PAST MASTERS 152

Thomas de Quincey
Malcolm Jameson
Frances Noyes Hart
Richard Marsh
H Bedford-Jones
Sumner Locke
William Merriam Rouse

and more

PAST MASTERS 152

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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Contents

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1: The Avenger

Thomas de Quincey

1785-1859

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine Aug 1838

Thomas de Quincey

"WHY CALLEST thou me murderer, and not rather the wrath of God burning after the steps of the oppressor, and cleansing the earth when it is wet with blood?"

That series of terrific events by which our quiet city and university in the northeastern quarter of Germany were convulsed during the year 1816, has in itself, and considered merely as a blind movement of human tiger-passion ranging unchained among men, something too memorable to be forgotten or left without its own separate record; but the moral lesson impressed by these events is yet more memorable, and deserves the deep attention of coming generations in their struggle after human improvement, not merely in its own limited field of interest directly awakened, but in all analogous fields of interest; as in fact already, and more than once, in connection with these very events, this lesson has obtained the effectual attention of Christian kings and princes assembled in congress. No tragedy, indeed, among all the sad ones by which the charities of the human heart or of the fireside have ever been outraged, can better merit a separate chapter in the private history of German manners or social life than this unparalleled case. And, on the other hand, no one can put in a better claim to be the historian than myself.

I was at the time, and still am, a professor in that city and university which had the melancholy distinction of being its theater. I knew familiarly all the parties who were concerned in it, either as sufferers or as agents. I was present from first to last, and watched the whole course of the mysterious storm which fell upon our devoted city in a strength like that of a West Indian hurricane, and which did seriously threaten at one time to depopulate our university,

through the dark suspicions which settled upon its members, and the natural reaction of generous indignation in repelling them; while the city in its more stationary and native classes would very soon have manifested THEIR awful sense of things, of the hideous insecurity for life, and of the unfathomable dangers which had undermined their hearths below their very feet, by sacrificing, whenever circumstances allowed them, their houses and beautiful gardens in exchange for days uncursed by panic, and nights unpolluted by blood. Nothing, I can take upon myself to assert, was left undone of all that human foresight could suggest, or human ingenuity could accomplish. But observe the melancholy result: the more certain did these arrangements strike people as remedies for the evil, so much the more effectually did they aid the terror, but, above all, the awe, the sense of mystery, when ten cases of total extermination, applied to separate households, had occurred, in every one of which these precautionary aids had failed to yield the slightest assistance. The horror, the perfect frenzy of fear, which seized upon the town after that experience, baffles all attempt at description. Had these various contrivances failed merely in some human and intelligible way, as by bringing the aid too tardily— still, in such cases, though the danger would no less have been evidently deepened, nobody would have felt any further mystery than what, from the very first, rested upon the persons and the motives of the murderers. But, as it was, when, in ten separate cases of exterminating carnage, the astounded police, after an examination the most searching, pursued from day to day, and almost exhausting the patience by the minuteness of the investigation, had finally pronounced that no attempt apparently had been made to benefit by any of the signals preconcerted, that no footstep apparently had moved in that direction— then, and after that result, a blind misery of fear fell upon the population, so much the worse than any anguish of a beleaguered city that is awaiting the storming fury of a victorious enemy, by how much the shadowy, the uncertain, the infinite, is at all times more potent in mastering the mind than a danger that is known, measurable, palpable, and human. The very police, instead of offering protection or encouragement, were seized with terror for themselves. And the general feeling, as it was described to me by a grave citizen whom I met in a morning walk (for the overmastering sense of a public calamity broke down every barrier of reserve, and all men talked freely to all men in the streets, as they would have done during the rockings of an earthquake), was, even among the boldest, like that which sometimes takes possession of the mind in dreams— when one feels oneself sleeping alone, utterly divided from all call or hearing of friends, doors open that should be shut, or unlocked that should be triply secured, the very walls gone, barriers swallowed up by unknown abysses, nothing around one

but frail curtains, and a world of illimitable night, whisperings at a distance, correspondence going on between darkness and darkness, like one deep calling to another, and the dreamer's own heart the center from which the whole network of this unimaginable chaos radiates, by means of which the blank PRIVATIONS of silence and darkness become powers the most POSITIVE and awful.

Agencies of fear, as of any other passion, and, above all, of passion felt in communion with thousands, and in which the heart beats in conscious sympathy with an entire city, through all its regions of high and low, young and old, strong and weak; such agencies avail to raise and transfigure the natures of men; mean minds become elevated; dull men become eloquent; and when matters came to this crisis, the public feeling, as made known by voice, gesture, manner, or words, was such that no stranger could represent it to his fancy. In that respect, therefore, I had an advantage, being upon the spot through the whole course of the affair, for giving a faithful narrative; as I had still more eminently, from the sort of central station which I occupied, with respect to all the movements of the case. I may add that I had another advantage, not possessed, or not in the same degree, by any other inhabitant of the town. I was personally acquainted with every family of the slightest account belonging to the resident population; whether among the old local gentry, or the new settlers whom the late wars had driven to take refuge within our walls.

It was in September, 1815, that I received a letter from the chief secretary to the Prince of M— — , a nobleman connected with the diplomacy of Russia, from which I quote an extract: "I wish, in short, to recommend to your attentions, and in terms stronger than I know how to devise, a young man on whose behalf the czar himself is privately known to have expressed the very strongest interest. He was at the battle of Waterloo as an aide-de-camp to a Dutch general officer, and is decorated with distinctions won upon that awful day. However, though serving in that instance under English orders, and although an Englishman of rank, he does not belong to the English military service. He has served, young as he is, under VARIOUS banners, and under ours, in particular, in the cavalry of our imperial guard. He is English by birth, nephew to the Earl of E., and heir presumptive to his immense estates. There is a wild story current, that his mother was a gypsy of transcendent beauty, which may account for his somewhat Moorish complexion, though, after all, *that* is not of a deeper tinge than I have seen among many an Englishman. He is himself one of the noblest looking of God's creatures. Both father and mother, however, are now dead. Since then he has become the favorite of his uncle, who detained him in England after the emperor had departed— and, as

this uncle is now in the last stage of infirmity, Mr. Wyndham's succession to the vast family estates is inevitable, and probably near at hand. Meantime, he is anxious for some assistance in his studies. Intellectually he stands in the very first rank of men, as I am sure you will not be slow to discover; but his long military service, and the unparalleled tumult of our European history since 1805, have interfered (as you may suppose) with the cultivation of his mind; for he entered the cavalry service of a German power when a mere boy, and shifted about from service to service as the hurricane of war blew from this point or from that. During the French anabasis to Moscow he entered our service, made himself a prodigious favorite with the whole imperial family, and even now is only in his twenty-second year. As to his accomplishments, they will speak for themselves; they are infinite, and applicable to every situation of life. Greek is what he wants from you;— never ask about terms. He will acknowledge any trouble he may give you, as he acknowledges all trouble, en prince. And ten years hence you will look back with pride upon having contributed your part to the formation of one whom all here at St. Petersburg, not soldiers only, but we diplomates, look upon as certain to prove a great man, and a leader among the intellects of Christendom."

Two or three other letters followed; and at length it was arranged that Mr. Maximilian Wyndham should take up his residence at my monastic abode for one year. He was to keep a table, and an establishment of servants, at his own cost; was to have an apartment of some dozen or so of rooms; the unrestricted use of the library; with some other public privileges willingly conceded by the magistracy of the town; in return for all which he was to pay me a thousand guineas; and already beforehand, by way of acknowledgment for the public civilities of the town, he sent, through my hands, a contribution of three hundred guineas to the various local institutions for education of the poor, or for charity.

The Russian secretary had latterly corresponded with me from a little German town, not more than ninety miles distant; and, as he had special couriers at his service, the negotiations advanced so rapidly that all was closed before the end of September. And, when once that consummation was attained, I, that previously had breathed no syllable of what was stirring, now gave loose to the interesting tidings, and suffered them to spread through the whole compass of the town. It will be easily imagined that such a story, already romantic enough in its first outline, would lose nothing in the telling. An Englishman to begin with, which name of itself, and at all times, is a passport into German favor, but much more since the late memorable wars that but for Englishmen would have drooped into disconnected efforts— next, an Englishman of rank and of the haute noblesse— then a soldier covered with

brilliant distinctions, and in the most brilliant arm of the service; young, moreover, and yet a veteran by his experience— fresh from the most awful battle of this planet since the day of Pharsalia,— radiant with the favor of courts and of imperial ladies; finally (which alone would have given him an interest in all female hearts), an Antinous of faultless beauty, a Grecian statue, as it were, into which the breath of life had been breathed by some modern Pygmalion;— such a pomp of gifts and endowments settling upon one man's head, should not have required for its effect the vulgar consummation (and yet to many it WAS the consummation and crest of the whole) that he was reputed to be rich beyond the dreams of romance or the necessities of a fairy tale. Unparalleled was the impression made upon our stagnant society; every tongue was busy in discussing the marvelous young Englishman from morning to night; every female fancy was busy in depicting the personal appearance of this gay apparition.

On his arrival at my house, I became sensible of a truth which I had observed some years before. The commonplace maxim is, that it is dangerous to raise expectations too high. This, which is thus generally expressed, and without limitation, is true only conditionally; it is true then and there only where there is but little merit to sustain and justify the expectation. But in any case where the merit is transcendent of its kind, it is always useful to rack the expectation up to the highest point. In anything which partakes of the infinite, the most unlimited expectations will find ample room for gratification; while it is certain that ordinary observers, possessing little sensibility, unless where they have been warned to expect, will often fail to see what exists in the most conspicuous splendor. In this instance it certainly did no harm to the subject of expectation that I had been warned to look for so much. The warning, at any rate, put me on the lookout for whatever eminence there might be of grandeur in his personal appearance; while, on the other hand, this existed in such excess, so far transcending anything I had ever met with in my experience, that no expectation which it is in words to raise could have been disappointed.

These thoughts traveled with the rapidity of light through my brain, as at one glance my eye took in the supremacy of beauty and power which seemed to have alighted from the clouds before me. Power, and the contemplation of power, in any absolute incarnation of grandeur or excess, necessarily have the instantaneous effect of quelling all perturbation. My composure was restored in a moment. I looked steadily at him. We both bowed. And, at the moment when he raised his head from that inclination, I caught the glance of his eye; an eye such as might have been looked for in a face of such noble lineaments—

"Blending the nature of the star

With that of summer skies;"

and, therefore, meant by nature for the residence and organ of serene and gentle emotions; but it surprised, and at the same time filled me more almost with consternation than with pity, to observe that in those eyes a light of sadness had settled more profound than seemed possible for youth, or almost commensurate to a human sorrow; a sadness that might have become a Jewish prophet, when laden with inspirations of woe.

Two months had now passed away since the arrival of Mr. Wyndham. He had been universally introduced to the superior society of the place; and, as I need hardly say, universally received with favor and distinction. In reality, his wealth and importance, his military honors, and the dignity of his character, as expressed in his manners and deportment, were too eminent to allow of his being treated with less than the highest attention in any society whatever. But the effect of these various advantages, enforced and recommended as they were by a personal beauty so rare, was somewhat too potent for the comfort and self-possession of ordinary people; and really exceeded in a painful degree the standard of pretensions under which such people could feel themselves at their ease. He was not naturally of a reserved turn; far from it. His disposition had been open, frank, and confiding, originally; and his roving, adventurous life, of which considerably more than one half had been passed in camps, had communicated to his manners a more than military frankness. But the profound melancholy which possessed him, from whatever cause it arose, necessarily chilled the native freedom of his demeanor, unless when it was revived by strength of friendship or of love. The effect was awkward and embarrassing to all parties. Every voice paused or faltered when he entered a room— dead silence ensued— not an eye but was directed upon him, or else, sunk in timidity, settled upon the floor; and young ladies seriously lost the power, for a time, of doing more than murmuring a few confused, half-inarticulate syllables, or half-inarticulate sounds. The solemnity, in fact, of a first presentation, and the utter impossibility of soon recovering a free, unembarrassed movement of conversation, made such scenes really distressing to all who participated in them, either as actors or spectators. Certainly this result was not a pure effect of manly beauty, however heroic, and in whatever excess; it arose in part from the many and extraordinary endowments which had centered in his person, not less from fortune than from nature; in part also, as I have said, from the profound sadness and freezing gravity of Mr. Wyndham's manner; but still more from the perplexing mystery which surrounded that sadness.

Were there, then, no exceptions to this condition of awestruck admiration?

Yes; one at least there was in whose bosom the spell of all-conquering passion soon thawed every trace of icy reserve. While the rest of the world retained a dim sentiment of awe toward Mr. Wyndham, Margaret Liebenheim only heard of such a feeling to wonder that it could exist toward HIM. Never was there so victorious a conquest interchanged between two youthful hearts— never before such a rapture of instantaneous sympathy. I did not witness the first meeting of this mysterious Maximilian and this magnificent Margaret, and do not know whether Margaret manifested that trepidation and embarrassment which distressed so many of her youthful co-rivals; but, if she did, it must have fled before the first glance of the young man's eye, which would interpret, past all misunderstanding, the homage of his soul and the surrender of his heart. Their third meeting I DID see; and there all shadow of embarrassment had vanished, except, indeed, of that delicate embarrassment which clings to impassioned admiration. On the part of Margaret, it seemed as if a new world had dawned upon her that she had not so much as suspected among the capacities of human experience. Like some bird she seemed, with powers unexercised for soaring and flying, not understood even as yet, and that never until now had found an element of air capable of sustaining her wings, or tempting her to put forth her buoyant instincts. He, on the other hand, now first found the realization of his dreams, and for a mere possibility which he had long too deeply contemplated, fearing, however, that in his own case it might prove a chimera, or that he might never meet a woman answering the demands of his heart, he now found a corresponding reality that left nothing to seek.

Here, then, and thus far, nothing but happiness had resulted from the new arrangement. But, if this had been little anticipated by many, far less had I, for my part, anticipated the unhappy revolution which was wrought in the whole nature of Ferdinand von Harrelstein. He was the son of a German baron; a man of good family, but of small estate who had been pretty nearly a soldier of fortune in the Prussian service, and had, late in life, won sufficient favor with the king and other military superiors, to have an early prospect of obtaining a commission, under flattering auspices, for this only son— a son endeared to him as the companion of unprosperous years, and as a dutifully affectionate child. Ferdinand had yet another hold upon his father's affections: his features preserved to the baron's unclouded remembrance a most faithful and living memorial of that angelic wife who had died in giving birth to this third child— the only one who had long survived her. Anxious that his son should go through a regular course of mathematical instruction, now becoming annually more important in all the artillery services throughout Europe, and that he should receive a tincture of other liberal studies which he had painfully missed

in his own military career, the baron chose to keep his son for the last seven years at our college, until he was now entering upon his twenty-third year. For the four last he had lived with me as the sole pupil whom I had, or meant to have, had not the brilliant proposals of the young Russian guardsman persuaded me to break my resolution. Ferdinand von Harrelstein had good talents, not dazzling but respectable; and so amiable were his temper and manners that I had introduced him everywhere, and everywhere he was a favorite; and everywhere, indeed, except exactly there where only in this world he cared for favor. Margaret Liebenheim, she it was whom he loved, and had loved for years, with the whole ardor of his ardent soul; she it was for whom, or at whose command, he would willingly have died. Early he had felt that in her hands lay his destiny; that she it was who must be his good or his evil genius.

At first, and perhaps to the last, I pitied him exceedingly. But my pity soon ceased to be mingled with respect. Before the arrival of Mr. Wyndham he had shown himself generous, indeed magnanimous. But never was there so painful an overthrow of a noble nature as manifested itself in him. I believe that he had not himself suspected the strength of his passion; and the sole resource for him, as I said often, was to quit the city— to engage in active pursuits of enterprise, of ambition, or of science. But he heard me as a somnambulist might have heard me— dreaming with his eyes open. Sometimes he had fits of reverie, starting, fearful, agitated; sometimes he broke out into maniacal movements of wrath, invoking some absent person, praying, beseeching, menacing some air-wove phantom; sometimes he slunk into solitary corners, muttering to himself, and with gestures sorrowfully significant, or with tones and fragments of expostulation that moved the most callous to compassion. Still he turned a deaf ear to the only practical counsel that had a chance for reaching his ears. Like a bird under the fascination of a rattlesnake, he would not summon up the energies of his nature to make an effort at flying away. "Begone, while it is time!" said others, as well as myself; for more than I saw enough to fear some fearful catastrophe. "Lead us not into temptation!" said his confessor to him in my hearing (for, though Prussians, the Von Harrelsteins were Roman Catholics), "lead us not into temptation!— that is our daily prayer to God. Then, my son, being led into temptation, do not you persist in courting, nay, almost tempting temptation. Try the effects of absence, though but for a month." The good father even made an overture toward imposing a penance upon him, that would have involved an absence of some duration. But he was obliged to desist; for he saw that, without effecting any good, he would merely add spiritual disobedience to the other offenses of the young man. Ferdinand himself drew his attention to THIS; for he said: "Reverend father! do not you,

with the purpose of removing me from temptation, be yourself the instrument for tempting me into a rebellion against the church. Do not you weave snares about my steps; snares there are already, and but too many." The old man sighed, and desisted.

Then came— But enough! From pity, from sympathy, from counsel, and from consolation, and from scorn— from each of these alike the poor stricken deer "recoiled into the wilderness;" he fled for days together into solitary parts of the forest; fled, as I still hoped and prayed, in good earnest and for a long farewell; but, alas! no: still he returned to the haunts of his ruined happiness and his buried hopes, at each return looking more like the wreck of his former self; and once I heard a penetrating monk observe, whose convent stood near the city gates: "There goes one ready equally for doing or suffering, and of whom we shall soon hear that he is involved in some great catastrophe— it may be of deep calamity— it may be of memorable guilt."

So stood matters among us. January was drawing to its close; the weather was growing more and more winterly; high winds, piercingly cold, were raving through our narrow streets; and still the spirit of social festivity bade defiance to the storms which sang through our ancient forests. From the accident of our magistracy being selected from the tradesmen of the city, the hospitalities of the place were far more extensive than would otherwise have happened; for every member of the corporation gave two annual entertainments in his official character. And such was the rivalship which prevailed, that often one quarter of the year's income was spent upon these galas. Nor was any ridicule thus incurred; for the costliness of the entertainment was understood to be an expression of OFFICIAL pride, done in honor of the city, not as an effort of personal display. It followed, from the spirit in which these half-yearly dances originated, that, being given on the part of the city, every stranger of rank was marked out as a privileged guest, and the hospitality of the community would have been equally affronted by failing to offer or by failing to accept the invitation.

Hence it had happened that the Russian guardsman had been introduced into many a family which otherwise could not have hoped for such a distinction. Upon the evening at which I am now arrived, the twenty-second of January, 1816, the whole city, in its wealthier classes, was assembled beneath the roof of a tradesman who had the heart of a prince. In every point our entertainment was superb; and I remarked that the music was the finest I had heard for years. Our host was in joyous spirits; proud to survey the splendid company he had gathered under his roof; happy to witness their happiness; elated in their elation. Joyous was the dance— joyous were all faces that I saw— up to midnight, very soon after which time supper was announced; and

that also, I think, was the most joyous of all the banquets I ever witnessed. The accomplished guardsman outshone himself in brilliancy; even his melancholy relaxed. In fact, how could it be otherwise? near to him sat Margaret Liebenheim— hanging upon his words— more lustrous and bewitching than ever I had beheld her. There she had been placed by the host; and everybody knew why. That is one of the luxuries attached to love; all men cede their places with pleasure; women make way. Even she herself knew, though not obliged to know, why she was seated in that neighborhood; and took her place, if with a rosy suffusion upon her cheeks, yet with fullness of happiness at her heart.

The guardsman pressed forward to claim Miss Liebenheim's hand for the next dance; a movement which she was quick to favor, by retreating behind one or two parties from a person who seemed coming toward her. The music again began to pour its voluptuous tides through the bounding pulses of the youthful company; again the flying feet of the dancers began to respond to the measures; again the mounting spirit of delight began to fill the sails of the hurrying night with steady inspiration. All went happily. Already had one dance finished; some were pacing up and down, leaning on the arms of their partners; some were reposing from their exertions; when— O heavens! what a shriek! what a gathering tumult!

Every eye was bent toward the doors— every eye strained forward to discover what was passing. But there, every moment, less and less could be seen, for the gathering crowd more and more intercepted the view;— so much the more was the ear at leisure for the shrieks redoubled upon shrieks. Miss Liebenheim had moved downward to the crowd. From her superior height she overlooked all the ladies at the point where she stood. In the center stood a rustic girl, whose features had been familiar to her for some months. She had recently come into the city, and had lived with her uncle, a tradesman, not ten doors from Margaret's own residence, partly on the terms of a kinswoman, partly as a servant on trial. At this moment she was exhausted with excitement, and the nature of the shock she had sustained. Mere panic seemed to have mastered her; and she was leaning, unconscious and weeping, upon the shoulder of some gentleman, who was endeavoring to soothe her. A silence of horror seemed to possess the company, most of whom were still unacquainted with the cause of the alarming interruption. A few, however, who had heard her first agitated words, finding that they waited in vain for a fuller explanation, now rushed tumultuously out of the ballroom to satisfy themselves on the spot. The distance was not great; and within five minutes several persons returned hastily, and cried out to the crowd of ladies that all was true which the young girl had said. "What was true?" That her uncle Mr.

Weishaupt's family had been murdered; that not one member of the family had been spared— namely, Mr. Weishaupt himself and his wife, neither of them much above sixty, but both infirm beyond their years; two maiden sisters of Mr. Weishaupt, from forty to forty-six years of age, and an elderly female domestic.

An incident happened during the recital of these horrors, and of the details which followed, that furnished matter for conversation even in these hours when so thrilling an interest had possession of all minds. Many ladies fainted; among them Miss Liebenheim— and she would have fallen to the ground but for Maximilian, who sprang forward and caught her in his arms. She was long of returning to herself; and, during the agony of his suspense, he stooped and kissed her pallid lips. That sight was more than could be borne by one who stood a little behind the group. He rushed forward, with eyes glaring like a tiger's, and leveled a blow at Maximilian. It was poor, maniacal Von Harrelstein, who had been absent in the forest for a week. Many people stepped forward and checked his arm, uplifted for a repetition of this outrage. One or two had some influence with him, and led him away from the spot; while as to Maximilian, so absorbed was he that he had not so much as perceived the affront offered to himself. Margaret, on reviving, was confounded at finding herself so situated amid a great crowd; and yet the prudes complained that there was a look of love exchanged between herself and Maximilian, that ought not to have escaped her in such a situation. If they meant by such a situation, one so public, it must be also recollected that it was a situation of excessive agitation; but, if they alluded to the horrors of the moment, no situation more naturally opens the heart to affection and confiding love than the recoil from scenes of exquisite terror.

An examination went on that night before the magistrates, but all was dark; although suspicion attached to a negro named Aaron, who had occasionally been employed in menial services by the family, and had been in the house immediately before the murder. The circumstances were such as to leave every man in utter perplexity as to the presumption for and against him. His mode of defending himself, and his general deportment, were marked by the coolest, nay, the most sneering indifference. The first thing he did, on being acquainted with the suspicions against himself, was to laugh ferociously, and to all appearance most cordially and unaffectedly. He demanded whether a poor man like himself would have left so much wealth as lay scattered abroad in that house— gold repeaters, massy plate, gold snuff boxes— untouched? That argument certainly weighed much in his favor. And yet again it was turned against him; for a magistrate asked him how HE happened to know already that nothing had been touched. True it was, and a fact which had

puzzled no less than it had awed the magistrates, that, upon their examination of the premises, many rich articles of bijouterie, jewelry, and personal ornaments, had been found lying underanged, and apparently in their usual situations; articles so portable that in the very hastiest flight some might have been carried off. In particular, there was a crucifix of gold, enriched with jewels so large and rare, that of itself it would have constituted a prize of great magnitude. Yet this was left untouched, though suspended in a little oratory that had been magnificently adorned by the elder of the maiden sisters. There was an altar, in itself a splendid object, furnished with every article of the most costly material and workmanship, for the private celebration of mass. This crucifix, as well as everything else in the little closet, must have been seen by one at least of the murderous party; for hither had one of the ladies fled; hither had one of the murderers pursued. She had clasped the golden pillars which supported the altar— had turned perhaps her dying looks upon the crucifix; for there, with one arm still wreathed about the altar foot, though in her agony she had turned round upon her face, did the elder sister lie when the magistrates first broke open the street door. And upon the beautiful parquet, or inlaid floor which ran round the room, were still impressed the footsteps of the murderer. These, it was hoped, might furnish a clew to the discovery of one at least among the murderous band. They were rather difficult to trace accurately; those parts of the traces which lay upon the black tessellae being less distinct in the outline than the others upon the white or colored. Most unquestionably, so far as this went, it furnished a negative circumstance in favor of the negro, for the footsteps were very different in outline from his, and smaller, for Aaron was a man of colossal build. And as to his knowledge of the state in which the premises had been found, and his having so familiarly relied upon the fact of no robbery having taken place as an argument on his own behalf, he contended that he had himself been among the crowd that pushed into the house along with the magistrates; that, from his previous acquaintance with the rooms and their ordinary condition, a glance of the eye had been sufficient for him to ascertain the undisturbed condition of all the valuable property most obvious to the grasp of a robber that, in fact, he had seen enough for his argument before he and the rest of the mob had been ejected by the magistrates; but, finally, that independently of all this, he had heard both the officers, as they conducted him, and all the tumultuous gatherings of people in the street, arguing for the mysteriousness of the bloody transaction upon that very circumstance of so much gold, silver, and jewels, being left behind untouched.

In six weeks or less from the date of this terrific event, the negro was set at liberty by a majority of voices among the magistrates. In that short interval

other events had occurred no less terrific and mysterious. In this first murder, though the motive was dark and unintelligible, yet the agency was not so; ordinary assassins apparently, and with ordinary means, had assailed a helpless and unprepared family; had separated them; attacked them singly in flight (for in this first case all but one of the murdered persons appeared to have been making for the street door); and in all this there was no subject for wonder, except the original one as to the motive. But now came a series of cases destined to fling this earliest murder into the shade. Nobody could now be unprepared; and yet the tragedies, henceforward, which passed before us, one by one, in sad, leisurely, or in terrific groups, seemed to argue a lethargy like that of apoplexy in the victims, one and all. The very midnight of mysterious awe fell upon all minds.

Three weeks had passed since the murder at Mr. Weishaupt's— three weeks the most agitated that had been known in this sequestered city. We felt ourselves solitary, and thrown upon our own resources; all combination with other towns being unavailing from their great distance. Our situation was no ordinary one. Had there been some mysterious robbers among us, the chances of a visit, divided among so many, would have been too small to distress the most timid; while to young and high-spirited people, with courage to spare for ordinary trials, such a state of expectation would have sent pulses of pleasurable anxiety among the nerves. But murderers! exterminating murderers!— clothed in mystery and utter darkness— these were objects too terrific for any family to contemplate with fortitude. Had these very murderers added to their functions those of robbery, they would have become less terrific; nine out of every ten would have found themselves discharged, as it were, from the roll of those who were liable to a visit; while such as knew themselves liable would have had warning of their danger in the fact of being rich; and would, from the very riches which constituted that danger, have derived the means of repelling it. But, as things were, no man could guess what it was that must make him obnoxious to the murderers. Imagination exhausted itself in vain guesses at the causes which could by possibility have made the poor Weishaupts objects of such hatred to any man. True, they were bigoted in a degree which indicated feebleness of intellect; but THAT wounded no man in particular, while to many it recommended them. True, their charity was narrow and exclusive, but to those of their own religious body it expanded munificently; and, being rich beyond their wants, or any means of employing wealth which their gloomy asceticism allowed, they had the power of doing a great deal of good among the indigent papists of the suburbs. As to the old gentleman and his wife, their infirmities confined them to the house. Nobody remembered to have seen them abroad for years. How, therefore, or when

could they have made an enemy? And, with respect to the maiden sisters of Mr. Weishaupt, they were simply weak-minded persons, now and then too censorious, but not placed in a situation to incur serious anger from any quarter, and too little heard of in society to occupy much of anybody's attention.

Conceive, then, that three weeks have passed away, that the poor Weishaupts have been laid in that narrow sanctuary which no murderer's voice will ever violate. Quiet has not returned to us, but the first flutterings of panic have subsided. People are beginning to respire freely again; and such another space of time would have cicatrized our wounds— when, hark! a church bell rings out a loud alarm;— the night is starlight and frosty— the iron notes are heard clear, solemn, but agitated. What could this mean? I hurried to a room over the porter's lodge, and, opening the window, I cried out to a man passing hastily below, "What, in God's name, is the meaning of this?" It was a watchman belonging to our district. I knew his voice, he knew mine, and he replied in great agitation:

"It is another murder, sir, at the old town councilor's, Albernass; and this time they have made a clear house of it."

"God preserve us! Has a curse been pronounced upon this city? What can be done? What are the magistrates going to do?"

"I don't know, sir. I have orders to run to the Black Friars, where another meeting is gathering. Shall I say you will attend, sir?"

"Yes— no— stop a little. No matter, you may go on; I'll follow immediately."

I went instantly to Maximilian's room. He was lying asleep on a sofa, at which I was not surprised, for there had been a severe stag chase in the morning. Even at this moment I found myself arrested by two objects, and I paused to survey them. One was Maximilian himself. A person so mysterious took precedency of other interests even at a time like this; and especially by his features, which, composed in profound sleep, as sometimes happens, assumed a new expression, which arrested me chiefly by awaking some confused remembrance of the same features seen under other circumstances and in times long past; but where? This was what I could not recollect, though once before a thought of the same sort had crossed my mind. The other object of my interest was a miniature, which Maximilian was holding in his hand. He had gone to sleep apparently looking at this picture; and the hand which held it had slipped down upon the sofa, so that it was in danger of falling. I released the miniature from his hand, and surveyed it attentively. It represented a lady of sunny, oriental complexion, and features the most noble that it is possible to conceive. One might have imagined such a lady, with her raven locks and

imperial eyes, to be the favorite sultana of some Amurath or Mohammed. What was she to Maximilian, or what HAD she been? For, by the tear which I had once seen him drop upon this miniature when he believed himself unobserved, I conjectured that her dark tresses were already laid low, and her name among the list of vanished things. Probably she was his mother, for the dress was rich with pearls, and evidently that of a person in the highest rank of court beauties. I sighed as I thought of the stern melancholy of her son, if Maximilian were he, as connected, probably, with the fate and fortunes of this majestic beauty; somewhat haughty, perhaps, in the expression of her fine features, but still noble— generous— confiding. Laying the picture on the table, I awoke Maximilian, and told him of the dreadful news. He listened attentively, made no remark, but proposed that we should go together to the meeting of our quarter at the Black Friars. He colored upon observing the miniature on the table; and, therefore, I frankly told him in what situation I had found it, and that I had taken the liberty of admiring it for a few moments. He pressed it tenderly to his lips, sighed heavily, and we walked away together.

I pass over the frenzied state of feeling in which we found the meeting. Fear, or rather horror, did not promote harmony; many quarreled with each other in discussing the suggestions brought forward, and Maximilian was the only person attended to. He proposed a nightly mounted patrol for every district. And in particular he offered, as being himself a member of the university, that the students should form themselves into a guard, and go out by rotation to keep watch and ward from sunset to sunrise. Arrangements were made toward that object by the few people who retained possession of their senses, and for the present we separated.

Never, in fact, did any events so keenly try the difference between man and man. Some started up into heroes under the excitement. Some, alas for the dignity of man! drooped into helpless imbecility. Women, in some cases, rose superior to men, but yet not so often as might have happened under a less mysterious danger. A woman is not unwomanly because she confronts danger boldly. But I have remarked, with respect to female courage, that it requires, more than that of men, to be sustained by hope; and that it droops more certainly in the presence of a MYSTERIOUS danger. The fancy of women is more active, if not stronger, and it influences more directly the physical nature. In this case few were the women who made even a show of defying the danger. On the contrary, with THEM fear took the form of sadness, while with many of the men it took that of wrath.

And how did the Russian guardsman conduct himself amidst this panic? Many were surprised at his behavior; some complained of it; I did neither. He took a reasonable interest in each separate case, listened to the details with

attention, and, in the examination of persons able to furnish evidence, never failed to suggest judicious questions. But still he manifested a coolness almost amounting to carelessness, which to many appeared revolting. But these people I desired to notice that all the other military students, who had been long in the army, felt exactly in the same way. In fact, the military service of Christendom, for the last ten years, had been anything but a parade service; and to those, therefore, who were familiar with every form of horrid butchery, the mere outside horrors of death had lost much of their terror. In the recent murder there had not been much to call forth sympathy. The family consisted of two old bachelors, two sisters, and one grandniece. The niece was absent on a visit, and the two old men were cynical misers, to whom little personal interest attached. Still, in this case as in that of the Weishaupts, the same twofold mystery confounded the public mind— the mystery of the HOW, and the profounder mystery of the WHY. Here, again, no atom of property was taken, though both the misers had hordes of ducats and English guineas in the very room where they died. Their bias, again, though of an unpopular character, had rather availed to make them unknown than to make them hateful. In one point this case differed memorably from the other— that, instead of falling helpless, or flying victims (as the Weishaupts had done), these old men, strong, resolute, and not so much taken by surprise, left proofs that they had made a desperate defense. The furniture was partly smashed to pieces, and the other details furnished evidence still more revolting of the acharnement with which the struggle had been maintained. In fact, with THEM a surprise must have been impracticable, as they admitted nobody into their house on visiting terms. It was thought singular that from each of these domestic tragedies a benefit of the same sort should result to young persons standing in nearly the same relation. The girl who gave the alarm at the ball, with two little sisters, and a little orphan nephew, their cousin, divided the very large inheritance of the Weishaupts; and in this latter case the accumulated savings of two long lives all vested in the person of the amiable grandniece.

But now, as if in mockery of all our anxious consultations and elaborate devices, three fresh murders took place on the two consecutive nights succeeding these new arrangements. And in one case, as nearly as time could be noted, the mounted patrol must have been within call at the very moment when the awful work was going on. I shall not dwell much upon them; but a few circumstances are too interesting to be passed over. The earliest case on the first of the two nights was that of a currier. He was fifty years old; not rich, but well off. His first wife was dead, and his daughters by her were married away from their father's house. He had married a second wife, but, having no

children by her, and keeping no servants, it is probable that, but for an accident, no third person would have been in the house at the time when the murderers got admittance. About seven o'clock, a wayfaring man, a journeyman currier, who, according to our German system, was now in his wanderjahre, entered the city from the forest. At the gate he made some inquiries about the curriers and tanners of our town; and, agreeably to the information he received, made his way to this Mr. Heinberg. Mr. Heinberg refused to admit him, until he mentioned his errand, and pushed below the door a letter of recommendation from a Silesian correspondent, describing him as an excellent and steady workman. Wanting such a man, and satisfied by the answers returned that he was what he represented himself, Mr. Heinberg unbolted his door and admitted him. Then, after slipping the bolt into its place, he bade him sit to the fire, brought him a glass of beer, conversed with him for ten minutes, and said: "You had better stay here to-night; I'll tell you why afterwards; but now I'll step upstairs, and ask my wife whether she can make up a bed for you; and do you mind the door while I'm away." So saying, he went out of the room. Not one minute had he been gone when there came a gentle knock at the door. It was raining heavily, and, being a stranger to the city, not dreaming that in any crowded town such a state of things could exist as really did in this, the young man, without hesitation, admitted the person knocking. He has declared since— but, perhaps, confounding the feelings gained from better knowledge with the feelings of the moment— that from the moment he drew the bolt he had a misgiving that he had done wrong. A man entered in a horseman's cloak, and so muffled up that the journeyman could discover none of his features. In a low tone the stranger said, "Where's Heinberg?"— "Upstairs."— "Call him down, then." The journeyman went to the door by which Mr. Heinberg had left him, and called, "Mr. Heinberg, here's one wanting you!" Mr. Heinberg heard him, for the man could distinctly catch these words: "God bless me! has the man opened the door? O, the traitor! I see it." Upon this he felt more and more consternation, though not knowing why. Just then he heard a sound of feet behind him. On turning round, he beheld three more men in the room; one was fastening the outer door; one was drawing some arms from a cupboard, and two others were whispering together. He himself was disturbed and perplexed, and felt that all was not right. Such was his confusion, that either all the men's faces must have been muffled up, or at least he remembered nothing distinctly but one fierce pair of eyes glaring upon him. Then, before he could look round, came a man from behind and threw a sack over his head, which was drawn tight about his waist, so as to confine his arms, as well as to impede his hearing in part, and his voice altogether. He was then pushed into a room; but previously he had heard a

rush upstairs, and words like those of a person exulting, and then a door closed. Once it opened, and he could distinguish the words, in one voice, "And for THAT!" to which another voice replied, in tones that made his heart quake, "Aye, for THAT, sir." And then the same voice went on rapidly to say, "O dog! could you hope"— at which word the door closed again. Once he thought that he heard a scuffle, and he was sure that he heard the sound of feet, as if rushing from one corner of a room to another. But then all was hushed and still for about six or seven minutes, until a voice close to his ear said, "Now, wait quietly till some persons come in to release you. This will happen within half an hour." Accordingly, in less than that time, he again heard the sound of feet within the house, his own bandages were liberated, and he was brought to tell his story at the police office. Mr. Heinberg was found in his bedroom. He had died by strangulation, and the cord was still tightened about his neck. During the whole dreadful scene his youthful wife had been locked into a closet, where she heard or saw nothing.

In the second case, the object of vengeance was again an elderly man. Of the ordinary family, all were absent at a country house, except the master and a female servant. She was a woman of courage, and blessed with the firmest nerves; so that she might have been relied on for reporting accurately everything seen or heard. But things took another course. The first warning that she had of the murderers' presence was from their steps and voices already in the hall. She heard her master run hastily into the hall, crying out, "Lord Jesus!— Mary, Mary, save me!" The servant resolved to give what aid she could, seized a large poker, and was hurrying to his assistance, when she found that they had nailed up the door of communication at the head of the stairs. What passed after this she could not tell; for, when the impulse of intrepid fidelity had been balked, and she found that her own safety was provided for by means which made it impossible to aid a poor fellow creature who had just invoked her name, the generous-hearted creature was overcome by anguish of mind, and sank down on the stair, where she lay, unconscious of all that succeeded, until she found herself raised in the arms of a mob who had entered the house. And how came they to have entered? In a way characteristically dreadful. The night was starlit; the patrols had perambulated the street without noticing anything suspicious, when two foot passengers, who were following in their rear, observed a dark-colored stream traversing the causeway. One of them, at the same instant tracing the stream backward with his eyes, observed that it flowed from under the door of Mr. Munzer, and, dipping his finger in the trickling fluid, he held it up to the lamplight, yelling out at the moment, "Why, this is blood!" It was so, indeed, and it was yet warm. The other saw, heard, and like an arrow flew after the horse patrol, then in the

act of turning the corner. One cry, full of meaning, was sufficient for ears full of expectation. The horsemen pulled up, wheeled, and in another moment reined up at Mr. Munzer's door. The crowd, gathering like the drifting of snow, supplied implements which soon forced the chains of the door and all other obstacles. But the murderous party had escaped, and all traces of their persons had vanished, as usual.

Rarely did any case occur without some peculiarity more or less interesting. In that which happened on the following night, making the fifth in the series, an impressive incident varied the monotony of horrors. In this case the parties aimed at were two elderly ladies, who conducted a female boarding school. None of the pupils had as yet returned to school from their vacation; but two sisters, young girls of thirteen and sixteen, coming from a distance, had stayed at school throughout the Christmas holidays. It was the youngest of these who gave the only evidence of any value, and one which added a new feature of alarm to the existing panic. Thus it was that her testimony was given: On the day before the murder, she and her sister were sitting with the old ladies in a room fronting to the street; the elder ladies were reading, the younger ones drawing. Louisa, the youngest, never had her ear inattentive to the slightest sound, and once it struck her that she heard the creaking of a foot upon the stairs. She said nothing, but, slipping out of the room, she ascertained that the two female servants were in the kitchen, and could not have been absent; that all the doors and windows, by which ingress was possible, were not only locked, but bolted and barred— a fact which excluded all possibility of invasion by means of false keys. Still she felt persuaded that she had heard the sound of a heavy foot upon the stairs. It was, however, daylight, and this gave her confidence; so that, without communicating her alarm to anybody, she found courage to traverse the house in every direction; and, as nothing was either seen or heard, she concluded that her ears had been too sensitively awake. Yet that night, as she lay in bed, dim terrors assailed her, especially because she considered that, in so large a house, some closet or other might have been overlooked, and, in particular, she did not remember to have examined one or two chests, in which a man could have lain concealed. Through the greater part of the night she lay awake; but as one of the town clocks struck four, she dismissed her anxieties, and fell asleep. The next day, wearied with this unusual watching, she proposed to her sister that they should go to bed earlier than usual. This they did; and, on their way upstairs, Louisa happened to think suddenly of a heavy cloak, which would improve the coverings of her bed against the severity of the night. The cloak was hanging up in a closet within a closet, both leading off from a large room used as the young ladies' dancing school. These closets she had examined on the previous day, and therefore she

felt no particular alarm at this moment. The cloak was the first article which met her sight; it was suspended from a hook in the wall, and close to the door. She took it down, but, in doing so, exposed part of the wall and of the floor, which its folds had previously concealed. Turning away hastily, the chances were that she had gone without making any discovery. In the act of turning, however, her light fell brightly on a man's foot and leg. Matchless was her presence of mind; having previously been humming an air, she continued to do so. But now came the trial; her sister was bending her steps to the same closet. If she suffered her to do so, Lottchen would stumble on the same discovery, and expire of fright. On the other hand, if she gave her a hint, Lottchen would either fail to understand her, or, gaining but a glimpse of her meaning, would shriek aloud, or by some equally decisive expression convey the fatal news to the assassin that he had been discovered. In this torturing dilemma fear prompted an expedient, which to Lottchen appeared madness, and to Louisa herself the act of a sibyl instinct with blind inspiration. "Here," said she, "is our dancing room. When shall we all meet and dance again together?" Saying which, she commenced a wild dance, whirling her candle round her head until the motion extinguished it; then, eddying round her sister in narrowing circles, she seized Lottchen's candle also, blew it out, and then interrupted her own singing to attempt a laugh. But the laugh was hysterical. The darkness, however, favored her; and, seizing her sister's arm, she forced her along, whispering, "Come, come, come!" Lottchen could not be so dull as entirely to misunderstand her. She suffered herself to be led up the first flight of stairs, at the head of which was a room looking into the street. In this they would have gained an asylum, for the door had a strong bolt. But, as they were on the last steps of the landing, they could hear the hard breathing and long strides of the murderer ascending behind them. He had watched them through a crevice, and had been satisfied by the hysterical laugh of Louisa that she had seen him. In the darkness he could not follow fast, from ignorance of the localities, until he found himself upon the stairs. Louisa, dragging her sister along, felt strong as with the strength of lunacy, but Lottchen hung like a weight of lead upon her. She rushed into the room, but at the very entrance Lottchen fell. At that moment the assassin exchanged his stealthy pace for a loud clattering ascent. Already he was on the topmost stair; already he was throwing himself at a bound against the door, when Louisa, having dragged her sister into the room, closed the door and sent the bolt home in the very instant that the murderer's hand came into contact with the handle. Then, from the violence of her emotions, she fell down in a fit, with her arm around the sister whom she had saved.

How long they lay in this state neither ever knew. The two old ladies had

rushed upstairs on hearing the tumult. Other persons had been concealed in other parts of the house. The servants found themselves suddenly locked in, and were not sorry to be saved from a collision which involved so awful a danger. The old ladies had rushed, side by side, into the very center of those who were seeking them. Retreat was impossible; two persons at least were heard following them upstairs. Something like a shrieking expostulation and counter-expostulation went on between the ladies and the murderers; then came louder voices— then one heart-piercing shriek, and then another— and then a slow moaning and a dead silence. Shortly afterwards was heard the first crashing of the door inward by the mob; but the murderers had fled upon the first alarm, and, to the astonishment of the servants, had fled upward. Examination, however, explained this: from a window in the roof they had passed to an adjoining house recently left empty; and here, as in other cases, we had proof how apt people are, in the midst of elaborate provisions against remote dangers, to neglect those which are obvious.

The reign of terror, it may be supposed, had now reached its acme. The two old ladies were both lying dead at different points on the staircase, and, as usual, no conjecture could be made as to the nature of the offense which they had given; but that the murder WAS a vindictive one, the usual evidence remained behind, in the proofs that no robbery had been attempted. Two new features, however, were now brought forward in this system of horrors, one of which riveted the sense of their insecurity to all families occupying extensive houses, and the other raised ill blood between the city and the university, such as required years to allay. The first arose out of the experience, now first obtained, that these assassins pursued the plan of secreting themselves within the house where they meditated a murder. All the care, therefore, previously directed to the securing of doors and windows after nightfall appeared nugatory. The other feature brought to light on this occasion was vouched for by one of the servants, who declared that, the moment before the door of the kitchen was fastened upon herself and fellow servant, she saw two men in the hall, one on the point of ascending the stairs, the other making toward the kitchen; that she could not distinguish the faces of either, but that both were dressed in the academic costume belonging to the students of the university. The consequences of such a declaration need scarcely be mentioned. Suspicion settled upon the students, who were more numerous since the general peace, in a much larger proportion military, and less select or respectable than heretofore. Still, no part of the mystery was cleared up by this discovery. Many of the students were poor enough to feel the temptation that might be offered by any LUCRATIVE system of outrage. Jealous and painful collusions were, in the meantime, produced; and, during the latter two months of this winter, it

may be said that our city exhibited the very anarchy of evil passions. This condition of things lasted until the dawning of another spring.

It will be supposed that communications were made to the supreme government of the land as soon as the murders in our city were understood to be no casual occurrences, but links in a systematic series. Perhaps it might happen from some other business, of a higher kind, just then engaging the attention of our governors, that our representations did not make the impression we had expected. We could not, indeed, complain of absolute neglect from the government. They sent down one or two of their most accomplished police officers, and they suggested some counsels, especially that we should examine more strictly into the quality of the miscellaneous population who occupied our large suburb. But they more than hinted that no necessity was seen either for quartering troops upon us, or for arming our local magistracy with ampler powers.

