamp of that kind exudes to some extent from the wick and collects on the outer surface of the standard. One handling such a lamp very often gets one's fingers slightly smeared with oil. Here, Ordway, have a look at this. I examined it while you Were interrogating Curry."

Detective Glynn turned while speaking and picked up the paper wrapper.

"Note the creases in it," he earnestly pointed out. "They show just how it was folded, and how the fold of one end was slipped into the other to prevent it from opening. Note that on the fold inserted into the other, which had to be drawn out with one's finger, there is a very perceptible oily print. No lens is needed, nor a comparison of the papillary lines with those of this dead girl. The size and shape of the print shows plainly that it could not be that of a man's finger, but undoubtedly was caused by that of Nanette Blair. There is not a sign, moreover, of any other finger print."

Detective Ordway gazed at it in grim silence for several seconds, with his brows contracted and his lips pursed.

"Humph!" he muttered. "I'm forced to admit it. It's so plain that only an infernal bonehead would deny it."

"Surely!" Glynn declared. '"Now examine this tumbler from which the fatal solution was taken. There are two oily finger prints on it of the same size and

shape as that on the paper wrapper. There is not a sign of any other, save where I held it near the rim in order to inspect it. All this shows plainly, Ordway, that the girl herself, not Doctor Curry, opened that package of poison and prepared the fatal dose. Do you see them?"

"Blast you, Glynn, do you think I'm blind?" Ordway held up the tumbler in the light from the window. "How could I help seeing them? I admit their significance, of course. But how the devil," he demanded, with a snarl of mingled chagrin and impatience, "could Baldwin have seen the shadow of a struggle, of the physician grasping the girl's throat and forcing her through this arched doorway? They then must have been in the sitting room, if that were true, and Curry lying to me when he said—"

"That's what you're banking on, Ordway, almost entirely, the assumption that Curry was lying," Glynn interrupted. "But you should not accept too confidently, Ordway, the evidence derived only when shadows fall. Let me tell you something. Try it yourself some night, if you doubt it."

"What's that, Glynn?"

"A lighted lamp placed close in front of a vertical mirror will reflect on a curtain directly opposite, as in this case, an illuminated figure of the glass, brighter than the light shed on the curtain by the lamp itself. Notice the arched top of this mirror. It is almost precisely the shape of the arched doorway close by. Seen from outside, as Baldwin saw it, the illuminated figure cast on the curtain would appear very like that of the doorway, and as if the rays from the lamp in the sitting room came through it. Obviously, what Baldwin saw appeared to transpire in the sitting room. But what he really saw were the shadows of Curry and the girl when they stood between the mirror and the curtain."

"You mean—"

"The physician removing the bit of steel, the girl's hands grasping his wrist when she was hurt, perhaps, and then falling nearly in a faint in his arms— the appearance of a struggle, Ordway, and the reduction of their figures as they drew back from the mirror and then, came nearer the curtain would have appeared exactly as if they came through the arched entrance from the parlor. That's all it was, Ordway, all it really was— an appearance."

"By thunder, Glynn, I must— I must admit you are right." Ordway's dark countenance had altered strangely.

"I know I am right," Glynn told him. He turned and gazed at the still, cold form on the bed. "Plainly enough, too," he added, with voice gone grave and sad, "a hopeless love, and a somewhat morbid nature, perhaps, led her to end it all when this man passed out of her life forever. Poor girl! She— ah, here is the coroner, Ordway."

“Yes, yes, the coroner! It’s time he arrived.” Ordway turned quickly, brushing the back of his hand across his eyes. “TI owe you something, doctor, an apology! There is nothing to this, coroner, nothing to it—but a case of suicide!”

“We'll be going, Wells, I guess.” Detective Glynn turned to the physician. “It’s past my lunch hour.”

Doctor Wells Curry fondly placed an arm over the shoulders of the private detective, as they moved out of the room. His eyes were moist. There were tears of gratitude in them— and tears for her upon whom the last eternal shadow had fallen.

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17: The Golden Crowns

Beatrice Grimshaw

1870-1953

Blue Book March 1926

THERE was Captain Clarity, little, gray, and full of scorn for treasure and treasure-seekers; there was Rutland Stewart-Ellis, big and fattish, restless as a dog that noses meat somewhere near; there was Jerry Dawson, spruce in his clean suit, and cool as the ice that was thousands of miles away from us, looking as if he didn't know, or care, that his reputation as a discoverer of hidden things hung that day in the balance. There was Ysabel, the Captain's daughter, with her black bobbed curls blowing in the sea-wind that swept from south, with her long Spanish eyes fixed, as the eyes of some of her explorer ancestors may have been fixed, in Balboa's day, upon the huge Pacific, looking, looking...

There was myself, too. And I was looking where Ysabel looked; where Jerry Dawson, and Clarity— despite his scorn— and Ellis all were looking: eastward, to a point of blue that in the last ten minutes had begun to prick up from the deep. For that point of blue was Bosun Island; and Dawson, breaking at last the long reserve he had kept inviolate throughout our wanderings, had told us that here, or nowhere, were the gold crowns of our seeking to be found.

We were east and north of Ducie, veering into that enormous three-thousand-mile gap that is broken only by Easter Island, and a few small unmarked islets, reefs and atolls. Easter itself lay about four hundred miles away. We did not purpose to call there, Jerry, who was leader in all but name, having informed us that Easter was outside our plans. Personally I should have thought— but it didn't matter what I might choose to think. Everyone on board the schooner would have told you that; and so I suppose it must have been true.

I cannot describe the tenseness, the feeling of things about to be fulfilled, that held the ship and its adventurers that windy blue South Sea morning. Gone was the indolence that for months had hung about the schooner like a magic mist through which we saw all things pleasantly, dreamily. It was as if a breeze had blown down from the far North, bringing with it a hint of the cold, the fierceness, the hard industry, born of iron skies, that was more or less in the blood of all of us. Dawson tramped the deck as if he had been on watch; Ellis had stopped smoking, for about the first time in three months, and was busy casting up accounts of the trip. I felt— also for the first time in three months— that it was absolutely wrong to lie in a deck-chair and read novels at nine in the morning; a newly-awakened Puritan conscience drove me to open

"*Norrie on Navigation*" (which I had always intended to study) and glance at its tiresome diagrams, in the intervals of watching Bosun Island.

ONLY Captain Clarity, detached as usual from the spirit of the trip, seemed to have the South Sea feeling about him that morning. He was rather conspicuously laid out in a deck-chair, with a Niué hat over his eyes, and he was to all appearance doing nothing, and doing it very hard. I don't know whether anyone else caught— as I did— a keen glance or two from the small gray eyes beneath the hat-brim, that boded ill for any Kanaka of the crew who should venture to presume upon that apparent quiet. Anyhow, the work of the ship was being done, and the black quartermaster, hands on the wheel, shifted a spoke or two, once or twice, in obedience to a barely perceptible nod.

I was not much surprised, therefore though I think the others were,— when Clarity suddenly burst out:

"I thought you was chaps had some sense somewhere in your skulls. I did."

"Oh?" was Dawson's comment.

"Well, and last night you tell me that I'm to believe a pack of sailors came and left God knows what of gold on that island, instead of taking it with them when they sailed away. It's not in reason, man. It's plain blank foolery."

"All the same, Captain," said Jerry, pausing in his eternal walk, "If anything's true about the treasure, that's true."

"What, sailors of two hundred years ago, who wasn't responsible to God or man or Board of Trade— left a fortune behind them, and went without it to South America, where all the fun must 'a' been, in those days, same as it is now?"

"That's so."

The Captain rose, spat once, forcefully, over the side of the ship, and returned to his deck-chair.

"I wouldn't have done it," he said, "if I was drunk— if I was dead— if the Day of Judgment was comin' up out of the sea in front of us, and the last trump was beginnin' to tootle. What kind of men was they, since you know all about it?"

"I wish I did know. I have a guess that they were Dutch, and that they visited these parts some time before Roggeveen did, two hundred years ago."

"Dutch!" said the Captain. "I never had any use for Dutch, but I'll think even less of them after that."

"Well, Roggeveen was a great man, Captain, and left his mark over a good deal of this side of the world. And I'm inclined to think his contemporaries knew what they were about, when they left their treasure behind them. I'm inclined to think they couldn't well do anything else."

"Why?"

"I hope to tell you that before very long."

"I don't believe a word of it, anyhow. Treasure cruises and treasure cruises— there's just two sorts: what the knowing ones gets up to skin the fools of their money with, and what the fools gets up to skin themselves with. Meaning nothing uncomplimentary to you, Mr. Dawson!" He put his pipe back in the corner of his mouth, drew his hat over his eyes, and seemed to doze again. But nevertheless that unsleeping glance from time to time raked the ship and the horizon, regularly as a beam from an intermitting lighthouse. The island was drawing near.

WHAT one saw, first of all, was an immense plaque of brilliant milky-green set down in the blue sea like a meadow fallen from fairyland. The island in the middle hardly caught your eye at first; it was dull and insignificant, compared with that arresting shout of color. When one did look at it, one saw it to be tallish, perhaps ninety feet, steeple-shaped, and covered with brush and trees. Inevitably, from its dusky outline, the eye fled back to the nameless, marvelous green of the surrounding lagoon, and the crumbling foam-wreath that surrounded it in a perfect circle.

"Marooner's Ring!" I exclaimed.

"If it is not," said Jerry, his eyes fixed on it as the eyes of Moses may have been fixed on the Promised Land, "there is no such place."

"Your limit," I ventured, "seems to have been a circle drawn round a point not very far from here." Jerry had told me much, but not everything; he had seized on my vague ideas and given them substance, and then— with his irritating, inevitable reserve— kept the heart of the matter from me.

It seemed that the reserve was not broken yet. He did not answer me, but by and by turned to Ysabel, who was standing on the poop beside him— always, unconsciously, those two seemed to gravitate together as needles floating in water, or ships in a calm at sea, will slowly, surely find one another.

"What has the Señorita to say?" he asked her. I had noticed that for some time now he had avoided using her own name. Ellis fidgeted like a restive horse if Jerry called the girl "Ysabel," and with "Miss Clarity" he would have nothing to do.

Ysabel surprised me by her reply— or would have, if I had not known how the two read each other's minds:

"The other expeditions," she said, "looked only at plain atolls, just as you did in the beginning. After we'd been to Wicked Island, you knew there was an island in the middle. Of course, Eighteenth Century people, who knew very little about coral islands, thought this reef and the lagoon most awfully

remarkable, and they called the place 'Marooner's Ring' when it ought to have been 'Marooner's Island.' Do I get a mark, Teacher?"

"You get all the marks," said Jerry, looking not at her but at the growing bulk of the island. "All the marks there are or ever will be."

"How many million marks for sixpence?" japed Ellis; he was the sort of man who can never resist the chance of any childish play on words. Nobody answered him. The island was growing near; we could see a narrow beach, backed by bare cliffs; birds flying over sunstruck starveling woods. Not a house, not a human being.

Clarity, with consummate skill, picked out the one opening in the reef, and sent his ship spinning through it, on the sweep of the high tide. The passage sucked us in as a man sucks in an oyster, and immediately we were gliding on the still, malachite surface of the lagoon.

"It's uninhabited," said Ysabel delightedly. "Do you think that we are the first who ever burst into it?"

SHE looked more than ever like a gallant mischievous lad this morning, dressed as she was for landing, in one of the cotton suits with patrol collar that are worn all over the tropics. Clarity answered her, a little acidly:

"Not the first by about fifty fools, I dare reckon. All these islands and atolls have been raked over with a small-tooth comb by people with the treasure-hunting bug. And if your mother," he continued without a break, "could 'a' seen you in that rig, she'd 'a' died. She was one with a figure," he went on. "You girls nowadays is like a fathom of pump-water; I don't know how you do it, nor where you put your dinners. As slick as weasels, you all are. I suppose the young chaps like it, or you wouldn't be it. In my time we liked girls with some shape to 'em, and they supplied the market according. I reckon your boys"— he suddenly attacked Jerry, as if the latter were responsible,— "will fancy 'em three-cornered, and her girls will have three corners exact to specification. It's a wonderful world we live in."

Ysabel, quite unconcerned by these terrific prophecies, was examining the land through a glass. When the roar of the anchor-chains had died away, she remarked:

"There's a round white thing lying on the beach. It couldn't be a life-buoy of course; but it— "

Clarity's eye was trained to his own glass before she had done speaking.

"It is a life-buoy," he remarked, and began humming to hide his dismay.

"Whisky for my Johnny— "'

he sang, under his breath, as if some one on the distant island might hear him, and come forth.

"Mr. Dawson, I reckon some one's been here before you."

Dead silence followed his remark. The two glasses were handed round; I looked, and Jerry looked, and Rutland Stewart-Ellis looked, and each of us saw what Clarity had seen— a life-buoy, new and clean, lying on the narrow beach of the island. A raging tiger would have been, to most of us, a pleasanter sight.

Jerry was the first to speak. He was smiling; men of his kind do smile when hurt or hit, so I took small comfort from that.

"It may have drifted in from outside," he said. '"There's no use worrying before one must."

"Of course it's drifted in," said Clarity. "But it has drifted off of something that was pretty near the island, I reckon, to make the passage the way it done. It's about a million times as likely that a ship has been close in here, and dropped it, as that the buoy has drifted in on its own from somewhere thousands of miles off, and just got into that current of the passage by sheer luck."

WE could all see this, and it did not cheer us up. Interest in the island itself had suddenly flagged. What everyone wanted to know was the name on the buoy, and the condition it was in. On those circumstances might depend the success of our quest.

Clarity did not keep us long waiting. He came with the boat himself, and leaped off the bow before she had touched ground. Jerry and he raced up the beach together, and made a dead heat to the buoy.

"*Anaconda*," shouted Jerry to us. "Quite new and clean. Can't have been here more than a day or so."

"What's the *Anaconda*?" shouted Ellis.

"Chilean gunboat." They were walking back to us. "What do you think of your treasure-trip now?" demanded Clarity, scorn in his voice. I took it that he was anxious to cover up his recent uncalculated display of interest.

"I'll have to take a look round before I can answer that," replied Jerry. He looked so cheerful that my heart sank to my "sneaker" shoes. 'There's something I haven't seen, and Clarity hasn't seen, and he has," I thought to myself. "And it's something perfectly rotten." Because when Jerry was succeeding, and things going well, he always carried a face as long as your arm.

"Where are you going to look round?" asked Ellis sneeringly. He seemed to have swelled up like a toad; his face was bloated with anger and disappointment. "I don't see any dashed thing on the dashed island but a lump of rock."

He had spoken truly; the whole of Bosun Island, except the little beach, was comprehended in the steeple of stone, thinly feathered with trees, that stood out above our heads. It was on this that Jerry's attention seemed to be focused. Not that there was any place upon it where treasure could be concealed— as well try to hide it on Nelson's Column or Cleopatra's Needle. No, something else seemed to attract him, and not slightly.

"I wish," he said to me, still with that pleasant smile on his face, "that you'd try to get Ysabel and her father between the pinnacle and the beach, and keep them there."

"Why?"

"Of all the why-birds! Because, since you must have it, I don't like the look of the splintered rocks on top there."

I could not say "Why?" again quite so soon, though I wanted to. I could only collect Ysabel and her father— nobody seemed troubling about Ellis— and keep them in the area indicated, by wild guesses as to the best places for digging operations. The Captain was obviously interested, as obviously determined not to show it. Ysabel, however, drank my words like honey; for about the second or third time on our long voyage, she seemed to know that I was really there, an existent human being.... I fancy now— though I did not then— that my supposed possession of Jerry's confidence was the true magnet.

JERRY, meanwhile, had gone up to the top of the high rocks, and was standing there, looking far off through a glass, as if he expected to see the crowns of Marooner's Ring floating about in the Pacific Ocean. I heard him whistling, a thin, gay whistle that I didn't like.

He came down again, and said we ought to get together and hold a council. I noticed that he collected the party on the sunny side of the pinnacle, where we had landed, instead of going round to the shadier part. Also that he tactfully shepherded in anyone who wandered off to the wide plateau of sand, where you could see all round you.

"Is there something he doesn't want us to see— and what on earth did he mean about splintered rocks?" I asked myself. I was puzzled. Jerry was secretive enough in his way, as are most men of his type, but it was not his way to keep any of the facts of his investigations back. On the contrary, he flung them in your face, and laughed to see how little you could make of them. No, I never said he was a prize book hero; he had as much conceit as you have, any day.

