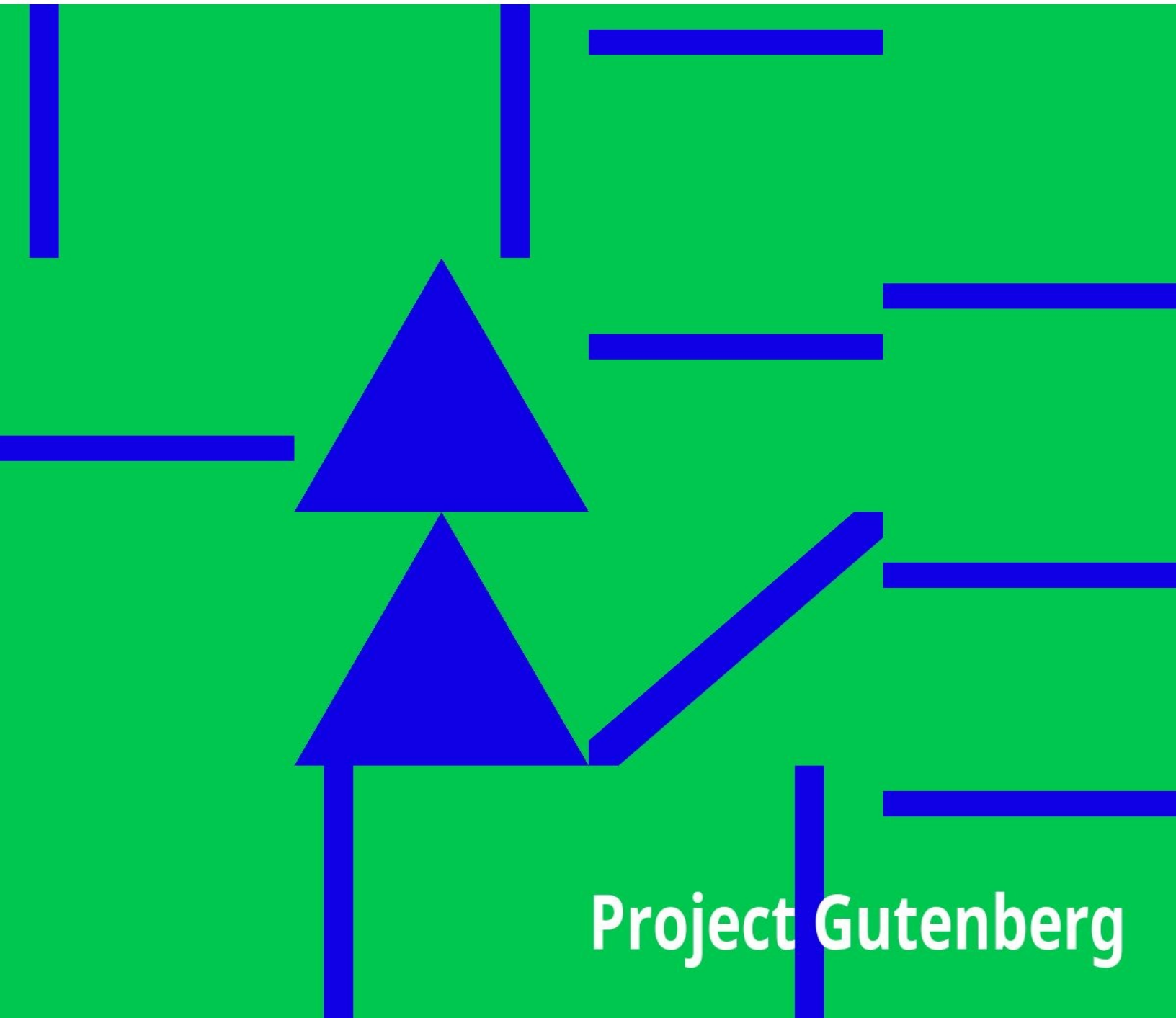
The Face and the Mask

Robert Barr



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THE FACE AND THE MASK

By Robert Barr

THE HON. WILLIAM E. QUINBY

(*United States Minister to the Netherlands*)

HAS HELPED SO MANY UNKNOWN LITERARY ASPIRANTS THAT HE CAN HARDLY HAVE HOPED TO ESCAPE THE DEDICATION TO HIM OF A BOOK BY AT LEAST ONE OF THEM

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THE SIXTH BENCH.