This correspondence with the central government occupied the month of March, and, before that time, the bloody system had ceased as abruptly as it began. The new police officer flattered himself that the terror of his name had wrought this effect; but judicious people thought otherwise. All, however, was quiet until the depth of summer, when, by way of hinting to us, perhaps, that the dreadful power which clothed itself with darkness had not expired, but was only reposing from its labors, all at once the chief jailer of the city was missing. He had been in the habit of taking long rides in the forest, his present situation being much of a sinecure. It was on the first of July that he was missed. In riding through the city gates that morning, he had mentioned the direction which he meant to pursue; and the last time he was seen alive was in one of the forest avenues, about eight miles from the city, leading toward the point he had indicated. This jailer was not a man to be regretted on his own account; his life had been a tissue of cruelty and brutal abuse of his powers, in which he had been too much supported by the magistrates, partly on the plea that it was their duty to back their own officers against all complainers, partly also from the necessities created by the turbulent times for a more summary exercise of their magisterial authority. No man, therefore, on his own separate account, could more willingly have been spared than this brutal jailer; and it was a general remark that, had the murderous band within our walls swept away this man only, they would have merited the public gratitude as purifiers from a public nuisance. But was it certain that the jailer had died by the same hands as had so deeply afflicted the peace of our city during the winter— or, indeed, that he had been murdered at all? The forest was too extensive to be searched; and it was possible that he might have met with some fatal accident. His horse had returned to the city gates in the night, and was found there in

the morning. Nobody, however, for months could give information about his rider; and it seemed probable that he would not be discovered until the autumn and the winter should again carry the sportsman into every thicket and dingle of this sylvan tract. One person only seemed to have more knowledge on this subject than others, and that was poor Ferdinand von Harrelstein. He was now a mere ruin of what he had once been, both as to intellect and moral feeling; and I observed him frequently smile when the jailer was mentioned. "Wait," he would say, "till the leaves begin to drop; then you will see what fine fruit our forest bears." I did not repeat these expressions to anybody except one friend, who agreed with me that the jailer had probably been hanged in some recess of the forest, which summer veiled with its luxuriant umbrage; and that Ferdinand, constantly wandering in the forest, had discovered the body; but we both acquitted him of having been an accomplice in the murder.

Meantime the marriage between Margaret Liebenheim and Maximilian was understood to be drawing near. Yet one thing struck everybody with astonishment. As far as the young people were concerned, nobody could doubt that all was arranged; for never was happiness more perfect than that which seemed to unite them. Margaret was the impersonation of May-time and youthful rapture; even Maximilian in her presence seemed to forget his gloom, and the worm which gnawed at his heart was charmed asleep by the music of her voice, and the paradise of her smiles. But, until the autumn came, Margaret's grandfather had never ceased to frown upon this connection, and to support the pretensions of Ferdinand. The dislike, indeed, seemed reciprocal between him and Maximilian. Each avoided the other's company and as to the old man, he went so far as to speak sneeringly of Maximilian. Maximilian despised him too heartily to speak of him at all. When he could not avoid meeting him, he treated him with a stern courtesy, which distressed Margaret as often as she witnessed it. She felt that her grandfather had been the aggressor; and she felt also that he did injustice to the merits of her lover. But she had a filial tenderness for the old man, as the father of her sainted mother, and on his own account, continually making more claims on her pity, as the decay of his memory, and a childish fretfulness growing upon him from day to day, marked his increasing imbecility.

Equally mysterious it seemed, that about this time Miss Liebenheim began to receive anonymous letters, written in the darkest and most menacing terms. Some of them she showed to me. I could not guess at their drift. Evidently they glanced at Maximilian, and bade her beware of connection with him; and dreadful things were insinuated about him. Could these letters be written by Ferdinand? Written they were not, but could they be dictated by him? Much I

feared that they were; and the more so for one reason.

All at once, and most inexplicably, Margaret's grandfather showed a total change of opinion in his views as to her marriage. Instead of favoring Harrelstein's pretensions, as he had hitherto done, he now threw the feeble weight of his encouragement into Maximilian's scale; though, from the situation of all the parties, nobody attached any PRACTICAL importance to the change in Mr. Liebenheim's way of thinking. Nobody? Is that true? No; one person DID attach the greatest weight to the change— poor, ruined Ferdinand. He, so long as there was one person to take his part, so long as the grandfather of Margaret showed countenance to himself, had still felt his situation not utterly desperate.

Thus were things situated, when in November, all the leaves daily blowing off from the woods, and leaving bare the most secret haunts of the thickets, the body of the jailer was left exposed in the forest; but not, as I and my friend had conjectured, hanged. No; he had died apparently by a more horrid death— by that of crucifixion. The tree, a remarkable one, bore upon a part of its trunk this brief but savage inscription:— "T. H., jailer at — — -; Crucified July 1, 1816."

A great deal of talk went on throughout the city upon this discovery; nobody uttered one word of regret on account of the wretched jailer; on the contrary, the voice of vengeance, rising up in many a cottage, reached my ears in every direction as I walked abroad. The hatred in itself seemed horrid and unchristian, and still more so after the man's death; but, though horrid and fiendish for itself, it was much more impressive, considered as the measure and exponent of the damnable oppression which must have existed to produce it.

At first, when the absence of the jailer was a recent occurrence, and the presence of the murderers among us was, in consequence, revived to our anxious thoughts, it was an event which few alluded to without fear. But matters were changed now; the jailer had been dead for months, and this interval, during which the murderer's hand had slept, encouraged everybody to hope that the storm had passed over our city; that peace had returned to our hearths; and that henceforth weakness might sleep in safety, and innocence without anxiety. Once more we had peace within our walls, and tranquillity by our firesides. Again the child went to bed in cheerfulness, and the old man said his prayers in serenity. Confidence was restored; peace was re-established; and once again the sanctity of human life became the rule and the principle for all human hands among us. Great was the joy; the happiness was universal.

O heavens! by what a thunderbolt were we awakened from our security!

On the night of the twenty-seventh of December, half an hour, it might be, after twelve o'clock, an alarm was given that all was not right in the house of Mr. Liebenheim. Vast was the crowd which soon collected in breathless agitation. In two minutes a man who had gone round by the back of the house was heard unbarring Mr. Liebenheim's door: he was incapable of uttering a word; but his gestures, as he threw the door open and beckoned to the crowd, were quite enough. In the hall, at the further extremity, and as if arrested in the act of making for the back door, lay the bodies of old Mr. Liebenheim and one of his sisters, an aged widow; on the stair lay another sister, younger and unmarried, but upward of sixty. The hall and lower flight of stairs were floating with blood. Where, then, was Miss Liebenheim, the granddaughter? That was the universal cry; for she was beloved as generally as she was admired. Had the infernal murderers been devilish enough to break into that temple of innocent and happy life? Everyone asked the question, and everyone held his breath to listen; but for a few moments no one dared to advance; for the silence of the house was ominous. At length some one cried out that Miss Liebenheim had that day gone upon a visit to a friend, whose house was forty miles distant in the forest. "Aye," replied another," she had settled to go; but I heard that something had stopped her." The suspense was now at its height, and the crowd passed from room to room, but found no traces of Miss Liebenheim. At length they ascended the stair, and in the very first room, a small closet, or boudoir, lay Margaret, with her dress soiled hideously with blood. The first impression was that she also had been murdered; but, on a nearer approach, she appeared to be unwounded, and was manifestly alive. Life had not departed, for her breath sent a haze over a mirror, but it was suspended, and she was laboring in some kind of fit. The first act of the crowd was to carry her into the house of a friend on the opposite side of the street, by which time medical assistance had crowded to the spot. Their attentions to Miss Liebenheim had naturally deranged the condition of things in the little room, but not before many people found time to remark that one of the murderers must have carried her with his bloody hands to the sofa on which she lay, for water had been sprinkled profusely over her face and throat, and water was even placed ready to her hand, when she might happen to recover, upon a low foot-stool by the side of the sofa.

On the following morning, Maximilian, who had been upon a hunting party in the forest, returned to the city, and immediately learned the news. I did not see him for some hours after, but he then appeared to me thoroughly agitated, for the first time I had known him to be so. In the evening another perplexing piece of intelligence transpired with regard to Miss Liebenheim, which at first afflicted every friend of that young lady. It was that she had been seized with

the pains of childbirth, and delivered of a son, who, however, being born prematurely, did not live many hours. Scandal, however, was not allowed long to batten upon this imaginary triumph, for within two hours after the circulation of this first rumor, followed a second, authenticated, announcing that Maximilian had appeared with the confessor of the Liebenheim family, at the residence of the chief magistrate, and there produced satisfactory proofs of his marriage with Miss Liebenheim, which had been duly celebrated, though with great secrecy, nearly eight months before. In our city, as in all the cities of our country, clandestine marriages, witnessed, perhaps, by two friends only of the parties, besides the officiating priest, are exceedingly common. In the mere fact, therefore, taken separately, there was nothing to surprise us, but, taken in connection with the general position of the parties, it DID surprise us all; nor could we conjecture the reason for a step apparently so needless. For, that Maximilian could have thought it any point of prudence or necessity to secure the hand of Margaret Liebenheim by a private marriage, against the final opposition of her grandfather, nobody who knew the parties, who knew the perfect love which possessed Miss Liebenbeim, the growing imbecility of her grandfather, or the utter contempt with which Maximilian regarded him, could for a moment believe. Altogether, the matter was one of profound mystery.

Meantime, it rejoiced me that poor Margaret's name had been thus rescued from the fangs of the scandalmongers. These harpies had their prey torn from them at the very moment when they were sitting down to the unhallowed banquet. For this I rejoiced, but else there was little subject for rejoicing in anything which concerned poor Margaret. Long she lay in deep insensibility, taking no notice of anything, rarely opening her eyes, and apparently unconscious of the revolutions, as they succeeded, of morning or evening, light or darkness, yesterday or to-day. Great was the agitation which convulsed the heart of Maximilian during this period; he walked up and down in the cathedral nearly all day long, and the ravages which anxiety was working in his physical system might be read in his face. People felt it an intrusion upon the sanctity of his grief to look at him too narrowly, and the whole town sympathized with his situation.

At length a change took place in Margaret, but one which the medical men announced to Maximilian as boding ill for her recovery. The wanderings of her mind did not depart, but they altered their character. She became more agitated; she would start up suddenly, and strain her eye-sight after some figure which she seemed to see; then she would apostrophize some person in the most piteous terms, beseeching him, with streaming eyes, to spare her old grandfather. "Look, look," she would cry out, "look at his gray hairs! O, sir! he is but a child; he does not know what he says; and he will soon be out of the

way and in his grave; and very soon, sir, he will give you no more trouble." Then, again, she would mutter indistinctly for hours together; sometimes she would cry out frantically, and say things which terrified the bystanders, and which the physicians would solemnly caution them how they repeated; then she would weep, and invoke Maximilian to come and aid her. But seldom, indeed, did that name pass her lips that she did not again begin to strain her eyeballs, and start up in bed to watch some phantom of her poor, fevered heart, as if it seemed vanishing into some mighty distance.

After nearly seven weeks passed in this agitating state, suddenly, on one morning, the earliest and the loveliest of dawning spring, a change was announced to us all as having taken place in Margaret; but it was a change, alas! that ushered in the last great change of all. The conflict, which had for so long a period raged within her, and overthrown her reason, was at an end; the strife was over, and nature was settling into an everlasting rest. In the course of the night she had recovered her senses. When the morning light penetrated through her curtain, she recognized her attendants, made inquiries as to the month and the day of the month, and then, sensible that she could not outlive the day, she requested that her confessor might be summoned.

About an hour and a half the confessor remained alone with her. At the end of that time he came out, and hastily summoned the attendants, for Margaret, he said, was sinking into a fainting fit. The confessor himself might have passed through many a fit, so much was he changed by the results of this interview. I crossed him coming out of the house. I spoke to him— I called to him; but he heard me not— he saw me not. He saw nobody. Onward he strode to the cathedral, where Maximilian was sure to be found, pacing about upon the graves. Him he seized by the arm, whispered something into his ear, and then both retired into one of the many sequestered chapels in which lights are continually burning. There they had some conversation, but not very long, for within five minutes Maximilian strode away to the house in which his young wife was dying. One step seemed to carry him upstairs. The attendants, according to the directions they had received from the physicians, mustered at the head of the stairs to oppose him. But that was idle: before the rights which he held as a lover and a husband— before the still more sacred rights of grief, which he carried in his countenance, all opposition fled like a dream. There was, besides, a fury in his eye. A motion of his hand waved them off like summer flies; he entered the room, and once again, for the last time, he was in company with his beloved.

What passed who could pretend to guess? Something more than two hours had elapsed, during which Margaret had been able to talk occasionally, which was known, because at times the attendants heard the sound of Maximilian's

voice evidently in tones of reply to something which she had said. At the end of that time, a little bell, placed near the bedside, was rung hastily. A fainting fit had seized Margaret; but she recovered almost before her women applied the usual remedies. They lingered, however, a little, looking at the youthful couple with an interest which no restraints availed to check. Their hands were locked together, and in Margaret's eyes there gleamed a farewell light of love, which settled upon Maximilian, and seemed to indicate that she was becoming speechless. Just at this moment she made a feeble effort to draw Maximilian toward her; he bent forward and kissed her with an anguish that made the most callous weep, and then he whispered something into her ear, upon which the attendants retired, taking this as a proof that their presence was a hindrance to a free communication. But they heard no more talking, and in less than ten minutes they returned. Maximilian and Margaret still retained their former position. Their hands were fast locked together; the same parting ray of affection, the same farewell light of love, was in the eye of Margaret, and still it settled upon Maximilian. But her eyes were beginning to grow dim; mists were rapidly stealing over them. Maximilian, who sat stupefied and like one not in his right mind, now, at the gentle request of the women, resigned his seat, for the hand which had clasped his had already relaxed its hold; the farewell gleam of love had departed. One of the women closed her eyelids; and there fell asleep forever the loveliest flower that our city had reared for generations.

The funeral took place on the fourth day after her death. In the morning of that day, from strong affection— having known her from an infant— I begged permission to see the corpse. She was in her coffin; snowdrops and crocuses were laid upon her innocent bosom, and roses, of that sort which the season allowed, over her person. These and other lovely symbols of youth, of springtime, and of resurrection, caught my eye for the first moment; but in the next it fell upon her face. Mighty God! what a change! what a transfiguration! Still, indeed, there was the same innocent sweetness; still there was something of the same loveliness; the expression still remained; but for the features— all trace of flesh seemed to have vanished; mere outline of bony structure remained; mere pencilings and shadowings of what she once had been. This is, indeed, I exclaimed, "dust to dust— ashes to ashes!"

Maximilian, to the astonishment of everybody, attended the funeral. It was celebrated in the cathedral. All made way for him, and at times he seemed collected; at times he reeled like one who was drunk. He heard as one who hears not; he saw as one in a dream. The whole ceremony went on by torchlight, and toward the close he stood like a pillar, motionless, torpid, frozen. But the great burst of the choir, and the mighty blare ascending from our vast organ at the closing of the grave, recalled him to himself, and he

strode rapidly homeward. Half an hour after I returned, I was summoned to his bedroom. He was in bed, calm and collected. What he said to me I remember as if it had been yesterday, and the very tone with which he said it, although more than twenty years have passed since then. He began thus: "I have not long to live"; and when he saw me start, suddenly awakened into a consciousness that perhaps he had taken poison, and meant to intimate as much, he continued: "You fancy I have taken poison;— no matter whether I have or not; if I have, the poison is such that no antidote will now avail; or, if they would, you well know that some griefs are of a kind which leave no opening to any hope. What difference, therefore, can it make whether I leave this earth to-day, to- morrow, or the next day? Be assured of this— that whatever I have determined to do is past all power of being affected by a human opposition. Occupy yourself not with any fruitless attempts, but calmly listen to me, else I know what to do." Seeing a suppressed fury in his eye, notwithstanding I saw also some change stealing over his features as if from some subtle poison beginning to work upon his frame, awestruck I consented to listen, and sat still. "It is well that you do so, for my time is short. Here is my will, legally drawn up, and you will see that I have committed an immense property to your discretion. Here, again, is a paper still more important in my eyes; it is also testamentary, and binds you to duties which may not be so easy to execute as the disposal of my property. But now listen to something else, which concerns neither of these papers. Promise me, in the first place, solemnly, that whenever I die you will see me buried in the same grave as my wife, from whose funeral we are just returned. Promise."— I promised.— "Swear."— I swore.— "Finally, promise me that, when you read this second paper which I have put into your hands, whatsoever you may think of it, you will say nothing— publish nothing to the world until three years shall have passed."— I promised.— "And now farewell for three hours. Come to me again about ten o'clock, and take a glass of wine in memory of old times." This he said laughingly; but even then a dark spasm crossed his face. Yet, thinking that this might be the mere working of mental anguish within him, I complied with his desire, and retired. Feeling, however, but little at ease, I devised an excuse for looking in upon him about one hour and a half after I had left him. I knocked gently at his door; there was no answer. I knocked louder; still no answer. I went in. The light of day was gone, and I could see nothing. But I was alarmed by the utter stillness of the room. I listened earnestly, but not a breath could be heard. I rushed back hastily into the hall for a lamp; I returned; I looked in upon this marvel of manly beauty, and the first glance informed me that he and all his splendid endowments had departed forever. He had died, probably, soon after I left him, and had dismissed me from some growing

instinct which informed him that his last agonies were at hand.

I took up his two testamentary documents; both were addressed in the shape of letters to myself. The first was a rapid though distinct appropriation of his enormous property. General rules were laid down, upon which the property was to be distributed, but the details were left to my discretion, and to the guidance of circumstances as they should happen to emerge from the various inquiries which it would become necessary to set on foot. This first document I soon laid aside, both because I found that its provisions were dependent for their meaning upon the second, and because to this second document I looked with confidence for a solution of many mysteries;— of the profound sadness which had, from the first of my acquaintance with him, possessed a man so gorgeously endowed as the favorite of nature and fortune; of his motives for huddling up, in a clandestine manner, that connection which formed the glory of his life; and possibly (but then I hesitated) of the late unintelligible murders, which still lay under as profound a cloud as ever. Much of this WOULD be unveiled— all might be: and there and then, with the corpse lying beside me of the gifted and mysterious writer, I seated myself, and read the following statement:

"March 26, 1817.

"My trial is finished; my conscience, my duty, my honor, are liberated; my 'warfare is accomplished.' Margaret, my innocent young wife, I have seen for the last time. Her, the crown that might have been of my earthly felicity— her, the one temptation to put aside the bitter cup which awaited me— her, sole seductress (O innocent seductress!) from the stern duties which my fate had imposed upon me— her, even her, I have sacrificed.

"Before I go, partly lest the innocent should be brought into question for acts almost exclusively mine, but still more lest the lesson and the warning which God, by my hand, has written in blood upon your guilty walls, should perish for want of its authentic exposition, hear my last dying avowal, that the murders which have desolated so many families within your walls, and made the household hearth no sanctuary, age no charter of protection, are all due originally to my head, if not always to my hand, as the minister of a dreadful retribution.

"That account of my history, and my prospects, which you received from the Russian diplomatist, among some errors of little importance, is essentially correct. My father was not so immediately connected with English blood as is there represented. However, it is true that he claimed descent from an English family of even higher distinction than that which is assigned in the Russian statement. He was proud of this English descent, and the more so as the war

with revolutionary France brought out more prominently than ever the moral and civil grandeur of England. This pride was generous, but it was imprudent in his situation. His immediate progenitors had been settled in Italy— at Rome first, but latterly at Milan; and his whole property, large and scattered, came, by the progress of the revolution, to stand under French domination. Many spoliations he suffered; but still he was too rich to be seriously injured. But he foresaw, in the progress of events, still greater perils menacing his most capital resources. Many of the states or princes in Italy were deeply in his debt; and, in the great convulsions which threatened his country, he saw that both the contending parties would find a colorable excuse for absolving themselves from engagements which pressed unpleasantly upon their finances. In this embarrassment he formed an intimacy with a French officer of high rank and high principle. My father's friend saw his danger, and advised him to enter the French service. In his younger days, my father had served extensively under many princes, and had found in every other military service a spirit of honor governing the conduct of the officers. Here only, and for the first time, he found ruffian manners and universal rapacity. He could not draw his sword in company with such men, nor in such a cause. But at length, under the pressure of necessity, he accepted (or rather bought with an immense bribe) the place of a commissary to the French forces in Italy. With this one resource, eventually he succeeded in making good the whole of his public claims upon the Italian states. These vast sums he remitted, through various channels, to England, where he became proprietor in the funds to an immense amount. Incautiously, however, something of this transpired, and the result was doubly unfortunate; for, while his intentions were thus made known as finally pointing to England, which of itself made him an object of hatred and suspicion, it also diminished his means of bribery. These considerations, along with another, made some French officers of high rank and influence the bitter enemies of my father. My mother, whom he had married when holding a brigadier-general's commission in the Austrian service, was, by birth and by religion, a Jewess. She was of exquisite beauty, and had been sought in Morganatic marriage by an archduke of the Austrian family; but she had relied upon this plea, that hers was the purest and noblest blood among all Jewish families— that her family traced themselves, by tradition and a vast series of attestations under the hands of the Jewish high priests, to the Maccabees, and to the royal houses of Judea; and that for her it would be a degradation to accept even of a sovereign prince on the terms of such marriage. This was no vain pretension of ostentatious vanity. It was one which had been admitted as valid for time immemorial in Transylvania and adjacent countries, where my mother's family were rich and honored, and took their seat among the dignitaries of the land.

The French officers I have alluded to, without capacity for anything so dignified as a deep passion, but merely in pursuit of a vagrant fancy that would, on the next day, have given place to another equally fleeting, had dared to insult my mother with proposals the most licentious— proposals as much below her rank and birth, as, at any rate, they would have been below her dignity of mind and her purity. These she had communicated to my father, who bitterly resented the chains of subordination which tied up his hands from avenging his injuries. Still his eye told a tale which his superiors could brook as little as they could the disdainful neglect of his wife. More than one had been concerned in the injuries to my father and mother; more than one were interested in obtaining revenge. Things could be done in German towns, and by favor of old German laws or usages, which even in France could not have been tolerated. This my father's enemies well knew, but this my father also knew; and he endeavored to lay down his office of commissary. That, however, was a favor which he could not obtain. He was compelled to serve on the German campaign then commencing, and on the subsequent one of Friedland and Eylau. Here he was caught in some one of the snares laid for him; first trepanned into an act which violated some rule of the service; and then provoked into a breach of discipline against the general officer who had thus trepanned him. Now was the long-sought opportunity gained, and in that very quarter of Germany best fitted for improving it. My father was thrown into prison in your city, subjected to the atrocious oppression of your jailer, and the more detestable oppression of your local laws. The charges against him were thought even to affect his life, and he was humbled into suing for permission to send for his wife and children. Already, to his proud spirit, it was punishment enough that he should be reduced to sue for favor to one of his bitterest foes. But it was no part of their plan to refuse THAT. By way of expediting my mother's arrival, a military courier, with every facility for the journey, was forwarded to her without delay. My mother, her two daughters, and myself, were then residing in Venice. I had, through the aid of my father's connections in Austria, been appointed in the imperial service, and held a high commission for my age. But, on my father's marching northward with the French army, I had been recalled as an indispensable support to my mother. Not that my years could have made me such, for I had barely accomplished my twelfth year; but my premature growth, and my military station, had given me considerable knowledge of the world and presence of mind.

"Our journey I pass over; but as I approach your city, that sepulcher of honor and happiness to my poor family, my heart beats with frantic emotions. Never do I see that venerable dome of your minster from the forest, but I curse its form, which reminds me of what we then surveyed for many a mile as we

traversed the forest. For leagues before we approached the city, this object lay before us in relief upon the frosty blue sky; and still it seemed never to increase. Such was the complaint of my little sister Mariamne. Most innocent child! would that it never had increased for thy eyes, but remained forever at a distance! That same hour began the series of monstrous indignities which terminated the career of my ill-fated family. As we drew up to the city gates, the officer who inspected the passports, finding my mother and sisters described as Jewesses, which in my mother's ears (reared in a region where Jews are not dishonored) always sounded a title of distinction, summoned a subordinate agent, who in coarse terms demanded his toll. We presumed this to be a road tax for the carriage and horses, but we were quickly undeceived; a small sum was demanded for each of my sisters and my mother, as for so many head of cattle. I, fancying some mistake, spoke to the man temperately, and, to do him justice, he did not seem desirous of insulting us; but he produced a printed board, on which, along with the vilest animals, Jews and Jewesses were rated at so much a head. While we were debating the point, the officers of the gate wore a sneering smile upon their faces— the postilions were laughing together; and this, too, in the presence of three creatures whose exquisite beauty, in different styles, agreeably to their different ages, would have caused noblemen to have fallen down and worshiped. My mother, who had never yet met with any flagrant insult on account of her national distinctions, was too much shocked to be capable of speaking. I whispered to her a few words, recalling her to her native dignity of mind, paid the money, and we drove to the prison. But the hour was past at which we could be admitted, and, as Jewesses, my mother and sisters could not be allowed to stay in the city; they were to go into the Jewish quarter, a part of the suburb set apart for Jews, in which it was scarcely possible to obtain a lodging tolerably clean. My father, on the next day, we found, to our horror, at the point of death. To my mother he did not tell the worst of what he had endured. To me he told that, driven to madness by the insults offered to him, he had upbraided the court- martial with their corrupt propensities, and had even mentioned that overtures had been made to him for quashing the proceedings in return for a sum of two millions of francs; and that his sole reason for not entertaining the proposal was his distrust of those who made it. 'They would have taken my money,' said he, 'and then found a pretext for putting me to death, that I might tell no secrets.' This was too near the truth to be tolerated; in concert with the local authorities, the military enemies of my father conspired against him— witnesses were suborned; and, finally, under some antiquated law of the place, he was subjected, in secret, to a mode of torture which still lingers in the east of Europe.

"He sank under the torture and the degradation. I, too, thoughtlessly, but by a natural movement of filial indignation, suffered the truth to escape me in conversing with my mother. And she— ;but I will preserve the regular succession of things. My father died; but he had taken such measures, in concert with me, that his enemies should never benefit by his property. Meantime my mother and sisters had closed my father's eyes; had attended his remains to the grave; and in every act connected with this last sad rite had met with insults and degradations too mighty for human patience. My mother, now become incapable of self-command, in the fury of her righteous grief, publicly and in court denounced the conduct of the magistracy— taxed some of them with the vilest proposals to herself— taxed them as a body with having used instruments of torture upon my father; and, finally, accused them of collusion with the French military oppressors of the district. This last was a charge under which they quailed; for by that time the French had made themselves odious to all who retained a spark of patriotic feeling. My heart sank within me when I looked up at the bench, this tribunal of tyrants, all purple or livid with rage; when I looked at them alternately and at my noble mother with her weeping daughters— these so powerless, those so basely vindictive, and locally so omnipotent. Willingly I would have sacrificed all my wealth for a simple permission to quit this infernal city with my poor female relations safe and undishonored. But far other were the intentions of that incensed magistracy. My mother was arrested, charged with some offense equal to petty treason, or scandalum magnatum, or the sowing of sedition; and, though what she said was true, where, alas! was she to look for evidence? Here was seen the want of gentlemen. Gentlemen, had they been even equally tyrannical, would have recoiled with shame from taking vengeance on a woman. And what a vengeance! O heavenly powers! that I should live to mention such a thing! Man that is born of woman, to inflict upon woman personal scourging on the bare back, and through the streets at noonday! Even for Christian women the punishment was severe which the laws assigned to the offense in question. But for Jewesses, by one of the ancient laws against that persecuted people, far heavier and more degrading punishments were annexed to almost every offense. What else could be looked for in a city which welcomed its Jewish guests by valuing them at its gates as brute beasts? Sentence was passed, and the punishment was to be inflicted on two separate days, with an interval between each— doubtless to prolong the tortures of mind, but under a vile pretense of alleviating the physical torture. Three days after would come the first day of punishment. My mother spent the time in reading her native Scriptures; she spent it in prayer and in musing; while her daughters clung and wept around her day and night— groveling on the ground

at the feet of any people in authority that entered their mother's cell. That same interval— how was it passed by me? Now mark, my friend. Every man in office, or that could be presumed to bear the slightest influence, every wife, mother, sister, daughter of such men, I besieged morning, noon, and night. I wearied them with my supplications. I humbled myself to the dust; I, the haughtiest of God's creatures, knelt and prayed to them for the sake of my mother. I besought them that I might undergo the punishment ten times over in her stead. And once or twice I DID obtain the encouragement of a few natural tears— given more, however, as I was told, to my piety than to my mother's deserts. But rarely was I heard out with patience; and from some houses repelled with personal indignities. The day came: I saw my mother half undressed by the base officials; I heard the prison gates expand; I heard the trumpets of the magistracy sound. She had warned me what to do; I had warned myself. Would I sacrifice a retribution sacred and comprehensive, for the momentary triumph over an individual? If not, let me forbear to look out of doors; for I felt that in the selfsame moment in which I saw the dog of an executioner raise his accursed hand against my mother, swifter than the lightning would my dagger search his heart. When I heard the roar of the cruel mob, I paused— endured— forbore. I stole out by by-lanes of the city from my poor exhausted sisters, whom I left sleeping in each other's innocent arms, into the forest. There I listened to the shouting populace; there even I fancied that I could trace my poor mother's route by the course of the triumphant cries. There, even then, even then, I made— O silent forest! thou heardst me when I made— a vow that I have kept too faithfully. Mother, thou art avenged: sleep, daughter of Jerusalem! for at length the oppressor sleeps with thee. And thy poor son has paid, in discharge of his vow, the forfeit of his own happiness, of a paradise opening upon earth, of a heart as innocent as thine, and a face as fair.

"I returned, and found my mother returned. She slept by starts, but she was feverish and agitated; and when she awoke and first saw me, she blushed, as if I could think that real degradation had settled upon her. Then it was that I told her of my vow. Her eyes were lambent with fierce light for a moment; but, when I went on more eagerly to speak of my hopes and projects, she called me to her— kissed me, and whispered: 'Oh, not so, my son! think not of me— think not of vengeance— think only of poor Berenice and Mariamne.' Aye, that thought WAS startling. Yet this magnanimous and forbearing mother, as I knew by the report of our one faithful female servant, had, in the morning, during her bitter trial, behaved as might have become a daughter of Judas Maccabaeus: she had looked serenely upon the vile mob, and awed even them by her serenity; she had disdained to utter a shriek when the cruel lash fell

upon her fair skin. There is a point that makes the triumph over natural feelings of pain easy or not easy— the degree in which we count upon the sympathy of the bystanders. My mother had it not in the beginning; but, long before the end, her celestial beauty, the divinity of injured innocence, the pleading of common womanhood in the minds of the lowest class, and the reaction of manly feeling in the men, had worked a great change in the mob. Some began now to threaten those who had been active in insulting her. The silence of awe and respect succeeded to noise and uproar; and feelings which they scarcely understood, mastered the rude rabble as they witnessed more and more the patient fortitude of the sufferer. Menaces began to rise toward the executioner. Things wore such an aspect that the magistrates put a sudden end to the scene.

"That day we received permission to go home to our poor house in the Jewish quarter. I know not whether you are learned enough in Jewish usages to be aware that in every Jewish house, where old traditions are kept up, there is one room consecrated to confusion; a room always locked up and sequestered from vulgar use, except on occasions of memorable affliction, where everything is purposely in disorder— broken— shattered— mutilated: to typify, by symbols appalling to the eye, that desolation which has so long trampled on Jerusalem, and the ravages of the boar within the vineyards of Judea. My mother, as a Hebrew princess, maintained all traditional customs. Even in this wretched suburb she had her 'chamber of desolation.' There it was that I and my sisters heard her last words. The rest of her sentence was to be carried into effect within a week. She, meantime, had disdained to utter any word of fear; but that energy of self-control had made the suffering but the more bitter. Fever and dreadful agitation had succeeded. Her dreams showed sufficiently to us, who watched her couch, that terror for the future mingled with the sense of degradation for the past. Nature asserted her rights. But the more she shrank from the suffering, the more did she proclaim how severe it had been, and consequently how noble the self-conquest. Yet, as her weakness increased, so did her terror; until I besought her to take comfort, assuring her that, in case any attempt should be made to force her out again to public exposure, I would kill the man who came to execute the order— that we would all die together— and there would be a common end to her injuries and her fears. She was reassured by what I told her of my belief that no future attempt would be made upon her. She slept more tranquilly— but her fever increased; and slowly she slept away into the everlasting sleep which knows of no to-morrow.

"Here came a crisis in my fate. Should I stay and attempt to protect my sisters? But, alas! what power had I to do so among our enemies? Rachael and

I consulted; and many a scheme we planned. Even while we consulted, and the very night after my mother had been committed to the Jewish burying ground, came an officer, bearing an order for me to repair to Vienna. Some officer in the French army, having watched the transaction respecting my parents, was filled with shame and grief. He wrote a statement of the whole to an Austrian officer of rank, my father's friend, who obtained from the emperor an order, claiming me as a page of his own, and an officer in the household service. O heavens! what a neglect that it did not include my sisters! However, the next best thing was that I should use my influence at the imperial court to get them passed to Vienna. This I did, to the utmost of my power. But seven months elapsed before I saw the emperor. If my applications ever met his eye he might readily suppose that your city, my friend, was as safe a place as another for my sisters. Nor did I myself know all its dangers. At length, with the emperor's leave of absence, I returned. And what did I find? Eight months had passed, and the faithful Rachael had died. The poor sisters, clinging together, but now utterly bereft of friends, knew not which way to turn. In this abandonment they fell into the insidious hands of the ruffian jailer. My eldest sister, Berenice, the stateliest and noblest of beauties, had attracted this ruffian's admiration while she was in the prison with her mother. And when I returned to your city, armed with the imperial passports for all, I found that Berenice had died in the villain's custody; nor could I obtain anything beyond a legal certificate of her death. And, finally, the blooming, laughing Mariamne, she also had died— and of affliction for the loss of her sister. You, my friend, had been absent upon your travels during the calamitous history I have recited. You had seen neither my father nor my mother. But you came in time to take under your protection, from the abhorred wretch the jailer, my little broken-hearted Mariamne. And when sometimes you fancied that you had seen me under other circumstances, in her it was, my dear friend, and in her features that you saw mine.

"Now was the world a desert to me. I cared little, in the way of love, which way I turned. But in the way of hatred I cared everything. I transferred myself to the Russian service, with the view of gaining some appointment on the Polish frontier, which might put it in my power to execute my vow of destroying all the magistrates of your city. War, however, raged, and carried me into far other regions. It ceased, and there was little prospect that another generation would see it relighted; for the disturber of peace was a prisoner forever, and all nations were exhausted. Now, then, it became necessary that I should adopt some new mode for executing my vengeance; and the more so, because annually some were dying of those whom it was my mission to punish. A voice ascended to me, day and night, from the graves of my father and

mother, calling for vengeance before it should be too late.

I took my measures thus: Many Jews were present at Waterloo. From among these, all irritated against Napoleon for the expectations he had raised, only to disappoint, by his great assembly of Jews at Paris, I selected eight, whom I knew familiarly as men hardened by military experience against the movements of pity. With these as my beagles, I hunted for some time in your forest before opening my regular campaign; and I am surprised that you did not hear of the death which met the executioner— him I mean who dared to lift his hand against my mother. This man I met by accident in the forest; and I slew him. I talked with the wretch, as a stranger at first, upon the memorable case of the Jewish lady. Had he relented, had he expressed compunction, I might have relented. But far otherwise: the dog, not dreaming to whom he spoke, exulted; he— But why repeat the villain's words? I cut him to pieces. Next I did this: My agents I caused to matriculate separately at the college. They assumed the college dress. And now mark the solution of that mystery which caused such perplexity. Simply as students we all had an unsuspected admission at any house. Just then there was a common practice, as you will remember, among the younger students, of going out a masking— that is, of entering houses in the academic dress, and with the face masked. This practice subsisted even during the most intense alarm from the murderers; for the dress of the students was supposed to bring protection along with it. But, even after suspicion had connected itself with this dress, it was sufficient that I should appear unmasked at the head of the maskers, to insure them a friendly reception. Hence the facility with which death was inflicted, and that unaccountable absence of any motion toward an alarm. I took hold of my victim, and he looked at me with smiling security. Our weapons were hid under our academic robes; and even when we drew them out, and at the moment of applying them to the threat, they still supposed our gestures to be part of the pantomime we were performing. Did I relish this abuse of personal confidence in myself? No— I loathed it, and I grieved for its necessity; but my mother, a phantom not seen with bodily eyes, but ever present to my mind, continually ascended before me; and still I shouted aloud to my astounded victim, 'This comes from the Jewess! Hound of hounds! Do you remember the Jewess whom you dishonored, and the oaths which you broke in order that you might dishonor her, and the righteous law which you violated, and the cry of anguish from her son which you scoffed at?' Who I was, what I avenged, and whom, I made every man aware, and every woman, before I punished them. The details of the cases I need not repeat. One or two I was obliged, at the beginning, to commit to my Jews. The suspicion was thus, from the first, turned aside by the notoriety of my presence elsewhere; but I took care that none suffered who

had not either been upon the guilty list of magistrates who condemned the mother, or of those who turned away with mockery from the supplication of the son.

"It pleased God, however, to place a mighty temptation in my path, which might have persuaded me to forego all thoughts of vengeance, to forget my vow, to forget the voices which invoked me from the grave. This was Margaret Liebenheim. Ah! how terrific appeared my duty of bloody retribution, after her angel's face and angel's voice had calmed me. With respect to her grandfather, strange it is to mention, that never did my innocent wife appear so lovely as precisely in the relation of granddaughter. So beautiful was her goodness to the old man, and so divine was the childlike innocence on her part, contrasted with the guilty recollections associated with him— for he was among the guiltiest toward my mother— still I delayed HIS punishment to the last; and, for his child's sake, I would have pardoned him— nay, I had resolved to do so, when a fierce Jew, who had a deep malignity toward this man, swore that he would accomplish HIS vengeance at all events, and perhaps might be obliged to include Margaret in the ruin, unless I adhered to the original scheme. Then I yielded; for circumstances armed this man with momentary power. But the night fixed on was one in which I had reason to know that my wife would be absent; for so I had myself arranged with her, and the unhappy counter-arrangement I do not yet understand. Let me add, that the sole purpose of my clandestine marriage was to sting her grandfather's mind with the belief that HIS family had been dishonored, even as he had dishonored mine. He learned, as I took care that he should, that his granddaughter carried about with her the promises of a mother, and did not know that she had the sanction of a wife. This discovery made him, in one day, become eager for the marriage he had previously opposed; and this discovery also embittered the misery of his death. At that moment I attempted to think only of my mother's wrongs; but, in spite of all I could do, this old man appeared to me in the light of Margaret's grandfather— and, had I been left to myself, he would have been saved. As it was, never was horror equal to mine when I met her flying to his succor. I had relied upon her absence; and the misery of that moment, when her eye fell upon me in the very act of seizing her grandfather, far transcended all else that I have suffered in these terrific scenes. She fainted in my arms, and I and another carried her upstairs and procured water. Meantime her grandfather had been murdered, even while Margaret fainted. I had, however, under the fear of discovery, though never anticipating a reencounter with herself, forestalled the explanation requisite in such a case to make my conduct intelligible. I had told her, under feigned names, the story of my mother and my sisters. She knew their wrongs: she had heard me contend for the right of

vengeance. Consequently, in our parting interview, one word only was required to place myself in a new position to her thoughts. I needed only to say I was that son; that unhappy mother, so miserably degraded and outraged, was mine.

"As to the jailer, he was met by a party of us. Not suspecting that any of us could be connected with the family, he was led to talk of the most hideous details with regard to my poor Berenice. The child had not, as had been insinuated, aided her own degradation, but had nobly sustained the dignity of her sex and her family. Such advantages as the monster pretended to have gained over her— sick, desolate, and latterly delirious— were, by his own confession, not obtained without violence. This was too much. Forty thousand lives, had he possessed them, could not have gratified my thirst for revenge. Yet, had he but showed courage, he should have died the death of a soldier. But the wretch showed cowardice the most abject, and— ,but you know his fate.

"Now, then, all is finished, and human nature is avenged. Yet, if you complain of the bloodshed and the terror, think of the wrongs which created my rights; think of the sacrifice by which I gave a tenfold strength to those rights; think of the necessity for a dreadful concussion and shock to society, in order to carry my lesson into the councils of princes.

"This will now have been effected. And ye, victims of dishonor, will be glorified in your deaths; ye will not have suffered in vain, nor died without a monument. Sleep, therefore, sister Berenice— sleep, gentle Mariamne, in peace. And thou, noble mother, let the outrages sown in thy dishonor, rise again and blossom in wide harvests of honor for the women of thy afflicted race. Sleep, daughters of Jerusalem, in the sanctity of your sufferings. And thou, if it be possible, even more beloved daughter of a Christian fold, whose company was too soon denied to him in life, open thy grave to receive HIM, who, in the hour of death, wishes to remember no title which he wore on earth but that of thy chosen and adoring lover,
"Maximilian."

2: "Seaward!"

Malcolm Jameson

1891-1945

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Malcolm Jameson

"READ 'em and weep, Silvy!" Heine Woerlein gleefully tossed two neatly bound booklets onto the reading table, a triumphant grin stretching from ear to ear. Sylvester Upham, his roommate, jerked his head up from the microscope to which his eye had been glued, and began undraping his long legs from about the stool on which he was perched. The lanky "Silvy" faced his jubilant associate inquiringly. Then he recognized the booklets They were their theses— back already, graded.

The exuberant Heine was displaying his own, the big blue "A" with a "Superlative Work" scrawled across the title page standing out like a Neon sign. Sylvester's eye sought his own. That was decorated by the letter "B", and the comment was "Could have been better." He took it in, half suspecting it was one of Heine's jokes. Perhaps his work "Transient Mutations" could have been better, but even as it stood, he didn't see how the dull subject "Neglected Potentialities of the Silicoids" could have rated an "A."

"That proves something or other," crowed Heine, dancing.

"It proves, you big fish, that when you submit a thesis to a prof that's nuts about silicoids it pays to write about silicoids! Now if he—"

"Yeah, I know. If he could see any use playing around with a lot of deformed hormones and inverted enzymes, you'd have led the class. It's applied chemistry we're studying, pal, something somebody can use. You'd better come down out of the clouds and start thinking about how to stick to a pay roll somewhere. Don't forget, next month we'll be out in the cold, cold world. Out there, it is not how interesting it is, but will it pay!"

It was the old battle. The two had roomed together for five years, and the

good-natured conflict between the practical-minded Woerlein and the dreamy Upham had raged unceasingly. At bottom, each had the greatest respect for the other's mentality, but that circumstance only rendered the friendly rivalry the keener.

When they left school, Woerlein went straight into the laboratories of the great Middle Europe Chemical Cartel, while Upham accepted a professorship in a small Scottish college. The former, prodded by the unrelenting system of the armylike Cartel, immediately started producing, with the regularity of a metronome, miracle after miracle of development in the field of industrial chemistry.

Upham's progress was not so swift or so consistent. But he had leisure and the freedom to experiment in his own bold fashion in a realm unthought of by the industrialists, with the result that every five years or so he was able to announce to a breathless world some unprecedented combination of molecules or living cells. Such a discovery would at one leap put him ahead of the plodding Woerlein in their race toward fame. They wrote each other frequently, and now and then met. It was always a merry occasion, full of boasting and friendly gibes.

It was when they were past forty that Upham's extraordinary plant creation, the Omniflor, was given to the public, an event that placed him definitely in the forefront of Britain's biochemists. This remarkable bit of synthetic magic produced not only a super-rubber from its stalk juices, a long-fibred natural silk from its seed-bolls and a palatable and nutritious fruit, but the substance purprephyll which gave the odd violet color to its leaves also generated a powerful essential oil which was found to be the perfect specific for cancer. Upham, now bald, bearded and chronically stooped from trying to adapt his six-feet-three of gaunt frame to the conventional limitations of furniture and architecture, had followed up his triumph by sending a taunting telegram to his old sidekick, Woerlein, mailing at the same time a smallish bale of press clippings. Back came the answer.

GOOD WORK. WHAT FERTILIZER DO YOU USE?
REGARDS HEINE.

And so it went. Upham grinned when he got it. He knew his thrust had been well parried— for his Omniflor would not seed without Protogen, that mysterious compound made by the Middle Europe Cartel. Protogen was the brain-child of Heine Woerlein, the wizard of the Continent.

IMMERSED in their research, the wasteful orgy of another great war was on them before they knew it. The Central Alliance, a combine of Continental

autocracies, had determined to crush the last of the democracies. These, in turn, allied themselves together and fought back. It became crystal-clear in a very few months that this conflict was only soluble through the extermination of one or the other of the participants. It was a war of whole populations, one in which quarter was neither asked nor given. Two distinct ideologies, two technocracies, two civilizations were grappling, and the future of the world hung on the outcome.

It was inevitable that the two scientists should find their services commandeered by their respective governments. Woerlein, being more practical, was made a general on the staff of the High Command. Upham, shrinking from administrative duties, accepted a commission as colonel and fell into the role of advisor to the Chief of Chemical Warfare of the Allied Democracies, a General Amos Canby.

Under the circumstances, communication between the former roommates virtually ceased, although once in a while they did manage to exchange greetings through another classmate who lived in a neutral country. Mainly, they kept track of each other's activities through recognition of new and ingenious methods of offense and defense. As was to be expected, the Central armies had sprung several surprises that clearly showed the chemical bias of Heine Woerlein— the inorganic field— whereas Upham's counter measures reflected his own tendencies, the manipulation of living organisms.

Honors were about even, and the war still dragged wearily on without noteworthy advantage to either side until the Centralists very nearly conquered by their introduction of the "glassy death." Upham first heard of this in his secluded laboratory hidden in the recesses of a Labrador fjord when he read the frenzied dispatch of his army superior General Canby. Without warning, tens of thousands of Democratic soldiers had stiffened, suddenly paralyzed, and the paralysis passed quickly into a rigor. Within a week, the stricken men's tissues were gradually transformed into a substance much like glass.

The gloating code message which the exultant Heine could not resist sending his old antagonist of the classroom gave Upham the clue. Their neutral intermediary sent him a slip of paper written by Woerlein to be forwarded to Upham. It reached him in the same week as Canby's urgent appeal.