There was nothing for it but to sit down on the beach with my suspicions and my sun-umbrella, and wait to see what might be going to happen. I didn't

like the way things had been happening, so far. I had never thought to land on the veritable island of our dreams, in an atmosphere of fears and warnings; I had thought to leap on shore pick in hand, and start madly digging, cheering and singing the while— or something similar.

Jerry lit a cigarette— I think to gain time,— and presently said: 'Well, we're on the island, all right, and no one has been before us."

It was as if an electric shock had run through the party— missing myself; I was insulated by that gnawing little doubt. Up went their heads as if moved by a string; two eyes of sunlit black, two of staring blue, and two of hard gray (Clarity's pretense of unbelief was wearing very thin by now) fixed themselves on Jerry's.

"How do you know?"

"What are you going to— "

"Where are the crowns?"

The exclamations burst out all together, from Clarity, Ysabel and Ellis.

"I know," said Jerry, nursing his cigarette, which seemed to be damp, "because the descriptions all fit, and everything matches. The *Beulah* must have been wrecked hereabouts— "

"Ay," broke in Clarity. "It was always reckoned so, but nobody knew till that paper turned up."

"And the man on the Ghost Island— you remember, Joe."

I said I remembered.

"He told me he had found the gold bowl he wanted to pay us with, under the white rock. There's the rock."

All of us knew about the rock; three heads were turned to look at it. It was a small subsidiary pinnacle, white with the droppings of seabirds.

"This place is not a pure atoll," went on Jerry, indicating with the point of one sea-browned finger the circular sweep of lagoon that surrounded, like a shield of malachite, the central boss of the dark green islet and narrow ivory beach. "But it would have passed for one, with people who weren't particular over names— and the very doubtfulness of it would cause confusion about which and where. An atoll, of course, is just a plain ring-shaped reef or island, with nothing in the middle. Well, as you know, about half the atolls in the Eastern Pacific have been marked down as Marooner's, one time and another."

"If we have found the place," cut in Ellis, "I don't see that you have much to be proud of; you got two jolly good hints. I wonder where you'd have been without them?"

"Just where I am, only a bit later," retorted Jerry. 'Because I had something to guide me that the others hadn't. It was only a question of time. Time's money, I grant, in a job like this, and the hints, as you call 'em, helped. But— "

WE were all craning and staring now; even I had forgotten the uncomfortable presentiments that assailed me earlier; even Clarity had laid aside his pose of skepticism. I think we all had our mouths open like frogs, literally gaping to hear the rest. For it was plain, from Jerry's tone, that the great secret, the golden secret, kept from us so long, was about to be revealed.

Surprisingly, just there, he stopped, and seemed to listen.

"I say," he said, "do you hear anything?"

I did not, and said so. I was wild to get at the rest of the tale. More than all the others, I knew that Jerry had a big card up his sleeve.

But he would not go on for a minute. He asked Ellis if he had heard anything, and made him listen. Ellis listened, and shook his head, and the Captain said he thought we'd have some weather by and by; and there was a silence, during which we all listened hard, for we knew not what. I heard the Captain breathing through his nose, and a faint tinkle of corals afloat on the outgoing tide, and up above, the thin whistling and mewing of gulls. Nothing more.

Jerry appeared to put some preoccupation or other definitely aside. He rose to his feet, and said:

"If we don't get it here, it's nowhere in the world. This is by far the likeliest place within a thousand miles of— Easter Island."

I jumped to my feet with a yell. I knew now.

"Say it again!" I cried. 'The crowns of the giant stone images— they were gold!"

"You have it," said Jerry.

"And the men who got there before Roggeveen— of course they did! And of course no boat— smallish boat— could make a long voyage with— that— on board. Jerry— Jerry! Oh, Lord!"

"What're you all talkin' about?" demanded Stewart-Ellis. "What's the tosh about Roggeveen and Easter? Where's our treasure?"'

"I know about Easter Island," burst in Ysabel, her eyes two dark moons of wonder. "It was in 'General Information' at school. Easter Island has stone images fifty feet high, with enormous red tufa crowns on them, and nobody knows who made them or when. Some people suppose they had something to do with the Aztecs— Incas and all that. The people who filled a room with gold to rescue the Inca. And they didn't rescue him, because Pizarro cheated," she added for our information.

"Fifty feet high!" repeated Ellis, his face lighting up with sudden greed. "I saw— by Jove, what size would their crowns be?'

"The size of a big sponge bath."

"Gold?"

"A sort of gold sheeting. Like the Tutankhamen things. You know there's been some connection suggested between Central America and Egypt. I figure the tufa crowns were sheeted with gold, in some cases at any rate, and that the sheeting was easily detachable. I was pretty near certain of it even before I saw the bob from the top of one of them on Ghost Island."

"Was that what the bowl was?" I cried.

"Yes. I'd gamble my life on it."

Now why, I wondered, should pretty Ysabel turn suddenly pale, at that word, and turn her face away? I was to know before long— to remember also. For the moment I could not keep my attention on anything but the vision of the gold. Clear before my eyes rose pictures, such as almost everyone has seen, of the mysterious, stately images of Easter— the giants sitting through a thousand years with faces turned to sea— crowns, cap-shaped, of red tufa, on their enormous heads.

Incas and conquistadores and rooms filled with gold— Tutankhamen and his chairs and chests and coffin, gold-sheeted— the immemorial pagoda of Burma, with its golden casing from earth to four hundred feet up in the air: things like this chased themselves through my brain. It was possible— with Jerry as sponsor, it was more than possible; it was true.

Some of the links in the chain of evidence were missing— have always been missing, since. Jerry has never been able to tell me whence and why the idea came to him of the Easter Island images. All that I had guessed at was Inca gold of some sort, Inca crowns and jewelry, perhaps, concealed on an unidentified atoll that must lie within a couple of weeks' sail of South America. Jerry Dawson, who had a sense (I always suspect) that other people do not possess, jumped the vacant places, and arrived at the certainty of the richer, infinitely more wonderful treasure. But even Jerry could not tell me how.

In that moment, nobody asked questions. We wanted to get our hands on the gold, instantly. We had brought picks and spades with us, and a cartridge or two of dynamite, also fuse. But nobody knew, even on that tiny islet, where to begin the search,

"Let's have your view of the matter," Jerry asked Ysabel. I was sure that his own mind was already made up; still, it was clear he took pleasure in drawing out her opinions.

Ysabel, standing in the sun and the wind beside us, made a strangely charming picture in her male attire, and one that suited well with the place. There was always something of the sea-breeze about Ysabel; the tossing of her dark silky curls, the sway of her light body upward from the ankles seemed to surround her with an aura of gay winds, wherever she went. If you have ever

been in love with a Spanish, or half-Spanish girl, you will know more of what I mean than books could tell you.

Her eyes had to pass Rutland Stewart-Ellis and myself, on the way to meet with Jerry's. As homing birds speed over an empty landscape, the light of her glance swept us, went by, and rested.

Ellis never saw it; his eyes were dimmed with the shine of those gold crowns; what I saw, and felt, matters to none.

I was sure then, and am sure now, that her reply was drawn from Jerry's mind, as the sky takes dew from the sea. Still, it startled me a little, it was so sure.

"I am to imagine," she said, "that I'm a sailor of two hundred years ago. And I've landed with other sailors. And we've carried off the gold crowns of some of the images. And we've probably mutinied to get a chance to do it, and maybe killed people. It's been hard going; the ship we stole was probably very, very small, and there's been bad weather, and the gold weighs her down. So we must land anywhere, get rid of the gold, and sail again to South America for a larger boat."

She paused a minute, still looking at Jerry. I don't know to this day whether she was hypnotized by him. I think not. I think it was something simpler, much older— something that has been told over and over again in trampled, handled verses like:

Two souls with but a single thought
Two hearts that beat as one.

Just while one wave had time to burst in creaming foam on the shore of the lagoon, she stood silent. Nobody interrupted. Then she went on:

"We wanted a big hole, and something to mark it by. And not too near low tide, for fear of storms. But we weren't careful enough after all, because you see the top of one of the crowns got washed out!"

"I say, did the rest?" asked Ellis eagerly.

"Ysabel's talkin' nonsense, and you oughtn't to be upholding her," commented the little skipper, severely. "What she ought to be doin' this minute is to be gettin' the tea ready out of them thermal bottles, and layin' the cloth, not yarnin' away there in trousers like an old shellback passin' the dogwatches."

Ysabel had been in the habit of serving us, prettily and simply, with our afternoon tea, more to please her father than anyone else. But this was no time for thermoses and tablecloths.

"Let her be, Cap," said Ellis sulkily. "We want to hear."

"Oh, if you want to," said Clarity, and sat himself down again, humming, with an air of detachment, the old, old chantey that we had not heard for long:

Farewell and adieu to you, fair Spanish ladies!

Not at all disturbed, she continued, through the windy sounding of Clarity's tune:

"We saw where the ground under the hill had been split a little; by an earthquake maybe, and we thought that would do. We were very tired. We rolled away all the rocks we could, and then we rigged a block and tackle—"

"Ysabel, how do you—"

"Stop!" I said sharply, to Ellis.

"And we hauled the crowns up one by one, pushing as well. It was dreadful work. We lay down on our backs, and some of us cried, and said we should never see Holland again. We got the crowns in, and we couldn't cover them that day, but next day we were better, and we threw rocks and rocks, and then we cut down a sort of cliff, of sand, on the top of it, and we sailed away."

She stopped again.

"That's all," she added suddenly, lifting up her head, and staring about her.

"Plain 'istirricks," said Clarity. "You'd ought to have a jug of water thrown over you. I always did it to your mother."

But Jerry Dawson looked at her, and in his eyes I saw the light that never was on sea or land.... Long after, he told me that she had read, almost word for word, what was in his mind— what he had gathered, and guessed, and caught with his own invisible aerials; what, I think now, was in all probability the true story of the place.

In the same minute (he told me) he had known for certain that even if Ysabel held to her strange obstinacy about Ellis, it would not separate her and himself— in the end.

"When you've got a woman's soul as fast as that," he said, "the rest is bound to follow; the greater will bring the less along after it."

"What if she had been married?" I asked out of curiosity.

"She couldn't have been," was his answer. "All nations know it's only a girl's white soul that can show the invisible writing."

I don't know that I understood him. I never understood Jerry altogether. As I've said, he belongs to the next generation; his own children and grandchildren will be more his contemporaries than I.

But to return.

THE significant moment passed; some of us had not even noticed it. Once more the treasure was in the foreground.

Now that Ysabel had said so, we could all see that the filled-in crevasse must be the spot, if any. It is impossible for anyone who has not hunted gold, to know the lust, the hunger that possessed us, once we had realized that almost under our feet, in all probability, lay treasure beyond reckoning. We almost fought each other for the picks— Jerry, Ellis, myself and the skeptical Clarity. We had a couple of native sailors with us, but we wouldn't even allow them a chance; we wanted under that sun, in the breathless heat of the brazen rocks— to do the work ourselves. I still remember how the pick-handle blistered my useless palms almost immediately; how it grew slippery with sweat and twisted; how soon, very soon, I found myself panting like a man who has run a long race, and felt the iron turn to ponderous lead.

When I dropped the pick, some one else seized it; in a moment Ysabel was swinging away with the best. And if you have never seen a beautiful girl, dressed as she was dressed, working with a common long-handle pick, you do not know what the poetry of motion can be.

Pick-work is graceful enough in itself; the commonest rock-chopper becomes a model for statuaries, once he begins that fine backward swing from the hips. But when Hebe herself takes the pick—

I have a little drawing of it; I am not much of an artist as a rule, but just then, for five minutes, while I stood back and watched, my hand was inspired. That bit of an envelope, sketched on with red pencil, is the most precious thing I have.

NEVER, as long as life remains in this body of mine, shall I forget the moment that came soon after— when the picks had been changed for the shovels, and the shovels, in their turn, laid aside for picks again. You would have thought the opening crevasse held some dangerous monster, so fast and hard were the blows rained down into it. I would have taken a pick now if I could have got one— I was rested enough to begin again; but you might as well have asked for the eye out of anyone's head, as the tool he— or she— was swinging.

I don't know how long it was— it may have been half an hour, or twice that time — before I heard an unforgettable sound: the glorious ring of iron upon gold. Take a gold cup from some one's race trophies, if he will let you, hit it with a hammer, and you will hear the live, splendid note that we heard. But you will hear it in miniature only. I think no one now living, save the little band who stood on the atoll that day, has listened to the ringing boom of an iron pick-head on a hollow mass of gold as big as a barrel.

I am not quite sure what I did after that, or what anyone did, for a few minutes. I remember kicking Ellis' shins, as if I had been ten, and getting my head punched, as if he had been fifteen, because I had got in the way, and wanted to get in the way some more. I recall, too, that there was a great deal of scrabbling with hands, and gravel and sand flying, till somebody shouted for the shovels, and everyone began digging again— inside the incredible gold cap that had been unearthed. I remember, too, that I was just a little disappointed; I had somehow pictured the crowns on the lines of those worn by chess kings, splendidly battlemented— and this colossal thing was a sheer tub. Thin, too — it looked like dented paper.....

But when the sand and gravel and loose stones were out of it, and the whole party began to heave, then we saw what we had got. One might just as well have heaved at the foundations of St. Paul's. Not a stir came out of the battered, blackened mass; not the smallest response to the fully exerted strength of four whites and two native boys. It did not need the sparkles that showed where picks had struck, to tell us that this was indeed none but the royal, the glorious metal.

"Avast heaving," ordered Clarity by and by. "Boys, get me that length of chain from the locker, and be sharp about it!"

I dare say they were sharp— being Clarity's crew; but it seemed a very long time before they came back from the ship with the chain. A long time, too, before they had it slung under the mass of gold, and secured above. Time, in such moments, is reckoned by feeling and thought; and we were living a year a minute. The thoughts that chased through my head in that half-hour or so would have filled volumes: dreams of my share, and what I was going to do with it; calculations, badly mauled for want of a bit of paper, about ounces, pounds, pounds Troy, and values taken at four guineas or so the ounce; strange shots of fear, like toothache pains of the mind, when I recalled Jerry's earlier uneasiness; over all, a dim cloud that dulled the splendor of our victory, as years and rains had dimmed the shine of the gold, because— because I had no one who might share it.

Well, they got the chain underneath at last; and then, Clarity directing, everybody, myself included, tailed on and began to haul. For the first and last time, I learned the true use of those eternal chanties. I don't think we should ever have got the mass out of the hole, but for Clarity and his

"Haul the bowline— the vessel she's a-rollin',
Haul the bowline, the bowline haul!"
"Heave, bullies— heave and wake the dead!
Put your back into it, you Ellis."
"Haul the bowline— the skipper he's a-growlin',

Haul the bowline, the bowline haul!"

And more verses that I like to remember, years after the ache has left my knees and shoulders.

Out she came at last, with a bumping ring that drowned the chantey. Clarity stopped, and wiped his forehead; he had been sweating almost as much as the rest of us. There was an immense silence; in the midst of it the small, careless waves of the lagoon sounded on the beach, and yellow-footed gulls took wing from the rocks above, crying.

I had got back strength, and was standing upright once more, opening my mouth to say I do not know what, when the words were stopped by an extraordinary sensation of impending disaster. So strong was it that breath stopped too, for a moment, as it stops in the teeth of a furious blast. Before I had time to catch my wind again, the terror was upon us.

THERE came from far away behind the rocky pyramid, a dull rending boom. As if it had been a signal, the top of the island almost immediately, bowed itself over and fell into the sea, with a terrific splash. The whole place seemed to rock; the landscape dissolved. Spires of stone toppled; fountains burst up in the lagoon. There was a terrible screaming in the air, mingled with crash on crash from the impending peak of the island.

Over and over, the rending boom burst out, shaking the heart with that dread sound that so many of us knew in the red years 'fourteen to 'eighteen— the sound of great guns firing.

Nobody needed explanations. We all— I suppose— guessed that the *Anaconda* had chosen this supposed solitary, unvisited island for gun-practice, after visiting it to see that everything was safe, and that, over the horizon, she was busy blowing it to bits.

Whether any one of us lived for another five minutes was a matter of the extremest chance.