THE WOMAN OF STONE.

Lurine, was pretty, *petite,* and eighteen. She had a nice situation at the Pharmacie de Siam, in the Rue St. Honoré. She had no one dependent upon her, and all the money she earned was her own. Her dress was of cheap material perhaps, but it was cut and fitted with that daintiness of perfection which seems to be the natural gift of the Parisienne, so that one never thought of the cheapness, but admired only the effect, which was charming. She was book-keeper and general assistant at the Pharmacie, and had a little room of her own across the Seine, in the Rue de Lille. She crossed the river twice every day—once in the morning when the sun was shining, and again at night when the radiant lights along the river's bank glittered like jewels in a long necklace. She had her little walk through the Gardens of the Tuileries every morning after crossing the Pont Royal, but she did not return through the gardens in the evening, for a park in the morning is a different thing to a park at night. On her return she always walked along the Rue de Tuileries until she came to the bridge. Her morning ramble through the gardens was a daily delight to her, for the Rue de Lille is narrow, and not particularly bright, so it was pleasant to walk beneath the green trees, to feel the crisp gravel under her feet, and to see the gleaming white statues in the sunlight, with the sparkle on the round fountain pond, by the side of which she sometimes sat. Her favorite statue was one of a woman that stood on a pedestal near the Rue de Rivoli. The arm was thrown over her head, and there was a smile on the marble face which was inscrutable. It fascinated the girl as she looked up to it, and seemed to be the morning greeting to her busy day's work in the city. If no one was in sight, which was often the case at eight o'clock in the morning, the girl kissed the tips of her fingers, and tossed the salute airily up to the statue, and the woman of stone always smiled back at her the strange mystical smile which seemed to indicate that it knew much more of this world and its ways than did the little Parisienne who daily gazed up at her.

Lurine was happy, as a matter of course, for was not Paris always beautiful? Did not the sun shine brightly? And was not the air always clear? What more, then, could a young girl wish? There was one thing which was perhaps lacking, but that at last was supplied; and then there was not a happier girl in all Paris than Lurine. She almost cried it aloud to her favorite statue the next morning, for it seemed to her that the smile had broadened since she had passed it the

morning before, and she felt as if the woman of stone had guessed the secret of the woman of flesh.

Lurine had noticed him for several days hovering about the Pharmacie, and looking in at her now and then; she saw it all, but pretended not to see. He was a handsome young fellow with curly hair, and hands long, slender, and white as if he were not accustomed to doing hard, manual labor. One night he followed her as far as the bridge, but she walked rapidly on, and he did not overtake her. He never entered the Pharmacie, but lingered about as if waiting for a chance to speak with her. Lurine had no one to confide in but the woman of stone, and it seemed by her smile that she understood already, and there was no need to tell her, that the inevitable young man had come. The next night he followed her quite across the bridge, and this time Lurine did not walk so quickly. Girls in her position are not supposed to have normal introductions to their lovers, and are generally dependent upon a haphazard acquaintance, although that Lurine did not know. The young man spoke to her on the bridge, raising his hat from his black head as he did so.

“Good evening!” was all he said to her.

She glanced sideways shyly at him, but did not answer, and the young man walked on beside her.

“You come this way every night,” he said. “I have been watching you. Are you offended?”

“No,” she answered, almost in a whisper.

“Then may I walk with you to your home?” he asked.

“You may walk with me as far as the corner of the Rue de Lille,” she replied.

“Thank you!” said the young fellow, and together they walked the short distance, and there he bade her good night, after asking permission to meet her at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré, and walk home with her, the next night.

“You must not come to the shop,” she said.