The message read: "A/B equal C/D. That proves something or other!"

Like a flash, the memory of the day when they received their thesis marks glowed in the mind of Sylvester Upham. The plain English sentence was the key to the code. Translated, the mathematical equation signified: "Just as my grade of 'A' was superior to your grade of 'B', so the Centralists are superior to the Democrats." In like manner!

Upham radioed the university for a verbatim copy of the Woerlein thesis. In that youthful work of over two decades ago was the suggestion of certain possible uses of the silicoids. Now it had come to fruition— in the "glassy death."

In another week, Upham had forwarded to General Canby a full analysis of the "glassy death" with directions as to how to nullify that malignant, ray-induced disease. Once more the war fell back into its previous condition of wasteful stalemate. Prompted by the reference to the almost forgotten college theses, Upham started his return message to his old sidekick, Heine. It read: "Your arithmetic worse than ever. True formula is expressed by H/H; C equals O."

With this cryptic message on its way, Upham dug out his own adolescent thesis and began its intensive study.

FROM THAT DAY on, a deep silence was all that could be had from the Democratic laboratory in the frozen north. General Canby felt that the counteraction of the "glassy death" was all well enough, but after all, it was a purely negative measure. Something more aggressive was urgently needed. He flooded the air with appeals to Upham to provide him with something more. The other arms of the service were slowly but remorselessly being driven back. It was up to science to devise the new weapon that would overwhelm the enemy and turn the menace of defeat into victory. That was Upham's job.

Canby's imperative messages to Labrador either evoked no response, or else a meager "Progress satisfactory"— a message maddening in its vagueness, conveying nothing.

Canby turned his routine duties of stimulating the production of poison gases and other ordinary chemical activities over to subordinates, and arranged for a cruiser to take him to Labrador. General Canby was a business man, primarily, and he had never fully trusted his distinguished colonel advisor. The suspicion was kindling in his mind that the eccentric scientist might have forgotten all about the war and had become immersed in some characteristic scheme of his own, such as altering the genes of seaweed so that it would produce honey.

As the Viper turned her bow in toward the entrance to the fjord that indented the barren, glacier-striped coast of Labrador, General Canby's chubby, plump form was on the bridge, his eyes squinted beneath a worried brow, scanning the inhospitable shore for the first sight of the camouflaged buildings that housed his most important experimental station. On the forecastle, men were making ready the lines for docking.

Abruptly the curt order of the captain of the Viper cut the silence. "Full

speed astern, both engines!" Dead ahead there was an acre of tiny ripples, the indication of a shoal or considerable rock just awash. Everyone on the bridge was studying the twinkling waters through glasses.

"A school of fish, sir!" reported the quartermaster.

"Rats!" exclaimed the captain, in the same instant.

And rats they were, hundreds of them. As the onrushing stern clove the water under the renewed push of the screws, the Viper forged ahead, split the approaching patch of roughened water, and went on through. General Canby and the captain rushed to the wing of the bridge and gazed down at the swarm of swimming animals slipping past in the quickwater. Rats, spotted brown rats, swimming vigorously, some clutching a moment at a seam or rivet of the cruiser's side as it slid by them. In the wake astern, the two halves of the sundered school reunited, and as the ship drew away toward the dock, the watching men on the bridge lost to view the area of tiny wavelets. The school of swimming rodents had gone on out into the broad Atlantic.

"Must he fumigating up there," observed the captain dryly, waving at the laboratory on the crest of the hill.

Canby made no answer, but he was thoughtful. What could Upham be doing with rats? The vagaries of that man's mind were unpredictable. Canby pretended a patience he was far from feeling, while the ship was being placed alongside the dock.

He left his aides on board, and pushed on up the rocky path alone, panting a little from the arduous ascent. When he reached the crest and had passed the sentries at the gate, he noted with astonishment that the yard surrounding the main building contained many wire pens. Some of them were filled with the same brown rats the Viper had met, others were empty. It was just as Canby had feared. Upham had gone off on one of his tangents— and at such a time! Rats, indeed, when the fate of the world was at stake!

IT WAS IN the far gallery that General Canby found his man. The lean figure was bending over a huge ledger, the straggly, bifurcated beard hanging down ludicrously over the trim army uniform. Upham was making entries in the ledger from a sheaf of loose sheets. Canby could not fail to be struck by the contrast of this man's impractical, scholarly countenance with his military garb. Here was another of the absurdities of war. This man they needed— and to pay him adequately, he must be given rank, for the War Office insisted such important work must be under army control. Control! Even a greater absurdity. A man like Upham was controllable by nothing except his own whimsical interest.

General Canby approached the writing man upon whom he depended so

heavily, casting a critical eye about the littered work tables as he threaded his way among them. Everywhere lay rats, dead rats, in all stages of dissection. On one table was a large cage, like a parrot cage, containing a half-dozen live ones. They were brownish in color, almost yellow, and spotted with dark spots.

"Just in time!" called out Upham, gayly, hearing his approach and looking up. He was as matter-of-fact in manner as if the conversation had just been resumed after a few minutes' interval. It had been more than three years since Canby had deposited him here and put the station at his disposal. General Canby was a trifle nettled by the informality of the greeting, and after seeing what he had seen on the way in, he was in no mood for pleasantries.

"If you are wasting your time on Bubonic Plague carriers"

"Dear me, no!" disclaimed Colonel Upham, in mild surprise. "That is too ineffective. Besides, I understand it is considered unethical to kill people by ordinary disease germs. I have the book you gave me, you know. The one on the Rules of War. It is all right to shoot, stab, bomb, strangle, burn— all those things— but germs are out. Not orthodox! But I haven't found anything in the book about this. It couldn't be, because I have just found out about it myself. I got the idea from Heine"

"Heine?" bristled the general.

"Yes, Heine— Heine Woerlein, my old roommate. You know. He is head of Chemical Warfare on the Central side. We did our theses together. That 'glassy death' stunt was his idea— he thought of it twenty years or more ago. So I'm working off one of mine on him." Upham chuckled, happy as an undergraduate. "Only I don't think he's fast enough to unravel mine as quickly as I did his."

General Canby was nonplussed. He was confronted with a situation he had not expected.

"Do you mean," he said, aghast, "that while we are fighting for our very existence, you are frittering away your efforts prolonging a silly schoolboy feud? Personal enmity has no place in war!"

"Enmity?" echoed Upham, his mild blue eyes widening in astonishment. "Why, Heine and I are the best of friends. The only trouble with him is he's blind to the possibilities of mutants in organisms. But he'll know better— soon."

"In the meantime our armies are pushed back every week," said General Canby, bitterly, not knowing quite how to handle this queer technical expert. "When they open the big drive next spring, we're done. And all the while you are playing with rats, to prove some point in a childish squabble!"

"Not rats, lemmings— lemmings from Norway!" Upham turned his absent-minded gaze toward the window. Then his expression became at once alert.

He jumped to his feet, excitedly, and ran to the window, shouting.

"Stop him! Stop Okkuk! Head him off before he reaches the shore!"

GENERAL CANBY followed to the window. He could see an Eskimo plunging down the rocky slope, falling occasionally, but each time picking himself up and resuming his headlong flight toward the fjord. He saw him bang blindly into a post, stop and tear at it savagely until he had uprooted it and flung it to one side. Then the fleeing man dashed on to the brink of the fjord and dived into it. Canby could hear Upham's voice behind him, telephoning to the soldiers on the dock. In a moment a boat was putting out, pursuing the fast-swimming Eskimo.

Upham joined General Canby at the window. He pointed down to a trough partly filled with grain. The trough was in one of the empty pens that had held the tawny rats.

"Okkuk is something of a petty thief," Upham explained, "but we should forgive him. He has saved us the embarrassment of having to ask for volunteers. He has evidently stolen and eaten some of my experimental food. Come, I will show you."

General Canby followed Upham through the halls of the laboratory building. He looked into a huge refrigerator piled waist-high with the dank bodies of the dead little animals. He was shown the pens of the living ones, and glanced through stacks of closely written notebooks. Upham was lecturing as they walked. He talked of hormones, a new and unthought-of variation that only developed in fluctuating and distorted magnetic fields.

He displayed microscopic slides, charts of curves correlating sunspots and auroras with selected terrestrial plagues and migrations. Canby saw the weird, fantastic arrangement of oddly constructed electromagnets suspended in all positions around jars of wheat, baskets of moss, and other substances. In an hour's time, he had lost the feeling of annoyance he had brought with him into the building. It had been replaced by a consuming interest. The interest grew into enthusiasm; here was the road to victory, and General Canby found himself slapping the lank colonel on the back and crying.

"You've done it! This is what we have been hoping for!"

THE Viper carried a contented Chief of Chemical Warfare back to Europe. His task was to lay this plan before the General Staff and get their cooperation. Colonel Upham wound up his work in the laboratory and departed for Chicago.

The purchasing agents of the Democratic armies had already engaged many millions of bushels of wheat and had contracted for its milling. In that city of abundant power supply, manufacturing facilities, and vast grain storage

capacity, it was a fairly simple matter for Upham to have his special electromagnets built, and the ponderous machines rigged at predetermined points about the grain elevators. Some were placed on cribs erected on the roofs, others on tall structures of heavy scaffolding located at carefully computed angles to the sides. When they were all in place, and the cam-driven battery of theostats connected, Upham gave the order to let the amperes flow.

The resulting wail of protest from householders whose radios were flooded with strange, oscillating static was dealt with by a friendly city government. Upham stayed in the city, keeping a watchful eye on his power charts, testing samples of flour from time to time as it was milled, and making further studies of its effects. The magnetically mutated hormones were present in every sample, in abundant concentration. His reactions were invariably what he expected. There was no more to be done in America. He let them barrel the flour, and later saw it descend into the hold of ships in New York harbor. Escorted by a squadron of destroyers, he crossed the Atlantic with his shipment and supervised its placing in the warehouses of Le Havre.

General Canby was having a harder row to hoe. First, the General Staff snarled at him, and the War Ministry laughed him out of the room. But he went at them again and again. His winning card— and he knew that they, too, knew it only too well— was that they had no alternative.

Spring was near, and with it would come the last Big Push. All winter they had barely managed to hold their lines, dug in behind barbed wire, fighting the miserable war of attrition in the mud. Elsewhere on the Continent, one after another of their allies had crumpled, been overrun, utterly crushed. Each such victory made more enemy troops available for the grand final thrust on the western front. As the roads became more passable, the enemy would be concentrating for the drive that would make the word "Democracy" a historical term.

As matters stood, there was left but the desperately held territory of the southwest half of France and a thin strip of the Channel coast protected by a hard-held line from Ostend to Rouen. Thence, the battered, soggy trenches straggled across France through Orleans toward Lyon. Paris had been lost the year before. The British clung doggedly to the torn and shattered sector of shore opposite their island. It was their last buffer against invasion.

It was when they thought of this bit of mangled territory that the die-hards among the brass-hats snorted indignantly. This Chemical General, Canby, had the effrontery to propose that they deliberately evacuate the lines from Amiens to Rouen and let the enemy through! Worse, he was urging them to stock the advance base at Gournay, behind the salient of that name, with thousands of tons of flour newly received at great risk and expense from

America, and then abandon it to the enemy. Such tactics were shockingly novel! Outrageous recklessness!

In time, Canby made his point. He argued that they were certain to lose the sector in any case, and pointed out that by orderly withdrawal they would save the troops to strengthen their lines elsewhere. And he finally convinced the most stupid of them that the gift of the flour was like that of the Trojan horse. It was charged with the hormones of destructive madness!

Flour, of all things, was what the enemy needed most. Although they had swept the Continent from one shore almost to the other, their lack of sea power had meant they still suffered an external blockade. During all the war, there had been an acute shortage of foodstuffs, and the civilian population had long since become inured to the use of shoddy substitutes. Such stocks of genuine food as could be obtained— usually by capture— were immediately distributed to the army.

When the General Staff made its decision, they were gracious enough to call in General Canby and allow him to dictate the movement orders.

His preparations were swift and simple. While the flour Upham had brought from America was being trucked to the depots of Gournay, all the rest of the district of Seine Inferieure was cleared of every living thing— animals as well as the citizens and troops. Prepared flank lines were drawn on the off banks of the Seine and the Somme. When all the region between the front line trenches and the Channel had been evacuated, the thin ranks holding the line were withdrawn during one dark, rainy night.

The enemy continued to bomb and shell the area, but within a few hours a trench raiding party found an abandoned trench. In another day the vanguard of the army was moving in, warily feeling its way ahead with the probing arm of artillery fire. But planes and scouts soon confirmed the fact of general retreat; the district was deserted, empty of defenders.

The general commanding the first wave of the invaders found the unguarded depots of Gournay, and settled his headquarters there. There was much material there besides flour, and hundreds of trucks were soon rolling to the rear, dispersing the welcome booty. Field kitchens all over conquered France would shortly serve to the victorious soldiers food that they had been deprived of for many months.

Fighting went on as usual, for several days. General Canby trotted in and out of General Headquarters, enduring as patiently as he could the biting comments of the Commander-in-Chief. But his aide, Colonel Upham, was content. He knew his hormones and their interval of propagation. Consequently, he walked the streets of Rouen unmindful of the tittering of the French girls or the wisecracks of the fresh young officers who referred to him

in the privacy of their messes as "that nutty old billy-goat." His mind was full of anticipation of the humbling of his erstwhile co-worker, Heine Woerlein. In just a few more hours he could taste his triumph, watch his contemptible "deformed hormones" tumble the reputation of his friendly rival into the dust.

On the third day, the relinquished sector was filled with the foe. He had occupied it to the utmost edge.

Then something extraordinary began to happen. Troop movements began on a huge scale. Those within the sector, the ones who had been attacking the north and south lines hemming it in, ceased their operations and unexpectedly marched away toward the coast. Elsewhere in France, armies began to converge on that region that had so accommodatingly been vacated by the Democratic armies. In response to the only inquiry that Upham made, Canby found out for him, through the Intelligence Service, that the enemy High Command was still located at Paris— including, of course, the general commanding the chemical warfare elements, General H. Woerlein.

"TOO BAD we can't see it all," remarked General Canby to Colonel Upham, the next day. They were lying on the belfry platform of an ancient Rouen church steeple, their binoculars resting on the sill of a slender Gothic window that opened out to the wastes to the north.

Firing had ceased. It was unnecessary now to shoot away ammunition. The enemy was paying no attention to what lay on his flanks, only to what was ahead. And ahead was but the ruined and deserted villages of what had once been the pleasant country of Seine Inferieure. Beyond them lay only the English Channel.

Canby and Upham looked again across the fields to the north. As far as the eye could see, there were columns of gray-clad soldiers— many columns, marching abreast. Among them threaded yet other columns, motor-drawn, lines of trucks, tractors, field-guns, tanks. All— regiments, divisions, whole armies— were marching steadily to the west. Whatever lay in their path, whether shrub, stump, or the crumbling walls of a wrecked town, was seized upon, torn apart and scattered to the winds in blind ferocity. But always onward, seaward, flowed those endless lines of gray men

All day that procession passed. It was a stupendous, awe-inspiring review of the greatest army the world had ever seen assembled. No matter how many thousands had gone on before, there were yet more thousands to follow at their heels.

In the late afternoon, an aerial parade appeared to complete the spectacle. Overhead, the sky became black with planes, planes that veered neither to the right nor the left. They, too, were going west. And behind, from out the hazy

distance of the eastern sky, still other squadrons were coming.

Night brought no cessation of the sounds of the hurrying hordes. The measured tramp of countless feet, the laboring motors of the trucks and tractors, and the unremitting drone of planes above filled the dark air with the echoes of urgent travel. The bewildered citizenry of Rouen was glad to hear them pass, but wondered dumbly where they were going. To the west lay England, to be sure, but where existed the fleets needful to transport such hosts?

In General Headquarters, General Canby pawed through the communications files. Telegrams from the eastern trenches reported the enemy had withdrawn from the attack, and was moving off to the west. Dispatches from Falmouth, England, stated that a multitude of aircraft were passing that point, flying high, headed straight into the west. Toward dawn, radio reports were received from the Admiralty. These contained the startling information that the head of the columns of planes had passed the south of Ireland, far at sea. Several destroyers there had observed many of them falling, apparently out of fuel, while many others, still in formation, had plunged into the sea in full-power dives. There had been a search for survivors, but none had been found.

When morning came, Canby and Upham went again to their observation post in the church tower. There were still the relentlessly moving columns to be seen, and they could not but feel appalled at the very magnitude of the forces they had set in operation. As they watched, breathless almost with awe, they noticed a new feature in this day's stampede. Yesterday, the men driving seaward had stopped occasionally, as if for meals or routine rest, but today they did not stop. Seemingly tireless, or as if driven by some urge that brooked no delay and revoked the natural laws of fatigue, they even accelerated their pace.

THE LAST of the airplanes had gone on out over the Atlantic. The sky was clear. General Canby and his aide left their perch, went to the ground, where the general ordered a plane. At the airbase, the grotesque figure of the discoverer of the mystery hormones that had caused this astounding migration of their opponents followed his chubby chief into the waiting plane. They got off the ground and steered a course across the sky above the marching legions, heading toward Dieppe, on the Channel. The hurrying troops and motorcades below were too intent on their strange fixed purpose even to glance upward.

If the sight of the marching armies past Rouen had been uncanny, what was to be seen at the shore line staggered belief. The beach, wherever access could be had to it from the land, was black with men, crossing, striding into the

surf. In one place where a road led straight down to the water, a long column of tanks had emerged onto the sand, wallowed across it, and plunged into the waves. The first of them had stalled as soon as their carburetors flooded, but the succeeding ones crawled clumsily up over them, toppling into the water beyond.

Canby and Upham circled above, watching in amazement. Soon, something very much like a breakwater had been built by the steady accretion of new tanks, flung together in a nondescript pile, some upside down, others at weird angles. Some infantry, following, advanced unhesitatingly into the water until stopped by the irregular wall of steel. They beat viciously at it with rifle butts, or tossed hand grenades. Finding they could neither demolish it nor move it, they wriggled between the crevices or climbed over. By whatever means they could, they forced their way to the other side. Then they struck out into the dirty waters of the Channel, swimming, a few of them, for a few yards, but the weight of their equipment dragged most of them down.

Similar scenes were everywhere along the coast. The seemingly inexhaustible manpower of the enemy was pouring steadily over the sand dunes, charging across the beaches, flinging itself into the ocean.

General Canby viewed the strewn ocean in solemn silence. As night approached and there was yet no end to the advancing regiments bent on watery self-destruction, he turned the plane and headed back toward Rouen. Colonel Upham had seen enough. His theory had borne fruit, abundantly. The war was won, and far more important to him, his thesis was upheld. Somewhere among those ocean-craving throngs was his friend and classmate, Heine Woerlein. His victory would be empty unless his lifelong rival should understand and acknowledge it. Until now, their years of competition had been indecisive. He asked Canby what news there was of the location of the opposing High Command.

It was the next forenoon that they found them. His Excellency, the Supreme Commander of the Central armies, was marching seaward, surrounded by his staff. Canby's plane alighted gently in a field a little to the right and ahead of them. He and Upham awaited the oncoming general and his circle of high officers, goose-stepping their way forward, glazed eyes fixed on the western horizon. Like men in a trance, they went forward. Among them, Upham finally recognized his old roommate, Heine, belted, bemedalled, and well-nigh concealed by his steel helmet.

UPHAM DARTED amongst the unseeing staff, and grasped Woerlein by the shoulder and shook him violently, but to no avail. Then he slipped from his pocket a syringe he had prepared and deftly shot the injection into the arm of

the somnambulistic Heine. After eight more paces, Heine shook himself and the light of recognition came into his eyes.

"My hormones have got you, Heine," said Silvy urgently. "Snap out of it! You are on your way to drown yourself."

The dazed Woerlein was led to the plane of his adversary, while Upham administered shots of his antidote to the Supreme Commander and his most important aides. A half hour later, they were cruising above the water's edge, showing the astonished captive generals what was happening to their armies. Convinced, the vanquished commander-in-chief signed the armistice put before him. and Canby sent out messages ordering the remainder of the flour to be intercepted and destroyed. Later, the victorious troops of the Allied Democracies, armed with tanks of Upham's antidote, were pursuing the ocean-bound cohorts of the Centralists, salvaging as many of them as they could overtake.

General Woerlein, as a distinguished prisoner of war, was paroled to the custody of Colonel Upham. In his quarters at Rouen, Upham told him what had happened to him.

"I sent you fair warning, Heine," chuckled Upham, his unruly beard waggling up and down as he spoke. "H over H, the hormones conquer Heine! It should teach you to be more respectful to the possibilities of some organisms.

"If you remember my university thesis, you will recall that I was even then speculating as to the causes of the extraordinary migrations of the lemmings of Norway, those little rodents that periodically go in droves to the sea, devouring or destroying everything in their path. As you know— or should know— when they reach the sea they go right on in, by the thousands, all of them, and start swimming straight away from the shore. Of course, they always drown.

"In the course of time, I eliminated most of the possible causes of this phenomenon and came to suspect that there was something in their diet, some accidental variation of it, that produced the disturbance. It was evidently something that occurred periodically, although irregularly.

"Eventually, I narrowed the field of inquiry and proved to my satisfaction that the magnetic fluctuations set up by auroras was what caused these mutations. I took moss, and bark, and the other rubbish they ordinarily feed on, and manipulated them in various magnetic fields. Finally I got a batch that worked. The hormones of madness— those hydrophiliac organisms— appeared in living specimens. It was simple enough after that to induce the same variations in other foods, such as wheat.

"The wheat variants were even more powerful than those in the moss, and according to my computations, strong enough to actuate men. You saw how it did it. I think that proves something or other."

"Yes," admitted Heine Woerlein, sadly, "I think it does!"

3: A Night at the 'Hotel des Morts'

Percy W. Thomas
fl 1880s
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THE 'High Level Route' is the name that Alpine climbers have given to the passage between Chamouny and Zermatt over the glaciers which lie between those two points. It is a passage of remarkable beauty, for it includes some of the finest ice scenery in all the Alps.

The route is capable of several variations, for there are many passes over the chain leading in the same direction ; but the route usually adopted, I believe— taking Chamouny as a starting-point— is over the Cols d'Argentière, de Sonadon, du Crêt, the Pas de Chèvres, the Col de Berthol, and the Col d'Herèus.

Substituting the Col du Géant and the Col Ferret for the Col d'Argentine, I was 'doing' the 'High Level Route' when the strange adventure I am about to relate happened to me. It is now some years since it occurred, but the unpleasant impression created at the time remains, and seems likely to remain.

One lovely summer's afternoon— the date is of no consequence— I left Chamouny and walked up the hot and dusty path to the wretched *cabane* which at that time did duty as the 'Hotel du Montenvert.'

For some days past the weather had been unusually sultry, and in order to avoid the mid-day heat when crossing the snowfields of the Col du Geant, I had arranged with my guides to make a start from the Montenvert at midnight, and as it was full moon at the time, we counted upon having as much light as we should reqnire.

I had two guides with me— one, the same that I had always had from the time when I first began to climb, some years previously; the other, a man who had made a name for himself for skilful and daring rock-climbing. He, though, was to be with me but a short while longer, as he had another engagement to fulfil in the course of a day or two.

For some three hours I made an attempt to sleep, and then I arose and feebly tried to swallow a few mouthfuls of bread; but at an hour bordering on midnight it is not easy to get up an appetite for breakfast, and I soon gave up in despair and went out to see if my men were ready.

An extraordinary stillness prevailed. From off the Mer de Glace a cool breeze was blowing, giving evidence of the frost that had frozen dry the little rills and streamlets intersecting the glacier, which all that day long bad been running musically; and yet though the breeze blew freshly on my cheek, it was

scarce sufficient to give motion, for on the pine trees and shrubs close beside me not a leaf was stirring. A soft pale light in the sky behind the Grandes Jorasses showed that the moon would soon be up.

Close upon the witching hour, equipped in heavy marching order, wearing each his knapsack, we left the hotel and made our way down the tourist-trod path towards the Mer de Glace. Without mishap, although it was still very dark and the track not too well defined, we reached the ice, and then commenced one of the most impressive walks I have ever undertaken in the Alps, for we made our way up the Mer de Glace in brilliant moonlight. The moon had risen by this time, and was shining down upon us from behind the dark and frowning mass of the Grandes Jorasses. As its rays fell upon it the frozen surface of the glacier sparkled and glittered, and the towering *séracs* of the great ice-fall in front of us rose weird and mysterious in their strange fantastic forms as the pale unearthly light fell upon them. It was like a scene from fairyland, and the impression was heightened by the stillness which reigned, only broken by the grating sound of our own footsteps as we trod the ice. Too much awed by the extraordinary beauty of the scene to exchange a word, we walked leisurely on till we halted to rest before commencing the ascent of the eeracs.

The sky was becoming lighter now, and soon a faint crimson flush spread over it, paling the moonlight into insignificance, and changing the appearance of everything so completely that the fairy scene we had just witnessed passed away from us as though it had been a dream. But the sunrise, too, was very beautiful, by its glory compensating us for the loss; and, with weather such as rarely falls to a climber's lot, we crossed the Col, and descended easily to the little inn on the Mont Fréty, half-way down to the valley.

Here we passed a quiet afternoon, but at midnight we were once more on the tramp, and again blessed by the most glorious weather, we crossed the Col Ferret and descended to Orsieres, a small village on the St. Bernard route.

Here my second guide left me, and with my other man (whom I will call Franz) I went on to Bourg St. Pierre, over the route traversed by the Great Emperor with his 'Army of Italy.'

Tradition has it that it was at the inn here that Napoleon halted to breakfast; and to this day, in memory of the event, it bears on its signboard the inscription, '*Hotel du dejeuner de Napoleon I*^{er}.'

It had become necessary for us to obtain another man to do duty as porter, two being an insufficient number for crossing the Col de Sonadon (for which we were bound next day), this being, perhaps, the most difficult pass on the 'High Level Route.'

With some little trouble one was at length found, but I did not like the look of him, and had I not had the utmost confidence in Franz, I should have

thought twice before engaging him. He was nothing better to look at than a clumsy peasant, and he reeked unpleasantly of stale spirits and suchlike abominations— just the kind of man, in fact, that one would not care to be alone with in moments of difficulty or danger. However, as no one else was available, we were constrained to make the best of him.

We started for the Col de Sonadon soon after two o'clock the following morning.

After two such glorious days in succession, it was too much to expect, in the mountains, that we should have a third; and soon after the start, although the sky,for the most part, was quite clear, a bank of heavy cloud hung upon the horizon, and gathered in blackness and density the farther we went.

For some time our way lay through pasture land, barren enough in appearance, but yielding sufficient, perhaps, for the few lean kine scattered over it; and then we went over more rocky ground, which bore traces of having been at one time a great moraine. Next we mounted some steep rock gullies, affording to Franz and myself a pleasant bit of climbing, but filling the porter's heart with dismay. We had not misjudged him. In any difficulty he showed himself, to use an expressive bit of slang, 'out of it,' and Franz had many a time to call him to order.

Then we passed on to the Sonadon glacier. The scene was a singularly wild and beautiful one. Right above us towered the Grand Combin, upwards of 14,000 feet in height, the highest of its group, and indeed ranking amongst the mightiest of the whole Alps. Nigh at hand rose the Mont Vélan, always a striking object from the neighbourhood of the St. Bernard; and all around us snow and grey barren rock gave to the landscape that wild, inhospitable look that I associate more than any other with this particular district.

I was a very energetic climber in those days, and many an expedition I had planned and carried out which in these I should hesitate about attempting. I had long wished to make the ascent of the Combin, and now that I was actually in reach of it I thought my chance had come. It mattered little that the Col de Sonadon by itself is considered a long expedition, and without hesitation I made the suggestion to Franz that we should combine the ascent of the peak with the passage of the Col.

In spite of the threatening appearance of the sky the weather still kept fine, and after a few moments' reflection Franz, who always fell in with my plans when not too unreasonable, agreed; 'but,' he added, 'we must be quick about it.' The porter looked on with open mouth, and when it was told him what we meant to do he flatly declined to go with us. 'You may try to reach the top,' he exclaimed, with an air as if to say, 'You are fools if you think you will ever get there.'

'But not I! —*pas si bête*!'

And so we left him with a few caustic remarks, and struck off for the ascent of the Combin, telling him to wend his way to some rocks hard by the summit of the pass and there wait for our return.

Had I known, though, what was before us I should not have set off with so light a heart. The weather, the higher we got, kept getting more and more unsettled, and Franz several times looked uneasy, and muttered 'Quicker! quicker!' but we kept steadily climbing upwards till we reached the top of the ridge leading straight to the summit, which was now not far distant.

No sooner, though, did we set foot on this ridge than a violent clap of thunder broke over our heads. Instantly a cloud swept down upon us, and before we could realise what was coming we were in the thick of a terrific snowstorm.

It was one of those sudden atmospheric changes that constitute one of the few real dangers of climbing.

That climbing is dangerous in itself those who do not know much about the matter are continually insisting, but those who try it for many years, as I have, get to learn that in nearly every instance the danger is created by the persons who climb, for it is to their own action alone that must be attributed most of tbe fatal accidents that have happened to Alpine climbers.

To have the summit within our grasp and yet not to reach it was more than we could bear, and so, shutting our eyes to the risk we ran, we seized the opportunity of a lull in the storm to make a push for it. Every moment the violence of the storm increased, and when we stood upon the highest point— which we knew to be so only by the fact of the ground falling away rapidly on the opposite side from which we ascended— we could scarcely see a foot in front of us, so thickly fell the snow. The thunder roared incessantly— flash succeeded flash, and our ice-axes began to give out a weird, humming sound, as if bewitched. We seemed to be in the thick of an electric current. There was something awful in our position. It was true we had reached the top, but should we ever get down again?

The howl of the storm was appalling. Not a word could we hear ourselves speak, and it was only by signs that Franz made me aware that I was to descend first. I pushed on downwards as rapidly as I could; but the hail, driving into my face, seemed to cut me to pieces, and at every few steps I had to pause to take breath.

By good luck, more than anything else, at last we reached the edge of the cliff by which we had ascended and looked over. The face of the cliff was very steep, and the whole force of the storm seemed to be beating against this side of the mountain, and by this side we must descend if we meant to get down at

all.

The position was certainly one calculated to try the nerves. Immediate action was necessary, for the violence of the storm, so far from abating, seemed rather to increase. The crash of the thunder, which seemed to break immediately above us, was deafening; the lightning danced about, leaping playfully from crag to crag, while snow and hail pelted against us more heavily than ever. Franz drew me beside him, and, shortening the rope which linked us together, pointed over the edge and shouted two words- in my ear— 'Lead down!'

For one moment I looked; the next, knowing the longer I did this the less I should like the prospect, I stepped over the edge.

In an instant the wind caught me and blew me hard against the side of the mountain, but I clutched the rocks like grim death, and worked slowly and with difficulty downwards, the wind all the while tearing at my clothes, which flapped about in such a way that I feared every instant they might be rent in pieces.

It was certainly the most awful experience I ever went through in the Alps, and to this day I marvel how we got down, but get down we did, somehow.

As we descended, picking our way painfully down the icecoated rocks and helping each other as best we could, the storm decreased, and finally, but for a few flakes of snow floating about the air, ceased, as far as we were concerned, but still we heard the thunder growling away over the summit of the Combin, which remained hidden from our sight in impenetrable mist. Safe ourselves, our next care was the porter. We had shouted to him several times on the way down, but nothing but the echo of our own voices came back to us, and we began to wonder what had become of him. We saw no trace of him on the glacier or by the rocks at the summit of the pass, and though we kept shouting continually no answer was returned.

We hurried on to the rocks, but still not a vestige of him could we see, till at last, after searching up and down, we came upon him, crouched beneath a big boulder fast asleep, and with the *débris* of a substantial meal strewn thick around him. We shook him and he awoke.

All this time we had been fasting, and now it dawned upon us that we had become very hungry indeed. Franz's foresight had provided us with a goodly stock of provisions before leaving Bourg St. Pierre, and we called upon the porter, somewhat impatiently perhaps, to produce the knapsack containing them. But a most unaccountable delay attended its production, and when at last it did appear its surprising lightness was ominous of evil.

Franz tore open the sack and fumbled within. His search was rewarded, first by a handful of paper, then by an empty bottle, then by more paper, and

lastly by a moist and hairy crust of bread and a morsel of cheese rind!

It was more than human nature could endure, and when the porter naively remarked that, rather than let such good provisions be wasted (?) (for he knew that we must be lost), he thought he might as well set to work to reduce them, our indignation knew no bounds. In charity I will draw a veil over what followed, for I fear our pent-up wrath broke forth in an unlimited form. But be that as it may, for any effect that our words had upon him the porter might have been made of adamant! Revenge is sweet, and we were to have ours before the day was over, for in descending the glacier on the other side of the pass the porter fell into a deep crevasse, and it was only after much difficulty and some risk that we pulled him out, and then his face showed such abject terror that we actually felt some degree of pity for him.

He was very meek and subdued for the rest of the day after this adventure. We had hard work in getting off the glacier, for we found it in a bad state, intersected with innumerable crevasses, and in many places difficult to cross. It was, accordingly, evening before we left the ice and descended into the wild rocky valley into the head of which the glacier came down.

Hitherto I have given their true names to the places I have described, but for obvious reasons I must now 'dissemble,' and in calling this valley the 'Vallée des Morts ' I am giving it a name by which no one will recognise it.

We meant to reach an inn which, it was said, existed in the neighbourhood, but it was in such an out-of-the-way spot that very little information had we been able to get on the subject, and Franz and the porter, from not having been in these parts previously, were equally in doubt as to where we should find it.

Night was coming fast upon us. A good deal of mist still hung about the mountain tops and over the valley, and the growing darkness showed that the day was nearly done. The Vallée des Morts— so named on account of its having been the scene of a violent struggle between Suwarrow and the French in 1799, in which the loss of life had been terrible— is a peculiarly wild and gloomy spot. Almost completely shut in by lofty precipices, but little sun can ever reach it, and as we saw it that evening in the declining light of day, its gloom reminded me strangely of an illustration I had once seen from Dante's '*Inferno*.'

Presently the sky became a little lighter, for the moon rose, and through the white mists its orb shone dimly and hazily down upon us. We walked quickly, hut we had difficulty at times in picking our way in the semi-darkness amongst the rocks and stones that littered the valley, and by-and-by we came to what looked to be a track of some kind. It was but a faint one, made probably by cattle, but it showed that a human habitation must be near, and

we cheerfully followed it.

The path mounted slightly, and soon it brought us to an open space— a small grass-clad plateau, and at one end of this rose ghostly in the mist a form of white, which as we drew near resolved itself into the front of a narrow stone building. It was what we wanted, sure enodgh. Franz made straight for the door, and with the point of his ice-axe rapped loudly. The sound rang hollowly through the building as though it were deserted, and indeed so it appeared to be, for no answer came.

We stepped back and looked. How lonely the place seemed! No sign of life about it, for every window was closely barred by shutters which in many instances seemed falling to pieces with age and neglect. An antiquated signboard hung over the porch, upon which we made out with difficulty the inscription, 'Hôtel des Morts.'

Scarcely a cheerful name it seemed to us, but we could not help thinking it appropriate, for it might indeed have been a house of the dead, so silent and still was everything within. Again Franz knocked, yet more loudly, and then, after an interval, we heard steps slowly coming down the passage leading to the door. A rattling of bolts and chains followed, the door half opened, and the face of a very withered wrinkled old man peered through.

'From the time you kept us waiting, old fellow, one would think you hadn't many visitors,' exclaimed Franz, as we pushed our way into the house.

The old man's face brightened. He seemed relieved.

'Ah! I see,' he said. *'Messieurs les voyageurs*. *Bon*! I thought— but no matter, no matter.'

We entered. Gloomy as the inn looked frorn the outside, it seemed gloomier still within, and it struck chilly even after the cold and dampness of the mist without.

I was tired out by this time, and, cutting short the conversation. I requested our host to get me something to eat at once, for I was longing to be off to bed. For three successive nights I had had no rest to speak of. He brought me some hot coffee and bread. It was all he could give me, but I was thankful for that, and after making a scanty meal I asked to be taken to my room. The old man bade me follow him, and he led me to a door opening on to the passage on the ground floor, which he threw open for me to pass through.

I entered a cold and comfortless apartment, squalid in appearance, very bare of furniture— containing, in fact, no more than was absolutely necessary. No carpet covered the floor, and altogether it looked a poverty-stricken place.

Two wooden bedsteads were placed alongside the wall, foot to foot— one close by the window, the other in a line with it, and this latter I chose.

I wished the old man '*bon soir*,' but he stood in the doorway in a hesitating

kind of way, as if he wished to say something.

'Monsieur,' at last he said, 'we have but scanty room here, and—'

That was of no consequence, I told him. I had roughed it many a time before, and did not mind that.

' It is not that, monsieur. There come *voyageurs* sometimes— *voyageurs* who arrive late. Would monsieur pardon the request he would make? If a voyageur should come, might he— would monsieur mind that he should take the other bed?'

'If that was all,' I told him, 'take the other bed by all means; only don't disturb monsieur— monsieur is fatigued.'

'A thousand thanks. Then if monsieur should wake in the night he will not fear to see that the other bed is occupied.'

Again he seemed to hesitate, but I bade him '*bon soir*' in a manner that showed him I meant it, and he went out and closed the door. Five minutes after I was between the blankets.

And now comes the odd part of my story. I had thought myself scarcely likely to need rocking when I got to bed, but, tired as I undoubtedly was, I could not get to sleep, and tossed about in a semi-conscious condition.

This may have gone on for a long or short time. I cannot tell. All I know is that I was suddenly wide awake and sitting up in bed.

A brilliant moonlight was shining into the room. Outside the mists had almost dispersed, for nothing but a thin haze hung for a few feet above the ground. The distance was quite clear, and snow-field and glacier showed dimly but distinctly in the soft light. A truly lovely scene.

But it was not that which attracted me. The moonlight was falling full upon the other bed, for the shutters had swung back from their fastenings, and where the light fell it was almost bright as day.

And there upon the bed I saw the outline of a figure.

It was that of some one tall and very thin. Wrapped in a blanket, he lay, one arm supporting the head, which, so raised, brought the face into the full gleam of the moonlight. And, great Heaven! what did I see?

A face so inexpressibly horrible that in the agony of that moment I almost shouted aloud! It was the face of a man apparently past the prime of life, but strangely sunken in feature, and so dark of complexion that he might almost have been born under an African sky.

A quantity of black hair, tinged here and there with grey, grew about the mouth and chin, but did not conceal the expression, and this it was that startled me.

Never before had I seen anything so diabolical. The eyes were so sunken that I could scarcely tell in the dim light whether or not they were closed, but

the lips were drawn up and exposed the teeth, so as to give the face an appearance as if it were grinning at me— so much so, indeed, that I feared each moment to hear a peal of unearthly laughter break from those hideous jaws.

But the figure remained so extraordinarily motionless that I felt it must be sleeping.

Only once had I seen anything approaching this ghastly object, and that was in the Morgue at the Hospice of the St. Bernard. An Italian labourer had been found by the monks frozen to death on the pass, and they had placed the body in the Morgue, where it remained standing leaning on its staff, preserved from decay by the coldness of the atmosphere— the face, scarcely more than the skull when I saw it, looking forward and seeming to grin in hideous mockery of the death that had overtaken it.

The face of the occupier of the other bed reminded me strangely of this one, and indeed so horrible, so awful did this vision at length become to me that I think I must have swooned from the sight of it, for I do not remember more till, with the early sunlight shining in at the window, I woke.

I at once looked at the other bed. It was unoccupied, and strange to say, when I went up and examined it more closely, it had the appearance of not having been slept on at all.

I was up and dressed before Franz came to tell me it was time to be stirring, and I went outside for a breath of the morning air.

What a splendid morning that was! But, though I stood there in the full glory of the golden sunlight, with the dew glistening on the stunted blades of grass beneath my feet and the snow peaks above me shining like burnished silver, I still felt chilled and unrested, and the vision of that awful face seemed again to rise before me, and damp the gladness that I should have felt at any other time at so bright and lovely a scene. I went in and sat down to breakfast at the open window in the dingy little room that did duty as the *salle-à-manger*.

Our host appeared with the coffee soon after, and when he had placed it on the table he hovered about the room pretending to dust the furniture, but I could see that it was but a pretence, and that he was longing to be saying something to me. At last he summoned courage.

'Monsieur has passed a good night?" he ventured.

'*Pas trop*. And, by the way, what has become of the *voyageur* that was put into monsieur's room?' And then I went on to describe minutely my fellow-traveller's appearance, ending with, 'If you often put such an ugly customer into their rooms, you will soon frighten your guests away, and the place will get a bad name.'

I said this jokingly, although, to tell the truth, the subject did not seem one that I altogether cared to joke about, but the effect on our host was extraordinary. Every vestige of colour— and he had little enough at any time— fled from his wrinkled cheeks, which assumed a dull leaden hue, and had he not grasped the chair in front of him he must have fallen. I was greatly alarmed, and, fearing he might be ill, rushed to his assistance; but he rallied instantly, and, pushing me aside, tottered out of the room, muttering to himself, 'Ah! it is true, then, it is true! Monsieur has seen it!'

Startled and surprised, at the same time my curiosity was aroused, and I questioned the old man closely to try and get an explanation, but he seemed afraid he had said too much as it was, for it was only very reluctantly that I got him to allude again to the subject.

Soon afterwards— towards six o'clock that morning— we left, and as we strode away I turned and saw the old man watching our retreating figures with a strangely wistful expression, as if in that moment the fearful loneliness of his position had come upon him in all its force.

I could not help pitying him, his life seemed such a solitary one, and when, from the summit of the ridge we had to cross on our way to Zermatt, I turned and took a last look down at the valley, I thought it appeared more gloomy than ever, for even in that early hour the mountains had cast their shadows across it, and thrown it completely into shade. Then we went on our way, and a load seemed to pass from me when I thought that I was not again to spend the night at the 'Hôtel des Morts.'

I have a great dislike to being 'chaffed,' and therefore I was somewhat chary of telling this adventure; but on one occasion I was relating it to a friend who was very well up in everything connected with the Alps, when, after listening very intently to what I had to tell, he asked me if I had never heard of the story connected with the inn. I told him I had not, and he then went on to say that, many years before, the landlord of the inn, on going to open his house for the summer season (most of these mountain inns are entirely shut up all through the winter), had been horrified to find the dead body of a man in one of the beds.

It never transpired how it came there, but it was believed to be that of a smuggler, who, in trying to cross the frontier, had missed the track, forced his way into the inn for shelter, and there perished miserably.

From the dried and mummified condition of the body it was evident that the man had been frozen to death.

4: Old Timbertoes

E. Everett-Green

1856-1932

Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney) 12 Feb 1913

"OLD TIMBERTOES" was the name that Jack's old sea-faring uncle had won for himself, when he settled down in his little cottage on the cliff. I suppose it was because he had a wooden leg. He had lost his leg at sea, doing something very courageous, and saving the only child of a very rich man. So the rich man bought him the cottage and a pretty substantial annuity— nobody ever knew how much this was. And when I first met him, he was quite a queer old man, who liked me to call him "Uncle Timbertoes," because, you see, Jack wanted to marry me, and I very badly wanted to marry Jack. But my parents said that could not be till Jack had something to marry upon, and his salary in a shipping office in our little nautical town was not considered enough to keep two people upon— and perhaps it wasn't.

Our holiday treat was for me to borrow or hire a bicycle— Jack had his own— and ride out the fifteen miles to spend an afternoon with old Uncle Timbertoes, and then ride back in the dusk of the summer's evening. It was great fun that little cottage of his. He kept it so beautifully. It was full of contrivances; and then I knew that he had left it to Jack, "with everything it contained," when he should have to leave it. And people were fond of saying of "Old Timbertoes" that he "must have money hidden away somewhere there."

But I'm glad to say that neither Jack nor I ever wanted the dear old man to die, even though it might have made our own way clear. But suddenly he did die, quite in the summer too, and without any illness. Just a stroke of apoplexy as he sat in his chair. And the clergyman of the parish (who once had been a lawyer), had made his will for him, and had taken care of it for him, and except for a sum of money set apart for his funeral, everything was left to Jack.

So Jack went over to take possession of the cottage, and I went to the funeral, because I loved the old man. But I could not stop, of course, and Jack rode part of the way back with me, debating whether it were better to let or to sell the cottage, or try to live in it ourselves.

That is what I should have loved, only it was so far from Jack's work. I need not say that Jack had looked very carefully for seme box or hiding place where money might be found— and so had I.

Three days later I got a letter from Jack. He had hunted and hunted and hunted; but nothing in the way of treasure-trove could he discover. But he was rather jubilant upon another count.

"Mr. Salter has been here," he wrote, "and has looked over the cottage, and has offered me five hundred for it! Madge, dear, don't you think I might take such a good offer? He's rich, and has a fancy for the place, and think what that would mean to us. One hundred to start us in housekeeping, and four hundred well-invested would be settled on you— a nice little income of £20 or thereabouts. Darling, don't you think your parents would let you come to me then— to the little home I could make for you?"

It was a lovely letter. I kissed it a thousand times. Yet I rushed off the first moment I could to the post office and spent sevenpence halfpenny on wiring to Jack.

"On no account accept this offer. Will write."

And write I did.

I told Jack that Mr. Salter was the cutest man in the district and the most unscrupulous.

As I expected, I had Jack over at nightfall. He had had a holiday granted to him from the office, and was staying at the cottage. He came to talk things over, to tell me that really there was no hidden hoard upon the premises, nor in the little garden— nowhere! And it was such a good offer! Such a chance for selling might never come again. Didn't I want the little home he could make for us?

"You dear old goose, of course I do. But Jack, I'm sure Mr. Salter must know something we don't. Most likely he has nosed out what old uncle's annuity was, and has been watching and waiting, and now means to pounce? Oh, we know his little ways— we old inhabitants. Don't do it, Jack— don't do it. If it's worth five hundred down to him, it's worth more to us!"

Jack was half convinced when he was with me. But three days later he came back flushed and eager. The offer had been raised— doubled!

"Think of it, Madge— a thousand pounds! Just because he's an idea there's a seam of coal under the ground. No use to me one bit; but "

"Coal— fiddlesticks! Jack, darling, don't do it! He must know something we don't! He must think us pretty simpletons not to see through him. A thousand pounds for a four-roomed cottage and a few perches of land!"