Many brave things were done in the war by Jerry Dawson, but I think his bravest act was done on that afternoon. As coolly as if it had been raining merely drops of water and hailstones, he walked round the shelter of the rock, looked to sea, and came back, dodging two or three fragments of flying rock that might have smashed up a cottage. I saw that he was white as the foam on the far verge of the reef, but I knew that it was not fear that paled him— remorse, rather, for having taken the chance that turned out so disastrously,

He had guessed from the first (if guess is the word) that the place was being used for gun-practice by the Chilean navy. There was, however, nothing to tell that the practice was not for the present finished, and there was every

chance of our being too late to secure the treasure, if a crowd of man-of-war's men were to get into the habit of overrunning the narrow little island. Therefore he kept his discovery to himself— knowing that the facts would not have had the slightest influence on any of our party— and decided to make one swift attempt to secure the gold.

I suppose I guessed this, but at the time I was not conscious of guessing or thinking, or of anything at all but trying to get Ysabel out of the range of falling fragments. I remember that she shouted things I could not hear, and seemed to struggle; but it was a minute or so before I realized that the struggles were not hers. Absurdly, we had all rushed upon her, like a football team rushing on the ball, and were all fighting against each other to drag her out of range. Nothing more dangerous or futile could have been imagined. Clarity was the first to find that out; he loosed his daughter, and shouted down her ear.

JERRY had let go, seeing he was merely making a tug-of-war rope of the girl; I was hanging on, and so was Ellis. When I loosed hold, Ellis went backward, stumbled over himself, and fell. I don't know how Ysabel had managed to keep her head, but she did; she twisted out of the mess, eel-wise, flung her hand into Jerry's waiting palm, and ran with him to the big rock where Clarity was beckoning. Half under it she crouched, and the Captain, arching himself over her like a cat with its kitten, placed his body between her and harm. "But it isn't any good," I heard myself saying. "Bodies are no use; they're only bits of soft meat." The thunder of the big guns had stopped; the island had ceased dissolving around us. Everything might begin again tomorrow, in two minutes, or never. There was no knowing. The *Anaconda* was far out of sight. Doubtless she would steam up and check the hits when she had done; but that was small consolation, considering that we, by that time, might be done also. And if we were not, the gold was as good as lost, once anyone saw it. For what right, after all, could we put up to a treasure taken from Easter Island natives by Dutch sailors, and left on an islet that geographically belonged— in all probability— to the very nation that owned the *Anaconda*?

IN the calm that followed the storm, there was a chance to think these things. I make no doubt we all thought much on the same lines. But— naturally enough— no one wanted, much, to go out into the open and begin hauling the gold down to the whaleboat. The native sailors, crouched beneath a neighboring rock, were shedding tears of dismay. Ellis, rolling a cigarette with unsteady fingers, shouted: 'Who's game to go?" and made no move to leave his own bit of shelter.

Jerry turned and walked to the dirty, glittering mass of the great crown. On the way he kicked the Raratongan boys out of their funk-hole, and they came with him, not stopping to ask questions. He said something to Ellis— something I didn't hear, for I was down beside the crown myself— that jerked Ysabel's future husband out of his retirement as quickly as Jerry's boot had brought out the boys. Clarity started to come out, but Jerry called to him: "Stay where you are, man; she must have some one." And the Captain, nodding, seemed to agree. "It's all down-beach to the boat now," he shouted.

It might have been down, but it felt extremely like "up," as we tailed on and hauled the frightful thing. I do not know whether we should ever have succeeded in getting the crown to the whaleboat or not. As things turned out, there was no need. We had not been straining and tugging with our teeth set and our heels dug into the sand, for half a minute, before the horrible thunder began again, and another pinnacle flew off the top of the island, and smashed down into the lagoon. I let go and ran as hard as I could, back to shelter. So did the Raratongans. I expected to be overtaken by Jerry, but when I flung myself down under a ledge of the pinnacle, wondering, while I licked my dry sandy lips, how long it would be before the whole place crashed round us, I saw that neither Jerry nor Ellis was with me.

The thunder came again, and I flung my head down, and saw nothing for a moment or two, fully expecting to die, for this time I had heard the scream of a shell. When the rending explosion passed, and I dared to look up, I saw three things:

Half the summit of the island gone.

Jerry, standing by the crown, hacking it up with an ax, which bit into the soft pure gold as into cheese.

Rutland Stewart-Ellis, lying in a lake of blood, dead.

It was a minute or so before I thought — so dazed was I— of looking for Ysabel. She was still where I had seen her last. Clarity had left her, and was coasting cautiously along under the rocks.

"The ship's all right," he bawled when he reached me. There was no noise at the moment, but I bawled loudly too, when I replied:

"Sooner we get to her the better."

"What about the gold?" he shouted. "Can't leave it, but can't take it."

I saw that. We should have to make a run for our lives, as if we were playing a ghastly sort of prisoner's base— and maybe lose the game, into the bargain.

"Must be mad," said Clarity, pointing to Jerry, who was still hacking away at the crown. He had bitten deep into it now. An immense thin hollow segment of it was almost detached; you could see the yellow glitter of untarnished metal

about the raw edges. In the strange blank silence that followed the thunder of the guns, the live ring of steel on gold sounded bell-like, marvelous. We stood under our poor shelter of rock, that might at any time be blown away, and watched him, wondering.

Jerry shouted, without stopping work:

"Make a run for the boat. I'll come at the last minute."

Clarity slapped his thigh.

"By Jings," he cried, "I see it." And I saw, too. Jerry was calmly risking— more than risking— his poor chance, by staying out there under possible fire, cutting up the one crown we had secured into portable fragments, which we were to transport if opportunity allowed us.

"I'll go and help," I cried. But Clarity, with his usual cold common sense, held me back.

"Not till it's time," he said.

TIME! Would there be any time for any of us, in half an hour? Or should we have gone where Ellis had gone, over eternity's edge? I thought this, even as I wondered how it was that none of us seemed shocked or moved at that barely perceived tragedy.

Left to myself, I don't know what I should have done. But when you were with Clarity, you usually had to do what he did. I waited, therefore, an interminable fifteen minutes or so. And the guns kept off. And Jerry hacked, and the glittering fragments flew.

Suddenly he stood up, shouting:

"They'll begin again soon."

To this day, I don't know upon what intervals or observations— when all observation seemed impossible— his calculations were based. But I knew Jerry. I followed the Captain at a run down the beach, and the boys came too. And Ysabel started from her refuge, as if to join us, until a shout from her father drove her back:

"You dare, and I'll skelp ye!"

After that, it was a madness of work, lifting bits of dirty, bright-bordered metal that felt incredibly huger than they looked, panting down to the whaleboat with them, casting them in, and laboring back for more. And above us the sky was delicate blue, and the wind hummed over the reef, and the bosun birds and the red-legged gulls wheeled, crying, wondering at the strange ways of men. And still the guns held off.

A strong man, hard driven, can carry two hundred pounds at once. A weak man can raise fifty or so. Among us, we had transported much more than a

thousand pounds weight to the big double-ender boat, before Jerry cried to us to stop, to bring Ysabel and go.

We were blindly obeying him now— among the blind, the one-eyed is king; and Jerry's unnamed sense, that had sometimes helped him and sometimes failed him, through those long wanderings of ours, was our only hope. You cannot imagine, till you have tried, how hard it is to stop in the harvesting of gold; leave off, with desire unsated, while you might yet gather more and more. But we did leave off; we let the lumps we held drop from our scarred fingers to the sand, and ran to: take our seats in the boat— long since shoved down— while Clarity called Ysabel, and went to meet her. Jerry went too, there was no keeping him back from that.

They had to pass the ghastly figure of Ellis. Jerry tried to kick the sand over it as he passed, and in so doing moved the body. Something rolled out from under— a couple of tiny, black-and-white objects. I don't think Jerry knew what they were at first; he picked them up mechanically and carried them in his hand Ysabel saw them, and her mouth parted in a sort of choked cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Jerry, looking at the things. "They're dice— I'll throw them away."

"No, no," said Ysabel, trembling as I had not seen her tremble before the bombardment itself. "Give them to me."

She turned them in her fingers,— all as we hurried down to the beach,— shook them up and down inside her palms, and then, with an exclamation, cast them far into the green still waters of the lagoon.

"What's the matter?" demanded Jerry.

"Get on board!' ordered Clarity. I really think those two might have stopped to discuss matters, if the Captain had not hustled them, sharply ordering, into the whaleboat, and set them, with myself, and the boys, to row. No sailing was possible now; the wind had died, and oars were our only chance. What that boat felt like, with over half a ton of gold, and six passengers under a tropic sun, I cannot tell you, any more than the galley slave of past ages— for whom I have ever since cherished a deep sympathy— could, probably, have told of similar experiences.

The one thing wanting to make our passage a hell was supplied when that damnable *Anaconda* opened out again, and began to smash the reef up with bad shots. Still, the farther we got from her target the safer we were, and it began to look before long, as if we should reach the schooner alive. By great luck she had been anchored far enough away from the island to escape destruction, though there was no knowing how long such luck might last.

IF you ask me what happened after we got on board, I cannot tell you at first hand. I found my berth, and lay three quarters dead all afternoon. I heard the guns stop, felt the schooner get under way and glide forth again— saw, dimly, by and by, green palm trees pass the port, blue empty seas take their place, dusk come with a burning of red fires against the west.

It was late when I stumbled out and lay upon the hatch. And the first thing I saw was a lady in a flowered, lace and silken gown, with ribbons in her hair, sitting unashamed and happy on the knee of Jerry Dawson.

I said the first thing that came into my head, and that was, idiotically:

"Where's your other clothes?"

"Kept for special occasions," answered Jerry. "We're going to lay in glad rags by the million in Callao."

I sat down and did not think at all for a minute or two.

Then I looked up and asked:

"Oh— what about the dice?"

The answer to that was long. But I daresay you will want to know.

YSABEL had gambled herself upon a throw of the dice, led on to it by Ellis, who saw her foolish, schoolgirl fancy for the toys, and made the most of it. And she had lost. But a certain fierce pride in playing the game had held her to her word. How far it would have held her in the very end, I do not know. For Ellis had been clever enough to include, in the throw, a promise not to marry anyone save himself.

But the dice we found on the beach under Ellis' body, the dice he had used, were not his own. They were a trick pair of Ysabel's, which she had made at school, for a wager, in keeping with her pose of being "the wickedest girl in the school." They had never been used except for innocent jests; even her dicing against herself had been carried out with the ordinary pair she also possessed. Ellis had seen the trick pair, and stolen them, days before he made his proposal; and he had substituted the false dice for the true ones at the moment when she had agreed to his crafty plan— taken as in a net by the snare of her own solitary fault.

Well, if it was a fault, he had cured her, for she never touched card or dice again.

You will not find Marooner's Ring if you look for it, on the map or on the seas. It was never rightly charted on the first, and as to the latter, the *Anaconda* started trying new explosives at short range, a few days later, with results entirely pleasing to the Republic of Chile.

As for us— half a ton of gold, we found, was as good for all practical purposes as twenty times the amount. Do your own summing, and see.

Captain Clarity's only comment, so far as report goes, was: 'Now, I suppose, I shall be allowed, at last, to wear my own trousers."

But for days after we left, he sang almost continuously:

"What shall we do with a drunken sailor?"

Which, being a sober man, was always his song of joy.

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18: Prudence Forgets Her Name

Charlton Lawrence Edholm

1879-1945

Joy Stories, Feb 1930

Joy Stories was one of those "racy" magazines that popped up in the 20s and 30s. Not very racy at all, but only lasted a few issues. This yarn came from Issue No 3.

WHY the police never molested Prudence Weymouth in her nightly prowling in the search of the stuff of drama, was a mystery. Quite alone she would find her way into the queerest corners of San Francisco, which has a world wide reputation for queer corners.

Her girlish figure, lithe and sensuous at once, and always smartly gowned was a familiar sight in the dives of the Barbary Coast. Chinatown and the cellar dance halls of Pacific Street knew her well. She had seen San Francisco in its most riotous hours, when opium dens were raided and the wretched women who frequented them were dragged into the light; and she had peered from a hiding place to see the hatchet men of rival tongs go out to street warfare.

Always alone, always veiled, she followed dangerous trails, and many a time her slender, shapely form, so inviting with its swaying gait, had lured the pursuit of the predatory male. When she found his persistence too annoying, Prudence would simply pause under a street light, resolutely confront her amorous pursuer— and lift her veil.

That was all. Her face, ravaged in childhood by smallpox, was like a blighted, wintry landscape: frozen, forbidding, ironical. It was enough to daunt the keenest sportsman in the chanceful game of the streets. He would slink away with an astonished "Damn!"

Her face protected Prudence.

Long ago she had given up all hope of a lover's embraces or a husband's sheltering arms. One look at her face had chilled so many hot-blooded youths. They would turn away quickly; not even noticing the beauty of her great hazel eyes, liquid and dark-lashed in that wreck of a face. Every such repulse was a sting to her vanity and a spur to her ambition. Her ambition was to write about these haunts of vice, the dives and dark alleys, in such gripping words that her readers would hear the shrieks of terror as some Chinese slave girl was beaten: would see the tattooed chest of the sailor, just ashore from a long cruise, tearing open his shirt in the excitement of the dance: would smell the liquor that was spilled in the underground bars, where haggard women waited, waited; with smiles painted on their excess-worn faces. Prudence would fashion stories about these things because it was her Art— so she said. How

much of this ambition was due to the crushing of her instinct to attract love; to give love in return; that she did not guess.

She had few friends; few pleasures. She did not know whether she were glad or sorry to be alone in the world, but she was undoubtedly glad that she did not have to divide her income which kept her so smartly dressed.

Prudence did not value her stories for the money they brought in; but their appearance in print, once in a while, made her feel that she was winning a place for herself in the art she loved. She assured herself that she was a born writer— that her disfigurement was an act of Providence— that it kept her from being distracted from her work— that it kept her out of entangling affairs. She had it all figured out.

Her greatest pleasure was getting the material, and what she called "local color;" prowling through the slimy streets before dawn, slipping past sleeping houses when the fog hung like a clammy shroud over the sea-port; when a slinking, adventurous cat, and the draggled, unsteady silhouette of a woman might be all the signs of life up and down Dupont Street. —When the only sounds might be the banging of a cheap piano in the next block, or the mournful bellow of fog horns on the bay.

In such a setting, at such an hour, anything might happen: something for a story, something for a life.

And happen it did! At such an uncanny hour, in such an unsavory place, she collided violently with "Bull" Corbin.

The big fellow had swung recklessly out of a narrow and malodorous passage. A door slammed behind him, cutting off the shrill laughter of women. As he fled to the street, the impact of his body had almost hurled her to the ground. But his arm, which was astonishingly quick for such a massive limb, snatched her by the waist, kept her from falling and supported her as firmly as if she had been picked up by the steel arm of a crane.

Prudence did not scream. She was not that kind. Besides she had only enough breath in her body for a little gasp which must have sounded rather pitiful, for the big fellow took her face in his huge left hand, tilted it up to his and kissed her in a big-brotherly sort of way on the lips.

"Hope I didn't hurt you, kid" he said. "I was in a hurry to get outa that damn joint. It made me sick— Them painted dolls! Full of— full of sawdust!"

There was genuine concern in his tones. There was no doubt about it. Bull Corbin was a kind-hearted brute and he felt that even a poor street-girl was entitled to an apology if you accidentally knocked the breath out of her.

For a few moments he held her thus, breathing heavily. How still it was! They could hear their breathing, even the beating of their hearts. 'Nothing else

but the far-away moan of the fog horn. They were alone in the immensity of the night, with the sea-fog blurring even the opposite side of the street.

Then he attempted to set her on her own little feet, but to his surprise (and perhaps to hers) she clung limply to him, and he felt with alarm that he might have really hurt her with his huge body.

A second thought made him feel quickly in his pockets for watch and money, but he found no slim and prying fingers there.

"What's the matter with this kid?" he thought.

As he tried to disengage himself, with slow and clumsy movements, the pressure of the woman's soft arm about his neck suddenly caused him to tingle all over.

He drew a long breath.

So that was it!

It was too dark to see her face. It was merely a pale, oval blur in the shadows. Once again, with more deliberation and a brutal tenderness, he took the little face in his huge left hand, brought his own down to it and kissed her full on the mouth.

The fog closed about two entwined figures that slowly moved through the deserted streets.

Cautiously they stole up the staircase to her pair of tiny rooms on the second floor. The gas was turned down to a pin point in the hall, and in her austere bed-chamber the only light came from the street lamp.

"Be quiet," she said under her breath.

He had knocked against a chair and muffled an expletive.