“I understand,” he replied, nodding his head in assent to her wishes. He told her his name was Jean Duret, and by-and-by she called him Jean, and he called her Lurine. He never haunted the Pharmacie now, but waited for her at the corner, and one Sunday he took her for a little excursion on the river, which she

enjoyed exceedingly. Thus time went on, and Lurine was very happy. The statue smiled its enigmatical smile, though, when the sky was overcast, there seemed to her a subtle warning in the smile. Perhaps it was because they had quarrelled the night before. Jean had seemed to her harsh and unforgiving. He had asked her if she could not bring him some things from the Pharmacie, and gave her a list of three chemicals, the names of which he had written on a paper.

“You can easily get them,” he had said; “they are in every Pharmacie, and will never be missed.”

“But,” said the girl in horror, “that would be stealing.”

The young man laughed.

“How much do they pay you there?” he asked. And when she told him, he laughed again and said,

“Why, bless you, if I got so little as that I would take something from the shelves every day and sell it.”

The girl looked at him in amazement, and he, angry at her, turned upon his heel and left her. She leaned her arms upon the parapet of the bridge, and looked down into the dark water. The river always fascinated her at night, and she often paused to look at it when crossing the bridge, shuddering as she did so. She cried a little as she thought of his abrupt departure, and wondered if she had been too harsh with him. After all, it was not very much he had asked her to do, and they did pay her so little at the Pharmacie. And then perhaps her lover was poor, and needed the articles he had asked her to get. Perhaps he was ill, and had said nothing. There was a touch on her shoulder. She looked round. Jean was standing beside her, but the frown had not yet disappeared from his brow.

“Give me that paper,” he said, abruptly.

She unclosed her hand, and he picked the paper from it, and was turning away.

“Stop!” she said, “I will get you what you want, but I will myself put the money in the till for what they cost.”

He stood there, looking at her for a moment, and then said—“Lurine, I think you are a little fool. They owe you ever so much more than that. However, I must have the things,” and he gave her back the paper with the caution—“Be sure you let no one see that, and be very certain that you get the right things.” He

walked with her as far as the corner of the Rue de Lille. “You are not angry with me?” he asked her before they parted.

“I would do anything for you,” she whispered, and then he kissed her good night.

She got the chemicals when the proprietor was out, and tied them up neatly, as was her habit, afterwards concealing them in the little basket in which she carried her lunch. The proprietor was a sharp-eyed old lynx, who looked well after his shop and his pretty little assistant.

“Who has been getting so much chlorate of potash?” he asked, taking down the jar, and looking sharply at her.

The girl trembled.

“It is all right,” she said. “Here is the money in the till.”

“Of course,” he said. “I did not expect you to give it away for nothing. Who bought it?”

“An old man,” replied the girl, trembling still, but the proprietor did not notice that—he was counting the money, and found it right.

“I was wondering what he wanted with so much of it. If he comes in again look sharply at him, and be able to describe him to me. It seems suspicious.” Why it seemed suspicious Lurine did not know, but she passed an anxious time until she took the basket in her hand and went to meet her lover at the corner of the Rue des Pyramides. His first question was—

“Have you brought me the things?”

“Yes,” she answered. “Will you take them here, now?”

“Not here, not here,” he replied hurriedly, and then asked anxiously, “Did anyone see you take them?”

“No, but the proprietor knows of the large package, for he counted the money.”

“What money?” asked Jean.

“Why, the money for the things. You didn’t think I was going to steal them, did you?”

The young man laughed, and drew her into a quiet corner of the Gardens of the Tuileries.

“I will not have time to go with you to the Rue de Lille to-night,” he said.

“But you will come as usual to-morrow night?” she asked, anxiously.

“Certainly, certainly.” he replied, as he rapidly concealed the packages in his pockets.

The next night the girl waited patiently for her lover at the corner where they were in the habit of meeting, but he did not come. She stood under the glaring light of a lamp-post so that he would recognize her at once. Many people accosted her as she stood there, but she answered none, looking straight before her with clear honest eyes, and they passed on after a moment’s hesitation. At last she saw a man running rapidly down the street, and as he passed a brilliantly-lighted window she recognized Jean. He came quickly towards her.