"And the coal underneath—"

"Horse marines underneath!" I answered with more force than politeness.

Then Jack got his arms round me, and he said very tenderly and firmly. "Madge, I've got a week to consider his offer. That week shall be yours to hunt rid hunt and hunt! But if at the end of that time we've found nothing, then I shall take the thousand pounds— and put up the banns. Your father says that if I can settle a few hundreds on you he'll let us marry. Madge, that is my ultimatum!"

It was a lovely ultimatum! Yet Jack must not be "had" by the Salter shark!

On the fourth day I. was rather desperate. Jack was at the office again, but he came out each evening to learn my success, and to escort me home. And he found me this evening staring up at the thatched roof and making sundry mental calculations.

"Jack, what's under the roof — just underneath?"

"Don't know, dear— beams, I suppose, and that sort of thing."

"Can we get up to see?"

"I don't know. Never thought of that. I'll go and look."

We both went to look,

On the upper land ing the ceiling was low and the end of the little passage was very dark, but as we started up I was certain that there was a crack in the rough whitening. Jack rushed to get the short ladder. Soon he was pushing and shaking, and presently pushed up a small square, which was like a trap door. I suppose you have to be able to get at the inside of your roof if anything goes wrong.

He disappeared inside, and then called down to me to bring a light. There was a lantern in the cottage, and I got it in haste, and scrambled up the ladder to Jack. We were in a queer place under the roof, with a good many beams criss-crossing about our heads when we stood up. But the dusty, queer place was quite empty. Only I noticed that it was a good deal cleaner than one might have expected. Somebody evidently came up here at intervals to clean round. Now why?

Jack took the lantern and began to search.

I saw by his face that he was full of hope; but as minutes passed by and lengthened into half an hour and still nothing turned up, the eager expectation in his eyes died down. I was examining the walls and floor myself. Who could tell where that queer old man might not have made a hiding-place? Oh, why had he not confided his purpose to Jack— or to me— before death sealed his lips?

Rather cramped by stooping and peering, I lifted myself up at length in the middle of the room and took hold of one of the beams to give myself a good "heave ahoy"— as Jack would have called it— and at that very moment I felt my fingers slipping into a cavity— and in that cavity I could feel something lying— something which felt to me like oil silk!

I repressed a cry of wonder. I stood on tiptoe and put my hand right down into the wide crevice in the beam, and I pulled out a roll wrapped round in green oil silk.

"Jack!" I cried, and there was a throb in my voice which instantly brought him to my side.

"Look there!" I said, and pushed the roll into his hands. "There is a hole in that beam. I found it there!"

By the light of the lantern Jack undid the string which fastened it about. I heard the beating of our two hearts. With quick and dexterous fingers he unrolled the crackling bits of paper which made so thick a wad! Bank notes, every one of them!

"Jack, oh, Jackie boy! Our fortune— our treasure trove!"

"Let's come down and count them over below!"

We shut and locked the cottage door. We were like a pair of misers ourselves! We spread the roll open on the table, and began to count. The biggest note was for a hundred pounds; there were five of these. Then quite a lot of fifties, then more tens, and a small roll of fivers. Jack, who had grown clever at counting and calculating in the office, gave me a look across the table. His eyes were shining with a light that more than just tne possession of money brought there.

"A little more than three thousand pounds, Madge! Think of that! I can buy that partnership with Molloy now, and work up that business into a thriving concern. Oh my clever little Madge— my clever little wife! And but for you my darling, and your quick wits, I should have parted with the place for five hundred pounds!"

He had me fast in his arms now! Oh, it was a beautiful moment! It was so much more delicious to feel that Jack and I were really one, than to feel that we were almost rich, that for the moment I think we almost forgot the money lying on the table.

"My darling, my darling, how I love you!"

"Oh, Jack, it is like a fairy tale!"

"I shall put up the banns to-morrow. Sweetheart, we will go and choose the wedding dress! You will be the loveliest little bride."

"And you the handsomest bridegroom, you dear old Jack!"

"And you shall choose your house wherever you like it."

"Jack dear, let us live here, and make it a little larger, and you shall have a motor cycle to go to business on. I love the cliffs and the sea, and this ducky little cottage home!"

I felt that I should always love the place for dear old uncle's sake, who by his thrifty and self-denying life had made my Jack a rich man— according to our ideas. Riches I only cared for in as far as they gave me Jack, and brought our married life within reach.

Jack looked round the painted walls with their many neat contrivances, and suddenly he began to laugh.

"After all you're not half sharp, my dearest," he said.

"Oh, Jack, what do you mean?"

"Why, sweetheart, if you were half as clever as I thought you were, you would tell me that the time had come to go to old shark Salter, and tell him he could have Old Timbertoes' cottage at 'the sacrificial price' of one thousand pounds!"

Then Jack and I held hands and laughed till the tears ran down our faces.

But we were not half sharp; for we never made that gracious offer, and we and our babies are living in a glorified edition of the Timbertoes Cottage to this very day!

5: Miss Donne's Great Gamble

Richard Marsh

1857-1915

The Strand Magazine, Nov 1901

Richard Bernard Heldmann

YOU CANNOT keep on meeting the same man by accident— not in that way. To suggest such a possibility would be to carry the doctrine of probabilities too far. Miss Donne began herself to think that such might be the case. She had first encountered him at Geneva— at the Pension Dupont. There his bearing had not only been extremely deferential, but absolutely distant. Possibly this was in some measure owing to Miss Donne herself, who, at that stage of her travels, was the most unapproachable of human beings. During the last few days of her stay he had sat next to her at table, in which position it had seemed to her that a certain amount of conversation was not to be avoided. He had informed her, in the course of the remarks which the situation necessitated, that he was an American and a bachelor, and also that his name was Huhn.

So far as Miss Donne was concerned the encounter would merely have been pigeon-holed among the other noticeable incidents of that memorable journey had it not been that two days after her arrival at Lausanne she met him in the open street— to be exact, in the Place de la Gare. Not only did he bow, but he stopped to talk with the air of quite an old acquaintance.

But it was at Lucerne that the situation began to assume a really curious phase. Miss Donne left Lausanne on a Thursday. On the day before she told Mr. Huhn she was going, and where she intended to stop. Mr. Huhn made no comment on the information, which was given casually while they waited among a crowd of other persons for the steamer. No one could have inferred from his manner that it was not his intention to end his days at Lausanne. When therefore, on the morning after her arrival, she found him seated by her side at lunch she was thrown into a flurry of surprise. As he seemed, however, to conclude that she would take his appearance for granted— not attempting

to offer the slightest explanation of how it was that he was where he was— she presently found herself talking to him as if his presence there was quite in accordance with the order of Nature. But when, afterwards, she went upstairs to put her hat on, she— well, she found herself disposed to try her best not to ask herself a question.

Those four weeks at Lucerne were the happiest she had known. A sociable set was staying in the house just then. Everyone behaved to her with surprising kindness. Scarcely an excursion was got up without her being attached to it. Another invariable pendant was Mr. Huhn. It was impossible to conceal from herself the fact that when the parties were once started it was Mr. Huhn who personally conducted her. A better conductor she could not have wished. Without being obtrusive, when he was wanted he was always there. Unostentatiously he studied her little idiosyncrasies, making it his especial business to see that nothing was lacking which made for her own particular enjoyment. As a conversationalist she had never met his equal. But then, as she admitted with that honesty which was her ruling passion, she never had had experience of masculine discourse. Nor, perhaps, was the position rendered less enjoyable by the fact that she was haunted by misgivings as to whether her relations with Mr. Huhn were altogether in accordance with strict propriety. She was a lady travelling alone. He was a stranger; self-introduced. Whether, under any circumstances, a lady in her position ought to allow herself to be on terms of vague familiarity with a gentleman in his, was a point on which she could hardly be said to have doubts. She was convinced that she ought not. Theoretically, that was a principle for which she would have been almost willing to have died. When she reflected on what she had preached to others, metaphorically she shivered in her shoes. She was half alarmed by the necessity she was under to acknowledge that it was a kind of shivering which could not be correctly described as disagreeable.

The domain of the extraordinary was entered on after her departure from Lucerne. At the Pension Emeritus her plans were public property. It was generally known that she proposed to return to England by way of Paris and Dieppe. In Paris she was to spend a few days, and in Dieppe a week or two. Practically the whole pension was at the station to see her off. She was overwhelmed with confectionery and flowers. Mr. Huhn, in particular, gave her a gorgeous bouquet, and a box of what purported to be chocolates. It was only after she had started that she discovered the chocolates were a sham; and that, hidden in the very midst of them, was another package. The very sight of it filled her with singular qualms. Other people were in the carriage. She deemed it prudent to ignore its existence in the presence of what quite possibly were observant eyes. But directly she had a moment of comparative

privacy she removed it from its hiding-place with what— positively!— were trembling fingers. It was secured by pink baby-ribbon tied in a true-lover's knot. Within was a leather case. In the case was a flexible gold bracelet, with on one side a circular ornament which was incrusted with diamonds. As she was fingering this she must have touched a hidden spring, because all at once the glittering toy sprang open, revealing inside— of all things in the world— a portrait of Mr. Huhn!

She gazed at it in bewildered amazement. All the way to Paris she was rent by conflicting emotions. That a perfect stranger should have dared to take such a liberty! Because, after all, she knew nothing of him— absolutely nothing, except that he was an American; which one piece of knowledge was, perhaps, a sufficient explanation. For all she knew, the Americans might have ideas of their own upon such subjects. This sort of behaviour might be in complete accord with their standard of propriety. The contemplation of such a possibility made her sigh. She actually nearly regretted that her standard was the English one, so strongly did she feel that there was something to be said for the American point of view, if, that is, it truly was the American point of view; which, of course, had still to be determined.

Had the bracelet been trumpery trash, costing say, fifteen or twenty francs, the case would have been altered. Of that there could be no doubt. But this triumph of the jeweller's art, with its costly diamond ornaments! She herself had never owned a decent trinket. Her personal knowledge of values was nil. Yet her instincts told her that this cost money. Then there was the name of "Tiffany" on the case. She had a dim consciousness of having heard of Tiffany. It might have cost one hundred— even two hundred— pounds! At the thought she burned. Who was she, and what had she done, that wandering males— the merest casual acquaintances— should feel themselves at liberty to throw bank notes into her lap? As if she were a beggar— or worse. There was a moment in which she was inclined to throw the bracelet out of the carriage window.

The mischief was that she did not know where to return it. She had Mr. Huhn's own assurance that he also was leaving Lucerne on that same day. Where he was going she had not the faintest notion. At least, she assured herself that she had not the faintest notion. To return it, by post, to Ezra G. Huhn, America, would be absurd. She might send it back to the person whose name was on the case— to Tiffany. She would.

Then there was the portrait— hidden in the bracelet— which he had had the capital audacity to palm off on to her under cover of a box of chocolates. It was excellent— that was certain.

The shrewd face, with the kindly eyes in which there always seemed to be

a twinkle, looked up at her out of the little gold frame like an old familiar friend. How pleasant he had been to her; how good. How she always felt at ease with him; never once afraid. Although he had never by so much as a single question sought to gain her confidence, what a curious feeling she had had that he knew all about her, that he understood her. How she had been impressed by his way of doing things; his quick resource; his capacity of getting— without any fuss— the best that was obtainable. How she had come to rely upon him— in an altogether indescribable sort of way— when he was at hand; she saw it now. How, in spite of herself, she had grown to feel at peace with all the world when he was near. How curious it seemed. As she thought of its exceeding curiousness, fancying that she perceived in the portrayed glance the twinkle which she had begun to know so well, her eyes filled with tears, so that she had to use her handkerchief to prevent them trickling down her cheeks. During the remainder of her journey to Paris that bracelet was about her wrist, covered by her jacket-sleeve. More than once she caught herself in the act of crying.

She found it impossible to remain in Paris. The weather was hot. In the brilliant sunshine the streets were one continuous glare. They seemed difficult to breathe in. They made her head ache. She longed for the sea. Within three days of her arrival she was hurrying towards Dieppe. In Dieppe she alighted at the Hotel de Paris. The first person she saw as she crossed the threshold was Annie Moriarty— at least, she used to be Annie Moriarty until she became Mrs. Palmer. The two rushed into each other's arms— Mrs. Palmer going upstairs with Miss Donne to assist in the unpacking. When they descended Miss Donne was introduced to Mr. Palmer, who had been Annie's one topic in the epistolary communications with which Miss Donne was regularly favoured. Mr. Palmer, who was a husband of twelve months' standing, proved to be a sort of under-study for a giant, towering above Miss Donne's head in a manner which inspired her with awe. While she was wonderful whether, when he desired to kiss his wife and retain his perpendicular position, he always lifted her upon a chair— for Annie was a mere pigmy in petticoats— who should come down the staircase into the hall but Mr. Huhn!

At that sight not only did Miss Donne's cheeks flame, but she was overwhelmed with confusion to such an extent that it was impossible to conceal the fact from the sharp-eyed person who was in front of her. Although Mr. Huhn merely raised his hat as he passed into the street, her distress continued after he was gone. She accompanied the Palmers— in an only partial state of consciousness— into the *Etablissement* grounds. While her husband continued with them Annie was discretion itself; but when Mr. Palmer, going into the building— it is within the range of possibility on a hint from her— left

the two women seated on the terrace, she assailed Miss Donne in a fashion which in a moment laid all her defences low.

The whole story was told before its narrator was conscious of an intention to do anything of the kind. It plunged the hearer into raptures. Although, with a delicacy which well became her, she concealed the larger half of them, she revealed enough to throw Miss Donne into a state of agitation which was half pathetic and altogether delightful. As she sat there, listening to Annie's innuendoes, conscious of her delighted scrutiny, the heroine of all these strange adventures discovered herself hazily wondering whether this was the same world in which she had been living all these years, and whether she was awake in it or dreaming. After all the miracles which had lately changed the whole fashion of her life, was the greatest still upon the way?

Eva Donne was thirty-eight and three-quarters, as the children say. For over twenty years she had been a governess— without kith or kin. All the time she was haunted by a fear that the fat season was with her now, and that the lean one was coming soon. She was not a scholar; she was just the sweetest woman in the world. But while of the second fact she had no notion, of the first she was hideously sure. She had strained every nerve to improve her mental equipment; to keep herself abreast of the educational requirements of the day; to pass examinations; to win those certificates which teachers ought to have. Always and ever in vain. The dullest of her scholars was not more dull than she. How, under these circumstances, she found employment was beyond her comprehension. Why, for instance, Miss Law should have kept her upon her teaching staff for nearly thirteen consecutive years was to her, indeed a mystery. That Miss Law should consider it well worth her while to retain in her establishment a well-mannered, dainty lady; possessed of infinite patience, kindliness, and tact; the soul of honour; considering her employer's interests before her own; willing to work late and early: who was liked by every pupil with whom she came into contact, and so was able to smooth the head mistress's path in a hundred different ways; that the shrewd proprietress of St. Cecilia's College should esteem these qualifications as a sufficient set-off for certain scholastic deficiencies never entered into Miss Donne's philosophy. Therefore, though she said not a word of it to anyone, she was tortured by a continual fear that each term would be her last. Dismissed for inefficiency at her age, what should she do? For she was growing old; she knew she was. She was grey— almost!— behind the ears; her hair was thinner than it used to be; there were tell-tale wrinkles about her eyes; she was conscious of a certain stiffness in her joints. A governess so soon grows old, especially if she is not clever. Many a time she lay awake all through the night thinking, with horror, of the future which was in store for her. What should she do? She had saved so

little. Out of such a salary how could she save?— with her soft, generous heart which could not resist a temptation to give. She sometimes wondered, when the morning dawned, how it was that she had not turned quite grey, after the racking anxieties of the sleepless night.

And then the miracle came— the god out of the machine. A cousin of her mother, of whom she had only heard, died in America, in Pittsburg— a bachelor, as alone in the world as she was— and left everything he had to his far-off kinswoman. Eight hundred sterling pounds a year it came to, actually, when everything was realized, and everything had been left in an easy realizable form. What a difference it made when she understood that the incredible had come to pass, and what it meant. She was rich, independent, secure from want and from the fear of it, thank God. And she thanked Him— how she thanked Him!— pouring out her heart before Him like some simple child. And she ceased to grow old; nay, she all at once grew young again. She was nearly persuaded that the greyness had vanished from behind her ears; her hair certainly did seem thicker. The wrinkles were so faint as to be not worth mentioning, while, as for the stiffness of her joints, she was suddenly conscious of an absurd and even improper inclination to run up the stairs and down them.

Then there came the wonderful journey. She, a solitary spinster, who had never been out of England in her life, made up her mind, after not more than six month's consideration, to go all by herself to Switzerland. And she went. After the strange happenings which, in such a journey, were naturally to be expected, to crown everything, here, on the terrace at Dieppe, sat Annie Moriarty that was— and a troublesome child she used to be— telling her— her!— the young woman's former and ought-to-be-revered preceptress— that a certain person— to wit, an American gentleman— was in love with her— with her! Miss Eva Donne. Not the least extraordinary part of it was that, instead of correcting the presumptuous Annie, Miss Donne beamed and blushed, and blushed and beamed, and was conscious of the most singular sensations.

A remark, however, which Mrs. Palmer apparently inadvertently made, brought her back to earth with a sudden jolt.

"I suppose that whoever does become Mrs. Huhn will become an American."

It was just a second or so before she comprehended. When she did it was with a quick sinking of the heart. Something, all at once, seemed to have gone out of the world. Perhaps because a cloud had crept over the sun.

Was it possible? A thing not to be avoided? An inevitable consequence? Of course, Mr. Huhn was an American; she did know so much. And although— as

she had gathered— this was by no means his first visit to Europe, it might reasonably be imagined that he spent most of his time in his native country. It was equally fair to assume that his wife would be expected to stop there with him. Would she, therefore, perforce lose her nationality, her birthright, her title to call herself an Englishwoman? To say the least of it, that would be an extraordinary position for— for an Englishwoman to find herself in. Mischievous Annie could not have succeeded better had it been her deliberate intention to make Miss Donne's confusion worse confounded.

She dined with the Palmers at a little table by themselves. Mr. Huhn was at the long table round the corner, hidden from her sight by the peculiar construction of the room. Mrs. Palmer announced that he had gone there before she entered. Miss Donne took care that she went before he reappeared. She spent the evening in her bedroom, in spite of Mrs. Palmer's vigorous protestations, writing letters, so she said. It is true that she did write some letters. She began half-a-dozen to Mr. Huhn. Among a thousand and one other things, that bracelet was on her mind. Her wish was to return it, accompanied by a note which would exactly meet the occasion. But the construction of the note she wanted proved to be beyond her powers. It was far from her desire to wound his feelings; she was only too conscious how easy it is for the written word to do that. At the same time it was necessary that she should make her meaning plain, on which account it was a misfortune that she herself was not altogether clear as to what she did precisely mean. She did not want the bracelet; certainly not. Yet, while she did not wish to throw it at him, or lead him to suppose that she despised his gift, or was unconscious of his kindness in having made it, or liked him less because of his kindness, it was not her intention to allow him to suspect that she liked him at all, or appreciated his kindness to anything like the extent she actually did do, or indeed, leave him an excuse of any sort or kind on to which he might fasten to ask her to reconsider her refusal. How to combine these opposite desires and intentions within the four corners of one short note was a puzzle.

It was a nice bracelet— a beauty. No one could call it unbecoming on her wrist. She had had no idea that a single ornament could have made such a difference. She was convinced that it made her hand seem much smaller than it really was. She wondered if he had sent for it specially to New York, or if he had been carrying it about with him in his pocket. But that was not the point. The point was that, since she could not frame a note which, in all respects, met her views, she would herself see Mr. Huhn to-morrow and return him his gift with her own hands. Then the incident would be closed. Having arrived at which decision she slept like a top all night, with the bracelet under her pillow.

In the morning she dressed herself with unusual care— with so much care,

indeed, that Mrs. Palmer greeted her with a torrent of ejaculations.

"You look lovelier than ever, my dear. Just like What's-his-name's picture, only ever so much sweeter. Doesn't she look a darling, Dick?"

"Dick" was Mr. Palmer. As this was said not only in the presence of that gentleman, but in the hearing of several others, Miss Donne was so distressed that she found herself physically incapable of telling the speaker that, as she was perfectly aware, she intensely disliked personal remarks, which were always in the very worst possible taste.

Nothing was seen of Mr. Huhn. She went with the Palmers to the market; to the man who carved grotesque heads out of what he called vegetable ivory; to watch the people bathe, while listening to the band upon the terrace; then to lunch. All the time she had that bracelet on her person. After lunch she accompanied her friends on a queer sort of vehicle, which was not exactly a brake or quite anything else, on what its proud proprietor called a "fashionable excursion" to the forest of Arques. It was nearly five when they returned. The Palmers went upstairs. She sat down on one of the chairs which were on the pavement in front of the hotel. She had been there for some minutes in a sort of waking dream when someone occupied the chair beside her.

It was Mr. Huhn. His appearance was so unexpected that it found her speechless. The foolish tremors to which she seemed to have been so liable of late seemed to paralyze her. She gazed at the shabby theatre on the other side of the square, trying to think of what she ought to say— but failed. No greetings were exchanged.

Presently he said, in his ordinary tone of voice:—

"Come with me into the Casino."

That was his way; a fair example of his habit of taking things for granted. She felt that if, after a prolonged absence, she met him on the other side of the world, he would just ask if she liked sugar in her tea, and discuss the sugar question generally, and take it for granted that that was all the situation demanded. That was not her standpoint. She considered that when explanations were required they ought to be given, and was distinctly of opinion that an explanation was required here. She intended that the remark she made should be regarded as a suggestion to that effect.

"I didn't expect to see you at Dieppe."

He looked at her— just looked— and she was a conscience-stricken wretch. Had he accused her, at the top of his voice, of deliberate falsehood, he could not have shamed her more.

"I meant to come to Dieppe. I thought you knew it."

She had known it; all pretence to the contrary was brushed away like so much cobweb. And she knew that he knew she knew it. It was dreadful. What

could she say to this extraordinary man? She blundered from bad to worse. Fumbling with the buttons of her little jacket she took out from some inner receptacle a small flat leather case.

"I think this got into that box of chocolates by mistake."

He glanced at it out of the corner of his eye, then continued to draw figures on the pavement with the ferrule of his stick.

"No mistake. I put it there. I thought you'd understand."

Thought she would understand! What did he think she would understand? Did the man suppose that everyone took things for granted?

"I think it was a mistake."

"How? When I sent to New York for it specially for you?" So that question was solved. She was conscious of a small flutter of satisfaction. "Don't you think it's pretty?"

"It's beautiful." She gathered her courage.

"But you must take it back."

"Take it back! Take it back! I didn't think you were the kind of woman that would want to make a man unhappy."

Nothing was further from her desire.

"I am not in the habit of accepting presents from strangers."

"That's just it. It's because I knew you weren't that I gave it to you."

"But you're a stranger to me."

"I didn't look at it in just that way."

"I know nothing of you."

"I'm sorry. I thought you knew what kind of man I am, as I know what kind of woman you are— and am glad to know it. If it's my record you'd like to be acquainted with, I'm ready to set forth the life and adventures of Ezra G. Huhn at full length whenever you've an hour or two or a day or two to spare. Or I can refer you for them to my lawyer, or to my banker, or to my doctor, according to what part of me it is on which you'd like to have accurate information."

She could not hint that she would like to listen to a chapter or two of his adventures there and then, though some such idea was at the back of her mind. While she was groping for words he stood up, repeating his original suggestion.

"Come with me into the Casino."

She rose also. Not because she wished to; but because— such was the confusion of her mental processes— she found it easier to agree than to differ. They moved across the square. The flat leather case was in her hand.

"Have you found the locket?"

"Yes."

She blushed; but she was a continual blush.

"Good portrait of me, isn't it?"

"Excellent."

"I had it done for my mother. When she was dying I wanted it to be buried with her. But she wouldn't have it. She said I was to give it to— someone else one day. Then I didn't think there ever would be a someone else. But when I met you I sent it to New York and had it mounted in that bracelet— for you."

It was absurd what a little self-control she had. Instead of retorting with something smart, or pretty, or sentimental, she was tongue-tied. Her eyes filled with tears. But he did not seem to notice it. He went on.

"You'll have to give me one of yours."

"I— I haven't one."

"Then we'll have to set about getting one. I'll have to look round for someone who'll be likely to do you justice, though it isn't to be expected that we shall find anyone who'll be able to do quite that."

It was the nearest approach to a compliment he had paid her; probably the first pretty thing which had been said to her by any man. It set her trembling so that, for a moment, she swayed as if she would fall. They were passing through the gate into the Casino grounds. He looked at the case which she still had in her hand.

"Put that in your pocket."

"I haven't one."

She was the personification of all meekness.

"Then where did you have it?"

"Inside my jacket."

"Put it back there. I can't carry it. That's part of the burden you'll have to carry, henceforward, all alone."

She did not stop to think what he meant. She simply obeyed. When the jacket was buttoned the case showed through the cloth. Even in the midst of her tremors she was aware that his eyes kept travelling towards the tell-tale patch. For some odd reason she was glad they did.

They passed from the radiance of the autumn afternoon into the chamber of the "little horses." The change was almost dramatic in its completeness. From this place the sunshine had been for some time excluded. The blinds were drawn. It was garishly lighted. Although the room was large and lofty, owing to the absence of ventilation, the abundance of gas, the crowd of people, the atmosphere was horrible. There was a continual buzz; an unresting clatter. The noise of people in motion; the hum of their voices; the strident tones of the *tourneur*, as he made his various monotonous announcements; all these assisted in the formation of what, to an unaccustomed ear, was a strange cacophony. She shrank towards Mr. Huhn as if afraid.

"What are they doing?" she asked.

Instead of answering he led her forward to the dais on which the nine little horses were the observed of all observers, where the *tourneur* stood with his assistant with, in front and on either side of him, the tables about which the players were grouped. At the moment the leaden steeds were whirling round. She watched them, fascinated. People were speaking on their right.

"*C'est le huit qui gagne*."

"*Non; le huit est mort. C'est le six*."

Someone said behind her, in English:—

"Jack's all right; one wins. Confound the brute, he's gone right on!"

The horses ceased to move.

"*Le numéro cinq*!" shouted the *tourneur*, laying a strong nasal stress upon the numeral.

There were murmurs of disgust from the bettors on the columns. Miss Donne perceived that money was displayed upon baize-covered tables. The croupiers thrust out wooden rakes to draw it towards them. At the table on her right there seemed to be only a single winner. Several five-franc pieces were passed to a woman who was twiddling a number of them between her fingers.

"Are they gambling?" asked Miss Donne.

"Well, I shouldn't call it gambling. This is a little toy by means of which the proprietor makes a good and regular income out of public contributions. These are some of the contributors."

Miss Donne did not understand him— did not even try to. She was all eyes for what was taking place about her. Money was being staked afresh. The horses were whirling round again. This time No. 7 was the winning horse. There were acclamations. Several persons had staked on seven. It appeared that that particular number was "overdue." Someone rose from a chair beside her.

Mr. Huhn made a sudden suggestion.

"Sit down." She sat down. "Let's contribute a franc or two to the support of this deserving person's wife and family. Where's your purse?" She showed that her purse— a silver chain affair— was attached to her belt. "Find a franc." Whether or not she had a coin of that denomination did not appear. She produced a five-franc piece. "That's a large piece of money. What shall we put it on?"

Someone who was seated on the next chair said:—

"The run's on five."

"Then let's be on the run. That's it, in the centre there. That's the particular number which enables the owner of this little toy to keep a roof above his

head."

As she held the coin in front of her with apparently uncertain fingers, as if still doubtful what it was she had to do, her neighbour, taking it from her with a smile, laid it upon five.

"*Le jeu est fait*!" cried the *tourneur*. "*Rien ne va plus*!"

He started the horses whirling round.

Then with a shock, she seemed to wake from a dream. She sprang from her chair, staring at her five-franc piece with wide-open eyes. People smiled. The croupiers gazed at her indulgently. There was that about her which made it obvious that to such a scene she was a stranger. They supposed that, like some eager child, she could not conceal her anxiety for the safety of her stake. Although surprised at her display of a degree of interest which was altogether beyond what the occasion seemed to warrant, Mr. Huhn thought with them.

"Don't be alarmed," he murmured in her ear. "You may take it for granted that it's gone, and may console yourself with the reflection that it goes to minister to the wants of a mother and her children. That's the philosophical point of view. And it may be the right one."

Her hand twitched, as if she found the temptation to snatch back her stake before it was gone for ever almost more than she could bear. Mr. Huhn caught her arm.

"Hush! That sort of thing is not allowed."

The horses stopped. The *tourneur* proclaimed the winner.

"*Le numéro cinq*!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed the neighbour who had placed the stake for her. "You have won. I told you the run was on five."

"Shorn the shearers," commented Mr. Huhn. "You see, that's the way to make a fortune, only I shouldn't advise you to go further than the initiatory lesson."

The croupier pushed over her own coin and seven others. Her neighbour held them up to her.

"Your winnings."

She drew back.

"It's not mine."

Her neighbour laughed outright. People were visibly smiling. Mr. Huhn took the pile of coins from the stranger's hand.

"They are yours; take them." Him she obeyed with the docility of a child. "Come let us go."

He led the way to the door which opened on to the terrace. She followed, meekly. It seemed that the eight coins were more than she could conveniently carry in one hand; for, as she went, she dropped one on to the floor. An

attendant, picking it up, returned it to her with a grin. Indeed, the whole room was on the titter, the incident was so very amusing. They asked themselves if she was mad, or just a simpleton. And, in a fashion, considering that her first youth was passed, she really was so pretty! Mr. Huhn was more moved than, in that place, he would have cared to admit. Something in her attitude in the way she looked at him when he bade her take the money, had filled him with a sense of shame.

Between their going in and coming out the sky had changed. The shadows were lowering. The autumnal day was drawing to a close. September had brought more than a suggestion of winter's breath. A grey chill followed the departing sun. They went up, then down, the terrace, without exchanging a word; then, moving aside, he offered her one of the wicker-seated chairs which stood against the wall. She sat on it. He sat opposite, leaning on the handle of his stick. The thin mist which was stealing across the leaden sea did not invite lounging out of doors. They had the terrace to themselves. She let her five-franc pieces drop with a clinking sound on to her lap. He, conscious of something on her face which he was unwilling to confront, looked steadily seaward. Presently she gave utterance to her pent-up feelings.

"I am a gambler."

Had she accused herself of the unforgivable sin she could not have seemed more serious. Somewhere within him was a laughing sprite. In view of her genuine distress he did his best to keep it in subjection.

"You exaggerate. Staking a five-franc piece— for the good of the house— on the *petits chevaux* does not make you that, any more than taking a glass of wine makes you a drunkard."

"Why did you make me, why did you let me, do it?"

"I didn't know you felt that way."

"And yet you said you knew me!"

He winched. He had told a falsehood. He did know her— there was the sting. In mischievous mood he had induced her to do the thing which he suspected that she held to be wrong. He had not supposed that she would take it so seriously, especially if she won, being aware that there are persons who condemn gambling when they or those belonging to them lose, but who lean more towards the side of charity when they win. He did not know what to say to her, so he said nothing.

"My father once lost over four hundred pounds on a horse-race. I don't quite know how it was, I was only a child. He was in business at the time. I believe it ruined him, and it nearly broke my mother's heart. I promised her that I would never gamble— and now I have."

He felt that this was one of those women whose moral eye is single— with

whom it is better to be frank.

"I confess I felt that you might have scruples on the point; but I thought you would look upon a single stake of a single five-franc piece as a jest. Many American women— and many Englishwomen— who would be horrified if you called them gamblers, go into the rooms at Monte Carlo and lose or win a louis or two just for the sake of the joke."

"For the sake of the joke! Gamble for the sake of the joke! Are you a Jesuit?" The question so took him by surprise that he turned and stared at her. "I have always understood that that is how Jesuits reason— that they try to make out that black is white. I hope— I hope you don't do that?"

He smiled grimly, his thoughts recurring to some of the "deals" in which his success had made him the well-to-do man he was.

"Sometimes the two colours merge so imperceptibly into one another that it's hard to tell just where the conjunction begins. You want keen sight to do it. But here you're right and I'm wrong; there's no two words about it. It was I who made you stake that five-franc piece; and I'd no right to make you stake buttons if it was against your principles. Your standard's like my mother's. I hope that mine will grow nearer to it. I ask you to forgive me for leading you astray."

"I ought not to have been so weak."

"You had to— when I was there to make you."

She was still; though it is doubtful if she grasped the full meaning his words conveyed. If he had been watching her he would have seen that by degrees something like the suggestion of a smile seem to wrinkle the corners of her lips. When she spoke again it was in half a whisper.

"I'm sorry, I should seem to you to be so silly."

"You don't. You mustn't say it. You seem to me to be the wisest woman I ever met."

"That must be because you've known so few— or else you're laughing. No one who has ever known me has thought me wise. If I were wise I should know what to do with this."

"She motioned towards the money on her lap.

"Throw it into the sea."

"But it isn't mine."

"It's yours as much as anyone else's. If you come to first causes you'll find it hard to name the rightful owner— in God's sight— for any one thing. There's been too much swapping of horses. You'll find plenty who are in need."

"It would carry a curse with it. Money won in gambling!"

He looked at his watch.

"It's time that you and I thought about dinner. We'll adjourn the discussion

as to what is to be done with the fruit of our iniquity. I say 'our,' because that I'm the principal criminal is as plain as paint. Sleep on it; perhaps you'll see clearer in the morning. Put it in your pocket."

"Haven't I told you already that I haven't a pocket? And if I had I shouldn't put this money in it. I should feel that that was half-way towards keeping it."

"Then let me be the bearer of the burden."

"No; I don't wish the taint to be conveyed to you." He laughed outright. "There now you are laughing!"

"I was laughing because— " he was on the verge of saying "because I love you;" but something induced him to substitute— "because I love to hear you talking."

She glanced at him with smiling eyes. His gaze was turned towards what was now the shrouded sea. Neither spoke during the three minutes of brisk walking which was required to reach the Hotel de Paris, she carrying the money, four five-franc pieces, gripped tightly in either hand.

In his phrase, she slept on it, though the fashion of the sleeping was a little strange. The next morning she sallied forth to put into execution the resolve at which she had arrived. I was early, though not so early as she would have wished, because, concluding that all Dieppe did not rise with the lark, she judged it as well to take her coffee and roll before she took the air. It promised to be a glorious day. The atmosphere was filled with a golden haze, through which the sun was gleaming. As she went through the gate of the Port d'Ouest she came upon a man who was selling little metal effigies of the flags of various nations. From him she made a purchase— the Stars and Stripes. This she pinned inside her blouse, on the left, smiling to herself as she did so. Then she marched straight off into the Casino.

The *salle de jeu* had but a single occupant, a *tourneur* who was engaged in dusting the little horses. To enable him to perform the necessary offices he removed the steeds from their places one after the other. As it chanced he was the identical individual who had been responsible for the course which had crowned Miss Doone with victory. With that keen vision which is characteristic of his class the man recognised her on the instant. Bowing and smiling he held out to her the horse which he was holding.

"*Vlà madame, le numéro cinq! C'est lui qui a porté le bonheur à madame*."

It was, indeed, the horse which represented the number on which she had staked her five-franc piece. By an odd accident she had arrived just as its toilet was being performed. She observed what an excellent model it was with somewhat doubtful eyes, as if fearful of its being warranted neither steady nor free from vice.

"I have brought back the seven five-franc pieces which I— took away with

me."

She held out the coins. As if at a loss he looked from them to her.

"But, madame, I do not understand."

"I can have nothing to do with money which is the fruit of gambling."

"But madame played."

"It was a misunderstanding. A mistake. It was not my intention. It is on that account I have come to return this money."

"Return?— to whom?— the administration? The administration will not accept it. It is impossible. What it has lost it has lost; there is an end."

"But I insist on returning it; and if I insist it must be accepted; especially when I tell you it is all a mistake."

The *tourneur* shrugged his shoulders.

"If madame does not want the money, and will give it to me, I will see what I can do with it." She handed him the coins; he transferred them to the board at his back. Then he held out to her the horse which he had been dusting. "See, madame, is it not a perfect model? And feel how heavy— over three kilos, more than six English pounds. When you consider that there are nine horses, all exactly the same weight, you will perceive that it is not easy work to be a *tourneur*. That toy horse is worth much more to the administration than if it were a real horse; it is from the Number Five that all this comes."

He waved his hand as if to denote the entire building.

"I thought that public gambling was prohibited in France and in all Christian countries, and that it was only permitted in such haunts of wickedness as Monte Carlo."

"Gambling? Ah, the little horses is not gambling! It is an amusement."

A voice addressed her from the other side of the table. It was Mr. Huhn.

"Didn't I tell you it wasn't gambling? It's as this gentleman says— an amusement; especially for the administration."

"Ah, yes— in particular for the administration."

The *tourneur* laughed. Miss Donne and Mr. Huhn went out together by the same door through which they had gone the night before. They sat on the low wall. He had some towels on his arm; he had been bathing. Already the sea was glowing with the radiance of the sun.

"So you've relieved yourself of your ill-gotten gains?"

"I have returned them to the administration."

"To the– did that gentleman say he would hand those five-franc pieces to the administration?"

"He said that he would see what he could do with them."

"Just so. There's no doubt that that is what he will do. So you did sleep upon that burning question?"

"I did."

"Then you got the better of me; because I didn't sleep at all."

"I am sorry."

"You ought to be, since the fault was yours."

"Mine! My fault that you didn't sleep!"

"Do you see what I've got here?"

He made an upward movement with his hand. For the first time she noticed that in his buttonhole he had a tiny copy of the Union Jack.

"Did you buy that of the man outside the town gate?"

He nodded.

"Why, it was of that very same man that I bought this."

From the inside of her blouse she produced that minute representation of the colours he knew so well. They looked at each other, and….

When some time after they were lunching, he forming a fourth at the small table which belonged of right to Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, he said to Annie Moriarty, that was:—

"Since you're an old friend of Miss Donne you may be interested in knowing that there's likely soon to be an International Alliance."

He motioned to the lady at his side and then to himself, as if to call attention to the fact that in his buttonhole was the Union Jack, while on Miss Donne's blouse was pinned the American flag. But keen-witted Mrs. Palmer had realized what exactly was the condition of affairs some time before.

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6: The Only Girl At Overlook

Franklin E. Fyles

fl 1891-1905

In: *Eleven Possible Cases*, Cassell, 1891

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

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

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

Polite indifference, and nothing else, was in her clear, gentle voice. There

was neither boldness nor shyness in the eyes that opened wide and blue, as she lifted them from the paper to the man whom she questioned. There was no more of a smile than of a pout on the mouth that worded the inquiry. She did not indicate the faintest interest as to whether he went or stayed, although she did suggest that he might as well go.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So it seemed that he was especially regardful of how he figured in the

presence of Mary Warriner.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Zat ees what-a I theenk," remarked Ravelli, with insolent elation; "you ar-r-e one-a fool, as ze president he say."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But Ravelli had disappeared.

Then, being alone, she laid a hand of her own coquettishly alongside its wooden counterpart, and critically admired the likeness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Stop, Mr. Ravelli— stop."

The command was positive, but it was not obeyed.

"I love-a you."

He caught her by one wrist as he began. She was utterly unresistant. If she had struggled or cried out, he would have gone on with his voluble, excited

declaration; but her placidity was incomprehensible to him.

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

"Perfectly, Mees Warriner."

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

He did it.

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

That he did not do.

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

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

"Well-a, besides—"

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

"Yes, eef—"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You must."

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

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

"What?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mary screamed again, but this time it was a low, musical little outcry of modesty. She had not observed Gerald's approach. She clutched the blanket closely around her white throat, which had been almost as much exposed as by an ordinary cut of frock, and drew under cover the gleaming wrists which had

all day been bared to a greater extent by sleeves of handy working length. Then she reached out one taper arm, and swung the sash around on its hinges, so its inner covering of muslin made a screen between her and the visitor. He did not apologize for his intrusion, and she pouted a little on her safe side of the sash, at his failure to do so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It would be my delight."

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

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

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

"You misconstrue me altogether. I mean—"

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

"If there were a thousand girls at Overlook—"

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

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

He walked slowly away, accusing himself of folly and ungentlemanliness,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I saw you-a kiss her hands."

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

Now, what are you going to do to me?"

"I am-a going to keel you!"

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

"You meant to kill me," Gerald exclaimed.

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

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

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

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

"You cowardly murderer!"

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

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

iii

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

"Everything all right?" Jim asked.

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

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

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

A glance gave the answer. It was the legs and half the body of a man, whose head and shoulders were thoroughly charred, as Jim was horrified to

see when he pulled the remains out upon the ground.

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

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

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

"Eph might have done it," he said.

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

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

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

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

Before the order could be specifically given a horse and a rider arose over the edge of the level ground and came into the midst of the assemblage. The man in the saddle had a professional aspect, imparted chiefly by his smoothly shaven face. In this era of mustaches a hairless visage is apt to be assigned to a clergyman, who shaves thus from a motive of propriety; an actor, who does it from necessity; or somebody who aims at facial distinction without the features suitable to that purpose. A countenance of which it can only be said

that it has one nose, one mouth, and two eyes, all placed in expressive nonentity, and which is dominated utterly by hair on and around it, may be less lost to individuality if entirely shaven. Of such seemed the visage of the dark man, who calmly rode into the excitement at Overlook.

"Which way have you come?" Brainerd asked.

"From Dimmersville," was the reply.

"Did you see anybody on the way?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"So robbery was not the object," said O'Reagan to Brainerd. "The motive is the first thing to look for in a case of murder."

Next, he found blood on the waistcoat, a great deal of it, but dried by the

fire that had burned the shoulders and head; and in the baked cloth were three cuts, under which he exposed three stab wounds. Strokes of a knife had, it seemed, killed the victim before he was thrust partially into the furnace.

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

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

"I did," Gerald replied.

"Where and when?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Did you talk with Ravelli?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"Not about Eph at all."

"About what, then?"

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

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

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

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

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

"What did happen between you and Ravelli?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The eyes of the girl rested on him inquiringly, and he palpably flinched, but as obviously nerved himself to proceed, and when he spoke again the Irish accent became more pronounced to hear, although not sufficiently to be shown in the printed words: "I will dictate it slowly, so that you can transmit it

as I speak. Are you ready?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Go on," said O'Reagan.

"I will not," was the determined response.

"Why not?"

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

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

"I did not kill the Italian," he said. "He attacked me with my knife which he had stolen. In the struggle his hand was cut, but I took the weapon away from him. He quitted me alive and unhurt. I never saw him again. You don't believe it? Mary does, and that is more than all else."

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

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

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

"Yes."

"And you love Heath?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tonio Ravelli had unwittingly resumed his Italian style of English.

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

Who, then, was the dead man?

Why, he was Eph.

Nothing but the fear of being himself condemned as a murderer of the maniac, as a part of the scheme of revenge against Gerald, induced Ravelli to explain. He had found Eph lying dead in the path, after both had parted from Gerald. The plot to exchange clothes with the corpse, drag it to the furnace, burn away all possibility of recognition, and thus make it seem to be his murdered self, was carried out with all the hot haste of a jealous vengeance.

Ravelli was not an Italian, although very familiar with the language of Italy, and able, by a natural gift of mimicry, to hide himself from pursuit for a previous crime. Overlook had been a refuge until his passion for Mary Warriner led him to abandon his disguise. Thereupon, he had turned himself into Terence O'Reagan, a detective, whose malicious work wrought happiness for Gerald Heath and Mary Warriner.

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7: The Mystic Krewe

Maurice Thompson

1844-1901

Romance: The Tales of the New York Story Club, June 1891

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

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

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

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

illegitimate, besides the streams of wealth produced by cotton, sugar, and rice industries. Gambling was indeed a fine art, duelling appeared more a pastime than anything else, and what went on in the gilded halls and melody-filled salles may be imagined, I suppose, though, I do not care to cast a glance that way.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coleman actually grew red in the face and exclaimed:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coleman felt the delicious shock of her magnetic beauty thrill through him. A sort of shimmering outline of her body wavered or appeared to waver in the door after she had gone, so dazzling had been the effect of her fresh, pure,

flower-like, yet intensely human, beauty. He heard her feet tap swiftly and lightly along the hall. Involuntarily and with unpardonable curiosity he sprang up and, hurrying to the door, looked out, but she was not in sight. For the first time in his life, he felt his heart beating unnaturally.

ii

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am Hepworth Coleman of New York?"

"Ah!"

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

"Indeed! I feel honored."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

being almost within reach on either hand.

"Stand here for one moment, please," said the Judge, touching Coleman's arm, "until I call a servant."

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

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

iii

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She clung close to him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mlle. Olympe knew of her father's frequent duels, and if he had been brought in dead or badly off on account of pistol ball or rapier thrust she would not have been surprised beyond measure, but this mysterious performance of the masked men and the unaccountable condition of the Judge were taken hold upon by her imagination and raised to the highest power of romantic meaning.

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

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

iv

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

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

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

looking trophies, skulls, pictures of dead men, ghastly and livid, pistols, swords, and strange banners. The floor was carpeted with heavy Persian tapestry, thickly padded underneath.

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

"Beware! you are in imminent danger."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One after another responded, only to fare badly. As yet, however, all had

escaped without deadly hurt, when the leader himself made ready to fight. Those who had come to grief were quietly cared for by others, and all seemed to treat the proceedings as by no means startling or even unusual.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the real world into the world of romance, and as he fought, the charm of heroism fell upon him, and, like the knights of old, he felt the strength of a glorious desperation. All round him the vague spirit of dreamland seemed to hover, though the hideous pictures of skeletons and cadavers gleamed real enough in the glare of the chandeliers. What inspired him most, however, was the knowledge that he was trying his force with that of the greatest duellist in the world, and one who had always killed his man.

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

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

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

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

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

v

JUDGE FAVART DE CAUMARTIN and Hepworth Coleman were, by order of the Judge himself, taken to the Judge's mansion, where their wounds were

examined by physicians and surgeons quickly summoned.