"Don't speak!" she whispered. "The woman who rents the rooms— she doesn't know that I receive visitors." The poor girl had never before had a caller by night; never a man at any hour, but she pretended that she was used to such elaborate precautions.

Grumbling, the big fellow felt for a match.

"No, no!" she almost cried aloud. "No light! No light!"

"Why not?"

"Oh, you don't know my landlady! She's a dragon. She'd look through the transom— or through the keyhole. She'd turn me out if she knew I did this!"

"Gawd," chuckled Bull Corbin, "I never run up against a Jane like this before. Blamed if you don't act like I was Mister First!"

"Oh no, no! Of course you're not." Her voice shook.

They were seated side by side on the low bed, virginal under its white counterpane. Outside, the fog-horn moaned at long intervals. Within the house all was silence. Prudence could hear her heart beating wildly.

"Aw, I guess I'd better go. I don't belong in no place where I can't breathe aloud." He made as if to rise and leave her, but Prudence gave one little gasp, a faint cry like a child that is afraid to be left alone.

"No, no!" she whispered. "Don't go."

Once again her arms were about his heavily muscled neck. The touch of them, so warm and soft and pulsing with desire was more compelling than cables of steel. He could not go now. His huge arms encircled her pliant waist. ,

Her head fell back under his embrace— her hat had dropped to the floor, and was under their feet. What matter?

Her eyes closed; her body relaxed; a weakness came over her that left her no more than a baby in his arms. What matter? What did anything matter?

She had found it at last; the stuff of drama; the stuff of which stories are made.

When dawn stole into the room, she awoke, but the big fellow was still sleeping. Something in the helplessness of this giant lying on his back before her like a great sprawling infant affected her profoundly. She had a desire to tend him, as a mother looks after her child.

Taking care not to awaken him, Prudence rose and prepared coffee. Every morning she set out her breakfast; rolls and an egg, a little fruit and coffee for one.

But coffee for two! That was something different. A miracle!

Prudence hoped he would not look at her while he ate his breakfast. If he should avert his face! One more stab at her vanity would kill her, she thought.

But his appraisal of her features was casual. And not painful to her, somehow.

Perhaps in the morning, when the mind turns to the business of the day; when one is drinking really excellent coffee; when one is interested in the headlines— a man is less critical, thought Prudence.

That same day they moved.

Bull Corbin wanted to be in the house where he was boss. None of this holding your breath for fear some old bat of a landlady would give you notice. Give her notice.

Prudence packed her typewriter submissively, and they went away together.

FROM the topmost room of a certain cheap hotel on the slope of Telegraph Hill, one has a ravishing view of the Bay. It is doubtful whether the room commands a higher rent on that account. Few frequenters go there for the view. But from the fire escape that led from Bull Corbin's room, one could see the lofty, purple bulk of Mount Tamalpais, one could look down upon ships

from the seven seas at anchor and could see the ferry boats plying back and forth, the boats from Oakland, Berkeley, San Rafael, leaving fleecy paths behind them. It was like a huge turquoise matrix, the Bay, a sheet of indescribable, greenish blue, veined and criss-crossed with the trail of vessels.

The fire escape served as a balcony, and of a Sunday morning it was Bull Corbin's habit to install himself there very comfortably with slippers and a can of beer and a black pipe. To keep his mind employed he perused the comic section of the Sunday paper.

His florid face was heavy-eyed with contentment on such a sunny morning of the day of rest. He was satisfied with himself. He felt especially virtuous because he had shaved. In past years he had never shaved Sunday mornings— but now. He was well satisfied. Business was good. He was damned if he was going to slave around the pool room any more on Sunday mornings. Charley would have to run the pool room alone until afternoon when business picked up for the day.

Profits were satisfactory. Also for some strange reason he was satisfied with his woman. "A hell of a note, that!" He would glance at her profile as she sat there looking across the Bay, sometimes braiding her long, glossy hair; sometimes watering the two geraniums that grew in lard buckets full of earth.

"Honest to Gawd, I bet I've got the homeliest woman on the Coast!" he would mutter to himself. "Me, that's had all Frisco to pick from!! But," he continued reflectively, "there is .something about her that them painted dolls haven't got. She's the real thing."

His wandering glance was caught by the rounded contour of her arm as the kimono fell from it clear to the ivory shoulder, and again that strange thrill went through him. He cleared his throat and spoke.

"Kid," he said, "I'm goin' to marry you. We're goin' to get hitched up this week,"

She made no answer but kept her face hidden upon his knee. "Say kid," he went on, "I wish't you'd tell me how you ever come to take up with me like this. You're not the sort I sized you up for— that night. You never took a chance before. I'm wise to that. What made you do it?"

"I could tell you, dear, but you wouldn't understand. Lets not talk about it. I am so happy now."

"Tell me anyhow. Maybe I ain't so dumb, like you think."

As if she were explaining it to herself, the girl said in a low, matter-of-fact tone, "Well, you see— I wonder if you'll understand! I felt that I had gone as far as possible in my writing— as far as I could go without some great soul-shaking experience. I had seen things just from the outside. I was a looker-on at the game. I wanted to do something big; write a story that would go to the

heart of things. But it was no use! I was just a spectator. I had had no experience— no emotion; just observation; just local color. How could I write? But now I can."

Bull Corbin laid his pipe on the rail of the fire escape and looked down upon the girl's glossy head with absolute bewilderment.

There was a pause; then she added timidly, "And dear— I'm so glad that I'm your woman. Are you?"

"Sure!" said Bull Corbin. "An' we're goin' to get married this week, kid. I guess you're right— but I don't quite get you— not all. 'There's a lot of your highbrow language that's away over my head. Like poetry. But there's one thing I want understood. Now lissen an' get me right. I ain't got no use for lady reporters. What do you want to write for? I can take care of you. Certainly I can! Why not? Business is good. So lissen: can all them ideas about writin' pieces for the paper, like you was speakin' of. You're goin' to be my wife. Understand? Wife! And you don't have to work no more for the papers, for my friends would think I was a piker to let you. See? An' besides I don't like it. So gimme a kiss an' fergit writin'."

And Prudence answered without hesitation or regret, "Yes dear. Of course."

19: The Lazarette of the "Huntress"

William Clarke Russell

1844-1911

The Idler, May 1894

I STEPPED INTO the Brunswick Hotel in the East India Docks for a glass of ale. It was in the year 1853, and a wet, hot afternoon. I had been on the tramp all day, making just three weeks of a wretched, hopeless hunt after a situation on shipboard, and every bone in me ached with my heart. My precious timbers, how poor I was! Two shillings and threepence— that was all the money I possessed in the wide world, and when I had paid for the ale, I was poorer yet by twopence.

A number of nautical men of various grades were drinking at the bar. I sat down in a corner to rest, and abandoned myself to the most dismal reflections. I wanted to get out to Australia, and nobody, it seems, was willing to ship me in any situation on any account whatever. Captains and mates howled me off if I attempted to cross their gangways. Nothing was to be got in the shipping yards. The very crimps sneered at me when I told them that I wanted a berth. "Shake your head, my hawbuck," said one of them, in the presence of a crowd of grinning seamen, "that the Johns may see the hayseed fly."

What was I, do you ask? I'll tell you. I was one of ten children whose father had been a clergyman, and the income "from all sources" of that same clergyman had never exceeded £230 a year. I was a lumbering, hulking lad, without friends, and, as I am now perfectly sensible, without brains, without any kind of taste for any pursuit, execrating the notion of clerkships, and perfectly willing to make away with myself sooner than be glued to a three-legged stool. But enough of this. The long and short is, I was thirsting to get out to Australia, never doubting that I should easily make my fortune there.

I sat in my corner in the Brunswick Hotel, scowling at the floor, with my long legs thrust out, and my hands buried deep in my breeches pockets. Presently I was sensible that some one stood beside me, and, looking up, I beheld a young fellow staring with all his might, with a slow grin of recognition wrinkling his face. I seemed to remember him.

"Mr. William Peploe, ain't it?" said he.

"Why yes," said I; "and you— and you—?"

"You don't remember Jem Back, then, sir?"

"Yes I do, perfectly well. Sit down, Back. Are you a sailor? I am so dead beat that I can scarcely talk."

Jem Back brought a tankard of ale to my table, and sat down beside me. He was a youth of my own age, and I knew him as the son of a parishioner of my father. He was attired in nautical clothes, yet somehow he did not exactly look

what is called a sailor man. We fell into conversation. He informed me that he was an under-steward on board a large ship called the *Huntress*, that was bound out of the Thames in a couple of days for Sydney, New South Wales. He had sailed two years in her, and hoped to sign as head steward next voyage in a smaller ship.

"There'll be a good deal of waiting this bout," said he; "we're taking a cuddy full of swells out. There's Sir Thomas Mason— he goes as Governor; there's his lady and three daughters, and a sort of suet" (he meant suite) "sails along with the boiling." So he rattled on.

"Can't you help me to find a berth in that ship?" said I.

"I'm afraid not," he answered. "What could you offer yourself as, sir? They wouldn't have you forward, and aft we're chock-a-block. If you could manage to stow yourself away— they wouldn't chuck you overboard when you turned up at sea; they'd make you useful, and land you as safe as if you was the Governor himself."

I thought this a very fine idea, and asked Back to tell me how I should go to work to hide myself. He seemed to recoil, I thought, when I put the matter to him earnestly, but he was an honest, kindly-hearted fellow, and remembered my father with a certain degree of respect, and even of affection; he had known me as a boy; there was the sympathy of association and of memory between us; he looked at the old suit of clothes I sat in, and at my hollow, anxious face, and he crooked his eyebrows with an expression of pain when I told him that all the money I had was two and a penny, and that I must starve and be found floating a corpse in the dockyard basin if I did not get out to Australia. We sat for at least an hour over our ale, talking very earnestly, and when we arose and bade each other farewell I had settled with him what to do.

The *Huntress* was a large frigate-built ship of 1400 tons. On the morning of the day on which she was to haul out of dock I went on board of her. Nobody took any notice of me. The vessel was full of business, clamorous with the life and hurry of the start for the other side of the world. Cargo was still swinging over the main hold, down whose big, dark square a tall, strong, red-bearded chief mate was roaring to the stevedore's men engulfed in the bowels of the ship. A number of drunken sailors were singing and cutting capers on the forecastle. The main-deck was full of steerage, or, as they were then termed, 'tween-deck passengers— grimy men, and seedy women and wailing babes, and frightened, staring children. I did not pause to muse upon the scene, nor did I gaze aloft at the towering spars, where, forward, up in the dingy sky of the Isle of Dogs, floated that familiar symbol of departure, Blue Peter. I saw several young men in shining buttons and cloth caps with gold badges, and

knew them to be midshipmen, and envied them. Every instant I expected to be ordered out of the ship by some one with hurricane lungs and a vast command of injurious language, and my heart beat fast. I made my way to the cuddy front, and just as I halted beside a group of women at the booby hatch, James Back came to the door of the saloon. He motioned to me with a slight toss of his head.

"Don't look about you," he whispered; "just follow me straight."

I stepped after him into the saloon. It was like entering a grand drawing-room. Mirrors and silver lamps sparkled; the panelled bulkheads were rich with hand paintings; flowers hung in plenty under the skylight; goldfish gleamed as they circled in globes of crystal. These things and more I beheld in the space of a few heart-beats.

I went after James Back down a wide staircase that sank through a large hatch situated a dozen paces from the cuddy front. When I reached the bottom I found myself in a long corridor, somewhat darksome, with cabins on either hand. Back took me into one of those cabins and closed the door.

"Now listen, Mr. Peploe," said he. "I'm going to shut you down in the lazarette." He pulled a piece of paper from his pocket, on which was a rude tracing. "This is the inside of the lazarette," he continued, pointing to the tracing. "There are some casks of flour up in this corner. They'll make you a safe hiding-place. You'll find a bag of ship's biscuit and some bottles of wine and water and a pannikin stowed behind them casks. There's cases of bottled ale in the lazarette, and plenty of tinned stuffs and grub for the cabin table. But don't broach anything if you can hold out."

"When am I to show myself?"

"When we're out of Soundings."

"Where's that?" said I.

"Clear of the Chops," he answered. "If you come up when the land's still in sight, the captain'll send you ashore by anything that'll take you, and you'll be handed over to the authorities and charged."

"How shall I know when we're clear of the Chops?" said I.

"I'll drop below into the lazarette on some excuse and tell you," he answered. "You'll be very careful when you turn up, Mr. Peploe, not to let them guess that anybody's lent you a hand in this here hiding job. If they find out I'm your friend, then it's all up with Jem Back. He's a stone-broke young man, and his parents'll be wishing of themselves dead rather than they should have lived to see this hour."

"I have sworn, and you may trust me, Back."

"Right," said he. "And now, is there e'er a question you'd like to ask before you drop below?"

"When does the ship haul out?"

"They may be doing of it even whilst we're talking," he said.

"Can I make my escape out of the lazarette should I feel very ill, or as if I was going to suffocate?"

"Yes, the hatch is a little 'un. The cargo sits tall under him, and you can stand up and shove the hatch clear of its bearings should anything go seriously wrong with you. But don't be in a hurry to feel ill or short o' breath. There's no light, but there's air enough. The united smells, perhaps, ain't all violets, but the place is warm."

He paused, looking at me inquiringly. I could think of nothing more to ask him. He opened the door, warily peered out, then whispered to me to follow, and I walked at his heels to the end of the corridor near the stern. I heard voices in the cabins on either hand of me; some people came out of one of the after berths, and passed us, talking noisily, but they took no heed of me or of my friend. They were passengers, and strangers to the ship, and would suppose me a passenger also, or an under-steward, like Jem Back, who, however, now looked his vocation, attired as he was in a camlet jacket, black cloth breeches, and a white shirt.

We halted at a little hatch-like trap-door a short way forward of the bulkheads of the stern cabins. Back grasped the ring in the centre of the hatch, and easily lifted the thing, and laid open the hold.

"All's clear," said he, looking along the corridor. "Down with you, Mr. Peploe." I peered into the abyss, as it seemed to me; the light hereabouts was so dim that but little of it fell through the small square of hatchway, and I could scarcely discern the outlines of the cargo below. I put my legs over and sank, holding on with a first voyager's grip to the coaming of the hatch: then, feeling the cargo under my feet, I let go, and the instant I withdrew my hands, Back popped the hatch on.

The blackness was awful. It affected me for some minutes like the want of air. I thought I should smother, and could hardly hinder myself from thrusting the hatch up for light, and for the comfort of my lungs. Presently the sense of suffocation passed. The corridor was uncarpeted; I heard the sounds of footsteps on the bare planks overhead, and, never knowing but that at any moment somebody might come into this lazarette, I very cautiously began to grope my way over the cargo. I skinned my hands and my knees, and cut my small clothes against all sorts of sharp edges in a very short time. I never could have realized the like of such a blackness as I was here groping through. The deepest midnight overhung by the electric cloud would be as bright as dawn or twilight compared to it.

I carried, however, in my head the sketch Back had drawn of this interior, and remembering that I had faced aft when my companion had closed me down, I crawled in the direction in which I imagined the casks and my stock of bread and wine lay; and to my great joy, after a considerable bit of crawling and clawing about, during which I repeatedly wounded myself, I touched a canvas bag, which I felt, and found full of ship's bread, and on putting my hand out in another direction, but close by where the bag was, I touched a number of bottles. On this I felt around, carefully stroking the blackness with my maimed hands, and discovered that I had crawled into a recess formed by the stowage of a number of casks on their bilge; a little space was left behind them and the ship's wall; it was the hiding-place Back had indicated, and I sat down to breathe and think, and to collect my wits.

I had no means of making a light; but I don't believe that in any case I should have attempted to kindle a flame, so great would have been my terror of setting the ship on fire. I kept my eyes shut, fancying that that would be a good way to accustom my vision to the blackness. And here I very inopportunely recollected that one of the most dreadful prison punishments inflicted upon mutinous and ill-behaved felons is the locking of them up in a black room, where it is thought proper not to keep them very long lest they should go mad; and I wondered how many days or hours it would take to make a lunatic of me in this lazarette, that was as black certainly as any black room ever built for refractory criminals.

I had no clothes save those I wore. Stowaways as a rule do not carry much luggage to sea with them. I had heard tell of ships' slop-chests, however, and guessed, when I was enlarged and put to work, the captain would let me choose a suit of clothes and pay for them out of my wages. I did not then know that it is not customary for commanders of ships to pay stowaways for their services. Indeed, I afterwards got to hear that far better men than the average run of stowaway were, in their anxiety to get abroad, very willing to sign articles for a shilling a month, and lead the lives of dogs for that wage.