“Here I am,” she cried, running forward. She caught him by the arm, saying, “Oh, Jean, what is the matter?”

He shook her rudely, and shouted at her—“Let me go, you fool!” But she clung to him, until he raised his fist and struck her squarely in the face. Lurine staggered against the wall, and Jean ran on. A stalwart man who had spoken to Lurine a few moments before, and, not understanding her silence, stood in a doorway near watching her, sprang out when he saw the assault, and thrust his stick between the feet of the flying man, flinging him face forward on the pavement. The next instant he placed his foot upon Jean’s neck holding him down as if he were a snake.

“You villain!” he cried. “Strike a woman, would you?”

Jean lay there as if stunned, and two gens d’armes came pantingly upon the scene.

“This scoundrel,” said the man, “has just assaulted a woman. I saw him.”

“He has done more than that,” said one of the officers, grimly, as if, after all, the striking of a woman was but a trivial affair.

They secured the young man, and dragged him with them. The girl came up to them and said, falteringly—

“It is all a mistake, it was an accident. He didn’t mean to do it.”

“Oh, he didn’t, and pray how do you know?” asked one of the officers.

“You little devil,” said Jean to the girl, through his clinched teeth, “it’s all your fault.”

The officers hurried him off.

“I think,” said one, “that we should have arrested the girl; you heard what she said.”

“Yes,” said the other, “but we have enough on our hands now, if the crowd find out who he is.”

Lurine thought of following them, but she was so stunned by the words that her lover had said to her, rather than by the blow he had given her that she turned her steps sadly towards the Pont Royal and went to her room.

The next morning she did not go through the gardens, as usual, to her work, and when she entered the Pharmacie de Siam, the proprietor cried out, “Here she is, the vixen! Who would have thought it of her? You wretch, you stole my drugs to give to that villain!”

“I did not,” said Lurine, stoutly. “I put the money in the till for them.”

“Hear her! She confesses!” said the proprietor.

The two concealed officers stepped forward and arrested her where she stood as the accomplice of Jean Duret, who, the night before, had flung a bomb in the crowded Avenue de l’Opéra.

Even the prejudiced French judges soon saw that the girl was innocent of all evil intent, and was but the victim of the scoundrel who passed by the name of Jean Duret. He was sentenced for life; she was set free. He had tried to place the blame on her, like the craven he was, to shield another woman. This was what cut Lurine to the heart. She might have tried to find an excuse for his crime, but she realized that he had never cared for her, and had but used her as his tool to get possession of the chemicals he dared not buy.

In the drizzling rain she walked away from her prison, penniless, and broken in body and in spirit. She passed the little Pharmacie de Siam, not daring to enter. She walked in the rain along the Rue des Pyramides, and across the Rue de

Rivoli, and into the Tuileries Gardens. She had forgotten about her stone woman, but, unconsciously her steps were directed to her. She looked up at her statue with amazement, at first not recognizing it. It was no longer the statue of a smiling woman. The head was thrown back, the eyes closed. The last mortal agony was on the face. It was a ghastly monument to Death. The girl was so perplexed by the change in her statue that for the moment she forgot the ruin of her own life. She saw that the smiling face was but a mask, held in place by the curving of the left arm over it. Life, she realized now, was made up of tragedy and comedy, and he who sees but the smiling face, sees but the half of life. The girl hurried on to the bridge, sobbing quietly to herself, and looked down at the grey river water. The passers-by paid no attention to her. Why, she wondered, had she ever thought the river cold and cruel and merciless? It is the only home of the homeless, the only lover that does not change. She turned back to the top of the flight of steps which lead down, to the water's brink. She looked toward the Tuileries Gardens, but she could not see her statue for the trees which intervened. "I, too, will be a woman of stone," she said, as she swiftly descended the steps.

THE CHEMISTRY OF ANARCHY.