Mlle. Olympe de Caumartin found herself nursing two almost dying patients at the same time. Although she suspected that this was the result of a duel between her father and the young stranger, she was not told the secret of the affair until long afterward.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The truth was that Coleman knew very little. He tried to discover the blind alley into which the Judge had led him on that eventful evening, but there was no such alley to discover. The whereabouts of the mysterious hall cannot be pointed out to-day, although from that memorable Tuesday in the spring of

1820 up to the Mardi-Gras of 1891, every anniversary of the Mystic Krewe has been duly celebrated by a fantastic band that at a certain hour of the night parades the streets of New Orleans. I do not refer to the regular carnival societies. These are but playful imitations of mystery. The genuine Krewe, as weirdly, strange and mysterious as ever, may be seen only on Royal Street, a small band headed by a tall, slender, dark man, who wears an invisible mask and a quaint black velvet cap. Where they come from nobody has ever been able to discover. Who they are is not known even to the great Rex, the king of the Carnival.

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

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

8: He Swallows Gold

H. Bedford-Jones

1887-1949

Argosy and Railroad Man's Magazine, 3 May 1919

H. Bedford-Jones

"WE, ALL OF US," said Huber Davis reflectively, "like to show off how we do things; we like to tell people about our methods; we like to exposit our particular way of managing affairs. Each of us thinks he is a little tin god in that respect, Carefrew. That's the way of a white man. A Chinaman, however, is just the opposite. He does not want to show his methods. He does things in a damned mysterious way— and he never tells."

Carefrew sucked at his cigarette and eyed his brother-in-law with a sneer beneath his eyelids. Only a few hours previously Carefrew had landed from the coasting steamer, very glad indeed to get out of Batavia and parts adjacent with a whole skin. His wife was coming later, after she had straightened up his affairs, and he would then hop aboard the Royal Mail liner with her, and voyage on to Colombo and Europe. Ruth Carefrew, however, knew little about the deal which had sent Carefrew himself up to Sabang in a hurry.

"You seem to know a lot about Chinese ways," said Carefrew.

"I ought to," admitted Huber Davis placidly. "I've been dealing with 'em here for the past ten years, and I've built up a whale of a business with their help. You, on the other hand, got into a whale of a mess through swindling the innocent Oriental—"

"Oh, cut out the abuse!" broke in Carefrew nastily. "What are you driving at with your drivel about Chinese methods? I suppose you're insinuating that they'll try to get after me away up here at Sabang?"

"More than likely," assented Huber Davis. "They have fairly close

connections, what with business tongs and the Heaven-and-Earth Society, which has a lodge here. They'll know that the clever chap who carried out that swindling game in Singapore, and then managed to put it over the second time in Batavia, is named Reginald Carefrew. They'll have relatives in both places; probably you ruined a good many of their relatives—"

"Look here!" snapped Carefrew nastily. "Let me impress on you that there was no swindle! The Chinese love to gamble, and I gave 'em a run for their money— that's all."

Huber Davis eyed his brother-in-law with a trace of cynicism in his wide-eyed, poised features.

"Never mind lying about it, Reggy," he said coolly. "You'll be here until the next boat to Colombo, which is five days. In those five days you take my advice and stick close to this house; you'll be absolutely safe here. I'm not helping and protecting you, mind, because I love you— it's for Ruth's sake. Somehow, Ruth would be sorry if you got bumped off. No one else would be sorry that I know of, but Ruth's my sister, and I'd like to oblige her. I don't order you to stay here, mind that! It's merely advice."

Under this lash of cool, unimpassioned truths Carefrew reddened and then paled again. He did not display any resentment, however. He was a little afraid of Huber Davis.

"You're away off color," he said carelessly. "Think I'm going to be a prisoner here? No. Besides, I honestly think there's no danger, in spite of your apprehension. The yellow boys have nothing to be revengeful over, you see."

"Oh," said Huber Davis mildly. "I understood that several had committed suicide back in Batavia. That makes you their murderer, according to the old beliefs."

Carefrew laughed; his laugh was not very good to hear, either.

"Bosh!" he exclaimed. "Those old superstitions are discarded in these days of New China. You'll be saying next that the ghosts of the dead will haunt me!"

"They ought to," retorted Huber Davis. "So you think the old beliefs are gone, do you? Well, we're not in China, my excellent Reggy. We're in Sabang, and the Straits Chinese have a way of clinging to the beliefs of their ancestors. You stick close to the house."

"You go to the devil!" snapped Carefrew.

Huber Davis merely shrugged his shoulders, as though he had received all the consideration which he had expected.

"Li Mow Gee," he observed, "is the biggest trader in these parts, and I know he has a raft of relatives back your way. I'd avoid his store."

Carefrew, uttering an impatient oath, got up and left the veranda.

Huber Davis glanced after his brother-in-law, a sleepy, cynical laziness in his

gaze. One gathered that he would not care a whit how soon Carefrew died, except possibly that his sister Ruth still loved Carefrew— a little. And except, of course, that the man was his own brother-in-law, and at the ends of the earth a white man upholds certain ideas about caste and the duty of white to white, and so forth.

ii

SINGAPORE is called the gateway of the Far East, but the real portal is the free-trade island harbor of Sabang, at the northern end of Sumatra.

At Sabang even the mail-steamers stop, coming and going. From England and India, coal is dumped at Sabang; the wharves and floating docks are many and busy; the cables extend from Sabang to all parts of the globe.

From the harbor heads runs brilliant blue water up to the brilliant green shores, and under the hill is snugly nestled a city whose Chinese streets convey a dull-red impression. Here, as elsewhere, the Chinese are the ganglia of trade and activity. The Dutch government likes them and profits by them, and they profit likewise.

One of the narrow Chinese streets turns sharply, almost at right angles, and is called the Street of the Heavenly Elbow for this reason. At the outside corner of the elbow is a door and shop sign, opening upon a narrow room little wider than the door; but behind this is another room, widening as one goes farther from the elbow, and behind this yet another room which broadens into a suite of apartments.

Such was the shop of Li Mow Gee. As is well known, Li is one of the Four Hundred surnames, and betokens that its owner is at least of good family, also widely connected. Li Mow Gee was both; to boot, he was very rich, considerably dissipated, and his private affairs were exactly like his shop— they began at a small and obscure point, which was himself, and they widened and widened beyond the ken of passersby until they comprised an extent which would have been incredible to any chance beholder. But Li Mow Gee saw to it that there were no chance beholders of his private affairs or shop either.

Li Mow Gee was not the type of inscrutable, omnipotent gambler who somehow manages to control fate and carry out the purposes of destiny, such as appear to be many of his race. He prided himself upon being a "son of T'ang"— that is, a man of the old southern empire whose ancestry was quite clear and unblemished through about nine centuries.

He was a slant-eyed, yellow-skinned, wrinkled little man of fifty. He had a bad digestion and an irritable temper, he was much given to rice-wine and

wives, and he possessed an uncanny knowledge of the code of Confucius, by which he ruled his life— sometimes.

Upon the day after Reginald Carefrew arrived in Sabang the estimable Li Mow Gee sat in his private back room, which was hung with Chien Lung paintings, whose subjects would have scandalized Sodom and Gomorrah. Li Mow Gee sucked a three-foot pipe of bamboo and steel, and watched a kettle of water bubbling over a charcoal brazier. At the proper moment he took a pewter insert from its stand, slipped it into its niche inside the kettle, and watched the water boil until the pewter vessel was well heated. Then he poured hot rice-wine into the thimble-cup of porcelain at his elbow, sipped it with satisfaction, and clapped his hands four times.

One of the numerous doors of the room opened to admit a spectacled old man who was a junior partner of Li Mow Gee in business, but who was also Venerable Master of the local lodge of the Heaven-and-Earth Society. As etiquette demanded, the junior partner removed his spectacles and stood blinking, being blind as a bat without them.

"As you are aware, worshipful Chang," said Li Mow Gee after some preliminary discourse, "my father's younger brother has become an ancient."

Mr. Chang bowed respectfully. A son of T'ang never says of his family that they are dead. But Mr. Chang had heard that Li Mow Gee's father's younger brother had committed suicide, with the intent of sending his avenging ghost after one Reginald Carefrew.

"You are also aware," pursued Li Mow Gee, refilling the steel bowl of his pipe, "that the brother-in-law of my friend Huber Davis has arrived in Sabang for a short visit. As a man of learning, you will comprehend that I have certain duties to perform."

Mr. Chang blinked, and promptly took his cue.

"You doubtless recall certain canons of the law which bear upon the situation," he squeaked blandly. "It would give me infinite pleasure to hear them from your lips."

Li Mow Gee had been waiting for this. He exhaled a thin cloud of smoke, and quoted from his exact memory of the writings of the Confucian canon:

"With the slayer of his father, a man may not live under the same sky; against the slayer of his brother, a man must never have to go home to seek a weapon; with the slayer of his friend, a man may not live in the same state."

Li Mow Gee smoked for a moment in silence, then continued:

"Thus reads the *Book of Rites*, most venerable Chang. And yet our friend Huber Davis is our friend."

"If the tiger and the ox are in company," quoth Mr. Chang squeakily, "let the ox die with the tiger."

"Not at all to the point," said Li Mow Gee in irritated accents. "Do not be a venerable fool, my father! I desire that a messenger be sent to my bazaar."

"Speak the message, beloved of heaven," responded the elder.

"In our safe," said Li Mow Gee slowly, "is a three-armed candlestick of white jade, bound in brass and having upon its three arms the characters signifying chalk, charcoal, and water. It is my wish that this precious object be taken to my bazaar and placed there near the door, with a sign upon it putting the price at nine florins; also, that our clerks be severely instructed to sell this object to no one except Mr. Carefrew."

Mr. Chang wet his lips.

"But, dear brother," he expostulated, "this is one of the precious objects of the Heaven-and-Earth Society."

"That is why I desire your permission to make use of it," said Li Mow Gee. "Am I to be trusted or not? Is my sacred honor of no worth in your eyes?"

"But, to be sold to a foreign devil!" the junior partner exclaimed.

"That is my wish."

Mr. Chang threw up his hands, not without a smothered oath.

"Very well!" he squeaked angrily. "But when this swindler, this murderer of honest folk, sees it for sale in your bazaar at so ridiculous a price, he will buy it and take it away, and laugh at Li Mow Gee for a fool!"

"If he did not," said Li Mow Gee, pouring himself another thimble-cup of wine, "I should be a most wretched and unhappy man!"

iii

A CHINESE candlestick is meant to hold, upon a long, upright prong, a candle painted with very soft red wax, so soft that the finger cannot touch the paint without blurring and marring it. Otherwise, it is like Occidental candlesticks in general respects.

Reginald Carefrew, who had plenty of money in his pocket, but who had left Singapore in something of a real hurry, walked into the Benevolent Brethren Bazaar in search of silks and pongees to take home to Europe. The bazaar, which bore no other name, confined itself almost exclusively to such goods. In the front of the shop, which was upon one of the half-Dutch streets overlooking the harbor, were strewn about a few objects of brass, bronze, and the cheap champlevé cloisonné which are made for tourists.

Almost as he entered the place, however, the vigilant eye of Carefrew discovered a very different object, placed in a niche which concealed it from view of the street. It was no less than a candlestick of three arms, a most unusual thing; also, it was made chiefly from jade, highly carven, while the

upright prongs and the trimmings were of brass. Altogether, a most extraordinary and wonderful candlestick— priced at nine florins.

Carefrew, naturally, thought that his eyes lied to him about the price. With excitement twitching at his nerves, he walked back and bought several bolts of silk, ordering them sent to him at the residence of Huber Davis.

Then, casually, he inquired about the candlestick of the smiling clerk.

It was, he learned, a worthless object, left here for sale long years ago by some now forgotten Hindu native, or maybe Arab; one could not be certain where years had elapsed and the insignificance of the object was great, but of course the books would show, should it be desired that the affair be looked into.

Naturally, Carefrew did not desire the affair looked into, because some one was then sure to discover that the candlestick was real jade. There was no doubt about that fact, and he was too shrewd to be deceived. A passing wonder did enter his mind as to how yellow men, especially men of T'ang from the middle provinces, could have supposed the candlestick to be worthless; but, after all, mistakes happen to all men— and other men profit by them. The candlestick was not a wonder of the world, but was worth a few hundred dollars at least.

So Carefrew laid down his nine florins, and carried his purchase away with him, wrapped in paper.

Carefrew found the bungalow deserted except for the native boys; the siesta hour was over, and Huber Davis had departed to his office. After a critical inspection of his purchase, resulting in a complete vindication of his former judgment, Carefrew set the triple candlestick on the dining-table and swung off to Chinatown again.

It was the most natural desire in the world to want to complete that princely candlestick with appropriate candles; particularly as Carefrew was now on his way to Europe and would have little further chance to get hold of the real articles.

Being down-town, Carefrew dropped into the office of Huber Davis, and found a letter which had come in that morning by the coast steamer from Batavia. The letter was from Ruth, confirming her passage on the next fast Royal Mail boat. Upon the fourth day from this she would be at Sabang, having taken passage as far as Colombo for herself and Carefrew, whose loose business ends she was arranging.

"I suppose," inquired Huber Davis in his cool, semi-interested fashion, "you did not take her into your confidence regarding your late financial ventures?"

"Why in hell would I want to bother her about finances?" retorted Carefrew, with his bold-eyed look. "She doesn't understand such things."

"Damned good thing she doesn't, perhaps," reflected the other. "Well, see you later! By the way, here's the receipt for that thirty thousand you laid in my safe."

"I don't want receipts from you." protested Carefrew virtuously.

"Maybe not, but I want to give 'em to you," and Huber Davis smiled.

"Damned rotter!" reflected Carefrew as he passed on his way.

He was not acquainted in or with Sabang. It was not hard to see what he desired, however, and presently he succeeded beyond his expectations. A dirty window filled with dried oysters and strings of fish and other things, after the Chinese fashion, carried also a display of temple candles. They had only appeared in the window that morning, but Carefrew did not know it, and would not have cared had he known it.

Carefrew stopped and inspected the candles, which were exactly what he wanted. There was a half-inch wick of twisted cotton, around which was built the candle, two inches thick. The outside was gaudy red and blue with sticky greasepaint, and at the lower end was a protruding reed four inches long.

By this reed one might handle the affair without marring the paint, and into this reed fitted the upright prong of a candlestick. The whole candle was bound inside a big joint of bamboo, which held it without harm.

Noting that there was one candle on display, and that there seemed to be but two more with it, Carefrew entered the shop, found the proprietor, and priced the candles. The proprietor had brought them from Singapore ten years previously and did not want to sell them. However, Carefrew offered a ten-florin note, and carried them home.

He was, for the moment, a child with a new toy, completely absorbed in it, and utterly heedless of all the rest of the world. Another man might have had weights upon his conscience, but Reginald Carefrew was not bothered by any such.

He laid the three bamboo cylinders upon the dining-table, after it had been laid for dinner, and opened them, cutting the shrunken withes that held them securely. The glaring red candles lay before him, and for a moment he pulled at his cigarette and studied them. Knowing what sort of candles they were, he tentatively touched them with his forefinger. The touch left a red blotch at the end of his finger, so soft was the greasepaint.

One by one he set them carefully upon the three prongs of his jade candlestick. One could not blame his ardent admiration. Even to an eye which knew nothing of Chinese art, the picture was exquisite; to one who could appreciate fully, it was marvelous. Candles and candlestick blended into a perfect thing, a creation.

"And to think that it cost me," said Carefrew to his brother-in-law, when

Huber Davis appeared, "exactly nineteen florins— ten of which were for the candles!"

Huber Davis gazed at the outfit appraisingly, a slight frown creasing his brow.

"If I were you," he said after a moment, "I'd get rid of it, Reggy. You certainly picked up something there— but it doesn't look right to me. You don't catch John Chinaman handing out stuff like that at a bargain price, not these days!"

"Bosh!" ejaculated Carefrew. "A pickup, that's all—one of the things that comes the way of any man who keeps his eyes open."

Huber Davis shrugged his shoulders.

"Got the red stuff on your hands, eh?"

Carefrew smiled vaguely— his smile was always vague and disagreeable— and glanced at his hands. He rubbed them, and the red spots became a fine pink rouge.

"I'll light 'em up," he said, "and then wash for dinner, eh?"

Huber Davis said nothing, but watched with cold-growing eyes as Carefrew lighted the three wicks. He was somewhat long in doing this, for they were slow to catch. When they did flare, it was with a yellow, smoky light that sent a black trail to the ceiling. Carefrew turned to leave the room, but the voice of his brother-in-law brought him about quickly.

"Wait! I had a letter to-day from my agent in Batavia, Reggy. He said that Ruth had been in the office— he was helping her straighten up some of your affairs."

A subtle alarm crept into the narrow eyes of Carefrew as he met the cold, passionless gaze of Huber Davis.

"Well?" he demanded suddenly. "What is the idea?"

"You didn't say anything was wrong with Ruth," said Huber Davis calmly. "But my agent mentioned that her right arm looked badly bruised—her sleeve fell away, I imagine— and she said it had been a slight accident. What was it?"

Carefrew's brows lifted. "Damned if I know! Must have hurt herself after I left, eh? Too bad, now—"

He turned and left the room, whistling. Huber Davis gazed after him; one would have said that the man's cold eyes suddenly glowed and smoldered, as a shaft of sunlight suddenly strikes fire into cold amethyst.

"Ah!" he muttered. "You damned blackguard—it goes with the rest, it does! You've laid hands on her, and yet she sticks by you; some women are like that. You've laid hands on her, all right. If I could prove it, by the Lord I'd let out your rotten soul! But she'll never tell."

Presently Carefrew's gay whistle sounded, and he sauntered back into the

dining-room.

"That's queer!" he observed lightly. "The red ink wouldn't come off. I'll get some of your cocoa butter after dinner and try it on. Hello! Real steamed rice, eh? Say, that's a treat! I despise this Dutch stuff."

iv

HUBER DAVIS, who had an excellent general agency, always dealt with Li Mow Gee in silks and fabrics— that is, he dealt with Li Mow Gee direct, which meant that he was one of a circle of half a dozen men who did this. Not more than half a dozen knew that Li Mow Gee had any particular interest in the silk trade.

Two days after Carefrew had brought home the candlestick and appurtenances thereof, Huber Davis sought the Street of the Heavenly Elbow, and entered the dingy cubby-hole which opened upon the widening shop of Li Mow Gee. That morning Carefrew had carefully tied up his temple candles again and was preparing to pack his purchases of silk.

After a very short wait Huber Davis was ushered through the fan-shaped apartments to the hub and kernel of Li Mow Gee's enterprises, where the owner sat before his charcoal brazier, heated his rice-wine, and gazed upon his nudes— to call them by a polite name— with never-flagging appreciation.

Li Mow Gee greeted him cordially and ordered tea brought in. Huber Davis said nothing of business until the tea had been poured, and then he did not make the usual foreigner's mistake of drinking his tea. He knew better, for Li Mow Gee followed the tea ceremony implicitly.

When he had concluded his business in silk Huber Davis took from his pocket a sheet of note-paper upon which were inscribed three ideographs.

"I wish you would do me a favor, Mr. Li," he said. "My brother-in-law is visiting me, and the other day he picked up a candlestick bearing these characters. For the sake of satisfying my own curiosity, I copied the characters and put 'em up to my clerk, but he said they were very old writing, and that only a university man like yourself could decipher them correctly. So, if you would oblige me—"

Li Mow Gee took the paper and glanced at the three ideographs. He wrinkled up his dissipated eyes and gazed at Huber Davis. Then he picked up his pipe and began to smoke.

"Your clerk was a wise man, Mr. Davis," he said quietly. "You have heard of the Heaven-and-Earth Society, no doubt?"

Huber Davis started. "You mean—"

"Exactly, my friend. How your esteemed brother-in-law picked up this

candlestick I cannot imagine; but it is marked with the emblems of that society, of which I am a member."

Huber Davis whistled. He knew that not all the power of the Manchu emperors had availed to stifle that secret fraternity, and he knew that Reggy Carefrew was playing with hot coals. But he kept silence, and presently he had his reward.

"If we were not friends," said Li Mow Gee reflectively, "and if the ties of friendship were not sacred and honorable things, I would say nothing to you. Even now it may be too late; as to that I cannot say, for others may know that your brother-in-law made this purchase. But, because we are friends, for your sake I shall try to help you."

"I appreciate it," said Huber Davis, not without anxiety. His anxiety was warranted. "If you will give me advice it shall be followed implicitly, I assure you."

Li Mow Gee smoked until his long pipe sucked dry.

"Well, then, bring to me that candlestick and whatever else was with it—candles, perhaps. I will make good whatever sum your honorable relative expended, and I will see to it that the matter is adjusted in the right quarters in case trouble has arisen. But, remember, time is an element of importance."

"In half an hour," said Huber Davis earnestly, "I shall return with the things."

Li Mow Gee picked up his cup of tea, signaling that the interview was ended.

Huber Davis dropped business and hurried home. If he could have reconciled it with his conscience, he would have let matters alone in the confidence that before a great while Reginald Carefrew would be removed from this mortal sphere; but Huber Davis had a stiff conscience. Besides, there was Ruth. If Ruth still loved this swindler, Huber Davis intended to protect and further him— for her sake. There was a good deal of the old conventional spirit in Huber Davis.

He expected trouble, and was prepared to handle it firmly; but he wanted to avoid a scene if possible. So, finding Carefrew engaged in packing, he lighted his pipe and watched for a few moments without broaching the subject on his mind.

"How much," he said at last, "do you expect to get for that candlestick if you sell it?"

Carefrew looked at him in surprise.

"Eh? Think I have some judgment, after all, do you? Oh, I ought to get a hundred easily."

"Well, see here," proposed Huber Davis, "I do like the thing, Reggy. Tell you

what: I'll give a hundred and twenty-five, cash down, if you'll turn it over. Eh?"

Carefrew grinned. "Hundred and fifty takes it," he said.

"You nasty son of—" thought Huber Davis. With an effort he controlled himself and produced his check-book. By the time he had written the check Carefrew had unpacked the candlestick. Huber Davis remembered the negligible remark which Li Mow Gee had made about the candles.

"Throw in the candles," he said, waving the check to dry it. "I want 'em."

Carefrew assented with a laugh. "You are welcome, old boy! I've never yet got that damned red stuff off my hands; nothing touches it. It 'll have to wear off. And it itches!"

Huber Davis paid little attention to him, but picked up the wrapped candlestick, took the two-foot bamboo sections, and started off down the hill.

"Now, you dirty whelp," he mentally apostrophized his relative, "I've got you out of a cursed bad situation, only you don't know it and would never believe it!"

Upon reaching the funny-bone in the Street of the Heavenly Elbow, he sent in his name and was ushered quickly to the presence of Li Mow Gee.

"There's the stuff," he said, with a deep breath of relief. "And I'm in your debt, Li. I'll remember it."

Li Mow Gee smiled slightly, ironically, as though Huber Davis might stand more in his debt than was known or dreamed of.

"Don't forget the price," he said quietly. "Accounts must be kept straight, my friend. What was the cost of this thing?"

"Nineteen florins, but don't bother about that," returned the other, saying nothing of his payment to Carefrew.

"Pardon me, but it must be made all straight." Li Mow Gee counted out nineteen florins from his pocketbook, which Huber Davis accepted. "Now a little wine to our friendship, eh?"

Huber Davis drank a thimble-cup of hot wine and took his departure, feeling that his hundred and fifty dollars had been well spent, having pulled Carefrew out of a bad situation, and thereby benefited Ruth.

Li Mow Gee, alone with his charcoal brazier and his pictures and his pipe, left the wrapped candlestick as it was, but took the three candles in their bamboo wrappings and opened a door in the wall where no door appeared to sight. He entered a long, narrow room which contained a great many queer little bottles, many of them old Chinese flasks carved from agate or amethyst, and a long table; the room did not appear in the least like a laboratory.

When he had laid the candles upon the table Li Mow Gee carefully cut the wrappings, but left each candle lying in its cradle of bamboo. Then he took a large glass bottle from the corner, and poured oil over each candle until the

bamboo cradles were filled. When he lighted a match and ignited the oil one realized that the table was of ironwood.

Li Mow Gee stood placidly watching while the three candles became reduced to scorched and smoking masses of black grease, then blew out the lingering flames, cleaned the débris from the table into a brass jar, and returned to his own apartment.

When he had emptied six cups of wine he clapped his hands four times, and promptly the venerable Mr. Chang appeared, removing his spectacles and blinking.

"I return to your keeping the honorable candlestick of our lodge," said Li Mow Gee, "and I thank you for the loan, venerable master."

"Are the spirits of the dead satisfied?" queried Mr. Chang.

Li Mow Gee poured himself another cup of wine and positively grinned.

"If they are not," he said, this time in English, "they are damned hard to please!"

It will be observed that Li Mow Gee was out nothing whatever— except certain obscure labors— for while he had paid Huber Davis nineteen florins, Carefrew had paid nineteen florins to agents of Li Mow Gee. And this, according to Oriental notions, was the acme of honor and propriety.

v

THE ROYAL MAIL boat, the "through packet" on which Ruth Carefrew was coming, held due for Sabang late in the afternoon. Upon the morning of that day Huber Davis went to the wireless station and sent a message to Ruth, aboard the steamer, to prepare to leave ship at Saban and cancel passage.

Then Huber Davis returned to his own bungalow, and met Dr. Brossot as the latter was leaving.

"Well," inquired Huber Davis quickly, "what's the trouble?"

The physician shrugged his shoulders.

"It has come, that's all. Java has been swept, the west coast of Sumatra has seen them die by thousands, and now— it is here."

"The influenza?" said Huber Davis.

"It can be nothing else. High temperature, and you say he had chills yesterday; much pain, everything according to the ritual. I am sorry, Mynheer Davis; his room had better be quarantined, of course."

"You think it is dangerous?"

"No. The danger, of course, lies in the pneumonia afterward. We must wait and see?"

After this, events moved fast. At noon the doctor arrived again, in response

to a hurried message from Huber Davis. An hour later the two men sat in the study of Davis.

"But, Brossot," said the latter, staring at the doctor, "what the devil was it, then? You say there was no pneumonia—"

The honest Dutchman shook his head. "Mynheer, upon my word of honor, I don't know! I shall call it heart-failure; that's what we all say, you know, to conceal our ignorance. The Chinese would say that he had swallowed gold, another polite way of saying the same thing. If you want an autopsy—"

Huber Davis rose, paced up and down the room, his brow furrowed.

"That's not half bad, that Chinese saying," he muttered. "No, Brossot, no autopsy. His wife arrives this afternoon, you know; my sister Ruth. Swallowed gold, did he? I believe it's the truth, at that!"

But he never thought again about the red grease-paint on those candles, and he did not know anything about Li Mow Gee having a little laboratory— in the Chinese style— opening off his apartments. Nobody knew about that laboratory, except Li Mow Gee; and Mr. Li never boasted of his methods.

9: The Hardest Fight

Sumner Locke

1881-1917

Weekly Times (Vic) 21 Aug 1915

Helena Sumner Locke

"OF COURSE, dear, you won't go."

It was the assurance in the tone that made Hesta Strong so very charming at such a time and in such a situation. The dearest man in the world to her had been appointed a commission by his Majesty the King, in charge of a section of a battery in the Royal Field Artillery, and the dearest man in this instance was already fully commissioned in a life service to the dearest woman in the world.

She was very primitive in her love for her great big-hearted husband, and with the primordial instincts of a true mate she wanted to hold on to that which was the biggest part of her. She could not understand separation from him at all. The bogie of the war had not even scared her as yet. She only thought of it as something that had risen to give greatness to the great Mother Country and to offer a splendid chance to still more splendid men, who wore glittering uniforms with superfluous buttons that neither did up nor were intended to undo. The dearest man had worn a uniform at intervals for quite a few years, but the significance of it did not strike her any more than if he had worn tweed in winter and white linen in the hot months. He had also held a superior position in military matters, but they had never interfered in any way with the routine of his married life. He had, for the period of fourteen months, been able to get home in the evenings in time to change for dinner, and it was only at certain periods he absolutely discarded plain clothes and climbed into the heavy material of drab color and went off to "Camp," or to a certain time of gun-drill.

But now it was different. The streets were thronged with men in khaki. A man out of it was looked upon with some query. A strong man, young and well-balanced, would have been ashamed to be seen standing in the street even discussing the war situation unless he was on his way to barracks or to

"sign on" or to the temporary drilling camp.

The dearest man, of course, was strong and well-balanced, and ready, and possessed of an action of mind and muscle that was a particularly good asset.

He was one of the men who was not carrying a regret about England having served Germany with an intimation that she was going to war on her, and to war to the last hour; and he was among the first to apply for a commission to get out to the fight, as an officer, right away.

Not because he had forgotten the dearest woman in the world— but because he had remembered her, and every good and stupid woman that needed the protection of the strong men of the British race. It was inherent in the dearest man to remember first of all that he was hardy and able, and could at last do his little bit to help the Empire and the people of the

Empire against an iniquitous race of j blunderers, who could not even be relied on to play the game properly.

His commanding officer had dealt with the matter of his commission and things had reached that stage when, physically fit as he was, and with a splendid record of good work in the South African War fourteen years before, it seemed likely that the dearest man would be appointed to something higher right away. He had romped home immediately with his heart in his j eyes and his soul burning with a desire to soar to the best and greatest heights of deeds that might, at least, be the means of almost entirely winning an Empire on his own.

He had told Hesta, the dearest woman, of the chance of the commission, of his possible command of a section of a battery, and having taken her into his arms, she had been quite, quite pleased all the time he had explained just what a battery was and what part of it composed a section. But when the glory of the picture, of great field guns under charge of her husband, had become familiar, and they had come down to common horse-sense about things, the dearest woman was not easy to teach. She could learn all about shrapnel shell and lyddite, and she could learn quite easily the number of men to a gun and the ones who took the range, opened the breech, saw the shell placed in position, shut the breech, worked the lever and fired the gun; but one thing nothing could make her understand why he need go away and leave her. She thought that if there were five men to each gun it was quite sufficient, and that her husband naturally ought to remain behind to teach and instruct other five men to go out and take the guns with them. She could not see why it was necessary for him to stand out in the very thickest firing with field glasses set towards the proper mark; and if there was a Divisional Artillery commander, and a battery commander as well to give orders, what would he be doing just standing there by the gun watching the men fire it off?

"Of course, you won't go," said, the dearest woman. "It's awfully nice of you, dear, to have offered; and I'm sure the C.O. must be proud to know you thought about it so quickly, but it would be madness to go right— right into the firing line, dear. Madness."

"Madness— to stay away, Hesta," said the big, strong, dear-hearted man. "Would you like to think of all the other fellows plugging away, pumping shot into the enemy, and me stopping behind to do the staff work in the Colonel's office. My dear—"

The dearest woman nodded several times.

"I think it would be perfectly adorable of you, dear, to do all the dry work at home. After all, pumping shot into the enemy is rather awful, isn't it? I mean for— for a gentleman. It isn't as bad for the men, because, of course, they aren't educated to anything better."

"I shouldn't want anything hotter," the dearest man was very nearly in a mental war on his own with the whole of Germany facing him... "Better than their education, anyway, Oh, I feel the ground rumbling with the weight of the guns rolling behind me— the rattle of chains and harness, and— to hear the brave fellows cheering, and to join in. 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary,' that's how It goes— but no matter how long— we are going to get there— to get there— to win— oh, aren't you proud, proud—?"

He was getting so excited, he was shouting and waving his arms. He even forgot to return the kisses she placed on his chin. She couldn't reach any further than his chin, because ho was standing up now with the inherent lighting blood in him stirred to a riot. Far over her head, he looked— looked miles away into the bitter cold of an encampment, where men crowded together to keep the chill of winter from sapping the warmth of their blood where eyes stared blankly into the foggy distance waiting the word to open fire, waiting for the first long shot of the battle. Where hunger bit and gnawed and made such weakness in a man, that almost he cursed the great War Lords, and the Commissariat who could not get forward with supplies. Right into the firing line the spirits of the dearest man was pushing a way, right furtherest from all things he loved and cherished. Over the dearest woman's fair cluster of waving hair, he looked and fought his fight, while playfully, almost childishly, she kissed his chin. Still, seeing the advancing line of brown-bodied infantry he kept his eyes well into the distance, visioning the forming of the battery column, watching the guns draw up, each with the waggon and men in command. Then he observed mentally the Brigadier and staff take up their positions, the battery commander and the sergeant-major, then the unhooking of the limber, the reversing of the guns, and the general business of preparation for opening fire. The calling for the fuze, the setting of it, the

passing of the shell into the breech, the adjusting of the range-taker, the waiting, waiting for the long roll of the boom of the exploded shell that seemed an eternity in breaking loose. The creeping, crawling cold of the death-draught that envelopes every man's heart before the battle commences, the strained nerve tension that shivers the soul and turns man coward, or brave in the fraction of a minute. Over her head he saw and felt it all, and she, the dearest woman, put up one white, softly-clinging hand and shut first one of his eyes and then the other.

"Don't," she said, fretfully, "I don't like you looking like that."

But he pulled her fingers down.

"The battery— the battery that did the business."

"Oh, it's great," he went on presently, in a more normal way. "Great to be in it all. I'm itching to be away, Hesta. I'm positively jealous of the spirit in me that wants to be away so far before my real self can fellow. To be in the thick of it all, to hear the rattle and the rain of bullets... the hum and the scream of the shells tearing along; to be driving, driving death forward and yet to be pushing it back..."

But the dearest woman could not take all this in. She pulled him to a sofa, sat near his side, held his hands down to her knee and leaned forward with the whole meaning of her life in her eyes.

"You really mean to go, Boyd?"

"I've no idea of remaining behind, Hesta." He looked strangely at her, "Don't you understand it's honor in me, girlie? It's what sent my father and his father into battles years ago. It has been seething and fermenting in our blood for generations. The bulldog breed... the fighters for the honor of a country, for the honor of a name, to he uppermost and the strongest, to let no man conquer you, and stand fast in the world of conquerors... Great Caesar, Hesta, if I thought that you would ask me to remain... under any conditions, and let others do what I am burning to do as my duty, I'd, I'd... be ashamed to think I'd married you.

"You want to go so much?"

Almost whispering the red lips paled; the eyes of the dearest woman went dull.

"I mean to go so much. There is nothing In the world I want so much. Nothing! Nothing!"

"Nothing?" Half query, half repeating his words. It was, as the dearest woman played her fingers on his coat sleeve and held her breath.

He almost laughed, but he was still fearfully, vitally, serious.

"Nothing. I don't think I ever wanted anything so much before as... as this commission to go to France. To go where the fiercest fighting is, to go... to go

to Hell if need be, but to go there hitting hard."

It was all beyond her limitations, and the idea that this was the great all in her husband's existence almost petrified her. She sat stunned.

"You'll be really proud and glad, dear, presently," he said, trying to sake some life into her by smoothing her cheeks with his hands. "You'll want to cry out of sheer joy at my promotion, at the pride in yourself for what it has been given me to do. Oh, you'll want to cry just because the feel is so great and the service so big, and the chance so wonderful... it will be so much in my whole career, in our whole career...Cry, Hesta. You'll cry with positive joy, I tell you. I'll cry myself presently...."

The dearest woman took him at his word, and, waiting no longer, she gladly, and with some relief, cried most sincerely on his breast.

IT WAS to the adjutant in charge that the dearest woman went one evening when the chance occurred. Long had she known Captain Branning, and many years had he watched her grow ripe with the fullness of womanhood and woman-love he knew her, and almost as if he had expected her he allowed her to sit down in his office looking about as unofficial as a picture hanging in a stable.

They talked of her husband's commission Without restraint. She tried to be important and easy and used to things. The adjutant congratulated her, spoke of the greatness of Boyd Strong's mind, the fine spirit in him, the record he carried, and the chance he would be given to get out among the first.

"He is going to fight a great fight," said Branning.

Only one regret escaped the dearest woman.

"If only... we could all go with him. If only I could fight, too."

The adjutant smiled.

"Hesta, my dear girl— it is just what you can do. Not all the hardest fighting is done on the battle-field. Sometimes it is in being left behind... dear little woman.... That's your fight, remember that. ..." He patted her shoulder. "Sometimes the fight is hardest for those who are left behind."

ONE MORNING she rose from her bed earlier than usual, and wandered in the little strip of garden sown in rich red geraniums and the drooped flowers of an acacia tree. She had the sweet assurance of something culled from the last few weeks' experiences in her face, and the steady step of a woman who has learned of the deeper things that come, not understood, but borne so wisely.

Her face was pale as the lilies holding the secret of the morning breezes, and her resolute purpose was to tell him a wonderful exquisite dream. All the day before she had thought the dream out, unravelled its meaning, felt and

known the depth, and there was only the great wish to express it to her husband, but like a child that clings to a precious toy, afraid to show it lest it be taken away, she had held the dream till the morning. It was now as precious to her as the secret the lilies held from the morning breezes.

She walked to the breakfast-room with an air of assurance in herself, in her husband's approval, in the whole of the future now, with the dream story on her lips.

"Boyce, my dear— I want to tell you. I have—"

The dearest man caught her round the waist, and brought her to his knee, and kissed her lips, so that they said nothing. The dream story was killed before it had birth, and the dearest woman listened instead of saying anything further.

"I want to tell you something also. Here are my orders. I'm to go into camp—to Join immediately, I have been appointed to a battery— I don't know where as yet, but—"

Then he saw her face, white as the lilies with the secret of the morning breezes, fading, fading out slowly.

"You have been so brave, dear. It has been a great help to me. Don't let go, dear, will you? It doesn't mean that I'm for the 'front' and the firing line yet. I'll be able to see you when I'm off duty if they don't send me too far away. Hesta— say you'll try, dear There is nothing keeping back my great happiness now, but the thought of leaving you "

The dearest, palest woman in the world began to glow under his caresses. She could say nothing, but with her eyes she tried to tell him so much— but he was the strong man, of the fighting breed, with the scent of the battle in his nostrils and the hum of bullet and shell surging round his ears. He could only understand that she must not give way— must not weep.

It was a weakness, and a point against him every time. At such a time sentiment was a wrong, it was an inconvenient thing.

"Think," he said, quietly, looking into her bright, sweet eyes. "Suppose we that child, to fight your little fight for had had a child. If I had had to go and leave you to— to perhaps support others as well as for yourself. But there isn't any such tie, thank God. I don't know, Hesta what— I— would have done— if— I had— to leave you with—a young— child "

Long he looked into the depth of glowing eyes before him, then he kissed her tenderly, slowly, and did it again. "I can go away relieved dear, to think you'll be watching and waiting for me, with no responsibilities, nothing to thing of but... me..."

"Nothing... but... you..." She said the words as if they were part of the dream-story she had come in to tell him earlier.

"I'd have fretted fearfully if there had been a boy to bring up. You see dear... if It were my lot to go under, I know that someone will look after you. It would have been simply awful for both of us, if there had been a very young child."

Paler than the lilies in the garden now, the dearest woman only answered with her eyes.

And later on the dearest man get his call for the front. The dearest woman stood looking as long as she could while he saw his men aboard a train for the ship, and took his place in another compartment. Then she went slowly home and sat down in the little garden among the rich, red geraniums and the pale lilies of the morning.

From her sewing basket she took a flimsy roll of cream flannel, sewing silks and the paper pattern of a child's first short robe. Her fingers were cold, her eyes burning. Somewhere in the rumble of the train, taking the men to the south there was the beating rattle of the words of the adjutant

"The hardest fighting is not always done on the battlefield."

She kissed the roll of flannel, as she felt the first long shot of her first battle, and she started her fight alone.

10: The Mug

Vernon Ralston

Sydney Stock and Station Journal 18 July 1919

British author of short stories who flourished 1907-1920 or thereabouts, and about whom I can find nothing else. This story appeared in Pearson's Magazine *first, but I can't find the date.*

AUSTIN DOUGLAS looked up from his table at the Cosmopolitan Hotel and glanced significantly at his pretty little wife. A gay-looking lieutenant had come to sit at the table next to them. The next minute, whilst Mrs. Douglas was chatting merrily to her husband, her silver bag slipped from her lap to the ground, apparently unnoticed. Instantly the lieutenant was on his feet.

'Excuse me, but you have dropped this.'

'Oh, thank you so much! I didn't know.'

'I am deeply indebted to you, sir,' said Mr. Douglas. 'My wife is always losing bags and rings and bracelets.'

'Well, there was nothing in this'— Mrs. Douglas paused and colored prettily— 'except my purse and a bracelet I was taking to be re-set.'

'Nothing in the world, you see, except her purse and a diamond bracelet. Of course, those would have turned up again. I see you are in the Berkshires. Do you know my friend, Colonel Hayter?'

'My colonel,' said the lieutenant. 'I should think I do know him!'

'Bit stiff and arbitrary, but a good sort. May I introduce my wife, Mrs. Douglas? Mr.—?'

'Smith,' said the lieutenant. 'Now you've put me under an obligation. Saved me advertising and interviewing the police. Make the obligation a little greater by lunching with us. Do, or the wile will be blowing me up for my carelessness in not seeing that she looked after her bag better.'

Soon they were chatting merrily, and they became so friendly that before lunch was over they had agreed to dine together, and go to a revue afterwards.

LIEUTENANT SMITH was just leaving his hotel to go and dine with his new friends when he noticed an acquaintance of his sitting in the lounge, a veritable picture of misery.

'What's the trouble, Rogers, old man? You look as if the girl had chucked you.'

'I wish she had!' groaned Rogers. 'Why, you kept me out of bed till one

o'clock only two nights since telling me what an angel she was.'

'A lot's happened since then. I'm wondering if I can face a courtmartial.'

'But you've not overstayed your leave yet!'

'That's not it. Conduct unbecoming to an officer and gentleman. Drawing cheques that can't be met. I've given cheques for £450, and my balance isn't a fiver.'

'Can't your people help?'

'Help! My mother is living on an annuity. If she sold her house and furniture she might square me, but I don't fancy that prospect.'

'It's not trades people?'

'No, a debt of honor. I met some people called Douglas at the Cosmopolitan. She dropped her bag and I picked it up.'

'No,' said Lieutenant Smith. 'I picked it up; I picked it up not six hours since.'

'Why, you've met them?'

'I'm going out to dine with them now, and then to a revue '

'And then to a nice little game of cards at their flat. Mrs. Douglas will beg you not to gamble, and give you more champagne.'

'Very likely.'

'Well, they've done me, and they'll do you.'

'Right, my boy. Let them do me. She's a charming little woman. I liked the clever way she shuffled the bag from her knee. It looked so unconscious. I thought at first it was my fajfcal beauty that attracted her, and that she wanted a chance to speak to a superbly handsome second loot. But life is very disappointing.'

'Well, I've warned you against these people. I don't say they play unfairly, but I'd so much champagne that I didn't know what I was doing. Now, take my advice and stay away.'

'I'm going, and I'll tell you something. Don't worry about your losses. I'll square them up out of my winnings. I play cards quite well, and I'll keep sober.'

'You'll just be another mug for them to fooll'

'Good-bye. I can't keep dear Mrs. Douglas waiting.'

IT WAS a delightful dinner, and the revue was gay afterwards. As they 'safr in the box Mrs. Douglas squeezed the second loot's hand, whilst her husband was absorbed in watching the stage. Sad to relate, the smiling second loot squeezed her hand in return.

Directly the show was over the Douglases insisted that Lieutenant Smith should come round to their flat for supper. The lieutenant needed no pressing. He accepted instantly. There was a charming supper, and afterwards a few genial friends came ib, and some casually suggested a hand at cards.

'Good I' said Lieutenant Smith. 'I'd love a bit of a gamble. Our colonel will only allow bridge at farthing points in our mess.'

'Shall we play poker?' suggested the amiable Douglas.

'I should love it!' replied the lieutenant.

The play went on for an hour or so. No one won or lost much. The genial friends could hardly keep from smiling at the lieutenant. His face showed so obviously the state of his hand.

At last, after a deal, Lieutenant Smith looked at his hand and seemed to tremble with excitement. Anyone could tell that he had the hand of a lifetime. The other players threw in their chips, and Mr. Douglas and the lieutenant started to raise each other.

'Now please don't gamble,' said Mrs. Douglas. 'I hate high play.'

'With a hand like mine,' said the lieutenant, 'it would be a sin not to gamble. You warn your husband, Mrs. Douglas.'

The raising went on till the stakes reached a thousand pounds. At that point Mr. Douglas said that he would see his opponent, and laid down four kings.

'Jolly good!' gasped the lieutenant. 'I'd no idea you were so good— too.' He laid d jwn four aces. Mr. Douglas gave a searching glance to the genial friend who had dealt the hands. Lint the genial friend was either a superb actor or else he was as amazed as anyone else. Evidently the appearance of four aces in the lieutenant's hand instead of the four queens he supposed he had dealt had paralysed him.

'Anyone want to play any more,' said Lieutenant Smith, when he had drawn his winnings.

'I've had enough,' said Mr. Douglas, who was anxious for an interview with the unfortunate dealer.

'Awfully jolly evening!' said the lieutenant. 'Hope we shall have another game, Douglas, old man. I must give you your revenge.'

'Yes, yes,' said Mr. Douglas; but there was a lack of heart in his response. The cheque was not crossed, and Lieutenant Smith was delighted to see that the bank paid it without demur the next morning. He had feared lest Mr. Douglas might have a habit of not meeting cheques, but evidently the business was one in which the infrequent losses must be met.

The day after Mr. Douglas received a brief note from Lieutenant Smith:—

Very sorry. Recalled from leave. Below find my expenditure of winnings:—
Lieut. Rogers' losses made good: £450
Berkshire Prisoners of War Fund: £650
Total £1,000

Hope Mrs. Douglas will always be lucky enough to find some one to recover her bag, however often she drops it. Kindest regards.

Lewis Smith.

P.S. — This is a queer new Army. I enclose an old professional card of mine.

Mr. Douglas gasped, swore, and raved when he read on the bit of pasteboard:—

"Cheero"
The World's Inimitable
Card Expert and Conjuror

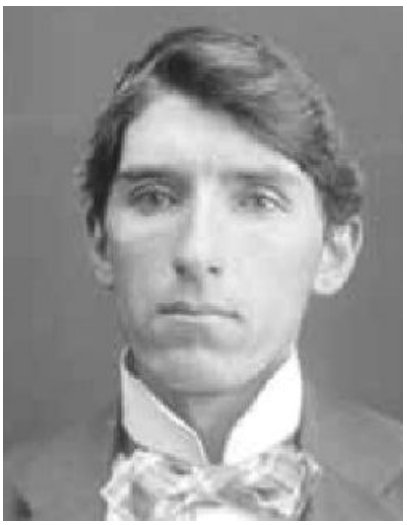
———————

11: The Mystery Man From Prague

James Francis Dwyer

1874-1952

The Popular Magazine, 7 Jan 1924



James Francis Dwyer

TO Robert Henry Blane had come a strange message. It came like a piece of thistledown out of the air.