I had come into the ship with a parcel of bread and cheese in my pocket: feeling hungry I partook of this modest refreshment, and clawing round touched a bottle, pulled the loosely-fitted cork out, and drank. This small repast heartened me; I grew a little less afraid of the profound blackness, and of the blue and green lights which came and went upon it, and began to hope I should not go mad.

The hours sneaked along. Now and again a sort of creaking noise ran through the interior, which made me suppose that the ship was proceeding down the river in tow of a tug. Occasionally I heard the tread of passengers overhead. It pleased me to hear that sound. It soothed me by diminishing the

intolerable sense of loneliness bred by the midnight blackness in which I lay. The atmosphere was warm, but I drew breath without difficulty. The general smell was, indeed, a complicated thing; in fact, the lazarette was a store-room. I seemed to taste ham, tobacco, cheese, and fifty other such matters in the air.

I had slept very ill on the preceding night, and after I had been for some hours in the lazarette I felt weary, and stretched myself along the deck between the casks and the ship's wall, and pillowed my head on my coat. I slept, and my slumber was deep and long. My dreams were full of pleasing imaginations— of nuggets of extraordinary size, chiefly, and leagues of rich pasture land whitened by countless sheep, all branded with the letter P. But after I had awakened and gathered my wits together, I understood that I had lost all count of time, that I should not know what o'clock it was, and whether it was day or night, until I had got out. I was glad to find that the blackness was not so intolerable as I had dreaded. I felt for the biscuits and bottles, and ate and drank as appetite dictated. Nobody in all this while lifted the hatch. No doubt the steward had plenty of stores for current use in hand, and there might be no need to break out fresh provisions for some weeks.

I had lain, according to my own computation, very nearly two days in this black hole, when I felt a movement in the ship which immediately upset my stomach. The vessel, I might suppose, was in the Channel; her pitching grew heavier, the lazarette was right aft, and in no part of the vessel saving the bows could her motion be more sensibly felt. I was speedily overcome with nausea, and for many long hours lay miserably ill, unable to eat or drink. At the expiration of this time the sea ran more smoothly; at all events, the ship's motion grew gentle; the feeling of sickness suddenly passed, leaving me, indeed, rather weak, yet not so helpless but that I could sit up and drink from a bottle of wine and water, and eat a dry ship's biscuit.

Whilst I was munching the tasteless piece of sea bread, sitting in the intense blackness, pining for the fresh air and the sunshine, and wondering how much longer I was to wait for Back's summons to emerge, the hatch was raised. I shrank and held my breath, with my hand grasping the biscuit poised midway to my mouth, as though I had been withered by a blast of lightning. A faint sheen floated in the little square. It was the dim lustre of distant lamplight, whence I guessed it was night. The figure of a man cautiously dropped through the hatchway, and by some means, and all very silently, he contrived to readjust the hatch, shutting himself down as Back had shut me down. The motion of the ship, as I have said, was gentle, the creaking noises throughout the working fabric were dim and distant; indeed, I could hear the man breathing as he seemed to pause after bringing the hatchway to its bearings over his head. I did not suppose that the captain ever entered this

part of the ship. The man, for all I could conjecture, might be one of the mates, or the boatswain, or the head steward, visiting the lazarette on some errand of duty, and coming down very quietly that the passengers who slept in the cabins on either hand the corridor should not be disturbed. Accordingly, I shrank into the compactest posture I could contort myself into, and watched.

A lucifer match was struck; the flame threw out the figure of a man standing on the cargo just under the hatch; he pulled out a little bull's-eye lamp from his pocket and lighted it, and carefully extinguished the match. The long, misty beam of the magnified flame swept the interior like the revolving spoke of a wheel as the man slowly turned the lens about in a critical search of the place, himself being in blackness. The line of light broke on the casks behind which I crouched, and left me in deep shadow unperceived. After some minutes of this sort of examination, the man came a little way forward and crouched down upon a bale or something of the sort directly abreast of the casks, through whose cant-lines I was peering. He opened the lamp and placed it beside him; the light was then full upon his figure.

He might have been an officer of the ship for all I knew. His dress was not distinguishable, but I had his face very plain in my sight. He was extremely pale; his nose was long and aquiline; he wore moustaches, whiskers, and a short beard, black, but well streaked with grey. His eyebrows were bushy and dark; his eyes were black, and the reflected lamplight shot in gleams from them, like to that level spoke of radiance with which he had swept this lazarette. His hair was unusually long, even for that age of the fashion, and his being without a hat made me guess he was not from the deck, though I never doubted that he was one of the ship's company.

When he opened the bull's-eye lamp and put it down, he drew something out of his pocket which glittered in his hand. I strained my sight, yet should not have managed to make out what he grasped but for his holding it close to the light; I then saw that it was a small circular brass box; a kind of little metal cylinder, from whose side fell a length of black line, just as tape draws out of a yard measure. He talked to himself, with a sort of wild, scowling grin upon his face, whilst he inspected his brass box and little length of line; he then shut the lamp and flashed it upon what I saw was a medium-sized barrel, such, perhaps, as a brewer would call a four-and-a-half gallon cask. It rested on its bilge, after the manner in which the casks behind which I lay hidden were stowed.

I now saw him pull a spile or spike of wood out of the head of the barrel, and insert the end of the black line attached to the small brass piece in the orifice. This done he fitted a key to the brass box and wound it up. He may have taken twenty turns with the key; the lazarette was so quiet that I could distinctly hear the harsh grit of the mechanism as it was revolved. All the while

he was thus employed he preserved his scowling smile, and whispered to himself. After he had wound up the piece of clockwork he placed it on the bale where his lamp had stood, and taking the light made for the hatchway, under which he came to a stand whilst he extinguished the bull's-eye. I then heard him replace the hatch, and knew he was gone.

The arrangement he had wound up ticked with the noise of a Dutch clock. I had but little brains in those days, as I have told you, and in sad truth I am not overloaded with that particular sort of cargo at this hour; but I was not such a fool as not to be able to guess what the man intended to do, and what that hollow, desperate ticking signified. Oh, my great God, I thought to myself, it is an infernal machine! and the ship will be blown up!

My horror and fright went far beyond the paralyzing form; they ran a sort of madness into my blood and vitalized me into desperate instant action. Utterly heedless *now* of hurting and wounding myself, I scrambled over the casks, and, directed by the noise of the ticking, stretched forth my hand and grasped the brass machine. I fiercely tugged it; then feeling for the slow match, as I guessed the line to be, I ran it through my fingers to make sure I had pulled the end out of the barrel. The murderous thing ticked in my hand with the energy of a hotly-revolved capstan, whilst I stood breathing short, considering what I should do, whilst the perspiration soaked through my clothes as though a bucket of oil had been upset over me. Heavens! the horror of standing in that black lazarette with an infernal machine ticking in my hands, and a large barrel of gunpowder, as I easily guessed, within reach of a kick of my foot! I trembled in every limb and sweated at every pore, and seemed to want brains enough to tell me what ought next to be done!

How long I thus stood irresolute I don't know; still clutching the hoarsely-ticking piece of clockwork, I crawled in the direction in which I supposed lay the casks behind which I had hidden. I had scarcely advanced half a dozen feet when the mechanism snapped in my fingers; a bright flash, like to the leap of a flame in the pan of a flint musket, irradiated the lazarette; the match was kindled, and burnt freely. The first eating spark was but small; I extinguished the fiery glow between my thumb and forefinger, squeezing it in my terror with the power of the human jaw. The ticking ceased; the murderous thing lay silent and black in my hand. I waited for some minutes to recover myself, and then made up my mind to get out of the lazarette and go on deck, and tell the people that there was a barrel of gunpowder in the after-hold, and that I had saved the ship from having her side or stern blown out.

I pocketed the brass box and match, but it took me above half an hour to get out of the infernal hole. I fell into crevices, went sprawling over pointed edges, and twice came very near to breaking my leg. Happily, I was tall, and

when I stood on the upper tier of cargo I could feel the deck above me, and once, whilst thus groping, I touched the edge of the hatchway, thrust up the cover, and got out.

I walked straight down the corridor, which was sown with passengers' boots, mounted the wide staircase, and gained the quarter-deck. I reeled and nearly fell, so intoxicating was the effect of the gushing draught of sweet, fresh night-wind after the stagnant, cheesy atmosphere of the lazarette. A bull's-eye shone on the face of a clock under the break of the poop; the hour was twenty minutes after two. Nothing stirred on the main-deck and waist; the forward part of the ship was hidden in blackness. She was sailing on a level keel before the wind, and the pallid spaces of her canvas soared to the trucks, wan as the delicate curls and shreds of vapour which floated under the bright stars.

I ascended a flight of steps which led to the poop, and saw the shadowy figures of two midshipmen walking on one side the deck, whilst on the other side, abreast of the mizzen rigging, stood a third person. I guessed by his being alone that he was the officer of the watch, and stepped over to him. He drew himself erect as I approached, and sang out, "Hallo! who the devil are you?"

"I'm just out of your lazarette," said I, "where I've saved this ship from having her stern blown out by an infernal machine!"

He bent his head forward and stared into my face, but it was too dark for him to make anything of me. I reckoned he was the second mate; his outline against the stars defined a square, bullet-headed, thick-necked man. On a sudden he bawled out to the two midshipmen, who had come to a stand on t'other side the skylight—

"Mr. Freeling, jump below and call the captain. Beg him to come on deck at once, young gentleman."

The midshipman rushed into the cuddy.

"What's this yarn about blowing out the ship's stern?" continued the second mate, as I rightly took him to be.

I related my story as straightforwardly as my command of words permitted. I told him that I had wanted to get to Australia, that I was too poor to pay my passage, that I had been unable to find employment on board ship, that I had hidden myself in the lazarette of the *Huntress*, and that whilst there, and within the past hour, I had seen a man fit a slow match into what I reckoned was a barrel of gunpowder, and disappear after setting his infernal machine a-going. And thus speaking, I pulled the machine out of my pocket, and put it into his hand.

At this moment the captain arrived on deck. He was a tall man, with a very deep voice, slow, cool, and deliberate in manner and speech.

"What's the matter?" he inquired, and instantly added, "Who is this man?"

The second mate gave him my story almost as I had delivered it.

The captain listened in silence, took the infernal machine, stepped to the skylight, under which a lamp was dimly burning, and examined the piece of mechanism. His manner of handling it by some means sprang the trigger, which struck the flint, and there flashed out a little sun-bright flame that fired the match. I jumped to his side and squeezed the fire out between my thumb and forefinger as before. The captain told the two midshipmen to rouse up the chief mate and send the boatswain and carpenter aft.

"Let there be no noise," said he to the second mate. "We want no panic aboard us. Describe the man," said he, addressing me, "whom you saw fitting this apparatus to the barrel." I did so. "Do you recognize the person by this lad's description?" said the captain to the second mate.

The second mate answered that he knew no one on board who answered to the likeness I had drawn.

"Gentlemen, I swear he's in the ship!" I cried, and described him again as I had seen him when the open bull's-eye allowed the light to stream fair upon his face.

But now the arrival of the chief officer, the boatswain, and the carpenter occasioned some bustle. My story was hastily re-told. The carpenter fetched a lantern, and the whole group examined the infernal machine by the clear light.

"There's no question as to the object of this piece of clockwork, sir," said the chief officer.

"None," exclaimed the captain; "it flashed a few minutes ago in my hand. The thing seems alive. Softly, now. The passengers mustn't hear of this: there must be no panic. Take the boatswain and carpenter along with you, Mr. Morritt, into the lazarette. But mind your fire." And he then told them where the barrel was stowed as I had described it.

The three men left the poop. The captain now examined me afresh. He showed no temper whatever at my having hidden myself on board his ship. All his questions concerned the appearance of the man who had adjusted the machine, how he had gone to work, what he had said when he talked to himself— but this question I could not answer. When he had ended his enquiries he sent for the chief steward, to whom he related what had happened, and then asked him if there was such a person in the ship as I had described. The man answered there was.

"What's his name?"

"He's booked as John Howland, sir. He's a steerage passenger. His cabin's No. 2 on the starboard side. His meals are taken to him into his cabin, and I don't think he's ever been out of it since he came aboard."

"Go and see if he's in his cabin," said the captain.

As the steward left the poop the chief mate, the boatswain, and carpenter returned.

"It's as the young man states, sir," said Mr. Morritt. "There's a barrel of gunpowder stowed where he says it is, with a hole in the head ready to receive the end of a fuse."

"Presently clear it out, and get it stowed away in the magazine," said the captain, calmly. "This has been a narrow escape. Carpenter, go forward and bring a set of irons along. Is there only one barrel of gunpowder below, d'ye say, Mr. Morritt?"

"No more, sir."

"How could such a thing find its way into the lazarette?" said the captain, addressing the second mate.

"God alone knows!" burst out the other. "It'll have come aboard masked in some way, and it deceived me. Unless there's the hand of a lumper in the job— does *he* know no more about it than what he says?" he cried, rounding upon me.

At this moment the steward came rushing from the companion way, and said to the captain, in a trembling voice, "The man lies dead in his bunk, sir, with his throat horribly cut."

"Come you along with us," said the captain, addressing me; and the whole of us, saving the carpenter and second mate, went below.

We walked along the corridor obedient to the captain's whispered injunction to tread lightly, and make no noise. The midnight lantern faintly illuminated the length of the long after passage. The steward conducted us to a cabin that was almost right aft, and threw open the door. A bracket lamp filled the interior with light. There were two bunks under the porthole, and in the lower bunk lay the figure of the man I had beheld in the lazarette. His throat was terribly gashed, and his right hand still grasped the razor with which the wound had been inflicted.

"Is that the man?" said the captain.

"That's the man," I answered, trembling from head to foot, and sick and faint with the horror of the sight.

"Steward, fetch the doctor," said the captain, "and tell the carpenter we shan't want any irons here."

The narrative of my tragic experience may be completed by the transcription of two newspaper accounts, which I preserve pasted in a commonplace book. The first is from the *Sydney Morning Herald*. After telling about the arrival of the *Huntress*, and the disembarkation of his Excellency and suite, the writer proceeds thus:—

"When the ship was five days out from the Thames an extraordinary incident occurred. A young man named William Peploe, a stowaway, whilst hidden in the lazarette of the vessel, saw a man enter the place in which he was hiding and attach a slow match and an infernal machine to a barrel of gunpowder stored amidships of the lazarette, and, from what we can gather, *on top of the cargo*! When the man left the hold, young Peploe heroically withdrew the match from the powder and carried the machine on deck. The youth described the man, who proved to be a second-class passenger, who had embarked under the name of John Howland. When the villain's cabin was entered he was found lying in his bunk dead, with a severe wound in his throat inflicted by his own hand. No reason is assigned for this dastardly attempt to destroy a valuable ship and cargo and a company of souls numbering two hundred and ten, though there seems little reason to doubt that the man was mad. It is certain that but for the fortunate circumstance of young Peploe lying hidden in the lazarette the ship's stern or side would have been blown out, and she must have gone down like a stone, carrying all hands with her. On the passengers in due course being apprised of their narrow escape, a purse of a hundred guineas was subscribed and presented by his Excellency to young Peploe. The captain granted him a free passage, and provided him with a comfortable outfit from the ship's slop-chest. It is also understood that some situation under Government has been promised to Mr. William Peploe in consideration of the extraordinary service rendered on this memorable occasion."

My next quotation is from the pages of the *Nautical Magazine*, dated two years subsequent to the publication of the above in the Australian paper:—

"A bottle was picked up in March last upon the beach of Terceira, one of the Azores, containing a paper bearing a narrative which, unless it be a hoax, seems to throw some light on the mysterious affair of the Huntress*, for the particulars of which we refer our readers to our volume of last year. The paper, as transmitted by the British Consul, is as follows:—*

Ship Huntress*. At sea, such and such a date, 1853.*

I, who am known on board this vessel as John Howland, am the writer of this document. Twenty years ago I was unjustly sentenced to a term of transportation across seas, and my treatment at Norfolk Island was such that I vowed by the God who made me to be revenged on the man who, acting on the representation of his creatures, had caused me to be sent from Hobart Town to that hellish penal settlement. That man, with his wife and children, attended by a suite, is a passenger in this ship, and I have concerted my plan to dispatch

him and those who may be dear to him to that Devil to whom the wretch consigned my soul when he ordered me to be sent as a further punishment to Norfolk Island. The destruction of this ship is ensured. Nothing can avert it. A barrel of gunpowder was stowed by well-bribed hands in the East India Docks in the lazarette, to which part of the hold access is easy by means of a small trap-door. I am writing this three-quarters of an hour before I proceed to the execution of my scheme, and the realization of my dream of vengeance. When I have completed this document I will place it in a bottle, which I shall carefully cork and seal and cast into the sea through my cabin porthole. I am sorry for the many who must suffer because of the sins of one; but that one must perish, and immediately, in which hope, craving that, when this paper is found, it may be transmitted to the authorities at home, so that the fate of my bitter enemy may be known, I subscribe myself,

Israel Thomas Wilkinson,

Ex-Convict and Ticket-of-Leave Man.