It has been said in the London papers that the dissolution of the Soho Anarchist League was caused by want of funds. This is very far from being the case. An Anarchist League has no need for funds and so long as there is money enough to buy beer the League is sure of continued existence. The truth about the scattering of the Soho organization was told me by a young newspaper-man who was chairman at the last meeting.

The young man was not an anarchist, though he had to pretend to be one in the interests of his paper, and so joined the Soho League, where he made some fiery speeches that were much applauded. At last Anarchist news became a drug in the market, and the editor of the paper young Marshall Simkins belonged to, told him that he would now have to turn his attention to Parliamentary work, as he would print no more Anarchist news in the sheet.

One might think that young Simkins would have been glad to get rid of his anarchist work, as he had no love for the cause. He was glad to get rid of it, but he found some difficulty in sending in his resignation. The moment he spoke of resigning, the members became suspicious of him. He had always been rather better dressed than the others, and, besides, he drank less beer. If a man wishes to be in good standing in the League he must not be fastidious as to dress, and he must be constructed to hold at least a gallon of beer at a sitting. Simkins was merely a “quart” man, and this would have told against him all along if it had not been for the extra gunpowder he put in his speeches. On several occasions seasoned Anarchists had gathered about him and begged him to give up his designs on the Parliament buildings.

The older heads claimed that, desirable as was the obliteration of the Houses of Parliament, the time was not yet ripe for it. England, they pointed out, was the only place where Anarchists could live and talk unmolested, so, while they were quite anxious that Simkins should go and blow up Vienna, Berlin, or Paris, they were not willing for him to begin on London. Simkins was usually calmed down with much difficulty, and finally, after hissing “Cowards!” two or three times under his breath, he concluded with, “Oh, very well, then, you know better than I do—I am only a young recruit; but allow me at least to blow up Waterloo Bridge, or spring a bomb in Fleet Street just to show that we are up and doing.”

But this the Anarchists would not sanction. If he wanted to blow up bridges, he could try his hand on those across the Seine. They had given their word that there would be no explosions in London so long as England afforded them an asylum.

“But look at Trafalgar Square,” cried Simkins angrily; “we are not allowed to meet there.”

“Who wants to meet there?” said the chairman. “It is ever so much more comfortable in these rooms, and there is no beer in Trafalgar Square.” “Yes, yes,” put in several others; “the time is not yet ripe for it.” Thus was Simkins calmed down, and beer allowed to flow again in tranquillity, while some foreign Anarchist, who was not allowed to set foot in his native country, would get up and harangue the crowd in broken English and tell them what great things would yet be done by dynamite.

But when Simkins sent in his resignation a change came over their feelings towards him, and he saw at once that he was a marked man. The chairman, in a whisper, advised him to withdraw his resignation. So Simkins, who was a shrewd young fellow, understanding the temper of the assembly, arose and said: —

“I have no desire to resign, but you do nothing except talk, and I want to belong to an Anarchist Society that acts.” He stayed away from the next meeting, and tried to drop them in that way, but a committee from the League called upon him at his lodgings, and his landlady thought that young Simkins had got into bad ways when he had such evil-looking men visiting him.

Simkins was in a dilemma, and could not make up his mind what to do. The Anarchists apparently were not to be shaken off. He applied to his editor for advice on the situation, but that good man could think of no way out of the trouble.

“You ought to have known better,” he said, “than to mix up with such people.”

“But how was I to get the news?” asked Simkins, with some indignation. The editor shrugged his shoulders. That was not his part of the business; and if the Anarchists chose to make things uncomfortable for the young man, he could not help it.

Simkins’ fellow-lodger, a student who was studying chemistry in London,

noticed that the reporter was becoming gaunt with anxiety.

“Simkins,” said Sedlitz to him one morning, “you are haggard and careworn: what is the matter with you? Are you in love, or is it merely debt that is bothering you?”

“Neither,” replied Simkins.

“Then cheer up,” said Sedlitz. “If one or the other is not interfering with you, anything else is easily remedied.”

“I am not so sure of that,” rejoined Simkins; and then he sat down and told his friend just what was troubling him.