He had turned his head for an instant while watching a weird show at the Grand Guignol and the scrap of paper carrying the words was deftly slipped onto his knees.

Before touching the paper The Texan Wasp examined his neighbors. The horror of the piece had gripped them. They were leaning forward, necks strained to the uttermost, watching the sketch that was written to tickle, the jaded nerves of blasé Parisians. The handsome American adventurer was unable to locate a person whose interest was in anything outside the very grotesque and nearly disgusting scene that was unfolding in a glaucous light that added to the weirdness of the happenings.

Robert Henry Blane unfolded the slip of paper and read the words penciled on it. They were few but their import was tremendous. The big Texan read them again and again, holding the sheet forward so that it struck a roving ray of green that fell from a badly fixed shutter. The message ran:

If Robert Henry Blane could be at the Lake of Como on June 27th The Man from Prague would like to speak to him.

The Texan Wasp forgot the grisly horror that was dragging itself toward a shrieking climax. He had no interest in the limb-dragging leper who had come

back from the hell of Molokai to choke the wife who had become the dancing queen of Paris. His eyes drifted away from the stage set that showed the gorgeous apartment of the wife, set high above that Rue de Rivoli, the woman crouched upon the window sill, the dreadful, leering deformity that was her husband blocking the path to the door. The Wasp was thinking of The Man from Prague.

An eccentric writer, hidden away somewhere in the slums of Vienna, has asserted that big wars and big revolutions are made not by the mass nor by the then leaders of the mass. He asserts that they are made unconsciously by the unknown individuals who will get the spotlight after the war of the great upheaval. The dreams of these persons, who may be living in abject poverty, have a strange and extraordinary effect upon the world. The dreams act as a great leaven that breeds discontent. The world labors in an effort to get these dreamers out of the ruck. Thousands and millions of men die in the upheaval, then out into the quiet that ranges after the battle fires of dreams!

The Viennese writer names a score of these people. They took no part in the Great War but they are now prominent in Europe. He, curiously, accuses them of being the cause of the war. He thinks if they had never been born there would have been no war. The soldiers and the generals, the statesmen and the politicians of 1914 were but the dead lava crust that was pushed forward by the throbbing, liquid fires that none could see. The throbbing fire of dreams!

Robert Henry Blane had read the article and although The Man from Prague was not mentioned by the writer Blane added him to the list. Somewhere in the tortuous streets of the old, old city of Prague there had lived one of the dreamers whose dreams upset the crust of nations. War came! Austria turned out her millions, her cannons trundled off across the landscape, her airmen flailed the winds of heaven. The dreamer didn't take part in the upheaval. He was saving himself.

Austria was shattered, then people began to hear of The Man from Prague. That is, the people who had their ears to the ground. He stepped lightly, did this man. It is the new method of doing things in Europe. The great man is never seen, his name is sometimes not known. He puts forward a number of little manikins and a number of these manikins get shot and knifed nowadays.

The Texan Wasp, walking back to his hotel, thought of all the slinking, furtive, headless-and-tailless rumors that were connected with The Man from Prague. Possibly fifty per cent of them lacked a base. Rumor is busy nowadays. Other men who had become powerful had been clutched by the camera—great industrialists and profiteering scoundrels who had made millions by pulling strings in the background, had been badgered and tormented by leggy

reporters and photographers who had run them into their palatial lairs, but The Man from Prague remained as remote as the Dog Star.

Into the new welter of European trickery and duplicity he thrust an invisible finger. He was credited with a thousand affairs that defied solution. A statesman shot at on the Unter den Linden, a banker assassinated in the Prater at Vienna, a coup d'état in a one-horse state, a slump of the mark, an attack on the íranc, everything and anything was credited to him. People whispered his name in corners, whispered it in a dozen tongues. He was The Mystery Man from Prague!

Many persons, and Robert Henry Blane was one of the number, doubted his existence. These doubters believed that the people on the street, unable to explain things, had fashioned, Indianlike, a god upon whose head they could throw the blame of assassinations, new wars, money depreciation, food riots, train smashes, robberies, and the million and one ills that harry poor old Europe. The unbelievers grinned as they listened to the breathless gossipers who tagged the monster with every knot in the twisted and tangled skein of world trouble.

The Texan Wasp occupied a front room in a small hotel on the Rue Chauveau-Lagarde that is close to the Madeleine. After the performance at the Grand Guignol he returned to the hotel and sat for a time at the window overlooking the narrow street. An electric lamp, heavily shaded, was the only light. In the soft gloom Robert Henry Blane considered the message. Was there really a person known as The Man from Prague? If so was he the controlling force in a slight percentage of the affairs that had been credited to him? Granting there was such a person why did he wish speech with Robert Henry Blane, one time of Houston, Texas?

The Wasp sitting at the window spoke aloud as this question came up for an answer. "I'd like to know how he heard of me and what he wants with me?" growled the big Texan. "His note seems to suggest that I had applied for a job, and I just didn't. I never hunt jobs. 'They come to me."

Mr. Blane switched on the overhead lights and picked up a "Continental Bradshaw." The mysterious person had left the American little time for a decision. He wished to see Robert Henry Blane at Como on June 27th and he had signified his wish on the evening of the twenty-fifth! An express train left Paris at eleven iorty-five in the morning, tore down through Lucerne and Bellinzona, dropped through the St. Gothard and reached Como at four thirty-two in the afternoon of the following day. If the Texan Wasp took this train he would be in Como in time to keep the appointment.

"But why?" questioned the American, rising to his feet. "Why should I go scurrying down through France and Switzerland to see—?"

Robert Henry Blane paused abruptly in his little soliloquy. Something had fallen upon the floor and had slithered under a couch, making a soft rustling noise as it moved over the polished boards.

The Wasp stooped cautiously and picked up a.small spill of paper. He unfolded it and read the dozen words scrawled upon it. They were:

It is very important that you should meet The Man from Prague.

Robert Henry Blane walked swiftly to the window and looked out. The old houses immediately fronting the hotel were in darkness. The Rue Chauveau-Lagarde is not more than twenty feet across, and the American could see plainly the windows of the corresponding floor opposite. They were the windows of a dressmaker's showroom. The blinds were drawn and the words "Robes," "Manteaux," and "Lingerie" painted on the blinds did not wiggle in the "slightest degree under the scrutiny of the American. Yet The Wasp was certain that the spill of paper that had whizzed into the room had been catapulted from one of the windows opposite!

He put:out the lights and watched the street door leading to the dressmaker's rooms. He watched it for a long time, his thoughts upon the wild and wonderful stories that were connected witn The Man from Prague. The will-o-the-wisp was growing real as the minutes passed.

Paris dropped into that whimpering stage that it assumes in the ghostly hours that run between the activity of the day and the first bustle of the dawn. Those hectic, spindle-legged hours that seem filled with weird and shameful happenings. Revelers from Montmartre halted their taxicabs at the corner of the Rue Chauveau-Lagarde and the Rue Pasquier and rent the night with guffaws that shot up like cannon sounds after intervals of sinister whispering. Slinking figures were spewed up by street angles and were again consumed by them. Now and then a scream rushed up like a red thread from the Boulevard Malesherbes.

No one came out of the door opposite. The Wasp rose and drew the curtains of the windows. The June night was a trifle warm. Thoughts of the Lake of Como came to his mind. Pictures flung themselves up before his eyes. He saw Cernobbia and Bellagio, the mountains springing up from the glorious lake that some one has described as a jewel dropped from a ring that the Almighty wore upon His finger!

"I'll take a run down without thinking of our friend," muttered The Wasp. "He can dance his own little minuet unless it suits me to partner with him."

THE LITTLE TOWN of Como squatting at the head of the glorious lake

seemed quiet and sweet to The Texan Wasp after hectic Paris. He settled himself in a small hotel on the Piazza Cavour and from his window he could watch the cars of the funicular railway that drags visitors up the steep slope of Brunate from whose summit they can see the Alps and the Plain of Lombardy as far as Milan.

He had barely bathed and changed his clothes when there came a message from the man who had made the appointment. Not a pleasing message to Robert Henry Blane. An unknown had left a note at the hotel and the wording of this note roused the anger of the big American. It read:

The Man from Prague is delayed. Wait where you are and hold no converse with any one. You are selected for a big undertaking.

"It looks as if I had put in an application for employment," growled The Wasp. "It surely does. Well, I'll wait and see what Bill-of-the-Wisp wants to propose."

To cool the irritation roused by the note The Wasp left the hotel and walked along the little quay. Five-score boats were drawn up on the sloping water front, boats that looked delightfully luxurious with their cushioned seats for two. The Como folk admit that some honeymooners do go to Venice, but that nine tenths of aristocratic Europe spends that period of enchanting sweetness, which the French so nicely describe as the *lune de miel*, on the Lake of Como.

And The Wasp, wandering along the quay, received proof that the honeymooners come from far-away places. He heard the speech of his "ain countree." A piratical-looking boatman had landed a very young and very small clergyman who was accompanied by a bride who was younger and smaller, and the boatman's conception of the work that he had done in pulling the couple out beyond the Point di Geno was in direct opposition to that held by the parson. The passengers were obviously honeymooners. They had that delightful "Let's- stay- together-so-we-won't - lose-each-other" look that only a sweet honeymooning couple can spread upon their features.

The parson was no quitter. He was small and he lacked a knowledge of the Italian tongue but he was perfectly certain that no truculent boatman could kill him. His little bride had doubts about this and Robert Henry Blane was amused at the manner in which she tugged fearfully at her husband's sleeve and whispered advice about the desirability of acceding to the pirate's demands.

A loud-mouthed fellow was the boatman. He lifted up his garlic-scented voice and the members of his craft lurched up to help in the looting. The boatman demanded twenty lire more than the passenger was prepared to pay, and to the protesting clergyman's "*Troppo*! *Troppo*!"—the little man had

evidently thought the Italian equivalent of "Too much" was a good word for a Continental tour— he screamed loudly, shaking a black and unreasonably large fist in the fare's face. Robert Henry Blane decided to take a hand in the argument.

There are two ways of acquiring a foreign tongue. One is the formal method of universities and colleges. The other is the "acquired-on-the-spot" method and it tells to the native something that correct speech does not. It proves a residency of many days.

The Texan Wasp used the informal speech. In the argot of Lombardy he told the boatman to lower his fist and his voice. In a swift throaty jargon he begged the pirate to give him details of the trip.

"The boatman took one glance at Robert Henry Blane and saw careless force. He hurriedly deflated his chest and brought his fist to his side. It would be a delight for him to explain to the distinguished signore. The affair was as follows. He had taken the parson and his signora out beyond the point and had pulled them well.

"How far?" questioned The Wasp. "Don't lie!"

"Nearly to the Villa Taglioni, *signore*. A long and tiring pull."

"And you want forty lire?"

"*Si*, *signore*."

Robert Henry Blane turned to the small parson and his timid bride. "If you give him more than fifteen lire you are being robbed," he said. "Hand him that much and see if he howls."

The boatman did howl. He called on his patron saint, San Michele of Cremia, to see how he was being robbed. The Americans who were all as rich as the Dukes of Lombardy were sweating the poor!

His temper made him forget the presence of Robert Henry Blane. He made a rush at the parson but The Wasp seized his shoulder and flung him backward.

The boatman stumbled, pulled himself together, then, fully aware of the fact that the attempt at graft had been frustrated by the interference of the distinguished stranger, he charged the tall Texan.

The Wasp received the attack coolly. He had his back turned to the sloping, slippery quay, and using the same tactics pursued by a matador when a crazed bull charges he side-stepped the rush and then adroitly used his right shoe to increase the speed of the rusher. The shoe was used with such good effect that the boatman could not halt himself. With arms flung wide he stumbled down the, slimy incline and plunged headlong into the cool water of the lake.

The bunch of pirates who had supported the fellow in his demand for money turned against him now. They jeered coarsely as he clawed himself

back onto the landing stage and when he showed a desire to renew the attack they shouldered him off to a shelter and drowned his wild remarks with loud laughter. They had been given a free show and they were satisfied.

Robert Henry Blane found himself walking along the waterside with the little clergyman and his bride. The parson introduced himself. He told The Wasp that he was the Reverend Thomas Browne, the pastor of a small church-at Calico Springs, Arkansas, and that the good folk of Calico Springs had collected the money that brought him and his bride to Europe on a short honeymoon.

"They must like you a lot," said The Wasp, amused at the manner in which the little clergyman had opened up on the manner in which the honeymoon funds had been obtained.

The Reverend Thomas Browne glanced at his blushing bride. "They like her," he said softly. "You see it wasn't actually my flock that forked out for the trip. It was the whole town of Calico Springs. Episcopalians, Catholics, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists and Unitarians. They thought that my wife—"

"Please, Thomas, don't," protested the bride. "You must not tell!"

"But I must inform this gentleman of the reason for their devotion," cried the clergyman. "I cannot let any one believe that my silly little sermons got us a trip to Europe! Dearie, I must tell! This gentleman helped us out of a little tangle and I would like him to know about you."

"Then tell about it at some other time!" persisted the embarrassed blushing bride. "Not now!"

"Please let me!" pleaded the Reverend Thomas. "It pleases me so much."

"Then I'll run away while you are talkling," cried the wife, "and when you have finished your story I will come back." With a little bow to The Wasp she skipped across the Piazza Cavour and found herself a seat under a leafy plane tree.

The Reverend Thomas Browne turned to The Texan Wasp and looked up into the handsome face that was some eighteen inches above the parson's head. "Possibly you have heard of Calico Springs?" he said. "It has been in the papers recently."

Robert Henry Blane, desirous of pleasing the little man, ran his mental eyes back over the news from home that he had absorbed from the Paris editions of the *Tribune* and *Herald*, and, by a tremendous mental effort, he dragged out the item. "Why, you had a great flood in your town!" he cried.

The parson was delighted at finding that the distinguished-looking stranger knew of the troubles of Calico Springs. "You said it!" he cried. "A great flood we had! A tremendous flood!"

"I read an account of it," said The Wasp. "If I remember rightly a dam burst at the back of your town and the water swept away a whole section. I recall the story distinctly. The paper had a long account of the happening and it made much of the bravery of a telephone girl who stuck to her job with the water up to her waist, calling up subscribers to tell them of the danger."

The Reverend Thomas Browne became an inarticulate and emotion-struck idiot. He gripped the hand of Robert Henry Blane and gurgled like a baby. For an instant The Wasp thought 'the little man was stricken with apoplexy, then the clergyman regained control of his voice. "Did they— did they write about her over here in— in Europe?" he gasped. "Did they? Did they?"

"Certainly," answered The Wasp. "There was a cabled account from New York. I read the story in Paris."

The Reverend Thomas Browne, still holding the hand of the big Texan, started across the Piazza Cavour to the seat on which the bride was resting. Mrs. Browne looked up as the two men approached, her face showing surprise at the manner in which her small husband was towing the tall Texan.

The Reverend Thomas brought Robert Henry Blane up with a round turn in front of the seat. He pointed to his bride, his blue eyes swimming with moisture. "There she is!" he cried. '"There's the telephone operator that you read about! That flood brought us to Lake Como! The good people of Calico Springs paid the honeymoon expenses of their local heroine, and, of course, I had to come along!"

The bride tried to halt the Reverend Thomas but his words were as uncontrollable as the flood waters that had brought out the courage and endurance of the girl he had married. He told the story in detail. Never was there such bravery. The bride fled before the praise which he unloosed. She became annoyed, and to sidetrack the matter in dispute Robert Henry Blane made a suggestion. He told the couple that it was seldom that he had an opportunity of doing honor to an American heroine, therefore the Reverend Thomas Browne and Mrs. Browne were to be his guests for dinner that evening. The happy prattle of the honeymooners made The Wasp forget The Man from Prague and the message that had brought him storming down through the St. Gothard to the Lake of Como.

It was a great meal. Robert Henry Blane had fallen upon a maitre d'hótel and terrorized him into tense activity. He had a chef brought before him and the fellow perspired under the demands which were made upon him. He told the chef that the dinner was in honor of a woman who had saved a town. Had the chef ever cooked for a person who had saved a town? The perspiring stove lizard admitted that.he had not. He had cooked for an emperor, three kings, a czar, five princes—

"Pooh!" snorted Robert Henry Blane. "That's nothing! Nowadays Europe is filled with royal floor-walkers who eat. at three-cent pensions. They couldn't save their own mightcaps when the flood struck them! This lady saved a town! Go down into your glory hole and toss some anthracite into the stove. This has got to be some meal."

The chef made a dinner that delighted the little bride from Calico Springs. There was a rice consommé that the cook refused to omit; there was salmon trout from the lake with garnishings that made the fish something that a gourmet might dream of; there were lamb cutlets in bread crumbs with little potato croquettes; white asparagus, the blanched asparagus of Italy; cheese from a goat farm way up on the slopes of Monte Legnone; and there was ice cream— the delightful Italian *cassate*— that was brought to the bride with a little American flag flying gayly from its frozen pinnacle.

The heroine of Calico Springs was very happy. So was the Reverend Thomas. In tasteless Vichy, which The Wasp drank much to his dislike, the little parson pledged friendship with the handsome adventurer.

"Tf you ever come to Calico Springs you must come and stay with us!" he cried. "We were a little lonely this afternoon. You see in our town we speak to every person we meet on the street, so it comes hard on us to wander round for weeks and not have a single person bob his head and say 'How d'ye do?' We think Europe is wonderful and all that, but now and then we get an awful longing for the Springs. It's homey there and folk are honest and straight."

There came a little interruption as they sipped their coffee on the terrace. A messenger boy delivered to Robert Henry Blane a note which the Texan begged permission to read. It was a scribbled message on a small square card, and it ran:

The Man from Prague is here.
Hold yourself in readiness.

It was only the presence of the Reverend Thomas and his bride that prevented The Wasp írom openly consigning the mysterious unknown to a warmer climate than Como. He smiled grimly as he 'tore the card into fragments. The delight expressed by his guests had more than repaid him for the run down írom Paris, yet there rose within him a tremendous desire to let The Man from Prague understand that there were a few carefree souls in Europe that his money could not buy.

The polite parson of Calico Springs wondered if their host wished to leave them. He mentioned his doubts. "You may have business matters 'to attend to?" he murmured.

"Not yet," laughed The Wasp. "I may be busy later in the evening, or I may

not. It is a— hello, look at the cavalcade!"

The cavalcade consisted of five handsome automobiles that rolled across the Piazza Cavour and pulled up before the hotel. From them descended fifteen wellgroomed and important-looking men, conspicuously American in dress and manner. Their remarks came up to the three on the terrace, the hard, resonant Americanese biting through the soft chatter of the crowd of Italians who gathered to see the newcomers.

The Wasp questioned a waiter. "Who are they?" he asked.

"It is a delegation of American bankers, *signore*," answered the man. "They have come down from Cadenabbia. They go on to Milan to-morrow morning and from there they go to Paris."

The Wasp translated to the Reverend Thomas and his bride. The fifteen constituted the famous "Billion Dollar Battalion" that was visiting Europe to see what steps could be taken to prevent the saber-jangling countries of the Old World from hopping into the abyss of bankruptcy. The European press had featured the visit. A few papers had applauded the fifteen, others had jeered. A number of radical sheets were openly insulting. They suggested that Uncle Sam was giving his creditors the onceover. They advised the near-bankrupt States to hide the ledgers that told of the cash spent ün buying guns, ammunition, decorations and other matters that old Uncle looked on with a hard eye.

The heroine of Calico Springs was delighted when she heard of the itinerary of The Fifteen. "We might travel on the same train!" she cried. "It would be splendid. People might think we belonged to the party. Thomas, dear, you look like a wealthy banker."

"I am," said the gallant parson; "I have you; and now as we have a long journey before us we had better retire."

Again they thanked Robert Henry Blane, repeated their invitation regarding a visit to Calico Springs, then left him alone upon the terrace.

The Wasp, leaning over the railing, watched ithe street. Four of the five automobiles that had brought the bankers had disappeared, the fifth was parked some twenty feet from the door of the hotel. It was a closed car, and having nothing to occupy his attention the Texan glanced at it from time to time. He wondered idiy why it had not followed its companions to the garage.

Pedestrian traffic lessened as the hours passed. The Wasp remained upon the terrace; the lone automobile still stood in the street. Tio the eyes of Robert Henry Blane it seemed to be without chauffeur or passengers.

The car attracted the attention of a policeman. He walked around it. He opened the door, and, ito the surprise of The Wasp the door immediately was wrenched from the officer's hand and closed with a bang! An occupant,

evidently annoyed with the inquisitive cop, bade the policeman to go on about his business.

The Wasp was alert now. He leaned out over the railing and listened. The officer wanted reasons. A bullet head was thrust through the window, and a voice, deep and threatening, gave reasons with such promptness that the cop walked swiftly away. The head disappeared within the car, leaving Robert Henry Blane a little startled and much surprised. The Wasp had recognized the bullet head! He knew the deep, gruff voice that had flung out a few swift reasons to the surprised cop. The man in the darkened car was No. 37! He was the tireless and intelligent man hunter who ranged from one end of Europe to another and gathered in criminals like an expert fisherman gathering shrimps!

The Wasp dropped back onto his seat, his eyes upon the closed car. The great sleuth had evidently journeyed in the company of the bankers, but instead of dismounting with the "Billion Dollar Battalon" he had remained inside the automobile! Robert Henry Blane asked himself the reason. He had not seen. No. 37 since the night at Carcassonne when the sleuth had told him of the League of the Creeping Death and the designs of the extraordinary secret society that had as its aim the destruction of the great and good. Months had slipped by since that night but he, Blane, had not crossed the track of the sleuth. Stil he had heard of the doings of the man hunter. Here and there through Europe the trail of the great lariat thrower of the law was now and then made evident. A queer, vile Russian had been cornered at Vevey and the capturer had given no name. A very "hush, hush" affair had been scantily reported from Strasbourg. The criminal's name and position were not mentioned by the press and his ultimate goal was not recorded. It was guessed at, though. Some said that a destroyer took the criminal swiftly toward a certain spot in South America where wrongdoers dropped into the pit of forgetfulness dug by their own deeds.

There had been another sensation. At Ostend, in the height of the season, a dazzling adventuress, who claimed close relationship with a European ex-monarch, had been removed hurriedly from the casino tables screaming like a she-devil as she was carriéd away. A gentleman friend had interfered with the bullet-headed abductor and had received for his trouble a blow in the face that laid him flat on the carpeted floor. The disposition of the lady was a matter upon which the stern heads of the Belgian police would not talk.

Robert Henry Blane continued to watch the car. What was the sleuth's motive? It was matural to suppose that some protection would be afforded to the distinguished company of bankers— a casual escort that would brush away half-crazed folk who might be attracted to The Fifteen, but the alert presence of the greatest man hunter in Europe was another matter.

A small, thin man who had slipped out onto the terrace without attracting the attention of the American now rose from his seat and shambled over to the Texan. In a manner that was slightly apologetic he leaned over and addressed Robert Henry Blane.

"Pardon," he murmured. "You seek an appointment?"

The Wasp looked him over coldly. "Who said so?" he asked.

The thin man was evidently upset by the counter-question. He swallowed hastily, glanced nervously about him, then lowered his head and spoke in a hissing whisper. "I thought your name was Robert Henry Blane. Is it so? Then it is you that I was to speak to. I was to tell you where you would find the person you wish to speak to."

There was a little interval of silence. A rebellious feeling within The Wasp prompted him to tell the messenger where he could go and cook waffles without a gas stove, but "he restrained himself. The quick glimpse that he had of No. 37 in the darkened car had excited his curiosity and wonder.. Was there a connection between the presence in Como of the great detective and The Man írom Prague? Monsieur Biane found that he was gripped by a mad desire to find out.

"And where can he be found?" he asked coldly.

The thin man moistened his lips. "You must walk up the Via Plinio, cross the Piazza del Duomo and continue along the Via Vittorio Emmanuele. Some one will speak to you and you will answer with one word. You wish to go?"

"Sure. And the word?"

"The word is 'Discord.' You speak Italian, monsieur? Well, say it in that tongue. It will be '*Discordanza*.' "

The fellow stood looking down at the Texan and his silent watchfulness annoyed Robert Henry Blane. "Go away!" snapped The Wasp. "You have delivered the message, have you not?"

"Yes, yes, monsieur," stammered the startled messenger, "but I was to find out when you would come?"

"I will come in good time," replied Blane. "Just for the moment I would like to be alone."

The thin man nearly fell over himself in getting away from the irritable American. He slipped like a scared bug into the passage leading from the terrace. The insolence of the tall adventurer to whom he had delivered the message astounded him. On previous occasions he had delivered similar instructions as to the manner in which his chief might be interviewed, and the persons to whom he had delivered the orders had received them with awe. He damned the impudence of all Americans as he crept away.

The Wasp, certain that the fellow had disappeared, stooped and picked up

a handful of small pebbles from the floor of the terrace. Carefully, and yet acting with a certain careless manner that would not stir the suspicion of a watcher, he tossed a pebble on the top of the closed and darkened car that stood in the street. He followed the one pebble with two more.

For a few seconds he waited, then, one after the other, he carelessly dropped seven pebbles onto the top. He wondered if the astute sleuth within the machine would count the tiny missiles and find in their number the figures that made his distinguished alias.

Mr. Blane guessed that the man hunter would count the taps made by the falling pebbles, and he guessed aright. To the keen eyes of the Texan there appeared a faint lightening of the black patch that marked the window on the side toward the pavement. He realized that the detective was looking up at the terrace. The Wasp struck a match, pulled out his watch, and for quite half a minute examined the face of the timekeeper. The match burned out. He dropped it and looked down at the car. The face had disappeared from the window.

The Wasp rose, sauntered through the passage, down the stairs and through the corridor of the hotel. A soft breeze came from the water. The descending and ascending cars of the funicular that carried the cliff dwellers of Brunate looked like two gigantic and phosphorescent caterpillars who were intent on keeping an appointment at a spot halfway down the mountain. The soft whisper of a guitar came from the lake in which the stars shone like daisies in a submerged field.

ROBERT Henry Blane followed the instructions of the thin man. He followed the short Via Plinio, named in honor of the elder and younger Pliny who were both born at Como. He crossed the Piazza del Duomo upon which the splendid cathedral benevolently looks and he continued along the Via Vittorio Emmanuele till he was near the Via Tridi. At the corner of the two streets a slouching, ruffianly person addressed him in Italian.

Was the signore looking for some one?

The signore admitted he was.

The fellow asked if there was an address. Possibly there was not, but there might be a word.

"*Discordanza*," said The Wasp.

The ruffianly one turned into the Via Tridi, stopped at the third door, kicked softly with this shoe, then, as the door opened waved The Wasp forward into the dark passage.

Monsieur Blane was alert now. His muscles were tense and his fists ready as he stepped into the passage. His thoughts were centered on a dwarfed

revolver of American make that rested in a specially made pocket. The revolver seemed to sense the blackness of the passage into which the Texan had carelessly stepped. It chattered of danger.

A flash light bit yard lengths out of the condensed gloom. It struck the visitor and climbed up his tall length till the circle of light enveloped his face. It sprang away again, brushed the darkness from the flooring boards and retreated before the American as the bearer of the light whispered a soft, "Follow me."

The Wasp counted his footsteps. Eleven straight ahead, five to the right, three steps onto a raised passage, five along the passage to a door. He checked the numbers in his head. Many times he had been called upon to make a departure from dangerous places where illuminants were not in favor for the moment, and he had found that a record of the ingoing passage was exceedingly useful.

The bearer of the flash light knocked, there came a gruff answer, the door opened, unloosing a volume -of light, and Robert Henry Blane moved into a spacious room. A really vast room, lighted by an enormous chandelier,

The Wasp took in the furnishings of the room with a single glance. The chamber was a blaze of gilt, a rather brazen and vulgar display of gold veneer. Huge mirrors in yellow, frames rushed up toward the high ceiling; chairs that sat up like beaten nuggets lined the walls. A rather barbaric display of uncomfontable and useless articles.

The big Texan looked for a human occupant. There was none as far as he could see. Then, as he wondered as to who had given the order to enter the room, the same voice came from the rear of an enormous leather screen that occupied one corner of the room.

"You will pardon me, Signore Blane, if I do not appear," said the unseen speaker. "I never speak face to face with any of my callers."

"The retort of The Wasp came without a moment's hesitation. "And I," he replied, "never speak with any one who hides behind a screen."

There was a long interval of silence. A clock upon the mantel spoke of the insolence of the visitor to the other pieces of furniture. "*Woof*, *woof*!" it ticked. "*Nerve*, *nerve*! T*hick*, *thick*! *Woof*, *woof*!"

The voice from behind ithe screen broke in on the muttering of the clock. "Perhaps you are right," said the unseen person. "It is a habit of mine but every law has its little exceptions. Why should you demand a face to face audience with me?"

"I didn't ask for any kind of an audience," retorted The Wasp. "You did the asking, but I assumed that any person I spoke to would be visible. But that's not here nor there. I'm off."

He turned to the door that had closed softly after he had entered but the man behind the screen spoke again before the American's fingers could grip the handle. "I come out," he said sharply. "Wait one moment."

A minute passed, then there stepped from behind the screen a tall, thin man who wore a dressing gown of gray silk, corded tightly around his waist. Only the upper part of the face was visible. Large, dark eyes, set close together and lit up with a light that suggested famaticism, regarded The Wasp over the tip of a black fan which the tall one held so that it completely covered the nose, mouth, and the lower section of the face. The hand that held the fan was long and lean, the bones emphasizing their presence and conjuring up a picture of thin poles beneath sagging, gray-tinted canvas. A rather ludicrous figure in a way, and yet, as the Texan glanced at the man, he felt that there was in him that queer, unexplainable, lambency that characterizes great dreamers and great fanatics. Mohammed might have had such eyes; they might have been the eyes of Savonarola, of Torquemada. They were illuminated with the fires of belief; hot, mad fires that bring trouble to the world unless they are held back by the cooling influence of common sense.

The voice in which he addressed The Wasp was raised slightly to show his displeasure at the tactics of the American. Words here and there broke away from the control and were kept down with difficulty. They had an inclination 'to shriek.

"You are right in saying that you did not ask for an audience with me," he said. "I wanted you to meet me because I thought your services would be valuable to me. You have come and now I can tell you what I want." He paused for a moment and regarded the handsome adventurer. The cool, gray eyes of Robert Henry Blane met the bright, dark eyes of The Man from Prague, and they were not a whit disconcerted by the scrutiny of tthe mysterious person who was troubling Europe. The Texan Wasp, in his time, had looked at many men without flinching.

The other went on, speaking swiftly: "I can offer you any reward that you ask. Any sum that you name will be met. Money is a small thing when compared with service. I can offer you a bigger salary than the president of your country."

"For what?" asked The Wasp.

The other paused for a moment before answering. "For making an attempt to upset the rule that exists in your country!" he said sharply. "Listen, don't speak for a moment! I am an iconoclast and the iconoclast always goes before the builder. Ground must be cleared before we erect new buildings. It is the law! We must have the destroyer who pulls down old walls, roots up old foundations, levels the ground and puts things in order for the architect of to-

morrow!"

The voice had got from beyond control now. It carried with it a thin, high note . that was painful to the listening Texan. It was the note that told of a mental engine in distress, of a brain "knocking" for want of proper attention. To Robert Henry Blane there came a feeling that the mental bearings of the other had been burned out by high-powered egoism upon which no one had poured the cooling oil of common sense.

The Man from Prague had climbed suddenly into a seat that offered difficulties.

"I'm listening," said The Wasp as the other paused.

"I want to send you to America!" cried the tall man. "I want to send you there with funds that will buy a path through steel walls. Do you understand? Not paltry remittances sent to you in a niggardly manner, but credits that will astonish bankers! Yes, credits that will astonish the fifteen fools that are at your hotel this evening! I can do it! I have the money! I have thousands and thousands! Millions and millions! I have all I want for the work!"

"And what is the work?" asked the Texan coldly.

"Destruction!" answered the man in the silk dressing gown. His lean hands pressed the fan against his face, suggesting the existence of a contrary desire to lower the shield and bark the word into the ears of the unmoved person who confronted him. After a little pause he repeated the word again, repeated it lovingly as if it were the essence of a prayer, a concentrated slogan of hope. "Destruction!" he cried.

Curiously, Robert Henry Blane remembered in the silence that followed, a paragraph of the article which the strange Viennese writer had published. It remarked that to many of the young men, who were filled with pride and ambition, the frightful war had seemed an opening course of life, and, with that bloody beginning to 'the feast, they naturally had expected more thrilling dishes to follow. Reasoning thus, the writer had attempted to explain the mad desire to destroy that was evident throughout the world. The Wasp thought. The Man from Prague was one of the persons to whom the writer alluded. Blood was necessary to the fellow's life.

Robert Henry Blane put a question. "Tell me in what way you wish this destruction to be carried out?" he asked quietly.

"In every way!" cried the other. "In all ways and in every way! With words, with money, with sneers, with smiles, with fire even! Destroy their faith, their stupid beliefs, their confidence, their pride, their patriotism! Destroy everything that they rest on! Destroy the little, fat pillows upon which their fat, bourgeois souls are squatting, then we will offer them a real base, a strong, modern base upon which they can rest»

A smile rested for a moment on the handsome face of The Texan Wasp. The other noted it. "What makes you smile?" he asked angrily.

"I was thinking of a couple I met today," said the American quietly. "I was just wondering what could replace what they and their townspeople possess."

"How? Why? What do you mean?" snapped. the man in the dressing gown. "What have the fools got?"

"I don't know quite what they've got," answered Robert Henry Blane. "It struck me that it was something rather nice and homey though. It seems a sort of mixture that youll have to go some to beat. The bride of the man I was speaking to saved a few hundred people from death by plugging in telephone calls with the flood water up to her waist, and the folk of her town were so impressed with her courage that the good old sports got together and scooped up enough money to pay her honeymoon expenses to Europe. It's possibly a small matter to you, but— well, it sort of hit me square in the middle of my emotional solar plexus."

There came an interval of silence. The dark eyes of The Man from Prague regarded the adventurer. In their blazing depths showed surprise, annoyance, anger. The long, bony fingers clutched the handle of the fan as if they had a belief that the article was a knife.

The silence was interrupted by a soft knock on the door. The apostle of destruction barked an order, the door opened and the ruffianly looking person who had addressed The Wasp at the corner of the Via Tridi entered the room.

The newcomer looked from his master to Robert Henry Blane, then again glanced inquiringly at The Man from Prague. It was plain that he had a message and waited the word to speak.

The lover of destruction turned to The Wasp. With a look of simulated astonishment he leaned forward, his eyes upon the face of the American. In the queer, slithering Magyar dialect he cried out: "There is blood on your face!"

Robert Henry Blane did not move a muscle. He understood what had been said to him but in his checkered career that test had been applied to him before. He said softly: "I do not understand. What did you say?"

The Man from Prague turned to the messenger and in the same tongue that he had used in testing the lingual capacity of the American he asked sharply: "Have they found out?"

"Yes," answered the man.

"Where?" questioned The Man from Prague.

"In the car," replied the other. "Hiding and watching the hotel."

The Man from Prague glanced swiftly at the Texan. Robert Henry Blane was examining a flight of gilded cupids on the ceiling. His complete lack of interest

would have fooled an angel.

The Man from Prague gave hurried instructions. Some one was to see some one else, means were to be taken immediately. The Magyar dialect was hard to follow when it took on high speed. The ears of The Wasp were strained to clutch the words. He seized upon one here and there and strung them together by guessing their connecting links. Something was to be done to a certain person hiding in an automobile in a street. And there was no indication that the "something" was to be of a kind and charitable order. Quite the opposite. It seemed to the Texan as his ears grabbed at the quick-flowing words, clutching an expression here and there, that the creed of destruction advanced by the madman from Prague was to be put in operation. The thoughts of The Wasp were on the darkened car on the Piazza Cavour, the car in which sat the greatest sleuth in Europe. He wondered what was being prepared for No. 37!

The messenger slipped through the door and The Man from Prague turned to the American. He began to talk in a quiet tone that carried a sneering note. "It has dawned on me that I made a mistake in sending for you," he said. "I thought from what I heard that you. were a person that would be useful. I thought that you— well, I thought that you were an adventurous person who was free from all mawkishness."

The slight scar on the right jaw of The Wasp that was not noticeable when the face expressed good humor showed white and sinister under the words of the other. The spirit of good temper left the gray eyes and was succeeded by a fighting look that might have stopped the prattle of a more observant person than the man in the gray-silk dressing gown.

The apostle of disorder went on: "I could offer you any reward that you named. I could offer you a sum that would be beyond your wildest hopes. But I won't! You started to talk about a silly girl who saved some one from drowning and stuff of that sort. Wihat is that to me? Tell me? What is all that to me?"

He lifted his voice and screamed the questions at Robert Henry Blame. Again there came the shrieking undernote into his words. He was angry, violently angry, and he took no pains to hide his temper. The simple story of the heroine of Calico Springs had stirred a consuming hate against the man that he had thought of employing.

"I might have known!" he screamed. "I should have been wiser! I have wasted time in speaking to you. If I had considered a moment I should have cut you out as a possible employee! I know the American people! They are all fools! They are—"

"Easy!" interrupted The Wasp. "Hold your horses! You're going down an incline!"

"Going down what?" shrieked the other.

"Going down an incline," said the Texan, his gray eyes fixed on the frothing egoist. "I said to clap on your brakes before—"

"I am speaking!" cried The Man from Prague. "I am telling you that I know the sickly sentimentality of the American people! I know their mawkish desire to help! I know their idiotic—"

The little résumé of the faults of the American people was suddenly interrupted. A very hard fist leaped up from the hip of Robert Henry Blane, whizzed swiftly through the air, smashed the black fan covering the lower part of the egoist's face and landed on what is known to ring followers as "the button." A fine, well-placed blow. For the faintest fraction of a second The Man from Prague seemed to oscillate softly with his feet. an inch from the floor, then he crumpled hurriedly and flopped heavily upon the Bokharan rug that covered the parquetry. For the time being the work of the destroyer was halted by a small dose of his own medicine deftly administered by a person who refused to join the colors.

The Texan Wasp didn't glance at the man on the floor. He stepped to the door, opened it and passed into the darkened passage. He was very annoyed. The criticism which the vicious fanatic had aimed at Americans angered him curiously. It cast a reflection on his own intelligence. He, Blane, had been stirred by the story which the Reverend Thomas Browne had told of his little bride, and he resented the impertinence of a long, ghostlike foreigner who found it mawkish and sentimental.

"The conceited ass!" growled the Texan. "If I had him near the lake I would drop him in!"

The passage was quiet. The Wasp remembered the little records he had taken while coming to the room. Cautiously he started to retrace his steps. There was the man with the flash light between him and the street door.

The American hurried. He realized that the man he had seüt into dreamland might recover at any moment. And he guessed that the apostle of destruction would come to his senses in a mood that would be in mo way friendly to the man who had walloped him on the jaw. Robert Henry Blane pictured the ridiculous face of the egoist as the blow landed. The fellow was bragging so loudly of destruction that it seemed strange when a: snappy little jolt to the jaw could silence his jargon and send him whizzing into slumberland.

Blane had nearly reached the street door when he stumbled over an obstacle on the floor. The obstacle immediately resented interference. Two muscular hands ghipped the right ankle of the Texan and brouglit him swiftly to the boards. He had tripped over the guard who had stretched himself across the passage to enjoy a nap!

It was a very short and sharp engagement. As The Wasp fell he heard the faroff buzzing of a bell which convinced him that The Man from Prague was recovering somewnat. The guardian of the door had also heard the bell. He unloosed a cry ior help that woke the echoes of the passage. Robert Henry Blane felt for the fellow's throat, luckily found it, and effectuaily stopped a second yell. He did more. His iron fingers shut off the breath of the guard so cleverly that the man gurgled and lay still.

The Wasp sprang to his feet. Some one had answered the bell. There came excited cries and orders from the end of the sage. A blaze of light routed the furthermost masses of gloom and advanced up the passage. The high-pitched voice of the great egoist rose above the clamor.

Robert Henry Blane dashed to the door. He found two locks and tL:ust them back. He gripped the handle and pulled. The door would not budge.

The seeing fingers of the American raced up and down the jamb. They found a button. The crack of a revolver was followed by deafening echoes. The Wasp pressed the button and again pulled. at the handle. The door opened. A hand gripped at the Texan's collar. He tore himself free, sprang into the Via Tridi and dashed away into the night.

The Texan Wasp made for the Piazza Cavour but he chose a different route to that by which he had come. He raced through dark and narrow streets till he reached the Via Unione, followed this to the Place Volta, then by a narrow street to the Lungo. His thoughts were centered on one matter of supreme importance. The conversation between The Man from Prague and his ruffianly follower buzzed within his brain. The scraps of the Magyar dialect that he had clung to became rimmed with colored fire as he ran. Something was to be done to some one who was within a darkened automobile, and the something was not of a friendly character.

The Wasp ran faster. For a second the remembered the roof in the narrow street at Carcassonne where he had sprung upon the man who carried with him the peculiar odor of crushed marigolds. Some one had rescued him, Blane, when death was placing soft and silent hands upon him. And that rescuer and the man in the darkened car were identical. The great man hunter, No. 37, was the active force in old Carcassone and the marked victim in Como!

Running at full speed Robert Henry Blane reached the Piazza Cavour. Half blinded by perspiration he glanced at the street before the hotel. The darkened car was still standing some twenty feet from the entrance!

The Wasp halted. He glanced around the square. There were no signs of immediate danger. 'The piazza was nearly deserted. The notes of a song floated in from the lake. The illuminated caterpillars that went up and down continuously on the slope of Brunate moved noiselessly away from each other

after meeting halfway up the mountain. The clock in the curiously constructed Broletto chimed eleven.

The American took:a scrap of paper from his pocket and, pausing for a moment, scribbled a few words upon it. It was a short message reading:

Hop for your life. Something is going to break loose.
They know where you are. BLANE.

At a swift walk he approached the darkened automobile. He rolled the scrap of paper into a pellet, then, without halting in his stride, he whisked it deftly through the open window of the car as he passed. He reasoned that the detective would be alert and that he would read the. message immeditely by aid of a flash light.

Robert Henry Blane, walking swiftly, crossed the street in front of the car and dived into a dark passage. He was certain that the man hunter, if still in the auto, would slip out the far door of the machine and make for the same spot. No. 37 was too clever to make his retreat from his hidüng place more noticeable than was absolutely necessary.

The guess made by the Texan was correot. He had hardly reached the dark passage when he saw the door of the car open. 'The short, muscular form of the detective crept quietly onto the street. The American watched him. Like a very alert cat the sleuth swiftly crossed the street and plunged into the gloom.

"Blane?" he whispered.

"Yes, I'm here!" murmured the Texan.

"What is happening?"

"I don't know."

"But why the note?"

"I heard something. Scraps of a confab between two persons who are not friendly disposed toward you."

The detective grunted. "There's a few around here who are not friendly with decent folk," he growled. "I'm thankful to you for tipping me off. I saw you when you tossed the pebbles on the car. Here long?"

"Came this afternoon," said The Wasp. "Had an appointment to keep."

The conversation ended for the moment. The two stood together and watched the darkened car. Robert Henry Blane wondered if he had made a mistake regarding the few scraps that he had rescued from the slithering speech of The Man from Prague. He had no wish to discuss with the detective the manner in which he had acquired the information. That was his own affair. Tipping him off to an immediate danger was simply paying off an old score. Besides, to the Texan there was a great desire to foil the plans of the egoist who had talked of the mawkishness and sentimentality of Americans.

From far off came the heavy rumbling of a motor truck. The noise rushed down a narrow street onto the piazza and spread, brazen and nerve-destroying, over the silent square. It drummed against the closed shutters of the houses, bringing grunts of anger from hot and sleepy persons within.

The roar increased. It became a very devil of a noise. It shook the ground. It was a canopy of disorder thrust out over the town, the throbbing of the engine being interlaced with the harder and more forceful streaks of sound made by the wheels grinding the cobbles.

A policeman near the water front was stirred into attention. " He came hurrying across the square with a "what-the-dickens" run that was ludicrous. Como was a resort and ruffians who ran army camions wild after midnight were undesirable citizens.

The narrow street choked with the barbaric uproar. It carried a 'sinister suggestion of unbridled power. It was threatening, alarming, menacing.

The cobbles shrieked under the iron-shod wheels as the camion rolled into the square. The Wasp and the detective leaned forward and watched the thing. They sensed a tragedy.

The great truck swept in a drunken manmer across the street, struck the pavement and bore down in a slouching, reckless way on the door of the hotel. Its speed increased. The policeman broke into a run, blowing his whistle furiously as he raced toward the camion that was running amuck. A woman peering from a half-opened window shrieked loudly. A waiter before the door of the hotel turned and dived like a startled rabbit into the house.

The wheel of the truck tossed aside a small pine tree in a tub that was taking an airing, then it charged straight at the darkened car in which No. 37 had been hiding!

It roared down on it like a tank on a concrete shelter. It struck the rear end of the automobile with irresistible force. It lifted it, held it wedged for an instant against the pavement, then ground it remorselessly.

The noise of splintering wood was added to the mad racket. The body of ithe car was crumpled up as if a monster mouth had pounced upon it. The sidewalk was strewn with varnished fragments; pieces of glass descended in a shower.

The driver of the truck had sprung from his seat the moment before the drunken machine had struck the car. He leaped to the street, turned, and ran swiftly in the direction from which the truck had come. Robert Henry Blane, standing in the dark passage, saw the policeman make an ineffectual attempt to stop the fellow, then, as The Wasp swung round to speak to his companion he found that the sleuth was not there. He looked again at the flying figure of the driver. Speeding after him at a gait that seemed altogether out of keeping

with his rather burly form, was No. 37!

The Wasp, a little astounded at the happening, kept on the outskirts of the crowd that gathered around the stalled truck and the wrecked automobile. The American was cautious. Some one had made a very definite attempt to send the man hunter to the other world, skewered with the splinters of the battered car. To the police and half-dressed onlookers it was simply an affair in which a drunken driver had collided with a parked car and had bolted at finding what a mess he had made of the machine. Blane looked for the officer who had spoken to No. 37 earlier in the evening, but the fellow was not there. He had evidently gone off duty, so there was no suspicion that the collision had been engineered with the view of killing or disabling any person.