20: The Vampire of Croglin Grange

Augustus Hare

1834–1903

In: *The Story of my Life*, Vol 4, 1896

English writer, almost entirely non-fiction (travel books and the like) and painter. He managed to write a six-volume autobiography.

FISHER MAY SOUND a very plebeian name, but this family is of a very ancient lineage, and for many hundreds of years they have possessed a very curious old place in Cumberland, which bears the weird name of Croglin Grange. The great characteristic of the house is that never at any period of its very long existence has it been more than one story high, but it has a terrace from which large grounds sweep away towards the church in the hollow, and a fine distant view.

When, in lapse of years, the Fishers outgrew Croglin Grange in family and fortune, they were wise enough not to destroy the long-standing characteristic of the place by adding another story to the house, but they went away to the south, to reside at Thorncombe near Guildford, and they let Croglin Grange.

They were extremely fortunate in their tenants, two brothers and a sister. They heard their praises from all quarters. To their poorer neighbours they were all that is most kind and beneficent, and their neighbours of a higher class spoke of them as a most welcome addition to the little society of the neighbourhood. On their part, the tenants were greatly delighted with their new residence. The arrangement of the house, which would have been a trial to many, was not so to them. In every respect Croglin Grange was exactly suited to them.

The winter was spent most happily by the new inmates of Croglin Grange, who shared in all the little social pleasures of the district, and made themselves very popular. In the following summer there was one day which was dreadfully, annihilatingly hot. The brothers lay under the trees with their books, for it was too hot for any active occupation. The sister sat in the veranda and worked, or tried to work, for in the intense sultriness of that summer day, work was next to impossible. They dined early, and after dinner they still sat out on the veranda, enjoying the cool air which came with the evening, and they watched the sun set, and the moon rise over the belt of trees which separated the grounds from the churchyard, seeing it mount the heavens till the whole lawn was bathed in silver light, across which the long shadows from the shrubbery fell as if embossed, so vivid and distinct were they.

When they separated for the night, all retiring to their rooms on the ground floor (for, as I said, there was no upstairs in that house), the sister felt that the heat was still so great that she could not sleep, and having fastened her window, she did not close the shutters— in that very quiet place it was not necessary— and, propped against the pillows, she still watched the wonderful, the marvellous beauty of that summer night. Gradually she became aware of two lights, two lights which flickered in and out in the belt of trees which separated the lawn from the churchyard, and, as her gaze became fixed upon them, she saw them emerge, fixed in a dark substance, a definite ghastly something, which seemed every moment to become nearer, increasing in size and substance as it approached. Every now and then it was lost for a moment in the long shadows which stretched across the lawn from the trees, and then it emerged larger than ever, and still coming on. As she watched it, the most uncontrollable horror seized her. She longed to get away, but the door was close to the window, and the door was locked on the inside, and while she was unlocking it she must be for an instant nearer to it. She longed to scream, but her voice seemed paralysed, her tongue glued to the roof of her mouth.

Suddenly— she could never explain why afterwards— the terrible object seemed to turn to one side, seemed to be going round the house, not to be coming to her at all, and immediately she jumped out of bed and rushed to the door, but as she was unlocking it she heard scratch, scratch, scratch upon the window, and saw a hideous brown face with flaming eyes glaring in at her. She rushed back to the bed, but the creature continued to scratch, scratch, scratch upon the window.

She felt a sort of mental comfort in the knowledge that the window was securely fastened on the inside. Suddenly the scratching sound ceased, and a kind of pecking sound took its place. Then, in her agony, she became aware that the creature was unpicking the lead! The noise continued, and a diamond pane of glass fell into the room. Then a long bony finger of the creature came in and turned the handle of the window, and the window opened, and the creature came in; and it came across the room, and her terror was so great that she could not scream, and it came up to the bed, and it twisted its long, bony fingers into her hair, and it dragged her head over the side of the bed, and—it bit her violently in the throat.

As it bit her, her voice was released, and she screamed with all her might and main. Her brothers rushed out of their rooms, but the door was locked on the inside. A moment was lost while they got a poker and broke it open. Then the creature had already escaped through the window, and the sister, bleeding violently from a wound in the throat, was lying unconscious over the side of the bed. One brother pursued the creature, which fled before him through the

moonlight with gigantic strides, and eventually seemed to disappear over the wall into the churchyard. Then he rejoined his brother by the sister's bedside. She was dreadfully hurt, and her wound was a very definite one, but she was of strong disposition, not even given to romance or superstition, and when she came to herself she said, "What has happened is most extraordinary and I am very much hurt. It seems inexplicable, but of course there is an explanation, and we must wait for it. It will turn out that a lunatic has escaped from some asylum and found his way here." The wound healed, and she appeared to get well, but the doctor who was sent for to her would not believe that she could bear so terrible a shock so easily, and insisted that she must have change, mental and physical; so her brothers took her to Switzerland.

Being a sensible girl, when she went abroad she threw herself at once into the interests of the country she was in. She dried plants, she made sketches, she went up mountains, and as autumn came on, she was the person who urged that they should return to Croglin Grange. "We have taken it," she said, "for seven years, and we have only been there one; and we shall always find it difficult to let a house which is only one story high, so we had better return there; lunatics do not escape every day." As she urged it, her brothers wished nothing better, and the family returned to Cumberland. From there being no upstairs in the house it was impossible to make any great change in their arrangements. The sister occupied the same room, but it is unnecessary to say she always closed the shutters, which, however, as in many old houses, always left one top pane of the window uncovered. The brothers moved, and occupied a room together, exactly opposite that of their sister, and they always kept loaded pistols in their room.

The winter passed most peacefully and happily. In the following March, the sister was suddenly awakened by a sound she remembered only too well—scratch, scratch, scratch upon the window, and, looking up, she saw, climbed up to the topmost pane of the window, the same hideous brown shrivelled face, with glaring eyes, looking in at her. This time she screamed as loud as she could. Her brothers rushed out of their room with pistols, and out of the front door.

The creature was already scudding away across the lawn. One of the brothers fired and hit it in the leg, but still with the other leg it continued to make way, scrambled over the wall into the churchyard, and seemed to disappear into a vault which belonged to a family long extinct.

The next day the brothers summoned all the tenants of Croglin Grange, and in their presence the vault was opened. A horrible scene revealed itself. The vault was full of coffins; they had been broken open, and their contents, horribly mangled and distorted, were scattered over the floor. One coffin alone

remained intact. Of that the lid had been lifted, but still lay loose upon the coffin. They raised it, and there, brown, withered, shrivelled, mummified, but quite entire, was the same hideous figure which had looked in at the windows of Croglin Grange, with the marks of a recent pistol-shot in the leg: and they did the only thing that can lay a vampire— they burnt it.

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21: Mr. Catlin's Weakness

Roy Norton

1869-1942

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THERE were few better sailors afloat than Mr. Catlin, chief mate of the steam schooner *Malabart*. No chief mate could have more affection and admiration for his superior than Mr. Catlin had for Captain Eli Drake, master-owner of the *Malabart*. No chief officer could be more loyal and dutiful than Mr. Catlin, but— he had a weakness. Worst of all, he did not even attempt to conquer it. The sad truth was that Mr. Catlin became a motion-picture fiend; sneaked off, when in port, to stare open-mouthed at the fleeting films; stole anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour to gratify his weakness when sent ashore on some mission; and when confined to the sea, surreptitiously read screen publications that he kept concealed in his locker.

To add to his ruin, he was seriously in love! He, a man who throughout his forty intrepid and adventurous years had succeeded in avoiding that complaint, had become desperately enamored with Margueryte Moolighano, that enchanting star of the film firmament who was admired, or adored, or at least known to millions upon millions of cinema goers, and whose slightest word was worth a column in any newspaper she deigned to notice. "The Angel of the Screen World" was the title usually bestowed upon her, and— secretly, of course— Bill Catlin thus thought of her, with many throbs of helpless, hopeless longing.

Bill Catlin was thinking of her on that afternoon when he lounged on the bridge of the *Malabart* and smoked and stared across at a trim steam yacht that was laid up in Dartmouth harbor. Captain Drake was ashore, closing the last details of the delivery of a cargo which had brought his ship into the quiet port. Catlin hoped the Old Man would be detained so long that he might decide to lay in the harbor all night before starting around to Plymouth. In that case he, Catlin, could slip ashore and find a motion-picture theater. With great good luck he might find a film with Margueryte as the star; then he could sit breathless and open-mouthed with enchantment for an hour or two.

He sighed, recalling the hardness of life, because such a chance could scarcely be expected in a small town where feature films were rare. His reverie was disturbed by the thumping of oars on the opposite side of the ship, where the side ladder was down, and a moment later he saw an anxious-eyed little man come aboard, pause, remove his hat, and mop a bald forehead, as he stared about him.

A voice from below, evidently that of the boatman, hailed:

"Malabart! On deck there! 'Ere's a bloke wants ta see the skipper."

"Owner's not aboard," Catlin called down. "Anything I can do? I'm the chief officer."

"I want— I want " " The little man stammered, looking upward. "I'd like to look over your ship."

Catlin knocked the ashes from his pipe, shoved it into his pocket, and went below, wondering if this were merely a curious landsman or some one who might lead to a charter.

"The fact is," said the nervous little visitor, who to Catlin's eyes had the appearance of a man weighted down with many cares or overwork, "I came down here— sent by a fool agent— to look at that yacht over there. He told me she was big enough to go anywhere. Her captain's aboard her and says he'll be damned if he'll command her out of sight of a coast."

"No," said Catlin, casting a sailorwise glance at the yacht, "I shouldn't care to meet any rough weather in her myself, But—" He paused, looking at his visitor perplexedly.

"Well," the other continued, "the captain of that yacht said there had been a lot of talk about this ship of yours, the— the *Malabart*. Said she was fitted up like a private yacht by somebody who once had her for a cruise. Said she might not be too handsome outside, but that inside—"

"Blast his eyes! Said that, did he? Well, I'll say she's handsomer both outside and in than that tin pot of his that calls itself a yacht," Catlin roared. To him the Malabart was one of the finest ships afloat. "Here, come along with me, till I show you."

He had reason for some pride, for the *Malabart*, due to the wants of a previous charterer, did have yacht-like accommodations, although she was nominally a cargo boat. And as he guided the visitor through the ship, Catlin was pleased to observe the growing elation of the landsman.

"Now," Catlin said when they again stood on the deck, "if anybody asks you if you've been through a sweet ship, you tell 'em you have."

"Just what I want! Just what I need," the visitor declared. "But—but do you think I could rent her?"

"Charter her, you mean? People don't rent ships."

"Yes, if that's the term you use. I want to hire her for some months. Want first to go down to one or two Spanish ports." He stopped to extract from his pocket a paper and consult it. "Then to Cagliari, then to Algiers, then to Tunis, then to one or two points on the north African coast farther east, then to Alexandria or Port Said, then up to Jaffa, and then back to Trieste."

"Whew! Some cruise!" Catlin commented. "If it's a passenger deal— I don't know. The Old Man— that is, the owner, Captain Drake— ain't so keen on passengers. In fact, he hates 'em like poison."

In truth, Catlin himself was not particularly keen on passengers. The few the *Malabart* had ever carried had usually proved nuisances, upsetting the quiet tenor of life and making anything but a happy ship. He was preparing to further discourage this would-be charterer, when the latter broke into eager argument.

"I must hire her. I really must," he said. "Yes, it's a passenger trip, but not like a— a— what you'd call a yachting party, although there will be three ladies, a maid, and two men in it, besides myself."

"Three ladies!" Catlin exclaimed. "Impossible! Not a bit of use in your going to Drake with that. Not a bit! Wouldn't take you at any price. Women passengers! Good Lord!"

"But surely he would, if he got paid enough," the visitor broke in. "See here, I'm desperate. You've got to help me talk your boss over."

Catlin shook a stubborn head, but the little man went on without heed: "I'm Feldman, field director for the Priceless Film Co. Here's my card. I've just got to get a ship to take Margueryte Moolighano and a cast to locations for a Cleopatra film. She won't go on anything less than a private yacht, or something as good. If she doesn't get what she wants, she balks. If you could— — What's the matter?"

Catlin had suddenly staggered back until he brought up against the rail and was in his turn mopping his forehead. It was as if an angel had suddenly swooped down from the clear blue skies and was holding out to him a promise of ecstatic happiness— just out of reach! To have the Angel of the Screen aboard for months, where he could feast his eyes on her, hear her lovely voice— for he was certain her voice must be entrancing— see that charming smile, and keep her from shedding those large, fat tears that had often wrung his heart— it was too much!— too good to be possible! He straightened himself with a jerk and was now as eager as Feldman himself.

"Look here," he said. "I don't know as I've got much pull with the Old Man, but— do you pay big? I've heard that—"

"Pay big! Man, I'd pay any price to satisfy Moolighano— pay more than this owner ever got before in his life."

Catlin brightened. There weren't many limits to which Drake, known as "The Opportunist," wouldn't go for money. Not that he was too grasping, or ungenerous, but because getting money was, with him, the finest game that could be played. Good charters had not been too plentiful of late; they had been mostly for short voyages. One which would require several weeks or months to fulfill would certainly appeal to Drake. But passengers! And women, too! Catlin was doubtful; but very, very eager and filled with hope.

"I think you better let me talk to the Old Man first," he said. "If I can catch him in the right mood— got to do that. If I see he's not in the right humor, I'll wait till he is. You just stand clear and wait for my wigwag. Where you stopping?"

"Nowhere here. I came over from Plymouth. I'm at the Cosmo Hotel there until I find what I want."

"And a very good hotel, too. My cousin is the bar manager there," Catlin said somewhat proudly. "I'm a Plymouth man myself. Now, I'll tell you what you do. You go back to the Cosmo in Plymouth and wait there till you hear from me. I think we'll blow in there about day after to-morrow, at the latest. Meanwhile, I'll bide for the right time and think of a way to get the skipper to an easy mood, if I can. How's that?"

Feldman grinned appreciatively and found a five-pound note in his pocketbook, and was duly surprised when Catlin, almost with a show of anger, declined it.

"I'm no damn navvy, you know, out for tips. I'm doin' this to help you out. Now you can go across to Kingswear to get your train, and I'll slip ashore to see if I can find the Old Man. See you in Plymouth."

But, strangely enough, Catlin, ashore, seemed to do anything save seek Drake. Instead, when he saw that mariner talking with a man in the street, he hurriedly slipped around a corner from sight, and by a devious route reached the post office, where he secluded himself in a telephone booth and called for his cousin in the Cosmo Hotel bar in Plymouth.

"Listen, Jim," he said. "I got something I want to do. You're supposed to have telephoned me that there's a chap named Feldman who wants to charter the *Malabart* for a sort of motion-picture cruise. And you thought it was a fine chance for Drake to make some money, so called me up to put me wise. Get all that? No, can't tell you any more about it now. Will when we come into port. Don't forget you told me about it, eh?"

When Captain Eli came aboard the Malabart, some hours later, Catlin was placidly lounging in the shade of the deck house, entirely guileless in appearance.

"Nothing doing here,' Drake said, "so we may as well get on over to Plymouth to-night."

He called to the chief engineer: "Mr. Forbes, shake 'em up below, will you, and give us some steam."

Catlin eyed him and decided that Drake was in good humor.

"See that steam yacht over there, sir? Well, through my cousin over in Plymouth shouldn't wonder if we'd done her owner one in the eye."

"Huh? Done 'em in the eye? How so?" Drake grinned. The mere idea of beating some one to anything always appealed to him, as the astute Catlin knew.