“Ah,” said Sedlitz, “that accounts for it. There has been an unkempt ruffian marching up and down watching this house. They are on your track, Simkins, my boy, and when they discover that you are a reporter, and therefore necessarily a traitor, you will be nabbed some dark night.”

“Well, that’s encouraging,” said Simkins, with his head in his hands.

“Are these Anarchists brave men, and would they risk their lives in any undertaking?” asked Sedlitz.

“Oh, I don’t know. They talk enough, but I don’t know what they would do. They are quite capable, though, of tripping me up in a dark lane.”

“Look here,” said Sedlitz, “suppose you let me try a plan. Let me give them a lecture on the Chemistry of Anarchy. It’s a fascinating subject.”

“What good would that do?”

“Oh, wait till you have heard the lecture. If I don’t make the hair of some of them stand on end, they are braver men than I take them to be. We have a large room in Clement’s Inn, where we students meet to try experiments and smoke tobacco. It is half club, and half a lecture- room. Now, I propose to get those Anarchists in there, lock the doors, and tell them something about dynamite and other explosives. You give out that I am an Anarchist from America. Tell them that the doors will be locked to prevent police interference, and that there will be a barrel of beer. You can introduce me as a man from America, where they know as much about Anarchism in ten minutes as they do here in ten years. Tell them that I have spent my life in the study of explosives. I will have to make-up a

little, but you know that I am a very good amateur actor, and I don't think there will be any trouble about that. At the last you must tell them that you have an appointment and will leave me to amuse them for a couple of hours."

"But I don't see what good it is all going to do, though I am desperate," said Simkins, "and willing to try anything. I have thought some of firing a bomb off myself at an Anarchist meeting."

When the Friday night of meeting arrived the large hall in Clement's Inn was filled to the doors. Those assembled there saw a platform at one end of the apartment, and a door that led from it to a room at the back of the hall. A table was on the platform, and boxes, chemical apparatus, and other scientific-looking paraphernalia were on it. At the hour of eight young Simkins appeared before the table alone.

"Fellow Anarchists," he said, "you are well aware that I am tired of the great amount of talk we indulge in, and the little action which follows it. I have been fortunate enough to secure the co-operation of an Anarchist from America, who will tell you something of the cause there. We have had the doors locked, and those who keep the keys are now down at the entrance of the Inn, so that if a fire should occur, they can quickly come and let us out. There is no great danger of fire, however, but the interruption of the police must be guarded against very carefully. The windows, as you see, are shuttered and barred, and no ray of light can penetrate from this room outside. Until the lecture is over no one can leave the room, and by the same token no one can enter it, which is more to the purpose.

"My friend, Professor Josiah P. Slivers, has devoted his life to the Chemistry of Anarchy, which is the title of this lecture. He will tell you of some important discoveries, which are now to be made known for the first time. I regret to say that the Professor is not in a very good state of health, because the line of life which he has adopted has its drawbacks. His left eye has been blown away by a premature explosion during his experiments. His right leg is also permanently disabled. His left arm, as you will notice, is in a sling, having been injured by a little disaster in his workshop since he came to London. He is a man, as you will see, devoted body and soul to the cause, so I hope you will listen to him attentively. I regret that I am unable to remain with you to-night, having other duties to perform which are imperative. I will therefore, if you will permit me, leave by the back entrance after I have introduced the Professor to you."

At this moment the stumping of a wooden leg was heard, and those in the audience saw appear a man on crutches, with one arm in a sling and a bandage over an eye, although he beamed upon them benevolently with the other.

“Fellow Anarchists,” said Simkins, “allow me to introduce to you Professor Josiah P. Slivers, of the United States.”

The Professor bowed and the audience applauded. As soon as the applause began the Professor held up his unmaimed arm and said, “Gentlemen, I beg that you will not applaud.”

It seems the fashion in America to address a11 sorts and conditions of men as “Gentlemen.”

The Professor continued, “I have here some explosives so sensitive that the slightest vibration will cause them to go off, and I therefore ask you to listen in silence to what I have to say. I must particularly ask you also not to stamp on the floor.”