The Wasp considered the happening. He was certain that the whole affair was the result of the instructions which The Man from Prague had given to his ruffianly follower. The impudence of the apostle of destruction amazed: the Texan. Europe was certainly going to the devil. Quiet, sober old Europe with the dust of the centuries on it was running the wildest sections of the New World off the map.

The Wasp considered his own safety. He was evidently under the eye of persons in the pay of The Man from Prague. Curiously his mind recalled an interview he had in the long ago with Ferdinand Darren, "Count of Pierrefond." The great gambler had told the Texan that he, Darren, seeking peaceful sleep, tried to imitate the natives of New Guinea who slept in trees after hauling up the ladders by which they had climbed to their lofty perches. Robert Henry Blane wished that he had a tree.

Some one in the crowd mentioned Brunate. The Wasp overheard the answer. There was a special late car up to the high peak!

The information solved the problem in the mind of Robert Henry Blane. Brunate, twenty-five hundred feet above the town, was a refuge that could not be reached after the cars stopped running.

Swiftly The Wasp slipped away from the crowd. -Running at top speed along the *Borgo Sant' Agostino he reached the station in time to spring into the last car. It slipped. up the high hill and Como dropped away as it climbed. Mr. Blane, watching the lights, thought it rather a mad town at the moment. A little too wild for the sound sleep which he longed for greatly. He felt a great admiration for the New Guinea natives who haul up their ladders after sleepily climbing into the treetops.

AT THE Central Station in Milan the Paris-Lausanne express was on the point of sweeping northward through the Simplon tunnel on its picturesque run. Bells rang and station officials bellowed wamnings.

The gold-laced conductor blew his whistle. The engine snorted. A proud engine. It was dragging northward the "Billion Dollar Battalion" that was giving Europe the once-over. They were occupying a special carriage at the rear of the trait. Next to the special carrying the fifteen American bankers was a second-class car, and in one compartment of the second sat the Reverend Thomas Browne and the little bride who was the heroine of Calico Springs.

The train was moving when commotion itself blew onto the platform. A long. legged person dashed through the turnstiles, cleverly evaded the tackle of two officials, streaked by the bankers' special car, rushed past the second-class compartments, clutched the brass rail of a corridor first-class and hauled himself aboard. A perspiring conductor who started to read the riot act caught the cool gray eyes of his tardy passenger and mumbled some unintelligible remarks about danger.

"Are you speaking to me?" asked Robert Henry Blane.

"No, signore," stammered the conductor.

The Wasp entered a compartment and sat down. He had not slept as well as he expected. Half a dozen questions had danced through his slumbers, prodding him at times into wakefulness. They had clustered around him, demanding answers. "What prompted the murderous attempt on the life of No. 37?" "Was The Man from Prague anxious te harm the fifteen bankers?" "Was the apostle of destruction connected with the League of the Creeping Death?" "Would the little parson and his bride be in danger through traveling on the same train as the distinguished financiers?" "Was No. 37 aware of the presence of the Prague person in Como?" And, lastly: "If a girl had the courage to stand at her switchboard and send out calls with flood water up to her waist would it not be possible for a two-fisted Texan to ride along with her on her wedding trip and keep his eyes open for danger?"

The train roared northward, through interesting country. By armies of olive trees, by Stresa and Baveno with glimpses of the Borromean Islands where "little chunks of Paradise squat soft in sapphire blue."

Robert Henry Blane was not interested in scenery. With apparent carelessness but with eyes and brain alert he wandered through the train, sifting the passengers. French, Italians, Americans, Swiss and English; a sprinkling of Germans, Swedes, and Norwegians. A cosmopolitan train. <A dozen tongues in use in a single carriage. The Wasp listened and moved on; stopped, listened, and moved again. He was searching for something, something that he had a dim idea he might find.

He invaded the second-class carriage in which rode the Reverend Thomas Browne and his bride. The little couple were in ecstasies. They sat side by side, holding hands, their eyes feasting on the flying landscape. 'Had Mr. Blane seen

Lake Maggiore? Had he seen the islands? Wasn't it all beautiful? What a lot they would have to tell to the good folk of Calico Springs!" The Reverend Thomas showed his diaries; fat, bulging diaries. He had planned— and he told this with visible self-consciousness— to give a series of lectures in aid of the poor who had suffered most by the flood. Robert Henry Blane had difficulty in getting away from 'the two delighted honeymooners. A sight of their glowing faces would cure any one suffering from gangrene of the soul.

For the third time The Wasp loafed through the corridors. He walked the train from end to end, excepting the special wagon in which rode the "Billion Dollar Battalion." He had a vague feeling that his eyes or ears would locate something of interest. It was a queer feeling that he could not get rid of. It was the result of the six questions that had troubled his sleep.

Through Domodossola and on toward the tremendous tunnel that drives through the very stomach of the Lepontine Alps. A burrow over twelve miles in length with a mile high of mountain above it! The appalling Simplon, unequaled in the world!

And as the train raced toward the black opening like a rabbit making for its hole that which The Wasp had sought came to his ears! It startled him. It dragged him suddenly from a daydream that pictured the face of a girl of the long ago sitting with a tall wanderer from Texas in a fairy train that swung them by wonder scenery the like of which they had never seen. The girl was Betty Allerton of Boston, and the man Robert Henry Blane, one time of Houston, Texas.

The something held The Wasp at rigid attention. It came from behind him as he stood in the corridor of his own carriage. It made him tense and watchful. He experienced a little thrill of horror, a queer feeling of morbid expectancy. An inner self suggested that he should brace himself to resist an approaching danger. What Robert Henry Blane had heard was the slithering Magyar dialect in which The Man from Prague had conversed with the henchman detailed to maim or kill No. 37!

The Wasp did not turn. .He listened, listened with ears strained to catch the purport of the whispered words. The slippery tongue evaded him. The words flowed into each other, making a gurgling stream that slipped by in a maddening fashion.

One word came clearly to The Wasp. It was the Magyar word for "burrow." It was followed closely by another that suggested hurry. The whispering stopped. Cautiously Robert Henry Blane turned. Slipping awkwardly through the passengers who cluttered the corridor and stared through the windows were two tall men wearing caps of the old type that possessed. earflaps which

were turned up and tied together by strings. One of the two carried a small bundle wrapped tightly in black oilskin.

Robert Henry Blane followed the two. They were making for the rear of the car in which he had taken his place. Behind his car was the second-class carriage in which rode the Reverend Thomas Browne of Calico Springs and his little bride; after the second-class car trailed the special car that carried the "Billion Dollar Battalion."

With a swish of hot air along the corridor and a little chorus of "Oh's" and "Ah's" the express dived into the terrible burrow, A strange, bold deed for the electric motor. Twelve miles away on the other side of the majestic peaks was Switzerland; behind were the sunlit slopes of Italy. Above the arched roof of the tunnel was a mile high of red clay, granite and crystalline-schist heaved heavenward in the days when the world. was young. Man, boring like a maggot in a gigantic cheese, had driven a little hole through this terrifying mass, and through this hole ran the electric-driven trains packed with travelers.

The Wasp hung to the two. tall men who whispered to each other. The roar of the train was deafening. Passengers in the cortidor -slipped back into their different compartments, a little awed by the knowledge that a mile of earth and rock rested on the ceiling beneath which the train scuttled like a frightened lizard. Robert Henry Blane was glad that the press in the corridor lessened. It gave him a better chance to observe the two. He got closer to them. The belief that they meditated something evil, something unclean, grew as he watched.

'The two reached the rear of the car. Behind them roared and rattled the secondclass carriage containing the heroine of Calico Springs, and behind that again came the special with the fifteen bankers.

The Wasp was an example of careless watchfulness. The train roared up the gradient that leads to the highest point of the wonderful burrow. The man carrying the package wrapped 'tightly in black oilskin cut the string and uncovered it furtively. Gusts of wind swept through the car. The little air demons that live in the dark Simplon snatched at the cap of the man with the bundle. It was whipped from his head and with a growl of rage he flung up his right hand to recover it.

The train lurched. The fellow cannoned against a brass guard leading to the side door. His companion cried a warning. The oilskin wrapper of the small bundle fell to the floor, carrying with it a sprinkling of gray powder that evidently had found its way out of the inner covering of brown paper. The Wasp moved closer. The eyes of the second man swung upon him, queer eyes that showed red in the dim light at the end of the car. He cried out a warning as Robert Henry Blane moved closer.

Robert Henry Blane became a panther ready to spring. The second man, who had ordered Blane away, now stooped to blow the gray powder from the platform. He dropped upon his knees and fanned it with his hat, and, as he did so Fate brought the matter to a head. A brakeman, lurching through the train from the rear, stumbled out of the connecting passage to the second-class carriage. The dim light made the man on the floor for the moment invisible. The brakeman tossed away the butt of the cigarette he was smoking. It fell upon one end of the little trail of gray powder that the fellow was brushing away. There was the spiteful hiss of an awakened snake, a flare that lit up the rear platform, a quick flash of flame as the spoonful of explosive that had oozed out of a badly packed bomb exploded. A stream of curses came from the man on his knees. The brakeman roared a question. Robert Henry Blane sprang.

It was a crazed man that The Wasp clutched. A madman whose god was Destruction. The American was interfering with what the fellow thought ito be the most wonderful work that was ever intrusted to any one. He had been ordered to throw the bomb from the rear end of the car so that it would encompass the destruction of the *Billion Dollar Battalion" traveling in the special. And the actions of a fool brakeman and qn interfering tourist blocked the great work!

The American received a blow on the back of the head that partly stunned him. The bundle carrier managed to gain possession of ithe door handle as ithe grip of the Texan weakened for an instant. The second thug had leaped upon the back of Robert Henry Blane and was endeavoring to strangle him with a well-placed garrote.

The wriggling snake with the bundle was possessed of the strength of a maniac. While his companion's grip tightened he fought to open the door. The wind torrent increased. The fellow shrieked with delight. He was winning. out.

Robert Henry Blane made a final effort. With the blood pounding madly in his head he swung himself around, packed the man clinging to his back in the aperture of the door, then, as the clawing devil made a further attack, the Texan put all his remaining strength into a punch.

The blow landed. It struck the wet forehead of the bomb carrier. He crumpled like a string of macaroni that has slipped from a fork. Some one in the corridor pulled the alarm. Blane, as he slipped to the floor of the platform, heard the squealing of hurriedly applied brake shoes. The express was pulling up.

TEN MINUTES later Robert Henry Blane, quite recovered from the struggle, listened to the remarks of a bullet-headed man who had come from the special

car that carried the fifteen bankers. A strange, bulldog type of man with eyes that were like frozen hailstones, a mouth that was but a lipless line, and a chin that had thrown peace to the wind. He was a man feared by criminals. He was known from the white city of Cadiz to odorous Archangel, and from romantic Stamboul to the far-off Hebrides. He was No. 37.

"They wish to make you a substantial present," said the sleuth. "Not a little thing. Something big that—"

The Texan laughed. "Tell them to keep it," he said quietly. "I had never a thought of them. I was thinking of a little American girl who is on her honeymoon. She's riding with her husband in the second-class. Saved a town, man! What do you think of that? Plugged in calls on the phone with the flood up to her waist. And, listen! The folk of her town sent her and her husband on a honeymoon trip to Europe. The folk of Calico Springs, Arkansas! Did you think I wanted that honeymoon trip mucked up by a madman? Come along and I'll introduce you to her and her husband. You consort so much with criminals and near criminals that it will do your soul good to chat for a few minutes with a clean American girl that carries more grit in her system than you and I together! Come along!"

12: After all Else Failed

William Merriam Rouse

1884-1937

Top-Notch Magazine 15 Jan 1924

Prolific American short story writer, some 500 published.

NO justice of the peace likes to be roused from his afternoon nap by a young mob scene. Old Sam Barnes, keeper of the peace and dignity and general well being of the Coon Mountain neighborhood, had learned through turbulent years that there is a time for all things. With the rheumatic Jeff, once a notable skunk dog, snoozing at his side, Sam had just entered upon the second and more enjoyable stage of his doorstep siesta when visitors gave tongue down, the path. There were only three of them, but they made enough noise for thirty; the granite-buttressed heights of Coon Mountain echoed to the sound of their approach. The whiskers of Constable Tom Grupp were easily recognizable, and there was no less difficulty in identifying the prisoners as "Budge" and "Hawk" Turner.

Nobody except the Turner boys, or some fool outlander, would make that much fuss over being arrested. It was noteworthy that Tom Grupp had taken out of moth balls the revolver his father had carried through the Civil War. Tom was champion collar-and-elbow wrestler of the county and under ordinary circumstances he scorned a weapon. With the Turner boys, it was different.

"Drat their hides!" muttered Sam Barnes. He scratched his chin thoughtfully. "I'm going to cure them boys this time, no matter if I bust my gallusses doing it! I've got almost a good mind to send 'em to jail!"

The party hhalted six feet from the justice and quieted down. Barnes repressed Jeff's bluif at being a watchdog and fixed the visitors with a blue eye which could grow cold and stormy upon occasion.

"Well, Tom," he said, "what's them two rapscallions been up to now?"

"Everything!" exploded Constable Grupp in the strained voice of one who is scraping the bottom of the barrel for more patience. "Disturbing the peace, disorderly conduct, felonious assault, public nuisance, and malicious mischief. If them charges ain't enough I can think of lots more."

Sam Barnes regarded the Turner brothers. Budge was a thick-shouldered young man with level black eyebrows which ran in one continuous line across his face. He was good-looking after his fashion, but a sharp contrast to his brother. Hawk Turner's most prominent feature was a grin, which changed but did not disappear in the stress of battle. He owned a fearless eye and a lithe and catlike body.

In the heart of Sam Barnes there was a soft spot for Hawk Turner. He bore no ill-will against Budge, but he had a sneaking fondness for the cheerful Hawk. The justice of the peace was out of patience with both of them now, however. He had hunted bears with their grandfather in the old days, but that was not going to save them from being settled in some kind of permanent peace.

"You tell me just how come, Tom," he said.

"Well, Sam, these two pests has both been sparking that new waitress at Ike Peabody's boarding house at the Corners. Good-looking girl with fluffy hair. Name's Flora Dell. Last night they both got there at the same time and had an argyment. Peabody's got two black eyes, a busted door, and all the furniture in the sitting room smashed. Ike figgers it's set him back twenty-five dollars besides the black eyes."

Sam Barnes filled his corncob pipe and worked the stem to a comfortable place between his teeth. "Black eyes is either durned foolishness or an act of Providence," he said. "Most likely Peabody tried to nose into somebody else's fight. Damages is a different thing. You boys got any money?"

Budge Turner silently produced a roll of bills. Hawk turned his pockets inside out, grinned, and shrugged.

"They's twenty-five dollars damages to pay," announced the justice, "and two dollars to Tom for all this fuss and a dollar more for waking me up to hold court. That's twenty-eight. You hand over half of it, Budge, and I'll see to getting the other half of it out of Hawk. That's easy, but now we're getting along toward the hard part of this rumpus. I'm going to make you boys behave yourselves. I'm going to give ye both a cure! Drat your hides! Budge, you tell your story first!"

Budge Turner looked at his brother and growled throatily. "Flora Dell would marry me if it wasn't for him!" he said.

"Huh!" snorted Barnes. "Well, Hawk, what you got to say?"

"She and I would have been married six weeks ago if it hadn't been for Budge!" exclaimed Hawk, with narrowing eyes. "He took what money I had on an ace full of jacks, and he's been spending it on her!"

They lurched toward each other and Constable Grupp collared them both.

"Stop it!" he yelled. "They had three fights on the way up here, Sam, and Tm all tired out. If you don't do something to make them critters keep the peace I'll put a hunk of lead into 'em!"

The Turner boys showed marks of conflict, but they were still full of battle and iniquity.

Sam Barnes heaved a sigh and scratched his chin again. "You boys can go to jail or do what I'm going to tell ye," he said. "Tt'll be less trouble for me if you want to go to jail."

"I'll do what you say, squire," declared Hawk with his usual grin.

"Me, too," agreed Budge.

"All right," said Barnes. "Tom, you take Hawk over to Gideon Barstow's place, and tell him I said to put Hawk to work. Gideon needs a man in haying and part of the money will settle up with Peabody. Budge, you stay here with me. I want to look you over some. Neither one of you is going down to the Corners to see this girl. Can't leave the places where you're at. Sentence of the court! Take 'em away, officer!"

"Gosh, I feel better!" exclaimed Grupp, putting up his revolver for the first time. "Come on, Hawk!"

Budge stood in silence as he watched his brother and the constable disappear. Jeff sniffed at him and cocked an inquiring eye at his master. Sam Barnes rose and knocked out his pipe.

"They's an ax and a woodpile out back of the house," he said. "I'm going down to the Corners and when I come back we'll have supper. Johnny cake and baked beans, and some of the best apple sass you ever et!"

Sam Barnes departed, and it was not until the Tong shadows of sunset were striking across woodland and rockstudded pasture that he came back to the foot of Coon Mountain. His step was a little slow with age, but there was a spring in it nevertheless, and his face wore the contented look of a man who has made up his mind.

Budge Turner had split wood with a reasonable degree of industry, but it was apparent that he did not relish the job. He dropped the ax where he stood when Barnes called him to supper, and he maintained an almost complete silence while the old man repeated the store porch gossip he had collected.

Budge Turner helped to wash the dishes after supper and then smoked morosely through the evening.

ii

IT was early the next afternoon, about twenty-four hours after Budge's arrival, when Justice Barnes called him from the woodpile. Sam grinned and pointed down the path with the stem of his corncob.

"Look and see what's coming and then take the crape off'n your disposition!" he chortled.

A slender, light-haired girl was almost upon them. She laughed, dimpling, and exposed the chewing gum between her white teeth as she came up to the doorstep. Her dress was an unobtrusive green, but red sandals and a red vanity case gave a touch of color. Nobody could deny that she was pretty.

"Oh, Mr. Barnes!" she cried. '"You're the very dearest old thing! Oh, Budge!

Don't stand there like a dummy! You ought to be glad to see me!"

"Flo Dell!" exclaimed Budge Turner thickly. "Say, squire—"

"Never mind asking questions, Budge!" interrupted Barnes. "It looks as though you and this gal knew each other. Mighty glad your friends is coming to see you! I don't want you two should go out of sight of the house, but I don't calculate to spy on ye, neither. Most likely I'll be asleep most of the time while she's here."

"You said we wasn't to see her!" Budge managed a full-sized laugh. "I guess this is one on Hawk!"

"I said neither one of you was to go to the Corners to see her until this business was settled," remarked Sam Barnes with a little coolness. "I don't go back on what I say. But I didn't say nothing about not letting her come up here!"

"She can go to see him, too!" cried Turner. "Flo, have you been to see Hawk?"

Flora Dell tossed her head and sidled away. "'Not yet!" she snapped— "But I guess I got a right to if I feel like it."

"Not unless Gideon Barstow give you an invitation," said Barnes dryly. "Leastways I guess Gideon is boss of his own place."

The good humor of Budge Turner came back. He possessed himself of Flora's hand.

"You better not go to see him!" he said with a grin.

"You better be thankful for your blessings," suggested Barnes.

Flora Dell agreed. "You said a mouthful!" she declared, giggling.

iii

THE back of Hawk Turner was creaking just a little. It's one thing to tramp the mountains with a dog and gun twelve hours on end and another to get up at daylight in haying and pitch onto the load or mow away until a late sunset. In general, Gideon Barstow was a mighty easy man to work for, but mountain weather is temperamental; also hay must be cut when it's right and put under cover at the right time or the year's profits on. a sidehill farm may be less than nothing.

Hawk knew Justice Sam Barnes too well to think he could get out of his present predicament, unless he took to the woods. If he took to the woods it would be a long time before he saw Flora Dell again. An inner whisper persisted in telling him that she was not the waiting kind.

Hawk Turner had just finished pitching on a load when down from the cool, maple-shaded farmhouse came a girl in a gingham dress. That was Barstow's

daughter, Margaret, with the regular jug of cider. Halfway between the early breakfast and dinner, and again between dinner and supper, she came. Gideon Barstow stuck his fork into the load and slid down; he was a comfortable-looking man with a twinkle in his eye.

"Cheer up, Hawk!" he said. "Soon as we finish getting the hay in we'll take it easy. If you do the chores you can spend the rest of your time playing croquet with Margaret, for all I care."

The Hawk Turner grin was still working; moreover, he liked the whole Barstow family. He had been having the first quiet and uneventful days of his young life, and he rather enjoyed them.

"Most any night at bedtime I'd be willing to take jail, if it wasn't for thinking of the cider next day," he said.

"Margaret," said Gideon Barstow, "Hawk thinks maybe he'd be happier in jail than he is here."

The gingham dress, containing a form calculated to please a most discriminating eye, had arrived. A pair of steady gray eyes looked out from beneath a broad white forehead.. She made Hawk Turner think of woodsy places along a brook, patches. of sunlight and little water sounds. Her smile rested a couple of tired men as she handed the jug to her father. He drank and passed it to Turner.

"Hawk wants to see his girl, dad," said Margaret Barstow. "That's what's the matter with him!"

Hawk Turner blushed and choked. Barstow laughed.

"I'm willing," the older man said, "but I got my orders from Sam Barnes. I can't let Hawk go off the farm until I get the word from Sam."

"You didn't promise not to have her come here, did you?" asked Margaret, without even the hint of a smile.

Hawk Turner started and almost dropped the precious jug. Barstow roared and slapped his leg.

"That would be a reg'lar York State joke on old Sam Barnes!" he cried. "Hawk, you've worked like a good feller for three weeks now, and you'd ought to have some fun out of life! Margaret can hitch up to-morrow after dinner and go down to the Corners and get your best girl! Wed ought to get the last load in by noon, and you can have the rest of the day off!"

A resounding thump from the hard hand of Gideon Barstow saved Hawk the embarrassment of trying to answer; literally he would not have known what to say. Three, even two weeks before he would have been willing to ignore Gideon Barstow's whiskers and kiss him at such a privilege. Now Hawk did not want to see Flora Dell; at least he did not want to have her come to visit him there.

"That'll be fine, dad!" Margaret Barstow was saying. "I'll be glad to do anything I can for Hawk! Maybe we can have the wedding here!"

She took the empty jug and started away, flinging a smile over her shoulder. Hawk dumbly watched her, until her father's voice reminded him that they ought to get that load of hay into the barn, if they ever expected to take in another on the same wagon.

Until exhaustion closed his eyes that night Hawk Turner worried about what was going to-happen the next day; and the next day, as noon drew on, he became more and more depressed. After dinner he went to the barn and with lagging hands began to put the harness on Margaret Barstow's driving horse. He heard her step on the planks of the floor and then her voice.

"I suppose you're the happiest man between here and the Canada. line, Hawk!"

Hawk Turner was nothing if not a man of action. Suddenly he flung the halter down. For an instant he stood in silence, gazing into the smiling gray eyes of Margaret Barstow. Then he began to unharness the horse.

"You needn't go to the Corners on my account," he said grimly.

"Oh, Hawk!" she cried softly. "I didn't think you'd trifle with a girl like that!"

"Me— trifle?" He turned upon her. "T guess you don't know Flo Dell! The first time I have a chance I'm going to tell Budge he can have her!"

"And everybody was talking about the fight you and Budge had over her! Ive been thinking right along you couldn't live without her, Hawk!"

"Well," muttered Turner, "I've kind of changed, I guess."

"Dad hasn't worked you so hard you've lost your spirit, has he?" she asked anxiously. "It's funny you'd change so quick!"

"No!" cried Hawk fiercely. "Any man would change, seeing a girl like you around every day! If— if I amounted to anything I'd— I'd marry you before sunset to-night!"

Twenty minutes later, when Gideon Barstow came into the barn to see why Margaret didn't start, he had to clear his throat three times before the young people heard him.

"Hawk and I are going to get married this afternoon," his daughter told him.

"Well," he said, after a moment, "if Sam Barnes'll marry you I don't know as I care. There' good stuff in you, Hawk, and with the wife you're going to get it's bound to come out."

iv

WITH Jeff, the hound dog, sleeping peacefully before him, Justice of the

Peace Sam Barnes sat on his doorstep and considered things in general and theTurner boys in particular. He believed that things were working out as he had planned three weeks before; there had been no evidence that they were not.

Although Sam was impartial, according to his lights, in the administration of justice, he could not help favoring Hawk Turner a little over his brother. That is, he wanted Hawk to have what he wanted, but for conscience's sake he felt bound to give Budge just a little bit the better of it.

He had sent Hawk over to Barstow's partly to get him out of the way for a time, and as much in order that he might earn some money and get acquainted with hard work. Sam Barnes had no very high opinion of Flora Dell, but she was all right as girls went, and he was sure that she must see the superiority of Hawk after she'd had a good chance to get acquainted with the crotchets of Budge's disposition.

The mighty brain of Sam Barnes had thought out the somewhat backhanded idea of winning her for Hawk by letting her see too much of Budge. And Budge Turner never would be able to say that he had not had a fair chance. The longer Sam Barnes observed the working out of his scheme the better pleased he was with itè

For a week Flora had come up from the Corners every afternoon. Then she had skipped a day. Then she had stopped coming altogether; and Budge, glummer than ever, had utterly refused to discuss the cessation of her visits.

Four days before this afternoon, Barnes had considered that his work with Flora and Budge was done. He had set Budge free. Now he thought it was about time for him to go over to Gideon Barstow's and get Hawk. Budge had announced his intention of going to the Plattsburg Fair, and the coast would be clear for Hawk and Flora to get married. Sam was ready to marry them. He had even filled in a marriage certificate that morning.

Into these pleasant meditations broke the war cry of an enraged male human of adult size. Even before his glance jerked down the path, Sam Barnes was sure of his facts. Budge Turner was coming, and he was coming fast despite a certain lurch and roll in his progress.

Sam got up. Jeff bristled and growled. Budge Turner came to a sudden stop six feet away and took off his coat. He began to roll up his shirt sleeves. Justice Barnes noticed that the coat was torn, with a large smear of mud down it, and that Budge carried a black eye.

"What's the matter of you, Budge?" he demanded sternly. "You're drunk!"

"There ain't nothing the matter of me!" replied Turner thickly. "But there's going to be something the matter witb you in a few minutes!"

"I'll put you in jail!" roared Sam, discreetly backing away.

"That's all right!" cried Budge. "You're going to have something to put me in jail for, you old he-matchmaker!"

Justice Sam Barnes was unquestionably a brave man, but it would have been folly for him to stand and give battle to Budge Turner. With great speed for one of his years he retreated around the corner of the house. Budge chased him and Jeff chased Budge. The three of them arrived at the woodshed, a lowlying addition to the house, and there Jeff saved the situation for the moment by settling what teeth he had left in one of Budge Turner's legs.

v

WITH a howl Budge Turner stopped to wrench the dog loose and hurl him into the woodshed. He closed the door on Jeff and looked around for his quarry. Sam Barnes was already on the woodshed roof. From there he scrambled up to the ridgepole of the house and pulled a loose brick from the chimney. He weighed it carefully in his hand as he looked down upon Budge. "Come on up!" he invited. "That's a thick head you got, but I bet I can dent it some with a brick!"

"I can stay down here a durned sight longer than you can stay up there!"

Budge Turner walked over to the woodpile, which his own labors had increased, and selected several pieces of a size handy for throwing.

Things were not looking as well as they might for Sam Barnes. He was not only in danger of severe physical chastisement from this rapscallion who had no respect for the law, but he was also consumed with curiosity to know what it was all about.

"What's got into you besides hooch?" he cried, as he worked to loosen more bricks. "If ever a man was let off easy, it was you!"

"Easy!" howled Budge Turner. "You call it easy, do you? Planned to get me married to that girl to save Hawk! Almost made me marry her! You knew, all right, what I was getting into! And we hadn't any more than got married in Plattsburg when she runs off with a book agent we meet up there, and I buy drinks for! And when I catch 'em and beat him up, I get dumped in jail overnight and fined ten dollars because she ain't my wife at all, on account of being married to him before! You're a damn' fine justice of the peace!"

Sam Barnes was staggered. The brick dropped from his hand and went skittering down the shingles. Then his glance, turning desperately to the four points of the compass, caught Hawk Turner coming up the path toward the front of the house. He shuddered. If his scheme had done that to Budge what might it not have done to Hawk?

"What are you doing, squire?" called Hawk with a grin. "Fixing your

chimney? Guess you better leave it for a while. Margaret Barstow and I want to get married, and her father says if you'll marry us it'll be all right with him! She's waiting down in the road, and we got to have you to help us out!"

Justice Sam Barnes looked down at the rear of his house, where Budge Turner was poising a stick. to throw. Not yet did Budge know that reénforcements had come.

"Hawk," called Sam Barnes, getting ready to dodge, "you go around back of the house and lick your brother, and I'll marry you for nothing! I'll be there in a minute with a club to help, if you need me. But if you don't lick him I'll put both of you in jail! This is the last time I'm going to try any monkeyshines with love!"

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13: The Mirrored Hand

George Woodruff Johnston

1858-1923

The Popular Magazine 20 March 1916

"I DID not see the hand— only its reflection in the mirror." Miss Jacinth shuddered. "It made me think of the hand of death!"

"Dora! Dora!" soothed Doctor Paget, wagging his wise old head in kindly reassurance. "Don't give way, my dear! Tell Doctor Dannart and me all about it, of course; but slowly, calmly! Now, as to the hand you speak of. When did you see it? Where were you at the time?'

"When? Why, just before I sent for you," Miss Jacinth replied excitedly. "Friends of mine had been dining with me. It was late when they went away, and I'd gone up to my dressing room to get ready for bed. I was sitting at my toilet table. My maid, Mary, had been brushing my hair. Then, suddenly, I looked up— I heard no sound; it must have been a premonition— and there, in the glass before me, was the image of a hand!"

"Yes; but the hand itself"

"When I first saw it, it was pushing apart the heavy curtains of the window behind me. I can't describe it— how it stole into the room like— like— something pale, deadly! Then it disappeared. In an instant it was back

again. Now it held a pistol— a pistol which it leveled carefully— oh, so carefully!"

"At whom?" queried Doctor Paget.

"I couldn't tell whether it was pointed at Mary or at me. I tried to warn her, to save myself. But I could do nothing, could only sit there petrified, staring into the mirror, watching the white hand stiffen its hold on the revolver— the finger close down upon the trigger—"

Her voice broke and trailed off into an indistinguishable whisper. She shivered and drew closer about her the silk and laces of her bedroom gown. As I looked at her, it was hard for me to realize that this girl, so small and dainty, so young and supple, was the vivid emotional actress, Dora Jacinth. But there was nothing theatrical in her manner now. The terror which gripped her was genuine and overmastering.

"Did you notice," I asked, my interest in the case aroused, "whether, the hand you saw was the right hand or the left?"

With an effort, she got herself under some sort of control. "It was the right hand," she said decisively.

"And twice you've called it 'white. In your opinion, was it a man's or a woman's?"

Miss Jacinth shook her head. "I can't say. It seemed— well, possibly, more like a man's. But I'm very far from being sure."

"Did you see nothing else?" I persisted. "Did you get no glimpse of a face, of a bit of clothing, a ring— of anything that would, at least, have pointed to the sex of the person concealed behind the window curtain?"

"Nothing!" she answered. "I saw absolutely nothing but the reflection of a hand with a pistol in it. And in a moment even that was gone. There was a flash, a. deafening explosion, a cloud of smoke—and it was over!"

"Then—"

"Then— I don't know what happened. Let me see! There was Mary, poor thing! She lay on the floor, gasping, bleeding! In falling, she must have knocked over my toilet table, for the mirror was splintered into fragments. Broken glass was scattered everywhere about— and blood!"

There was a pause. Miss Jacinth sank back upon the sofa on which she had been sitting. Doctor Paget, his hands clasped behind him, his silvery head bent forward, took a turn or two about the room. Then he stopped abruptly and asked this question:

"Where, precisely, was Mary at the critical moment? Can you tell me, Dora?"

"I'm afraid not," she murmured weariedly, perplexedly. "She was somewhere near me— I could feel her nearness. But all I saw was the hand."

"Well," the old doctor observed; "it's clear she wasn't standing behind you; for then her body would have intervened between the hand and the mirror, and there could have been no reflection of the one in the other. She must have stood elsewhere—alongside you, perhaps. But in that event she would not have been in a direct line between the carefully sighted pistol and yourself; and— here's the point I want to make— it is almost inconceivable that at a range so short as the width of your dressing room, she should have received a shot intended for you. No, my dear! It was at Mary, and not at yourself, that the weapon was aimed and fired. Don't you think so, Dannart?"

"But who could have wanted to harm a girl like Mary Naseby?" interposed the actress impatiently. "That shy, faithful creature!— she have an enemy! I can't believe it!"

"Do you know anything of her private life?" I inquired.

"Not a thing! My former maid fell ill about a year ago and had to stop work. While I was without one, I employed Judic, the hairdresser, a good deal, and it

was he who recommended Mary to me. I just now told my housekeeper to telephone him to send some one of her relatives here, if he knew of any. It would be dreadful, I should think, to die without a soul you love beside you. But you will do everything you can to save-her, won't you; no matter what the trouble or expense?" Miss Jacinth cried impetuously. "Poor Mary! She always seemed so lonely, somehow; so pitiful, so downtrodden. I've grown immensely fond of her. I believe I'd rather have been shot myself than that she should suffer!"

"Come, come, Dora!" Doctor Paget protested. "You are altogether too impulsive, too generous. Why, bless my soul! How do you suppose your countless friends could get along without you, even for a day?"

Miss Jacinth turned to me with a weary smile. "Doctor Dannart, you mustn't believe all Doctor Paget says. Because he brought me into the world, and has been my physician and father confessor ever since, he considers himself privileged to flatter me— yes, and to scold me, sometimes. But, seriously, it is about the many 'friends' of whom he speaks that I am thinking at this moment. There are two Dora Jacinths, doctor. One of them is the property of these 'friends,' that is to say, the public; the other longs with all her heart and soul for privacy, for the peace and quiet of home life. But the public will not let her have them, She must live in the spotlight always. There was a time when she positively enjoyed this sort of notoriety. But now she can't stand it any more, really! It sickens her, makes her wretched. Yet here it is again threatening her. Think of it! Dora Jacinth's maid mysteriously shot! The police! The reporters! Oh! And the Sunday papers gushing and thrilling over me and 'The Mirrored Hand'!"

" 'The Mirrored Hand!" I echoed. "What is that— a play?"

"Yes, a photo play in which I was starred and which was recently released. One scene in it is curiously like the tragedy just acted out in my dressing room— is almost prophetic of it. The newspapers would note the likeness in a moment, And if the story of this, the real tragedy, should get about— now, after all this worry and excitement— I believe I should grow frantic. And yet the person who tried to kill Mary must be found and punished! Won't you help me do this, Doctor Dannart? Please! I've heard of your skill and tact in the clearing up of mysteries. Mary is nothing but a servant, I know. But you will not refuse me on that account, will you?"

Overburdened with work as I already was, I should have positively declined the case. But the appeal of her fresh young beauty, and that strange personal charm which had been the main cause of her success on the stage, and which, since she had appeared in the "pictures," had made Dora Jacinth probably the most popular and highest-paid actress in the world, were too much for me,

and I succumbed almost without a struggle.

"I'll do what I can for you," said I, with as good a grace as possible. "But, first, Doctor Paget and I must take a look at our patient."

Mary Naseby lay in one of the spare bedchambers of Miss Jacinth's house, whither she had been carried by some of her fellow servants who had hurried to their mistress' dressing room at the sound of'the shot. The bullet had struck the maid— a tall, well-built, pretty girl of twenty-two— at a point a few inches below and behind the right armpit; and had it not there encountered and been partly deflected by a corset steel, would doubtless have killed her on the spot. Having been called in consultation by Doctor Paget, I had operated upon the desperately injured woman about half an hour before, aided by my young assistant, Doctor Arc, and by two nurses he had brought with him on the rush from my private hospital.

As Paget and I now entered the sick room and caught a glimpse of the sufferer, the old man stopped short. "Dannart!" he muttered. "Look at the girl's face!"

I had already done so. It was as white as the uniform of the nurse standing at her bedside. But the gripping thing about it was the terror and despair that racked it.

"Ah!" sighed my colleague, with relief, after a brief examination of the maid. "It's only an ether dream, after all, and—"

"Listen!" I interrupted, my finger raised warningly.

The blanched lips had parted, and now the girl moaned faintly: "Don't make me do it! It's wrong; it's wrong!" Her voice was urgent, beseeching. Like her face, it was filled with fear and hopelessness.

"Its wrong!" Paget echoed, in a whisper. "Whats wrong? Do you suppose, Dannart—"

"S-s-h!" I cautioned.

As I spoke, the maid's lips moved once more, and again the same words fluttered forth, and yet again the same, and so on and on in dreary repetition.

I waited, intent upon every whisper. At length her moaning ceased abruptly. She started. "I am punished!" she cried aloud; and thereupon her eyelids flew apart, she stared about her wonderingly, and winced with bodily pain. A moment passed, and then, "Water!" she supplicated feebly. "Water!"

She had now recovered consciousness, and my frail hope that in her stupor she might reveal some coherent clew to the crime of which she had been the victim had come to nothing; while any attempt to question her, ill as she was, would have been both cruel and useless.

As Paget and I walked away from the bed, there came a tap at the door. I answered it, and found standing in the hall a rosy, bright-eyed, clever-looking

woman, who stated that she was Miss Jacinth's housekeeper and bore a message from her mistress.

"Miss Jacinth would be obliged," said she, "if you and Doctor Paget would speak with some one who has just called to see Mary. She's quite worn out— Miss Jacinth is, and is lying down. She asked me to excuse her to you and to Doctor Paget."

ii

IN A ROOM on the first floor, we found the visitor— a tall, thin man, with a long, pale face, and close-cropped black hair. As we entered, he was nervously pacing the floor and glancing about him furtively.

"My name is Titus Prowl," he began at once, in a meek, ingratiating voice.

"Well," said I, "we represent Miss Jacinth; at least, for the moment. This is Doctor Paget; I am Doctor Dannart. What do you want?"

"I just heard about Mary, and—"

"What did you hear, and from whom?" I interrupted.

"That she'd been hurt, was ill, or something," Prowl replied. "Judic couldn't understand what the trouble was exactly. Mrs. Firth telephoned him, but I didn't get the message from him until a few minutes ago. What is the matter? If she's bad off, I'd like to see her. In fact, I've got to!"

His voice had now become peremptory, irritating. "You've got to see her, have you?" I challenged. "I'm not so sure of that. Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm Mary's uncle,' Titus Prowl announced.

"Oh! Then I suppose you'll have to have the truth. She's been shot."

Prowl's white face turned whiter still, "Shot!" he breathed. "Shot? Who did it?"

"That's what were trying to find out," I answered.

"But— where was it? Tell me!"

"In the right side,' I explained.

"No! I don't mean that," he burst out nervously, rubbing the palms of his hands with a handkerchief and rolling it into a ball. "It's the whereabouts I'm after. Was it here, in Mrs. Firth's house, or where?"

I glanced at my colleague, puzzled. "Who is the man talking about, Paget? Mrs. Firth? Who is she? I thought Miss Dora Jacinth—"

"They happen to be one and the same person,' mumbled the old physician. With this perfunctory answer, he dropped the subject as though he found it awkward, and hurried on to tell Prowl of the recent tragedy and of the operation I had performed.

Meanwhile, the latter's shifty gaze roamed about the room. "This job'll cost

something," he said, at length; "something considerable, I'm afraid. Won't it, with two doctors, and the nurse, and all?"

"Don't worry!" Paget consoled. "Miss Jacinth will attend to that, I'm sure."

Prowl breathed a sigh of relief. But immediately his brow clouded and he grew fidgety again. After a swift look at me, he asked: "Mary didn't say anything, did she, when she was under the ether? People are apt to get off a lot of nonsense then, I'm told."

Before I replied, I studied the man a little more critically. He was palpably worried. Yet the extent of the girl's injuries, and the chances for and against her recovery, were matters concerning which he had so far shown not a semblance of curiosity or feeling. This seemed so odd that I grew doubly cautious.

"Yes," I responded to his last inquiry; "under anesthesia, patients often do say silly things."

"Did Mary chatter much?"

It was the second time he had asked this question, and I mentally noted the fact.

"No; only a little— a word or two, perhaps," I answered, with assumed indifference. "I've no idea what they meant. Have you, Doctor Paget?"

"Not the faintest!" the latter declared.

Prowl's manner gained assurance. He became voluble.

"That's good!" he exclaimed. "It would mortify her to death to learn that she'd babbled a lot of trash. She's so sensible, you know, so long-headed about everything. Here's what I mean; here's something she worked out all by herself. When she came from the country, three years ago, I said to her, says I: 'Mary, you're my dead sister's child, and I'll help you all I can. I'll get you a nice job in a shop or a factory, somewhere.' But do you suppose she took me up? Not much! 'Uncle Tite,' says she, 'a poor girl like me makes more money and lives better as a servant with good, kind folks than she does working around shops and factories.' And she was right! See what Mrs. Firth's doing for her now— her being taken care of here like a queen, and it not costing her a penny!

"And Mary's been saving money, too," he added. "She's nearly paid me back what I advanced to have her taught the ladies' maid business— hairdressing, manicuring, and all that. It came to a good deal. But I wanted to do the square thing by the poor girl; I wanted her to learn right while she was at it."

"Very generous of you, I'm sure," remarked Doctor Paget. "And your story is most interesting. But Doctor Dannart and I have still much to do, and if you'll excuse us—"

"But you'll let me see Mary, won't you?" Prowl appealed to me anxiously. "I must! I must!"

"If Doctor Paget agrees, I have no objection. But no talk, no excitement in her presence! Remember that!" I cautioned.

As we three tiptoed into the sick room, the nurse switched on a shaded light, and I observed that the injured girl lay in a half doze, her eyes partly open, her expression dreamy and placid. But presently she roused up, and the instant she caught sight of Prowl's face, that same look of terror and distress which she had displayed just as consciousness was returning to her again distorted her pale features.

Immediately she turned her head aside. "Go away! Go away, uncle!" she muttered despairingly. "I can't do it any more; it's wrong!"

Without more ado, I quietly hustled Prowl from the room. Outside the door, I backed him against the wall.

"Its mighty singular that your niece should be so afraid of the good, kind uncle you pretend to be. Why is it?" I demanded.

"I give it up," the man stammered. "Tt's the ether, maybe. You said yourself that people often talk silly—"

"Nonsense!" I broke in. "She's out of the ether long ago. You made her do something wrong. What was it?"

"I swear—"

"Don't lie! That girl is too sick to know for certain whether she's alive or dead. She's telling the truth now, and she's acting it, too, even if it's for the first and only time in her life. She thinks this shot was somehow a punishment for the evil thing you forced her to do, whatever that was. She practically said so. Who fired it? Whose hand was it that Miss Jacinth saw in the mirror? Come, you blackguard! You are mixed up in this affair in some way. I suspected it from the first moment I set eyes on you. I can read it in your ugly face. Tell me the truth, or I'll wring it out of you!"

Prowl grew surly, vicious. "Try it!" he sneered. "Try it, and see what a hornet's nest you stir up!"

"That's what I'm hunting for—a hornet's nest!" I retorted, grabbing him by the collar; "and you'll come along to Mary's room, and help me find it!"

iii

THE MAID'S bedchamber lay on the top floor of Miss Jacinth's dwelling. As we entered it, I signed to the housekeeper, who had shown us the way thither, to shut and lock the door behind us.

The room itself, though comfortable enough, looked as bare of the

individual touch as an empty bird cage. There was absolutely nothing visible within its four walls to suggest a motive for the recent crime, or even to furnish an inkling of the character or tastes of the occupant; and the girl's few personal belongings, which, upon my request, the housekeeper brought to view, were equally lacking in significance. Apparently everything in the room was accessible; but if the maidservant had buried her possessions at the bottom of the sea, she could not have caused them to shed less light upon herself.

"In the year she's been here, I don't believe Mary's had company come to see her once," the housekeeper explained, in answer to my inquiries regarding the girl's habits; "and she never went out except on Sunday nights, and then only in case Miss Jacinth had no one to dine with her. Where did she go? I've no idea. Inthe house she had no enemies that I know of, and no friends but Laurent."

"Laurent?"

"Yess Miss Jacinth's chauffeur."

"Sweet on him, was she?" I asked.

The housekeeper smiled, and her rosy cheeks grew rosier still. "A little; but it was rather the other way about. Gracious me! If I ever saw a lovesick man, it's been Laurent. You see," she added, more seriously, 'Miss Jacinth had guests to-night— last night, I mean," she corrected herself, after looking at a noisy clock, standing on the mantelpiece, which marked twenty minutes after two, "and Laurent was off duty and went home early. When he finds out as

The woman stopped speaking and shot a questioning glance, first at me,' and then at Prowl, who sat glumly on a chair, his eyes roving restlessly about the room.

"Go ahead! Say what you please!" I reassured her. "Mr. Prowl is as deeply interested in this affair as we are."

"When Laurent finds out what's happened," the housekeeper resumed, "hell do something dreadful, I'm afraid. Hes frightfully jealous."

"Of whom?"

"Of Judic, the hairdresser."

"Why ?"

"Because Mary worked for him before she came here, and because she gets letters which Laurent suspects are from him. The chauffeur tells his troubles to any one who will listen. I've often heard the servants gossiping over them."

"Is this letter from Judic?" I demanded, holding out an envelope I had found while the housekeeper was talking. It had been carefully tucked betwen the pages of a tablet of cheap writing paper that lay beneath a towel covering the bottom of one of the bureau drawers. This envelope was addressed in a-

strong masculine hand: "Miss Mary Naseby, Cf. Mrs. Frederick Firth, 4 Jefferson Square, City," was postmarked "Station C," and had been mailed the day before.

"I don't know," the housekeeper de'clared, after scrutinizing the object in question. "But PI say this much: The mail for the servants is first delivered to me, and every letter that Mary has received has been directed in this same handwriting. Besides, Judic's place is near Station C."

Observing that Prowl was watching me in obvious suspense, I eagerly opened the envelope, which had previously been neatly slit, and drew out of it a folded piece of tissue paper. This I cautiously unfolded, and disclosed—a hair net!

A hair net! Again it had seemed that I was on the edge of a discovery that would throw at least a side light on the case, and once more I had suffered disappointment.