"Well, it seems they've been mighty keen to charter to a motion-picture company that's going to take an outfit along the North African coast. Big, fine charter, I reckon, from what Jim told me over the telephone this afternoon, Easy work, no cargo to handle, and long stops in port while they do their work inland. So Jim gets on to it and holds 'em off until they can get in touch with you. He's got the chap moored there at the Cosmo Hotel and seems to have assured him that you were out for such work and better fixed to take such a charter than any other ship on the seas. Seems he had almost to give his word that, if they would pay the price, they could get a charter. I suppose the owner of that yacht would be pretty sore if he found out that Jim had nosed in, so it's— er— sort of confidential, you understand."

"Yacht owner been after 'em hard, eh? Ummh! Must be something good in it, then," Captain Eli growled, staring across at the offending yacht.

"Always gives me a grouch when something like this bobs up," Catlin remarked, fanning the kindled flame. 'What right has a man who can afford to own a steam yacht cutting in and taking business away from them that makes a livin' by the sea? They're the sort I like to see beaten."

"By heck! You're right, Bill!" Drake agreed. And now his stare at the yacht became a scowl. "All right, we'll see who gets that charter. I'm after it. Jim give you the feller's name?"

"Feldman, or something like that. Anyhow, Jim's hanging onto him until you can get there."

Throughout the voyage to Plymouth, Catlin adroitly stirred up Drake's cupidity, as well as his craving to beat some one else to a charter. Catlin also addressed to Feldman a letter which read:

I think you can get the charter if you work it cautiously. Let Captain Drake come to you first. Tell him the agents for a big yacht are trying to get you to use their vessel. And whatever you do, try to keep him from knowing until after the charter is signed that you have women in your party.

The letter got away from the ship before Drake did, and had been read and reread by Feldman before Drake and Catlin appeared at the Cosmo and advanced upon the discreet but wondering Jim, the bar manager.

"Feldman? Oh, the feller I phoned Bill about? That's him over there in the corner. Oh, Mr. Feldman!" He hailed the motion-picture director before

Captain Drake, who wished to ask numerous confidential questions, could intervene. "Mr. Feldman, here is Captain Drake, owner of the Malabart."

Catlin, appearing to have no particular interest, listened to the ensuing conversation, and thought to himself that Feldman must be a fool to show his eagerness to charter the Malabart when dealing with one as shrewd as the gentleman who was sometimes referred to by other commanders as "The Old Hyena." In fact, Feldman didn't play his game at all well, and at every other sentence Drake's shrewd eyes gleamed.

Finally, after many calculations as to time and steaming, Drake named a price that any legitimate agent would have laughed at; and, to Catlin's profound astonishment, Feldman, without a murmur, accepted it. Drake's bony Yankee face, the face of a poker player or a red Indian, betrayed nothing of his inward delight at getting almost double as much as he had ever hoped for, and he suggested going to the proper legal source for the drawing of the agreement.

Feldman was already on his feet when Drake said: "Oh, by the way, I understand there are to be only seven men as passengers. If you bring more aboard—"

"Well—" Feldman hesitated, looked at Catlin helplessly, and then blurted out: "I didn't say all of them were men. But there will be seven passengers."

"What!" roared Drake. '"Some of 'em are women?"

"Yes, four of them—three actresses and one maid. But, captain—"

"That settles it! I'll not have women passengers aboard any ship of mine at

He had jumped to his feet, but Catlin laid a hand on his arm and growled:

"Easy. Easy on, sir."

"What d'ye mean, Bill Catlin, with your 'easy on?" demanded Drake, shaking off his friend's restraining hand.

Catlin promptly took a fresh and appealing hold, and said to Feldman:

"Just wait here a minute, will you, while I have a talk with Captain Drake." Then to the skipper he muttered: 'Something I want to say to you, sir. Come over here a minute."

He fairly towed Drake into the other corner of the room. "Look here, captain. Be reasonable! You're throwing away a chance of a lifetime. Don't you see that if you swallow your likes and dislikes and get this charter— and a damned fine charter it is, too, and you know it!— mebbe it'll be the means of gettin' a whole lot of that kind of big-payin' business in the future? These film outfits are clannish. All of 'em knows what the others are doin', and if they see that this outfit uses the *Malabart*, like as not there'll be others wantin' her as soon as this v'yage is finished. Why, man, you can go back to that feller right now and say that if you have women aboard you'll have to boost the rate

twenty-five per cent. And think what that'll mean! Charters ain't too easy, these times, what with the big companies having their regular agents. And there's no cargo to handle in this job. A good deal of the time waiting in ports while they go on what this chap calls 'location.' It's a little gold mine!"

Captain Drake's face lost some of its lines of annoyance as Catlin proceeded. By the time Catlin was halfway through, Drake was massaging his chin, and by the time the words "gold mine" were pronounced, Drake had become calculating.

"Bill, I believe you're right. Maybe I am making a fool of myself, although Lord knows I hate all passengers, and women most of all. But if that feller's fool enough to want to pay— Guess I'll go back and talk with him some more."

By mid-afternoon of that day Mr. Catlin was back in his cabin aboard ship, glowing with anticipation and happiness. The Angel of the Films was due to sail— actually to be aboard the *Malabart*, to be gazed upon and worshiped for some time to come. Catlin locked the door of his cabin, dug into the locker beneath his berth, got out a recent Sunday supplement, and, after admiring the half tones of the lady of his ideal in house gowns, riding habits, bathing costumes, "On the Mall," smiling at prince or two, et cetera, he read the glowing words with which she had favored that interviewer.

Such was the heading, after which was explained that, unknown to her millions of admirers, she devoted. all her spare time, when the public wasn't making demands on her, to scientific research, One of the pictures showed her surrounded by crucibles and retorts, frowning through a microscope. Catlin read more:

"A sense of reticence restrains me from discoursing in an interview upon my work; but I may say that there is a connection and affinity between utilitarian chemistry and meteorology which offers a vast, indeed an almost terrifying field for research. Beginning with Aristotles' 'Meteorologia' and Theophrastes' 'On the Wind,' on down throughout the ages, all the patient plodders in science have failed to attack the questions. But I have, in the hope of discovering great advantages for the benefit of humanity, through the knowledge of what chemical disturbances are effected in the outer void through metereorological phenomena."

"My Lord!" Catlin gasped in bewilderment. "So she's one of them scientific blokes, is she? It fair bowls me over to think of so lovely a woman havin' a head full of brains like that. It does! I reckon if she was to talk to a chap like me I'd not know what . she was talkin' about. Not at all."

The *Malabart* was ready to sail before Miss Moolighano appeared. In truth, the *Malabart* had been due to sail for some hours before Miss Moolighano

deigned to come aboard, and Drake had been alternately swearing and growling with impatience. But finally, in the darkness, a launch came alongside.

There were feminine exclamations, the voice of Mr. Feldman in soothing tones, the sharp yapping of a Pekingese dog, and a receptive bustle aboard the ship. Catlin was told to take the bridge, and Drake went down to the head of the ladder to meet his passengers. The extra stewards signed on for the cruise bustled to and fro, beneath the deck lights, the last of the hand luggage came aboard and disappeared in the direction of various cabins, and Drake began calling orders to get under way.

The *Malabart*'s screw turned and her bow swung around and nosed out past the flashing lights on the breakwater. Catlin felt that the first step of his dream had come true and that he was actually sailing aboard a ship with the most wonderful woman in the world preparing for sleep somewhere in the depths below—of course, in the choicest cabin, where, naturally, she belonged.

The sea, the sky, the sun, the glass, the winds, were propitious on the following morning. They kept on being so as Catlin watched eagerly for the advent of passengers on the deck. He feared that the lovely lady might not appear. Many lovely ladies got seasick even on a day like this. Feldman was the first on deck, staring about him apprehensively. An athletic young man with a haughty air came next, yawning, looking bored, and clad in an immaculate yachting outfit. An elderly 'woman whose face was filled with infinite good humor, but who was anything but yachtingly clad, emerged, took a few careless pats at her unkempt head, gave a jerk to her untidy skirt, and called to the young man:

"Hello, Mooney! Up admiring yourself so early?"

Mr. Mooney glared at her, sniffed, and headed for the lounge. Then a very blond young lady appeared and shouted boisterously :

"Hello, old funny face! Guess you and I are the only ones up. Couldn't expect the wonderful star to expose her mug to the weather this early in the morning. If I ever get to be a big star like she is— which I oughta been long ago, if old Smutz had brains enough to know one when he seen it— you can bet your last pair of whole socks I won't be as fussy as she is about my looks. Why about a little eye opener? Where's the place to get it? Oh, in there, you think? Well, come on, let's go and find it."

Mr. Catlin detested that slangy young woman. He could see that she was jealous— probably not only of Margueryte's sweet nature, but of her looks and brains. And then he had no further time to ruminate and watch, because Captain Drake called to him, and for an hour or so he was a busy man. Finally

his duties took him aft along the deck past the lounge, and he heard a shrill voice raised to high pitch:

"Feldman, you crooked little shrimp! I was told we was to have one of them yachts for this trip, and I says it had to be as big and fine as the one the Coloroscope folks got for Sanders when she done them faked South Sea Island things. You and the old man agreed. And here we are on the Pacific, or Atlantic, or whatever ocean it is, in a damn old tub of a scow that ain't fit for my dawg to ride in, and—"

An imploring voice, which he recognized as Feldman's, began to explain that a yacht like the one Miss Sanderson had used was impossible to obtain; that this was, after all, nearly as comfortable as a yacht; that yachts were mostly dangerous in rough weather, and he'd thought of safety first; and so on, until he was interrupted with:

"Can the apple sass. I'll go see the captain of this ship and tell him to beat it back to Plymouth, and I'll not step one step from there till it's on a real yacht—as big and pretty as the one Sanders had."

Catlin scowled and passed on.

"If that little blond hussy runs foul of the skipper, she's liable to find out whether he'll take orders from her," he grinned to himself. "Scow! She calls the *Malabart* a scow! If she says that to the Old Man, he'll chuck her overboard or have her locked in her cabin. Serve her jolly well right, too."

When he passed up the opposite side of the deck he got another waft of that angry female voice, and hastened his steps to reach the bridge. He had been there less than five minutes when the new saloon steward appeared, paused at the foot of the bridge steps, pulled his forelock, and came up, plainly reluctant and frightened.

"Excuse me, sir! Excuse me, but—" he began, stammering and addressing Captain Drake.

The captain stared at him and said: "Excuse you for what? What do you want? Don't you know how to talk, man alive?"

"There's a lady in the saloon, sir— I think she's the star one, sir— who told me to come and tell you to come there at once, because she wants to talk to you."

"What? What's that? She told you to—"

"I didn't want to come, sir, and the little man tried to keep her from sending me, and to quiet her down; but she's in a fair tantrum, sir, she is; and I didn't know what else to do. She told me that if I didn't move fast she'd bust a bottle over my bean, sir, and—"

Drake snorted, then laughed. He looked uncertainly toward the deck and then at Catlin.

"That comes of having women aboard," he commented. "It was you that got me into this mess, Catlin. So it's up to you to go down and see what she wants."

Catlin would have protested, had he dared. But with an obedient, "Yes, sir," he turned and went below. He would rather have faced a mutiny than an angry woman, but resolved to do his best. If that blond hussy said too much to him

He strode through the saloon door a determined man. One moment later he was almost abject, and nearly speechless. All the passengers appeared to be there, standing in an anxious group around one whom he instantly recognized as the object of his secret adoration. And she, pointing at him scornfully, demanded in the shrill voice he had heard through the window and attributed to the "blond hussy,"

"No, miss, I'm sorry— that is— no, I ain't the captain. I'm the chief officer and— that is, Captain Drake was very busy and— well— you see, he said he was sorry that he couldn't come himself and.

"Busy! Too busy to talk to me, is he? Well, of all the nerve I ever— What's he doing, may I ask?" she demanded freezingly.

"He's— he's repairing the compass, miss. You see, it's so important that he never leaves it to anybody else, because—you see, it wouldn't do for us to get lost and—he said that if you had any complaints—"

"Complaints! Of course I have. I was told this was a yacht and it's not. I want him to turn this boat about and go back to where we came from. At once!"

Feldman mumbled an appeal, but the Angel of the Films told him to "close his trap." The interlude gave Catlin time to regain more of his wits.

"I'm very sorry, miss. Of course, if you want to put back—but—" An inspiration came to him and he smiled timorously. "He will be very sorry you don't like his ship. Others have. Now there's a young film lady, named Miss Sanderson, who tried to charter the *Malabart* once before and couldn't get her, and had to take a common, dinky little yacht. This Miss Sanderson was trying to get this ship when Mr. Feldman, there, beat her to it, so I dare say the captain would be quite willing to go back if you want him to, and let this Miss Sanderson and her outfit have her. I'll go tell him."

He replaced his cap and started toward the door, but was halted with:

"Stop! Come back here. Was this woman named Terita Sanderson?"

"Yes, that's the name, miss. I've seen her scores of times in the pictures. Crazy to have this ship, she was, and if Mr. Feldman had been an hour later e

"Ah! So that's the way of it. Never mind. saying anything to the captain. I think this ship will do." And she turned her back on Catlin and shrilled to the

nonplused but highly relieved Feldman: "Why didn't you say so? Whyn't you tell me that scarecrow of a woman was after this ship? Huh?"

"I really didn't know it, Miss Moolighano. That is, I knew some one was trying to hire it, but I didn't know who. But if you are through with this gentleman—"

She turned to Catlin and enraptured him with a dazzling smile.

"You can beat it now," she said. "It's really too bad that I bothered you."

And Catlin forced his reluctant legs to work, and breathed deeply when outside, and at a safe distance emitted a "Whew!" That final smile had restored an allegiance that was being racked and shaken. To be smiled at like that by the Angel of the Films was worth much.

"What'd that dame want?" Drake asked when the mate reappeared on the bridge.

"Oh, she thought she'd like to put back to Plymouth, but it was easy to talk her out of it," Catlin said.

"What's the matter with her? Fussy?"

"No, sir, I shouldn't say that. But— I reckon she don't know much about ships and so forth. Maybe she knows the big packets, but, oh, she's all right. Just a little diplomacy, sir, is all she needs to keep her steerin' easy."

Drake smiled slyly to himself. He did not think it necessary to explain that when Catlin had gone down the port side of the ship to call on the saloon no less a person than the commander had slipped quietly down along the starboard deck and eavesdropped that entire interview. He smiled because he felt that there must be some reason for Bill Catlin's reticence. He foresaw many occasions in which it might be convenient to use Catlin as mediator. But his prescience failed to forewarn the next clash. It came on the following forenoon.

The night had closed down with a making sea and a falling glass, followed by a lowering dawn and a dirty morning. Both Drake and Catlin were on the bridge when, without warning or asking the customary permission, the Angel climbed upward and glared at Captain Drake, who bore her stare with questioning eyes.

"You're the captain, ain't you?" she asked, with a fine blending of haughtiness and scorn,

"Yes, ma'am, I am," Drake answered, while Catlin, apprehensive, edged across to stare busily over the wing of the bridge, but with his ear cocked for a cyclone.

"Well, what ails the bells on this here ship?" the Angel demanded. "I rang and rang the bell in my cabin at three o'clock this morning, because my dog wanted to go out, and no one answered."

To Catlin's amazement, Captain Eli answered mildly: "How many times did you ring?"

"Lord knows how many I didn't ring. I rang dozens and dozens of times," she replied, stamping her foot, as she thought appropriate to "registering anger."

Catlin turned until he could look at "The Old Hyena's" face, and heard his reply:

"Well, that must be the reason no one came. You should ring once for the valet, twice for a steward, and three times for the maid. The next time your dog wants to go out, ring four times. That's for me. I always take the dogs out for a walk on this ship myself. I'm terribly sorry. Is there anything else wrong?"

His face was so devoid of guile that Catlin saw she had taken Drake seriously.

"No, I ain't had time to find anything else wrong yet, but, of course, I shall, on a boat like this,' she said, turning away.

And as she went down the bridge stairs Drake's voice flung after her with cheerful urbanity:

"Always glad to straighten anything out for you I can, ma'am. 'Passengers first' is our motter."

He turned and stared at the chief mate, and if ever there was a sneer of derision in a man's eyes, it was then in Captain Drake's.

"What's the matter with you, Bill Catlin?" he asked. And evoking no reply, went on, in much the same tone he had employed with the Angel of the Films: "You acted as if you were afraid I'd hurt her nice artistic feelings, As if you were afraid I'd heave her overboard or down to the deck, where she belonged. Wasn't I polite enough to' suit you? Huh? Four rings and I take her dog out!"