Before these remarks were concluded Simkins had slipped out by the back entrance, and somehow his desertion seemed to have a depressing effect upon the company, who looked upon the broken-up Professor with eyes of wonder and apprehension.

The Professor drew towards him one of the boxes and opened the lid. He dipped his one useful hand into the box and, holding it aloft, allowed something which looked like wet sawdust to drip through his fingers. “That, gentlemen,” he said, with an air of the utmost contempt, “is what is known to the world as dynamite. I have nothing at all to say against dynamite. It has, in its day, been a very powerful medium through which our opinions have been imparted to a listening world, but its day is past. It is what the lumbering stage-coach is to the locomotive, what the letter is to the telegram, what the sailing-vessel is to the steamship. It will be my pleasant duty to-night to exhibit to you an explosive so powerful and deadly that hereafter, having seen what it can accomplish, you will have nothing but derision for such simple and harmless compounds as dynamite and nitro-glycerine.”

The Professor looked with kindly sympathy over his audience as he allowed the yellow mixture to percolate slowly through his fingers back into the box again. Ever and anon he took up a fresh handful and repeated the action.

The Anarchists in the audience exchanged uneasy glances one with the other.

“Yet,” continued the Professor, “it will be useful for us to consider this substance for a few moments, if but for the purpose of comparison. Here,” he said, diving his hand into another box and bringing up before their gaze a yellow brick, “is dynamite in a compressed form. There is enough here to wreck all this part of London, were it exploded. This simple brick would lay St. Paul’s Cathedral in ruins, so, however antiquated dynamite may become, we must always look upon it with respect, just as we look upon reformers of centuries ago who perished for their opinions, even though their opinions were far behind what ours are now. I shall take the liberty of performing some experiments with this block of dynamite.” Saying which the Professor, with his free arm, flung the block of dynamite far down the aisle, where it fell on the floor with a sickening thud. The audience sprang from their seats and tumbled back one over the other. A wild shriek went up into the air, but the Professor gazed placidly on the troubled mob below him with a superior smile on his face. “I beg you to seat yourselves,” he said, “and for reasons which I have already explained, I trust that you will not applaud any of my remarks. You have just now portrayed one of the popular superstitions about dynamite, and you show by your actions how necessary a lecture of this sort is in order that you may comprehend thoroughly the substance with which you have to deal. That brick is perfectly harmless, because it is frozen. Dynamite in its frozen state will not explode—a fact well understood by miners and all those who have to work with it, and who, as a rule, generally prefer to blow themselves to pieces trying to thaw the substance before a fire. Will you kindly bring that brick back to me, before it thaws out in the heated atmosphere of this room?”

One of the men stepped gingerly forward and picked up the brick, holding it far from his body, as he tip-toed up to the platform, where he laid it down carefully on the desk before the Professor.

“Thank you,” said the Professor, blandly.

The man drew a long breath of relief as he went back to his seat.

“That is frozen dynamite,” continued the Professor, “and is, as I have said, practically harmless. Now, it will be my pleasure to perform two startling experiments with the unfrozen substance,” and with that he picked up a handful of the wet sawdust and flung it on a small iron anvil that stood on the table. “You will enjoy these experiments,” he said, “because it will show you with what ease

dynamite may be handled. It is a popular error that concussion will cause dynamite to explode. There is enough dynamite here to blow up this hall and to send into oblivion every person in it, yet you will see whether or not concussion will explode it." The Professor seized a hammer and struck the substance on the anvil two or three sharp blows, while those in front of him scrambled wildly back over their comrades, with hair standing on end. The Professor ceased his pounding and gazed reproachfully at them; then something on the anvil appeared to catch his eye. He bent over it and looked critically on the surface of the iron. Drawing himself up to his full height again, he said,

"I was about to reproach you for what might have appeared to any other man as evidence of fear, but I see my mistake. I came very near making a disastrous error. I have myself suffered from time to time from similar errors. I notice upon the anvil a small spot of grease; if my hammer had happened to strike that spot you would all now be writhing in your death-agonies under the ruins of this building. Nevertheless, the lesson is not without its value. That spot of grease is free nitro- glycerine that has oozed out from the dynamite. Therein rests, perhaps, the only danger in handling dynamite. As I have shown you, you can smash up dynamite on an anvil without danger, but if a hammer happened to strike a spot of free nitroglycerine it would explode in a moment. I beg to apologize to you for my momentary neglect."