Crestfallen, I idly picked up the sheet of paper in which the net had been wrapped, and observed that some figures had been jotted down upon it. Scribbled in lead pencil, they were arranged in columns like an example in addition, the sum being noted under a line drawn at the bottom, thus:

321
182
362
122
211
162
352
222
202
152
201
142
82
141,191

As I peered at these rows of numerals, I became dimly conscious of something irregular, and, at the same time, of something familiar, in their appearance. The first applied particularly to the sum total set down at the foot of the columns. Quickly I took a pencil from my pocket and sought to verify it, and no less rapidly detected how false and absurd it was. The aggregate should not have been 141,191, but 2,713.

Instantly a light burst upon me, and I realized that here, at last, was a possible clew to the murderous assault made upon the girl. Turning my back on the others, I ran, page by page, through the tablet in which I had discovered the envelope, and on the very last page of all there came to view another column of figures, longer than the first, written in a different hand, and since no summing-up line appeared below it, probably unfinished.

I tore out the leaf and stuffed it in my pocket. Then I swung round and faced Prowl.

"You bungling idiot!" I cried. "If you were set on using a cipher, why did you not choose a better one than this? No man ever yet constructed a cryptogram that could not be translated into plain English, and this one is simplicity itself. Moreover, it is not even original. So long ago I had almost for gotten about it, I solved this particular cipher in the case of a confidential stenographer who was utilizing it to betray to competitors the business secrets of the firm which employed her.

"See, Paget!" I went on, drawing a number of-circles on the margin of the sheet of tissue paper. "Here it is in a nutshell! The cipher is based on the arrangement of the keyboard of a typewriter, which, like every one familiar with the touch system, I, of course, know by heart; and in this instance it is the keyboard of a machine with thirty-eight keys. Take, for example, the first amount here set down— three hundred and twenty one. The thirty-second key, counting always from the left, is the letter 'c, and the numeral 'one,' which follows, is merely an indicator, specifies upper case, or a capital letter, and in this place signifies the beginning of a sentence. The next sum, one hundred and eighty-two, represents key eighteen, lower case, or the letter ‘o'. And so it goes down to eighty-two, at the bottom of the column, which is key eight, lower case; that is to say, the figure nine. There you have it! "That's the solution of your famous cryptogram, Prowl! It reads: 'Come Sunday at nine'."

"My cryptogram!" snarled Prowl. "How do you make that out? I never saw the thing before!"

Paget and the housekeeper looked at me with some concern, as though they feared I had been caught napping.

"Never saw it before?" I challenged. "Why, that's odd. You signed it! Here is 'Titus Prowl,' or, at least, your initials, 'T. P.,' plainly denoted in the numerals one hundred and forty-one and one hundred and ninety-one at the foot of the column."

The shadow of fear fell across Prowl's long white face, and again he took to wiping the palms of his hands with his handkerchief.

"Well, what of it?" he blustered. "Is there any harm in a man's asking his

own niece to come to see him? And whether he writes in English or Chinese— what is that to you?"

"Oh, no!" said I; "there's not a bit of harm in an affectionate uncle wishing to see his niece, or in his sending her word to that effect in any language that - pleases him. But you! You haven't a trace of natural feeling for Mary. When you learned she had been shot, you showed that you didn't care a picayune whether she lived or died, so long as she did not give you away while under ether, and her operation and nursing cost you nothing. No! You got this poor, downtrodden country girl into your clutches on the pretense of being kind and helpful to your dead sister's child. You can't deny it; you've told us so yourself. And what did you do with her? You had her taught typewriting, for one thing. You had her trained by Judic— evidently your crony and go-between— to become a ladies' maid. That touching story of yours about her wishing to be a servant was false from beginning to end. You were fitting her to be an eavesdropper, a talebearer, a betrayer of trust; and when a chance to use her came, you sent her into this house to spy upon the' generous and> impulsive woman, who soon became attached to her, and who now insists that nothing be spared in the effort to get her well. Mary was to stay indoors; she was to get into the good graces of the chauffeur that she might keep posted as to her mistress' goings and comings, and, lastly, she was to report to you what she saw and heard. And when her soul revolted at this-dirty work, and she pleaded with you that it was wrong and she could not do it, you bullied her and browbeat her, perhaps, or tortured her in some other cruel fashion, until the mere thought of you— even in her ether dream— became a horror!"

"It's you who's having an ether dream now!" Prowl mumbled. "Mary a spy? What are you giving us?"

"The truth! Here's one of her reports! Shall I read it?"

With this, I whipped out of my pocket the leaf I had secretly torn from the tablet, and gave Prowl a fleeting glance of the long columns of figures inscribed upon it. He tried to grab the paper, failed, and dropped back in his chair, white with rage.

"No, no, no! Don't read that thing till I've seen it!"

"It smells too strong of blackmail, eh? Is that the reason?" I chuckled. "What is your business, anyhow, you scoundrel? Just plain spy and blackmailer, or something worse?"

Prowl made no answer.

"Come! Tell me!" I demanded.

Still he remained silent, glaring greedily at the paper in my grasp.

I asked the housekeeper a question. She nodded and left the room, but - soon she came back, bringing with her a city directory. I opened it at the

proper place, and read aloud:

"Prowl, Titus, Private Detective, Rooms 1014-1015 Ashe Building. Confidential cases a specialty."

"Private detective!" exclaimed Paget, in amazement. Then he laid a hand on my shoulder and led me as far as possible away from the others. "But, Dannart, this is simply incomprehensible!" he whispered. "Dora Jacinth! Why, there's nothing in her house that needs to be concealed any more than in my own. I'd stake my reputation on it! A spy here! For what purpose, I should like to know? For whose benefit ?"

"Evidently for the benefit of Prowl's employer," I answered.

"Naturally! But who on earth could that person be?"

"Tell me that, and I will name the owner of the mirrored hand. They are one and the same individual."

"You astound me!" Paget ejaculated.

"How do you make that out? Oh, I see! Mary's report—"

"Mary's report!" I echoed, with a wry smile. "Let's thank our lucky stars, doctor, that Prowl did not take me up when I offered to read it aloud. That was a bluff. To be frank, I don't know of whom it speaks. I can't make head or tail of it!"

iv

AFTER Prowl's identification, I could get nothing further out of him, no matter how much I coaxed or bullied. I felt certain he was somehow implicated in the recent crime, yet without tangible proof of it I dared not detain him longer against his will. But I could have him watched; and to this end I telephoned my young assistant, Doctor Arc, to hurry around to Jefferson Square and shadow him when he departed.

Soon thereafter, I let Prowl out of the maid's room, and accompanied him down to the front door. It was not yet dawn, but along the deserted street the electric lamps were burning crisply in the chill autumn air; and presently I saw Arc slip out from among the bare trees of the square opposite and take up the trail. Then I returned upstairs, and, with Paget and the housekeeper, began that necessary search of the scene of the tragedy which a succession of incidents had so long delayed.

Miss Jacinth's dressing room had two French windows opening upon a narrow stone balcony. This balcony was too high above the street to be readily accessible from it; but it communicated, by means of similar windows, with other rooms and a hallway on the same floor. It was evidently through one of. these that the criminal— whether a member of the household, or some one

who had entered the dwelling on the ground floor— had reached the balcony, It was then merely necessary to step through the partly opened window directly back of Miss Jacinth's toilet table, insert a hand between the curtains, fire the pistol, retrace the road already traveled, and, finally, escape during the excitement, or hide till it was over. This, obviously, was what had been done. There had been no occasion to set foot in the dressing room or to touch anything but the window hangings. Hence, it was not surprising that the guilty person had come and gone without leaving a trace behind. And yet, in one respect, the felon's acts were significant. They betrayed a familiarity with the arrangement of the house and with the habits of its mistress.

Defeated in other directions, I next made shift— with the aid of Paget, the housekeeper, and a fresh mirror— to reconstruct the scene of the actual shooting, and had practically finished my task, when the door into the adjoining bedchamber opened and Miss Jacinth appeared on the threshold. Pale and weary looking, she peered about her with blinking eyes.

"I've been lying down, but couldn't sleep, and thought I heard my name called. Did you want me, doctor?" she asked.

"Not yet,' I replied. "But— well, perhaps.I'd better tell you this: Your maid was in the service of a private detective, and has been acting as a spy and informer in your house. Furthermore, the shot which nearly killed Mary, was aimed, not at her, but at you."

"At me!" Miss Jacinth cried, clutching at the door for support.

"Yes; I am convinced of it.. I ean imagine no reason on any one's part for doing away with the girl; but, on the contrary, a dozen for wishing her to live. In brushing your hair, she must have stepped within the line of fire at the instant the pistol went off. Whether she did this accidentally, or, seeing your danger, impulsively threw herself in the way, to protect you, she alone knows. In either case she would have received the bail intended for you; and that, I feel sure, is what happened. Shall I show you how?"

"No; no!" Miss Jacinth protested, her glance wavering about the bloodstains and litter of glass upon the floor. "I can't stop in this room another second! Come in here with me— you and Doctor Paget!"

We followed her into her bedchamber, where, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes, she paced the floor nervously.

"Now, what is this about Mary being a spy?" she began immediately. "You can't mean it! If she were that kind of a girl, why should she try to save my life at risk of her own?"

"There's no doubt as to the main fact, Dora," Paget insisted. "Doctor Dannart has a report of hers in his pocket."

"Let me 'see: it!"

"Its in cipher, Miss Jacinth," I explained. "I can read the words, but the rest is sheer guesswork. For one thing, it's unfinished. For another, I happen to be absolutely ignorant of the circumstances. But it seems to refer to some sort of trap that was set for somebody last night— a trap that could not be sprung because you had more than one guest at dinner."

"A trap? I don't understand."

"Nor do I. Yet—could it be possible that the intention was to embarrass you, to compromise you, in some false and tricky way?"

"Me! For what purpose?" the actress asked.

"To extort blackmail," I suggested.

"I hardly think so. In my whole life no one has ever tried to blackmail me—"

"Well," I hesitated, "such sorry evidence is likewise employed— sometimes— in divorce suits—"

"But, my dear Dannart," Paget demurred, "the time for evidence of any kind is long past. The decree has been handed down, has been made permanent."

Until an hour before, I had not thought or cared whether the actress, whom the world knew only as Dora Jacinth, was married or not. But the persistent use of her maiden name since I had been in her house, the fact that she lived alone, Paget's reticence when Prowl had spoken of her as Mrs. Firth, and, lastly, the little I had been able to gather from Mary's report— had, together, hinted at how the land lay. But my colleague's last statement had come to me as a distinct surprise.

"When was the divorce granted?" I inquired.

"Nearly a year ago."

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Firth," Paget replied, after an appreciable pause.

Miss Jacinth stopped in her walk and faced me. "I see what you have in mind, doctor. But there was nothing sorry, as you term it, about my separation; nothing whatever.

"Mr. Firth's conduct has always been without reproach, and so has mine. We parted simply and solely because we differed as to how our married life should be led. It was the old, old conflict between marriage; that is, wifehood and the artistic career. I have told you how my own views have changed in this respect. I believe now that Mr. Firth was right and I was wrong. But I did not find that out till too late. At the time, we couldn't agree. My husband was stubborn; he demanded that I give up my profession. I was just as obstinate, and would not do it. We soon reached a deadlock. Life together was no longer possible— and I left him. This house in which we had stayed for a few months after our marriage, while Mr. Firth's was being altered, belonged to me, and I

returned to it. Later on, he sued me for divorce on the ground of desertion and abandonment. I made no defense, and the decree was given him. That's the whole story.

"The entire subject is intensely disagreeable to me," Miss Jacinth went on, resuming her restless pacing of the floor. "And I know it must be without interest to you. I have mentioned it merely to show that you will have to look elsewhere for an explanation of this tragedy. Our divorce could have nothing to do with it, and, consequently, neither could Mr. Firth. Why should he have tried to manufacture evidence against me? Not to use in his suit, for he had already won it. Not with the object of persecuting me; for he had secured the one thing he wanted— his freedom— and, by introducing no defense, I had actually helped him to obtain it."

Without making answer or comment, I waited until Miss Jacinth, in her tour of the room, passed directly in front of me. Then I suddenly asked this question:

"Who dined with you last night?"

She halted and surveyed me in astonishment, as though I had hit upon something which at that moment occupied her own secret thoughts.

"Mr. and Mrs. George Rodney, Amy Archer, and— Mr. Trant," she answered slowly.

The Rodneys I knew slightly— quiet, artistic people, with a fondness for the theater. I inquired who the others were.

"Miss Archer? Mr. Trant? Why they were my support on the stage, and are now with me in the films."

"You said a while ago, Miss Jacinth, that your guests stayed late. Did they all leave the house together?"

A subtle change had taken place in the actress' manner. It seemed to have lost its frankness; and she delayed her answer so long that I was forced to repeat my question, "Mr. Trant remained after the others had gone— a little while after the others had gone," she finally conceded.

"Did he have a part in your play, 'The Mirrored Hand'?" I queried.

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"He was, first, my lover; afterward, my husband," she admitted reluctantly.

"And off the stage? Did he, by any chance, ask, last night, to be given the same rôles in the future— in your future ?"

Miss Jacinth stared at me, embarrassed, a little frightened. "I see I can hide nothing from you. Yes— Mr. Trant— and it hurt me to say 'No'; he seemed to take it so hard. Do you suppose— I'm ashamed to put it into words— what I've been thinking— but he's so hot-headed! Oh, what a mixup it is! There's Amy

Archer. She loves him. It may sound conceited, ridiculous, yet she's jealous of me— actually! I've noticed it for some time. It was particularly apparent last night, at the table; and later—"

A rap at the door interrupted her, and, in response to her call, the housekeeper entered the room.

"Mary is worse, and wishes to see you, Miss Jacinth," said she. "And the nurse wants the two doctors at once."

When we reached Mary's bedside, the girl took Miss Jacinth's hand in hers and feebly laid it against her cheek.

"I've done wrong by you," she murmured. "But he made me do it— I was so afraid of him!"

"Poor thing!" Miss Jacinth soothed, after I had told her, in as few words as possible, about Prowl.

"Forgive me, won't you?" Mary pleaded. "Until you do, I can't die in peace. And I want to die."

"No; no! You shan't. The doctors will not let you. Soon you will be as well as ever."

"I know better than that. I feel it coming." Then, presently, she said: "You were always good to me, and maybe what I did at last will make up for some of my wickedness. I saw the hand— the pistol pointed at you— I stepped in the way God told me to do it. Do you think He will pardon me the rest?"

"I am sure He will, even as I do," the actress comforted.

The tide of life had turned against the girl, and she was making no effort to stem it. Time was passing; every moment was precious.

"Mary," I asked, "whose hand was it that held the pistol?"

"I couldnt. see," she answered weakly. > aoe

"But you know for whom your uncle made you do those things, don't you; the things you didn't want to do?"

"No!"

Her voice had sunk into a whisper; her eyes were drooping; the shadows were closing in upon her. I took her hand gently.

"Mary, have you nothing to tell us?"

"I'm almost afraid," she muttered. "I don't want to do any more harm, only to help all I can. But— there was a lady across the street— waiting— waiting till Mr. Trant came out. It may have been *her* hand."

"Who was it?" I begged, leaning over to catch the words that were now nothing more than sighs.

"Miss— Amy—"

The girl's lips were stilled. She had lapsed into unconsciousness. And in the gray light of the dawn which stole into the silent room, I saw upon her face the

look of those who have willed to die, and whom, so often, there seems no possibility of saving.

A little after ten o'clock, her life ended. Drab it had been, and shabby and muddled, but not altogether futile. She had risked it to save another, and what remained of it she had given willingly in expiation of her faults. Though her frail, timid spirit had cringed before her uncle, at the supreme climax it had risen above things earthly, and triumphed.

v

MARY Naseby's death at this particular juncture altered the entire situation, and brought out a crisis in an inquiry already sufficiently baffling. It was now no longer possible to evade or prevent the. publicity which Miss Jacinth so much dreaded. Paget and I would be compelled to summon the police and the coroner. This might be deferred, but only briefly. Nevertheless, I asked that it be done. I felt there was a bare chance that in a few hours I might be able to turn over to the authorities a completed case, and thus, at least, spare Miss Jacinth a host of disagreeable experiences. There was only one way to accomplish this. I must ruthlessly discard the many promising clews that offered, and rely solely on my knowledge of human nature. I should be obliged to stake all on a single throw. But, if I judged rightly, Prowl, with a little encouragement from me, would, after all, be the one to cast the dice.

"Well, it's now a quarter before eleven," said Doctor Paget sleepily, fumbling his fat gold watch. "I suppose we might delay notifying the coroner till one." It had been a trying night for the old man, and he had sunk wearily into.an easy-chair in the library, whither he had come after leaving Mary's deathbed.

"Until one? Good! That will give me ample time," I agreed.

But my colleague did not hear me. He was already dozing, his silvery head resting on a cushion Miss Jacinth had placed for him.

I left Jefferson Square in my car, and in ten minutes was at the Ashe Building, where I found Arc reading a newspaper at the news stand in the ground floor corridor.

"The man came straight here from Miss Jacinth's,' he began, as soon as we had squeezed ourselves-into a telephone booth, from which we could -watch all who used the elevators. "He went up to his office, and his light burned till daylight. At five, when the scrub women went away, I listened outside his door for a while. He seemed to be trotting around a good deal and tearing up papers. He hasn't left the building yet."

"That's lucky! We weren't ready for him. Now we are. And if he's the man I

think he is, we'll have no trouble in getting him out of his hole."

Thereupon I called up Miss Jacinth, and asked her to telephone Prowl that his niece was dead. If he inquired for me, she was to say that as yet, no trace of the murderer had been discovered, and that I intended a little later to inform the police.

This device succeeded beyond my hopes. In less than five minutes the man himself shot down in an elevator and hurried past us, into the street. We were close behind him; and as we pushed through the revolving doors, we saw him hop into a taxicab and make off uptown at high speed.

"Quick, Arc!" I urged. "Take my car! Don't lose sight of him on your life! I'll trail you, not him. He knows me— might look back. But you're safe."

Arc got away without delay, and I hailed another taxi and followed him. But although I kept a sharp lookoutand knew the appearance of my own machine, it was no easy job to keep track of it in the hurly-burly of the business streets ; and twice I nearly lost it before we got into the residence section of the city. There the chase went better. Yet sometimes Prowl's car and then Arc's would swing round a corner, and I would hold my breath till I, too, made the turning, and discovered that my assistant had not wholly disappeared.

At one of these turns— into Marlborough Avenue, it was— I saw Arc slow up and then sweep round and come back-along the side street, toward me. The chauffeur of my machine stopped, and I jumped out. So did Arc, and we met on the pavement.

"He went into the third house, on the south side!" he exclaimed excitedly. "His taxis waiting halfway up the block."

"Know who lives there?"

"No, doctor!"

"I believe I can guess," I ventured.

As I hastened toward the house in question, I told Arc to dismiss my taxi, and, in my own car, to remain within call lest I should need him. Then I ran up the steps and pushed the electric bell. Almost immediately a manservant opened the door.

"Mr. Prowl hasn't come yet, has he?" I began at once, moving past him into the hall.

"Yes, sir," the man replied.

"Don't tell me that!" I grumbled ruefully. "I was to meet him here, and promised him faithfully not to be late."

The unsuspecting servant hastened to reassure me. "It's not many minutes behind you are, sir. He's in the library. If you'll come this way—"

He preceded me along the hall. At the end of it, he opened the door of a

large, sumptuously furnished room, lined with books; and when I had stepped inside, he closed the door softly behind me.

I found two men in the apartment. One of them was Prowl. The other— whom, so far as I could recall, I had never seen before— was tall, handsome, and strongly built, but with a weary sag about the shoulders and in the muscles of his face. They stood at opposite sides of a huge table, confronting each other, glaring into each other's eyes, pale, trembling, voiceless. They did not see or hear me. Their passion was too hot. It blinded them; dried up their words.

Not till I reached the table end did they become aware of my presence. Then they both whipped round and stared, Prowl aghast, the stranger uncomprehendingly.

"How did you get in here?" the latter challenged sharply. "And who are you— what do you want?"

"Dannart's my name. I'm acting for Miss Jacinth, and I want this scoundrel, Prowl, for complicity in the murder of his niece!"

"Take him! You're welcome to him. He came here—"

"Yes, I came here to get money you owed me!" Prowl broke in furiously.

"You lie!" the man shouted back at him. "You were after blackmail. But you got into the wrong shop. Pll see you dead before I pay you a penny!"

"Blackmail!" I cried, egging the man on. "That's like Prowl. I believe it. The only thing that puzzles me," I added, with mock ingenuousness, "is how he happened to light on you."

The man shrugged his shoulders. "The very question I was asking him when you came in," said he.

"Because he did it! He murdered her!" Prowl screamed at me, shaking his fist impotently across the table at the other. -

"*I*?" ejaculated the latter. "*I* kill this chambermaid, or whatever else she was? What the devil should I do that for? I never laid eyes on the girl in my life! Prowl, you're a raving lunatic !"

"Its you who are the lunatic!" the detective flung back at him, beside himself with rage. "You pestered your wife to quit the stage and drop everything and everybody for you— kept at it till you-drove her away from you; and then, no sooner had you divorced her than you went crazy with jealousy. You're a regular dog in the manger, Firth; that's what you are. You didn't want her, wouldn't have her; and yet, after you'd got rid of her, you'd go wild if any other man came near her; at the bare thought-of her marrying again. Nothing would suit you but that I must set Mary to keeping tabs on the goings-on in her house. Then, there was no satisfying you. What you heard' only made you hungrier for more. You! You're the limit! You've acted like a boy

with a sore finger that he's simply got to touch every once in a while, just to see if it still hurts."

The affair was turning out precisely as I had hoped it would. And now, to keep the men at white heat, I threw a little fresh fuel on the fire of their anger.

"Goings-on!" I echoed. "I see that Prowl has been working you both ways, Mr. Firth. There have been no 'goings-on' at Jefferson Square."

Firth spun round and faced me. "What do you know of it?" he demanded harshly, losing all semblance of self-control.

"Mrs. Firth has honored me with her confidence," I replied. "And, aside from that, I have Doctor Paget's word for it."

"You're easy!" the man sneered. "How about that pink-faced doll, Trant?"

"Trant!" I laughed. "Your former wife is as likely to marry Prowl as Trant. She told me as much herself."

"So? And what do you call what happened there last night?"

"I call it a scheme to get Mrs. Firth into some awkward fix or other. It was doubtless concocted by Prowl to give you something to feed your grouch on, and thus enable him to extort more money from you. But the plan didn't work. In fact, nothing happened!"

"What!" cried Firth.

"Here's the proof of what I say— Mary Naseby's report!" I took the paper from my pocket and held it out to him. He grasped it with his left hand, I noticed, gazed at it long and steadily, and then flung it on the table.

"Ah, I begin to see!" he burst out. "Yes, now I understand it all. Prowl, you said the reports you've been sending me right along for a year were from your niece. They weren't! I never saw this handwriting before! What you got from her, you suppressed. What you sent me, you doctored; made up out of the whole cloth, maybe. And what you told me early last night was a lie— a lie like all the rest! Own up, you devil, or I'll rub you out!"

"Hold on!" I commanded, stepping between the two infuriated men. "Let me say a word, will you? I've felt sure from the beginning that Prowl's employer and the owner of the mirrored hand were identical. Whether Prowl knew him to be the murderer, or merely suspected him, I could not discover. But, in either case, I was confident that as soon as he heard the girl was dead, he would scurry to that employer, would pretend that he knew all about it, would stick him up for hush money, and then skip before the police could get him as an accessory or as a witness. Thats why I had Mrs. Firth telephone him the news. Thats why I dropped every other clew and followed him from his office. And that's precisely what he has just done.

"But he did more than betray the criminal. He instigated the crime. He played on your preposterous jealousy, Firth, until he got you frantic, insane.

The rotten lie he told you about last night was the final straw. You could not stand for that, and you went to your divorced wife's house and tried to kill her— the very woman whom time had changed to your way of thinking about marriage and the stage, and who, in her present frame of mind, could easily be induced, no doubt, to give up her profession."

Firth sank into a seat beside the table. The anger had died out of his face, leaving it gray and tired looking. He peered at Prowl— always at Prowl— between half-closed lids. On his lips there was a faint smile, cunning, cynical.

"You went to your wife's house," I repeated. "You had lived there, knew its arrangement, very probably had a latchkey, and were acquainted with Mrs. Firth's habits. You must have been familiar with a play in which she appeared, called '*The Mirrored Hand*.' What took place in her dressing room, I am told, was an exact reproduction of a certain scene in that drama, and it was this scene that suggested to you the way in which the crime you intended might be committed. It was a fatal suggestion, for the reflection of your hand in the looking glass has finally clinched. the proof against you. Mrs. Firth said that, what she saw was a right hand. She forgot that in a mirror the two sides of an object are reversed, and that which seems to be the right hand is actually the left. I observe that you are left-handed, and that your skin is very white. Nothing further need be said. But you should remember this: The fact that you did not kill the person you shot at, but somebody else, will not save you from punishment. The law will find you guilty of willful and premeditated murder all the same. And your good friend, Prowl, will come in handy as a witness against you."

"Don't drag me into this, Doctor Dannart!" the detective implored. "Don't! It'll simply wreck my business. I suspected Firth of killing Mary; but, honest, I didn't know a thing about it till you got after him."

"You needn't worry, Prowl," said Firth composedly, the cold, satirical smile still playing about his lips. "Your business may suffer in the future, but not because of what you testify on the witness stand."

I pushed a bell button on the wall, and when a servant appeared— the same who had let me in— I told him to find Arc and send him to me immediately.

"Very good, sir!" the man returned, and was about to close the library door and depart on my errand, when, at that instant, an explosion occurred that seemed to crack the silence of the room into splinters. I swung around. There was Prowl, sprawled grotesquely across the table, his dying fingers clutching convulsively at the books and papers which cluttered it. Opposite him sat Firth, a smoking revolver in his hand, his features twisted into that same icy, derisive grin.

The servant and I, with one accord, sprang toward him, but immediately there was another ear-splitting crash, and Firth pitched forward, face downward, on the table, his arms interlocked with those of the man who had ruined him.

I picked up the pistol which had dropped from his hand to the floor. Three chambers were empty. The bullets that remained were of the same caliber as that which I had extracted from Mary Naseby's body.

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14: Green Gardens

Frances Noyes Hart

1890-1943

Scribner's Magazine July 1921

Frances Newbold Noyes Hart

DAPHNE was singing to herself when she came through the painted gate in the back wall. She was singing partly because it was June, and Devon, and she was seventeen, and partly because she had caught a breath-taking glimpse of herself in the long mirror as she had flashed through the hall at home, and it seemed almost too good to be true that the radiant small person in the green muslin frock with the wreath of golden hair bound about her head, and the sea-blue eyes laughing back at her, was really Miss Daphne Chiltern. Incredible, incredible luck to look like that, half Dryad, half Kate Greenaway— she danced down the turf path to the herb-garden, swinging her great wicker basket and singing like a small mad thing.

"He promised to buy me a bonnie blue ribbon,"

carolled Daphne, all her own ribbons flying,

"He promised to buy me a bonnie blue ribbon,
He promised to buy me a bonnie blue ribbon
To tie up—"

The song stopped as abruptly as though some one had struck it from her lips. A strange man was kneeling by the beehive in the herb-garden. He was looking at her over his shoulder, at once startled and amused, and she saw that he was wearing a rather shabby tweed suit and that his face was oddly brown against his close-cropped, tawny hair. He smiled, his teeth a strong flash of white.

"Hello!" he greeted her, in a tone at once casual and friendly.

Daphne returned the smile uncertainly. "Hello," she replied gravely. The strange man rose easily to his feet, and she saw that he was very tall and carried his head rather splendidly, like the young bronze Greek in Uncle Roland's study at home. But his eyes— his eyes were strange— quite dark and burned out. The rest of him looked young and vivid and adventurous— but his eyes looked as though the adventure were over, though they were still questing.

"Were you looking for any one?" she asked, and the man shook his head, laughing.

"No one in particular, unless it was you."

Daphne's soft brow darkened. "It couldn't possibly have been me," she said in a rather stately small voice, "because, you see, I don't know you. Perhaps you didn't know that there is no one living in Green Gardens now?"

"Oh, yes, I knew. The Fanes have left for Ceylon, haven't they?"

"Sir Harry left two weeks ago, because he had to see the old governor before he sailed, but Lady Audrey only left last week. She had to close the London house, too, so there was a great deal to do."

"I see. And so Green Gardens is deserted?"

"It is sold," said Daphne, with a small quaver in her voice, "just this afternoon. I came over to say good-by to it, and to get some mint and lavender from the garden."

"Sold?" repeated the man, and there was an agony of incredulity in the stunned whisper. He flung out his arm against the sun-warmed bricks of the high wall as though to hold off some invader. "No, no; they'd never dare to sell it."

"I'm glad you mind so much," said Daphne softly. "It's strange that nobody minds but us, isn't it? I cried at first— and then I thought that it would be happier if it wasn't lonely and empty, poor dear— and then, it was such a beautiful day, that I forgot to be unhappy."

The man bestowed a wretched smile on her. "You hardly conveyed the impression of unrelieved gloom as you came around that corner," he assured her.

"I— I haven't a very good memory for being unhappy," Daphne confessed remorsefully, a lovely and guilty rose staining her to her brow at the memory of that exultant chant.

He threw back his head with a sudden shout of laughter.

"These are glad tidings! I'd rather find a pagan than a Puritan at Green Gardens any day. Let's both have a poor memory. Do you mind if I smoke?"

"No," she replied, "but do you mind if I ask you what you are doing here?"

"Not a bit." He lit the stubby brown pipe, curving his hand dexterously to shelter it from the little breeze. He had the most beautiful hands that she had ever seen, slim and brown and fine— they looked as though they would be miraculously strong— and miraculously gentle. "I came to see— I came to see whether there was 'honey still for tea,' Mistress Dryad!"

"Honey— for tea?" she echoed wonderingly; "was that why you were looking at the hive?"

He puffed meditatively, "Well— partly. It's a quotation from a poem. Ever read Rupert Brooke?"

"Oh, yes, yes." Her voice tripped in its eagerness. "I know one by heart—

" 'If I should die think only this of me:
(That there's some corner of a foreign field
(That is forever England. There shall be—' "

He cut in on the magical little voice roughly.

"Ah, what damned nonsense! Do you suppose he's happy, in his foreign field, that golden lover? Why shouldn't even the dead be homesick? No, no— he was sick for home in Germany when he wrote that poem of mine— he's sicker for it in Heaven, I'll warrant." He pulled himself up swiftly at the look of amazement in Daphne's eyes. "I've clean forgotten my manners," he confessed ruefully. "No, don't get that flying look in your eyes— I swear that I'll be good. It's a long time— it's a long time since I've talked to any one who needed gentleness. If you knew what need I had of it, you'd stay a little while, I think."

"Of course, I'll stay," she said. "I'd love to, if you want me to."

"I want you to more than I've ever wanted anything that I can remember." His tone was so matter-of-fact that Daphne thought that she must have imagined the words. "Now, can't we make ourselves comfortable for a little while? I'd feel safer if you weren't standing there ready for instant flight! Here's a nice bit of grass— and the wall for a back—"

Daphne glanced anxiously at the green muslin frock. "It's— it's pretty hard to be comfortable without cushions," she submitted diffidently.

The man yielded again to laughter. "Are even Dryads afraid to spoil their frocks? Cushions it shall be. There are some extra ones in the chest in the East Indian room, aren't there?"

Daphne let the basket slip through her fingers, her eyes black through sheer surprise.

"But how did you know— how did you know about the lacquer chest?" she whispered breathlessly.

"'Oh, devil take me for a blundering ass!" He stood considering her forlornly for a moment, and then shrugged his shoulders, with the brilliant and

disarming smile. "The game's up, thanks to my inspired lunacy! But I'm going to trust you not to say that you've seen me. I know about the lacquer chest because I always kept my marbles there."

"Are you— are you Stephen Fane?"

At the awed whisper the man bowed low, all mocking grace, his hand on his heart— the sun burnishing his tawny head.

"Oh-h!" breathed Daphne. She bent to pick up the wicker basket, her small face white and hard.

"Wait!" said Stephen Fane. His face was white and hard too. "You are right to go— entirely, absolutely right— but I am going to beg you to stay. I don't know what you've heard about me— however vile it is, it's less than the truth—"

"I have heard nothing of you," said Daphne, holding her gold-wreathed head high, "but five years ago I was not allowed to come to Green Gardens for weeks because I mentioned your name. I was told that it was not a name to pass decent lips."

Something terrible leaped in those burned-out eyes— and died.

"I had not thought they would use their hate to lash a child," he said. "They were quite right— and you, too. Good night."

"Good night," replied Daphne clearly. She started down the path, but at its bend she turned to look back—because she was seventeen, and it was June, and she remembered his laughter. He was standing quite still by the golden straw beehive, but he had thrown one arm across his eyes, as though to shut out some intolerable sight. And then, with a soft little rush she was standing beside him.

"How— how do we get the cushions?" she demanded breathlessly.

Stephen Fane dropped his arm, and Daphne drew back a little at the sudden blaze of wonder in his face.

"Oh," he whispered voicelessly. "Oh, you Loveliness!" He took a step toward her, and then stood still, clinching his brown hands. Then he thrust them deep in his pockets, standing very straight. "I do think," he said carefully, "I do think you had better go. The fact that I have tried to make you stay simply proves the particular type of rotter that I am. Good-by—I'll never forget that you came back."

"I am not going," said Daphne sternly. "Not if you beg me. Not if you are a devil out of hell. Because you need me. And no matter how many wicked things you have done, there can't be anything as wicked as going away when some one needs you. How do we get the cushions?"

"Oh, my wise Dryad!" His voice broke on laughter, but Daphne saw that his lashes were suddenly bright with tears. "Stay, then— why, even I cannot harm

you. God himself can't grudge me this little space of wonder— he knows how far I've come for it—how I've fought and struggled and ached to win it— how in dirty lands and dirty places I've dreamed of summer twilight in a still garden— and England, England!"

"Didn't you dream of me?" asked Daphne wistfully, with a little catch of reproach.

He laughed again, unsteadily. "Why, who could ever dream of you, my Wonder? You are a thousand, thousand dreams come true."

Daphne bestowed on him a tremulous and radiant smile. "Please let us get the cushions. I think I am a little tired."

"And I am a graceless fool! There used to be a pane of class cut out in one of the south casement windows. Shall we try that?"

"Please, yes. How did you find it, Stephen?" She saw again that thrill of wonder on his face, but his voice was quite steady.

"I didn't find it; I did it! It was uncommonly useful, getting in that way sometimes, I can tell you. And, by the Lord Harry, here it is. Wait a minute, Loveliness— I'll get through and open the south door for you— no chance that way of spoiling the frock." He swung himself up with the swift, sure grace of a cat, smiled at her— vanished— it was hardly a minute later that she heard the bolts dragging back in the south door, and he flung it wide.

The sunlight streamed into the deep hall and stretched hesitant fingers into the dusty quiet of the great East Indian room, gilding the soft tones of the faded chintz, touching very gently the polished furniture and the dim prints on the walls. He swung across the threshold without a word, Daphne tiptoeing behind him.

"How still it is," he said in a hushed voice. "How sweet it smells!"

"It's the potpurri in the Canton jars," she told him shyly. "I always made it every summer for Lady Audrey— she thought I did it better than any one else. I think so too." She flushed at the mirth in his eyes, but held her ground sturdily. "Flowers are sweeter for you if you love them— even dead ones," she explained bravely.

"They would be dead indeed, if they were not sweet for you." Her cheeks burned bright at the low intensity of his voice, but he turned suddenly away. "Oh, there she sails— there she sails still, my beauty. Isn't she the proud one though— straight into the wind!" He hung over the little ship model, thrilled as any child. "The Flying Lady— see where it's painted on her? Grandfather gave it to me when I was seven— he had it from his father when he was six. Lord, how proud I was!" He stood back to see it better, frowning a little. "One of those ropes is wrong; any fool could tell that—" His hands hovered over it for a moment— dropped. "No matter— the new owners are probably not seafarers!

The lacquer chest is at the far end, isn't it? Yes, here. Are three enough— four? We're off!" But still he lingered, sweeping the great room with his dark eyes. "It's full of all kinds of junk— they never liked it— no period, you see. I had the run of it— I loved it as though it were alive; it was alive, for me. From Elizabeth's day down, all the family adventurers brought their treasures here— beaten gold and hammered silver— mother-of-pearl and peacock feathers, strange woods and stranger spices, porcelains and embroideries and blown glass. There was always an adventurer somewhere in each generation— and however far he wandered, he came back to Green Gardens to bring his treasures home. When I was a yellow-headed imp of Satan, hiding my marbles in the lacquer chest, I used to swear that when I grew up I would bring home the finest treasure of all, if I had to search the world from end to end. And now the last adventurer has come home to Green Gardens— and he has searched the world from end to end— and he is empty-handed."

"No, no," whispered Daphne. "He has brought home the greatest treasure of all, that adventurer. He has brought home the beaten gold of his love, and the hammered silver of his dreams— and he has brought them from very far."

"He had brought greater treasures than those to you, lucky room," said the last of the adventurers. "You can never be sad again— you will always be gay and proud— because for just one moment he brought you the gold of her hair and the silver of her voice."

"He is talking great nonsense, room," said a very small voice, "but it is beautiful nonsense, and I am a wicked girl, and I hope that he will talk some more. And please, I think we will go into the garden and see."

All the way back down the flagged path to the herb-garden they were quiet—even after he had arranged the cushions against the rose-red wall, even after he had stretched out at full length beside her and lighted another pipe.

After a while he said, staring at the straw hive: "There used to be a jolly little fat brown one that was a great pal of mine. How long do bees live?"

"I don't know," she answered vaguely, and after a long pause, full of quiet, pleasant odors from the bee-garden, and the sleepy happy noises of small things tucking themselves away for the night, and the faint but poignant drift of tobacco smoke, she asked: "What was it about 'honey still for tea'?"

"Oh, that!" He raised himself on one elbow so that he could see her better. "It was a poem I came across while I was in East Africa; some one sent a copy of Rupert Brooke's things to a chap out there, and this one fastened itself around me like a vise. It starts where he's sitting in a cafe in Berlin with a lot of German Jews around him, swallowing down their beer; and suddenly he remembers. All the lost, unforgettable beauty comes back to him in that dirty place; it gets him by the throat. It got me, too.

" 'Ah, God! to see the branches stir
Across the moon at Grantchester!
To smell the thrilling-sweet and rotten
Unforgettable, unforgotten
River-smell, and hear the breeze
Sobbing in the little trees.
Oh, is the water sweet and cool,
Gentle and brown, above the pool?
And laughs the immortal river still
Under the mill, under the mill?
Say, is there Beauty yet to find?
And Certainty? and Quiet kind?
Deep meadows yet, for to forget
The lies, and truths, and pain?—oh, yet
Stands the Church clock at ten to three?
And is there honey still for tea?'"

"That's beautiful," she said, "but it hurts."

"Thank God you'll never know how it hurts, little Golden Heart in quiet gardens. But for some of us, caught like rats in the trap of the ugly fever we called living, it was black torture and yet our dear delight to remember the deep meadows we had lost— to wonder if there was honey still for tea."

"Stephen, won't you tell me about it— won't that help?"

And suddenly some one else looked at her through those haunted eyes— a little boy, terrified and forsaken. "Oh, I have no right to soil you with it. But I came back to tell some one about it— I had to, I had to. I had to wait until father and Audrey went away. I knew they'd hate to see me— she was my stepmother, you know, and she always loathed me, and he never cared. In East Africa I used to stay awake at night thinking that I might die, and that no one in England would ever care— no one would know how I had loved her. It was worse than dying to think that."

"But why couldn't you come back to Green Gardens—why couldn't you make them see, Stephen?"

"Why, what was there to see? When they sent me down from Oxford for that dirty little affair, I was only nineteen— and they told me I had disgraced my name and Green Gardens and my country— and I went mad with pride and shame, and swore I'd drag their precious name through the dirt of every country in the world. And I did— and I did."

His head was buried in his arms, but Daphne heard. It seemed strange indeed to her that she felt no shrinking and no terror; only great pity for what he had lost, great grief for what he might have had. For a minute she forgot that she was Daphne, the heedless and gay-hearted, and that he was a broken

and an evil man. For a minute he was a little lad, and she was his lost mother.

"Don't mind, Stephen," she whispered to him, "don't mind. Now you have come home— now it is all done with, that ugliness. Please, please don't mind."

"No, no," said the stricken voice, "you don't know, you don't know, thank God. But I swear I've paid— I swear, I swear I have. When the others used to take their dirty drugs to make them forget, they would dream of strange paradises, unknown heavens— but through the haze and mist that they brought, I would remember— I would remember. The filth and the squalor and vileness would fade and dissolve—and I would see the sun-dial, with the yellow roses on it, warm in the sun, and smell the clove pinks in the kitchen border, and touch the cresses by the brook, cool and green and wet. All the sullen drums and whining flutes would sink to silence, and I would hear the little yellow-headed cousin of the vicar's singing in the twilight, singing, 'There is a lady, sweet and kind' and 'Weep you no more, sad fountains' and 'Hark, hark, the lark.' And the small painted yellow faces and the little wicked hands and perfumed fans would vanish and I would see again the gay beauty of the lady who hung above the mantel in the long drawing-room, the lady who laughed across the centuries in her white muslin frock, with eyes that matched the blue ribbon in her wind-blown curls— the lady who was as young and lovely as England, for all the years! Oh, I would remember, I would remember! It was twilight, and I was hurrying home through the dusk after tennis at the rectory; there was a bell ringing quietly somewhere and a moth flying by brushed against my face with velvet— and I could smell the hawthorn hedge glimmering white, and see the first star swinging low above the trees, and lower still, and brighter still, the lights of home. —And then before my very eyes, they would fade, they would fade, dimmer and dimmer—they would flicker and go out, and I would be back again, with tawdriness and shame and vileness fast about me— and I would pay."

"But now you have paid enough," Daphne told him. "Oh, surely, surely— you have paid enough. Now you have come home— now you can forget."

"No," said Stephen Fane. "Now I must go."

"Go?" At the small startled echo he raised his head.

"What else?" he asked. "Did you think that I would stay?"

"But I do not want you to go." Her lips were white, but she spoke very clearly.

Stephen Fane never moved but his eyes, dark and wondering, rested on her like a caress.

"Oh, my little Loveliness, what dream is this?"

"You must not go away again, you must not."

"I am baser than I thought," he said, very low. "I have made you pity me, I

who have forfeited your lovely pity this long time. It cannot even touch me now. I have sat here like a dark Othello telling tales to a small white Desdemona, and you, God help me, have thought me tragic and abused. You shall not think that. In a few minutes I will be gone— I will not have you waste a dream on me. Listen— there is nothing vile that I have not done— nothing, do you hear? Not clean sin, like murder— I have cheated at cards, and played with loaded dice, and stolen the rings off the fingers of an Argentine Jewess who—" His voice twisted and broke before the lovely mercy in the frightened eyes that still met his so bravely.

"But why, Stephen?"

"So that I could buy my dreams. So that I could purchase peace with little dabs of brown in a pipe-bowl, little puffs of white in the palm of my hand, little drops of liquid on a ball of cotton. So that I could drug myself with dirt— and forget the dirt and remember England."

He rose to his feet with that swift grace of his, and Daphne rose too, slowly.

"I am going now; will you walk to the gate with me?"

He matched his long step to hers, watching the troubled wonder on her small white face intently.

"How old are you, my Dryad?"

"I am seventeen."

"Seventeen! Oh, God be good to us, I had forgotten that one could be seventeen. What's that?"

He paused, suddenly alert, listening to a distant whistle, sweet on the summer air.

"Oh, that— that is Robin."

"Ah—" His smile flashed, tender and ironic. "And who is Robin?"

"He is— just Robin. He is down from Cambridge for a week, and I told him that he might walk home with me."

"Then I must be off quickly. Is he coming to this gate?"

"No, to the south one."

"Listen to me, my Dryad— are you listening?" For her face was turned away.

"Yes," said Daphne.

"You are going to forget me— to forget this afternoon— to forget everything but Robin whistling through the summer twilight."

"No," said Daphne.

"Yes; because you have a very poor memory about unhappy things! You told me so. But just for a minute after I have gone, you will remember that now all is very well with me, because I have found the deep meadows— and

honey still for tea— and you. You are to remember that for just one minute— will you? And now good-by—"

She tried to say the words, but she could not. For a moment he stood staring down at the white pathos of the small face, and then he turned away. But when he came to the gate, he paused and put his arms about the wall, as though he would never let it go, laying his cheek against the sun-warmed bricks, his eyes fast closed. The whistling came nearer, and he stirred, put his hand on the little painted gate, vaulted across it lightly, and was gone. She turned at Robin's quick step on the walk.

"Ready, dear? What are you staring at?"

"Nothing! Robin— Robin, did you ever hear of Stephen Fane?"

He nodded grimly.

"Do you know— do you know what he is doing now?"

"Doing now?" He stared at her blankly. "What on earth do you mean? Why, he's been dead for months— killed in the campaign in East Africa— only decent thing he ever did in his life. Why?"

Daphne never stirred. She stood quite still, staring at the painted gate. Then she said, very carefully: "Some one thought— some one thought that they had seen him— quite lately."

Robin laughed comfortingly. "No use looking so scared about it, my blessed child. Perhaps they did. The War Office made all kinds of ghastly blunders— it was a quick step from 'missing in action' to 'killed.' And he'd probably would have been jolly glad of a chance to drop out quietly and have every one think he was done for."

Daphne never took her eyes from the gate. "Yes," she said quietly, "I suppose he would. Will you get my basket, Robin? I left it by the beehive. There are some cushions that belong in the East Indian room, too. The south door is open."

When he had gone, she stood shaking for a moment, listening to his footsteps die away, and then she flew to the gate, searching the twilight desperately with straining eyes. There was no one there— no one at all— but then the turn in the lane would have hidden him by now. And suddenly terror fell from her like a cloak.

She turned swiftly to the brick wall, straining up, up on tiptoes, to lay her cheek against its roughened surface, to touch it very gently with her lips. She could hear Robin whistling down the path but she did not turn. She was bidding farewell to Green Gardens— and the last adventurer.

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