Catlin hurriedly discovered something that necessitated his attention aft, pulled the peak of his cap forward, and fled. He hoped Margueryte wouldn't run afoul of the skipper again. When the skipper acted that way nobody could tell what might happen. And for the remainder of that day and the two following he was extra-respectful and punctilious.

In the meantime, the weather cleared and nothing happened. Catlin recovered his admiration and hung about with his eyes bulging for views of the Angel. Finally her attention was called to it by a malicious gibe from the ingénue, who said:

"You needn't feel that you ain't got no audience. That guy who's the walkin' boss of this craft is gettin' gummy just lookin' at you."

"If that's so, it's one more person than you ever got to fall for you," the Angel retorted.

And to show her independence she threw herself in Catlin's way and opened conversation. Catlin had barely recovered coherent speech when the chief engineer appeared and, for the first time since they had sailed, saw her. Somewhat oily, but clean, he started to pass where she and Catlin were talking, halted, stared, and then came forward with a cheerful grin of recognition on his face and his hand extended.

"Great Scott! If it isn't little Maggie Mulligan!" he cried.

The Angel of the Films, who had just been telling Catlin how she had been reared in a convent, and that her father was a New York banker, and that she had gone to Bryn Mawr, straightened up and tried to look like a block of ice.

"What, don't you remember me?" the engineer insisted. "Why, your mother used to do my laundry when I worked in a machine shop down on the Atlantic Basin, and you used to come and fetch it. Surely you've not forgotten me, old 'Daddy' Forbes, and the nickel I always gave you to get gum with." :

"I ain't never seen you before in m life," the Angel declared, with unconcealed repulsion. "You've made a case of mistook identities." And she turned her back, shrugged her shoulders with a ten-thousand-dollar shrug, and walked away with her head in the air.

"You certainly got balled up that time, chief," Catlin said, with marked disapproval.

"Balled up, the devil!" said the chief. "Of course it's her! Mag Mulligan, I tell you, grown up— and some hoity-toity now, eh? Well, she won't be bothered by me any more."

The chief had a dignity of his own, and used it in his retreat.

On the following day the Angel waylaid Drake as he was passing along the deck; where she was ensconced in a deck chair, surrounded by chocolates, a dog, Feldman, and a bundle of cheap novels,

"Oh, captain!" she hailed. "I rang the bell four times for you this morning and—"

"So?" he answered. "Well, you see we're having the bells fixed. Must be out of order."

"While you're doin' it, can't you have a special bell for me to my maid's room?" she asked.

"I'm afraid it can't be done, this trip, ma'am," he said, starting to move away.

"I s'pose that's all anybody could expect on a little boat," she remarked disdainfully. "I've always traveled on the biggest and the best ships, before this— and in the most expensive rooms, too. And the captains was always gentlemen. In fact, one of 'em says to me: 'Miss Moolighano, if ever you'll let

me know in time when you're goin' to cross again, I'll have my whole ship made over to suit you.'"

"I reckon he would say that, miss; I reckon he would," said Captain Eli, with dry appreciation of that unknown commander's sarcasm, "And I'll say this, too, that if you say that you're coming on my ship again, I'll have her made all over before you do."

The Angel wasn't quite certain whether this could be taken as a compliment or not, until she conversed with the infatuated Catlin that evening and was assured by him that Captain Drake was in deadly earnest. Her next complaint was made' by again mounting to the bridge and personally* confronting Captain Eli, whose patience was reaching its limit.

"That steward of yours is a fool," she told him, with a pout. "This morning I nearly scalded myself in a bath he fixed up for me. Anybody'd think he expected me to feel the water to make sure it was right before I got in. I wish you'd—"

"Maybe he did," Drake said. Then, recovering his sense of humor, he added, much to Catlin's embarrassment: "Tell you what you do. Next time you have a bath made ready, let me know, and I'll go down and get in it first, just to see if it's all right."

"Think you're smart, don't you!" the Angel retorted. "Fresh, I call it! Why, you old—"

"Mr. Catlin, tell the lady that this is my busy day, and, if she can read, point out that sign that says passengers are not allowed on the bridge. Also, push her over, if she don't go down to the deck at once."

Miss Moolighano went, and as she did so, with Catlin almost at her heels, made a few remarks that she must have learned while delivering laundry to the Atlantic Basin. Even Catlin's admiration felt strangely dampened, but he still clung to some of his memories and wished he hadn't been a participant in that unpleasant episode.

After that Miss Moolighano vented her fits of temper on poor Feldman, sometimes in such loud tones that her voice could be heard over the entire deck; and on one occasion it required the united efforts of the other lady members of the troupe to pacify her. With every one save Catlin she seemed to be at feud, and slowly he became the sole listener to her perpetual complaints. An even more steadfast admirer would have found himself gradually dreading an interview with her; but now his commander seemed to maliciously thrust him in the lady's way. Frequently the captain suggested:

"Bill, you better go down there and talk to that Angel of the Films. I don't want her to get lonesome or dissatisfied. Passengers first on a passenger

packet, you know. And it was you that wanted 'em brought aboard, you remember."

Captain Eli seemed waiting for something, and also seemed to watch Catlin's symptoms, as if he were a nurse checking up the relapse on a fever chart.

The *Malabart* came to Malaga, and Feldman took his charges ashore for a week. It gave Catlin time to partially regain his adoration, inasmuch as absence is said to make the heart work differently. Her return, however, cooled him off once more, and he began to wonder if beauty could be but skin deep. Then, as the lady, amused by his innocence and glorying in her "wiseness," began to unfold and take pleasure in telling him incidents of her career, he was perceptibly and definitely shocked. Discerning this and enjoying it, she began to go a little farther each time, until finally Catlin's last illusion was gone, There wasn't an honest moral or compunction in her being. She was a face and figure with the monkey's aptitude for mimickry— and that was all. Catlin, disillusioned, began to avoid her.

Piqued by this, she turned the tables and began to pursue him, having nothing else to amuse her and being scarcely on speaking terms with the others of the cast. When Drake discerned this state of affairs he seemed highly amused, and added to Catlin's discomfiture by sly digs now and then which made the victim secretly writhe.

At Cagliari, that ancient capital of Sardinia, the entire troupe went inland for another historic location, and were gone three days. The *Malabart* enjoyed three days of the utmost tranquility. Captain Eli was much ashore. He was busy around the cable office on the first day, on the second seemed waiting for something, and on the third almost ran to meet a messenger boy who crossed the tramline and came down the long dock and up the gangway of the ship. Drake took the message, tore it open, and his hard face twisted itself into a happy grin. He gave the boy a ten-lire note— for him a rare liberality— and then went below and sought Forbes. A long conference followed, after which Drake returned to his cabin, stuck his feet up on his deck, and sent for Catlin. The mate came, wondering at the call.

"Bill, sit down. Help yourself to a smoke," Captain Eli said hospitably.

And Catlin, knowing from the form of address that this was to be a friendly and familiar, rather than business, talk, sighed like one disenthralled and accepted.

"Nice and quiet on the ship since that gang of fatheads left, eh?" Drake began, eying Catlin.

The mate squirmed, puffed at his cigar, scowled, and then blurted out:

"Wish to the Lord they weren't ever comin' back!"

"Surprised at you, Bill! Thought you were enjoying this cruise first rate, along with that Angel of the Films."

Catlin growled inaudibly, cleared his throat, and said something about a man becoming tired sometimes. Drake chuckled, then lowered his feet and leaned forward. His eyes twinkled as he remarked:

"I thought I saw signs that you were getting fed up. Now listen, Bill, while I talk to you like a father." And what he said caused Catlin first to blink with astonishment, then stare with admiration, and finally to grin, as complete understanding came to him.

"There was a time, Bill," said Captain Eli, as they finally arose to leave the cabin, "when I'd sort of doubted if I could depend on you, but I think I can now. I think you understand that—"

He did not finish. A woman's voice was heard loudly complaining on the deck below and shouting for a steward. The film party had returned, and the Angel was tired and petulant. It seemed that Feldman had again failed. She had been compelled to go to that distant location in a common tin lizzie of a car, instead of a Rolls Royce; and she blamed Feldman for it, although he kept repeating that there wasn't such a thing as a car deluxe on the island and that he had done his best. The clamor died away in various directions, mostly in the direction of the bar, which the steward hastened to open. Captain Eli immediately arose and sought Feldman for sailing orders; but as he went he bestowed a parting wink and grin on Catlin, who was still shaking his head and chuckling.

The ship cleared that night; and a most amazing thing happened—she began to take a slight list. By the next afternoon, when she reached Phillippeville, where the troupe was to debark for two days on location in Constantine, that city of ancient splendors and heroic tragedies, the *Malabart* was even more noticeably listing, and the passengers were becoming curious.

"What makes this boat tip over that way?" the Angel asked Catlin just as they entered the port.

"Oh, it's— well, you see—" He looked about him, as if afraid of being overheard, and then muttered confidentially: "If it ain't all right by the time you come back from Constantine, I'll tell you. But it's between us, you understand?"

She nodded and would have asked more questions, had he not hurried away to his work. He saw her pause and look anxiously back at the ship after she went ashore. She called Feldman's attention to it, and he, too, stared, perplexed.

The glass had fallen slightly before the filmers returned aboard. Feldman again looked at the list of the ship, but said nothing. The Angel was, as usual,

too full of laments regarding her experiences to devote attention to anything else, and the Malabart slipped out of port, eastward bound. She encountered a somewhat brisk sea running outside and lobbed into it as if complaining of her trim. While the passengers were at supper she behaved so badly, lurching to and fro so much, that the steward spilled soup down the back of the Angel's neck. Film stars don't like to have hot soup spilled down the back of their necks. Miss Moolighano appeared after the meal and complained to the captain.

"Well, ma'am," Drake drawled, "I don't make the weather down this way. Besides, I'm a heap worried. You'll have to stay down off the bridge. I told you that once before. What's that? Humph! I don't care if you are the big cheese in the films. On this ship you don't draw much more water than would float a gnat. Now don't bother me."

Highly indignant, she went to the deck. Captain Eli laughed after she disappeared and said to the quartermaster:

"By the way, you keep your mouth shut about my taking the wheel and skeehawing the boat all over the ocean while they were at supper. Hold her steady nor'east-by-east now."

Then he rang for half speed and glanced hopefully at the glass. The sea tossed a little more, as if in response to his wishes, and he glanced downward along the deck to see Catlin in earnest and confidential conversation with the famous motion-picture star. Drake grinned. Perhaps he might not have grinned had he known what Catlin was saying; perhaps he might; for Catlin had drawn Miss Moolighano to a place where his words could not be overheard, to say:

"I got to tell you somethin' mighty confidential. I feel I must, because if anything happened to you— well, somehow, I'd feel it was me was to blame."

The Angel registered confiding affection in the "great, sun-tanned, simple soul of the sea" by edging closer to him.

"Whatever you tell me, my dear friend," she said, "shall never pass my lips. What is it? Is it about this boat?"

"It is," said Catlin solemnly, looking around to make certain they were entirely alone. "This ship's an old tub with a cement bottom, and her plates are just streaks of rust held together by paint and glue. Why, the last time she was in drydock a feller accidentally hit her hull with a hammer and it slipped from his hand, went right on through, and fell inside. That ain't all. This crew's almost in mutiny, and I got it straight that the chief engineer is goin' to sling his hook and look for another job when we get to Tunis. As for me, if I can't get Feldman to give me a job with the movies actin' sailor parts, I allow I'll be lookin' for another ship myself. Plenty of other ships on salt water."

"But— are we in danger now?" the Angel asked tremulously, with palpable and quite unassumed alarm.

"No, we'll make it to port all right, even if she does act as if she had the collywobbles. The Old Man's a good sailor, I got to admit that. But, listen! You ain't to say a word to nobody that I told you about this. Cross your heart and 'ope to die?"

She did, fervently.

"I guess you'd better let me ask Feldman myself," he said, "about givin' me a job actin', Of course, if he mentions it to you, you might tell him you think I ought to be able to do things as good as that boob Mooney. Of course, I ain't no Fairbanks nor a Valentino for looks, but—"

Her amusement conquered her fear, and to hide her laughter she made an excuse and left him. He stood uncertainly for a moment; then, as the ship took an extra wallow, he rolled his way aft to see if everything was snug.

Barely half an hour later Feldman, plainly alarmed and somewhat pallid, made his way uncertainly to the foot of the bridge ladder and asked permission to speak to the commander. He wished to know if the ship was in danger of sinking.

"Sinking? Nonsense!' Drake bawled at him. "That is— of course, there's always danger of any ship sinking, but this ship of mine's all right. That is, she ain't ever sunk yet— or, at least, while I've had her."

"Miss Moolighano seems to fear that—" Feldman began.

"Damn Miss Mulligan!" the mariner roared, "Also, if I've got to stop here and palaver, I can't very well look after the ship, can I?"

Not at all reassured, Feldman disappeared. The filmers retired early, but in the night were awakened by the stopping of the engines. The Malabart rolled as if bewitched. Feldman and the Angel reached the deck together, fully clad, as if they had apprehended a shipwreck and had retired prepared for emergencies. They found both the commander and his mate running around as if highly perturbed. Drake promptly ordered them below.

"No place for passengers on a night like this," he shouted. "But don't get scared. She's weathered many a worse storm."

After they had retreated, Captain Eli took time to curse a sailor who had laughed aloud at the use of the word "storm."

When the passengers appeared on the deck in the early morning they discovered a huge hose from the engine room that writhed and pulsated as it pumped water overboard.

"A leak! My Lord! She's leaking and they're pumping the water out of her," the Angel screamed, and threatened to faint on the nearest shoulder, which happened to be Catlin's.

"Don't worry, miss," he muttered with an air of grave concern. "We'll soon be turning the corner toward Tunis, and the pumps are working fine."

And, strangely enough, by the time they came off Cape Blanco the *Malabart* had slowly righted herself until her list was gone, and as she headed toward the entrance of the long canal running to Tunis, the leak, too, seemed to have been mastered and the hose line was taken up and disappeared. When the pilot came aboard at La Goulette no-one could have surmised that the *Malabart* was anything other than a perfect ship. Up through the long canal she nosed her way between the channel buoys and came to rest alongside the big docks, where chattering natives swarmed and sputtered guttural Arabic, and the winches of a big Italian liner rattled and clanked and screamed as the cargo cranes swung in and out with reckless haste.

Feldman came hurrying up and said to the captain:

"We've decided not to stop aboard while here. Can you have all our baggage sent to the Hotel Majestic?"

"Not stoppin' aboard? Why— why— what's the matter? But, of course, I'll have your outfit sent where you wish."

"Why ain't you tellin' him, Feldman? Ain't you got no nerve?" came the angry voice of the Angel of the Films, who had come up behind him. "You can take it straight from me that I'll never step foot on this bunch of junk again— not if I have to go back to America on the railroad. Oh, you needn't say nothin', I know all about how dangerous this thing you call a ship is." She paused to point at Catlin, and added: "That dough-faced boob there give the whole show away to me, and what I say goes!"

Feldman locked harassed and helpless. It wasn't a warm day, but he took off his hat and wiped drops of perspiration from his forehead. Finally, in exasperation, he shrugged his shoulders and said to Drake:

"Would you mind, captain, coming to see me at the Majestic— at, say, four o'clock this afternoon?"

"Not at all, not at all," the captain assented cheerfully.

And the passengers were scarcely off before Drake went ashore. Shortly afterward he was in a telephone booth, where he held a lengthy conversation.

At just six o'clock he returned to the ship; and Catlin and the chief observed that he was in high good humor.

"Well," Drake remarked with evident jubilation, "we're out of the motion-picture business for good. The Angel of the Films raised so much hell that Feldman compromised by paying two thirds of the total amount due."

"You certainly gave us work enough below," Forbes growled. "What with working all hands to shift coal and ballast to give her a list, and then having to move it all over again when we came into port— to say nothin' of runnin' a

pump line to pull water out of the ocean and pump it back over the side again, and lettin' her roll until I thought her boilers would go adrift from their cradles, and—"

Drake chuckled with glee and said: "Never mind, chief. You can enter bonus pay for all hands below. Reckon I can afford it. You, Bill Catlin, get nothin'! You helped out nobly to get rid of that dame, but it was you that got us into the mess, just the same.

"By the way, Bill," said Drake, "I see on the boards in front of a big cinema that there's a film there to-night with Miss Margueryte Moolighano in the star part. After we eat we can go "

Mr. Catlin forgot himself. "To hell with the movies!" he roared.

Mr. Catlin had been cured of his weakness.

End