A man rose up in the middle of the hall, and it was some little time before he could command voice enough to speak, for he was shaking as if from palsy. At last he said, after he had moistened his lips several times:—

"Professor, we are quite willing to take your word about the explosive. I think I speak for all my comrades here. We have no doubt at all about your learning, and would much prefer to hear from your own lips what you have to say on the subject, and not have you waste any more valuable time with experiments. I have not consulted with my comrades before speaking, but I think I voice the sense of the meeting." Cries of "You do, you do," came from all parts of the hall. The Professor once more beamed upon them benevolently.

"Your confidence in me is indeed touching," he said, "but a chemical lecture without experiments is like a body without a soul. Experiment is the soul of research. In chemistry we must take nothing for granted. I have shown you how many popular errors have arisen regarding the substance with which we are dealing. It would have been impossible for these errors to have arisen if every man had experimented for himself; and although I thank you for the mark of

confidence you have bestowed upon me, I cannot bring myself to deprive you of the pleasure which my experiments will afford you. There is another very common error to the effect that fire will explode dynamite. Such, gentlemen, is not the case."

The Professor struck a match on his trousers-leg and lighted the substance on the anvil. It burnt with a pale bluish flame, and the Professor gazed around triumphantly at his fellow Anarchists.

While the shuddering audience watched with intense fascination the pale blue flame the Professor suddenly stooped over and blew it out. Straightening himself once more he said, "Again I must apologize to you, for again I have forgotten the small spot of grease. If the flame had reached the spot of nitro-glycerine it would have exploded, as you all know. When a man has his thoughts concentrated on one subject he is apt to forget something else. I shall make no more experiments with dynamite. Here, John," he said to the trembling attendant, "take this box away, and move it carefully, for I see that the nitro-glycerine is oozing out. Put it as tenderly down in the next room as if it were a box of eggs."

As the box disappeared there was a simultaneous long-drawn sigh of relief from the audience.

"Now, gentlemen," said the Professor, "we come to the subject that ought to occupy the minds of all thoughtful men." He smoothed his hair complacently with the palm of his practicable hand, and smiled genially around him.

"The substance that I am about to tell you of is my own invention, and compares with dynamite as prussic acid does with new milk as a beverage." The Professor dipped his fingers in his vest pocket and drew out what looked like a box of pills. Taking one pill out he placed it upon the anvil and as he tip-toed back he smiled on it with a smile of infinite tenderness. "Before I begin on this subject I want to warn you once more that if any man as much as stamps upon the floor, or moves about except on tip-toe this substance will explode and will lay London from here to Charing Cross in one mass of indistinguishable ruins. I have spent ten years of my life in completing this invention. And these pills, worth a million a box, will cure all ills to which the flesh is heir."

"John," he said, turning to his attendant, "bring me a basin of water!" The basin of water was placed gingerly upon the table, and the Professor emptied all the pills into it, picking up also the one that was on the anvil and putting it with the others.

“Now,” he said, with a deep sigh, “we can breathe easier. A man can put one of these pills in a little vial of water, place the vial in his vest-pocket, go to Trafalgar Square, take the pill from the vial, throw it in the middle of the Square, and it will shatter everything within the four-mile radius, he himself having the glorious privilege of suffering instant martyrdom for the cause. People have told me that this is a drawback to my invention, but I am inclined to differ with them. The one who uses this must make up his mind to share the fate of those around him. I claim that this is the crowning glory of my invention. It puts to instant test our interest in the great cause. John, bring in very carefully that machine with the electric-wire attachment from the next room.”

The machine was placed upon the table. “This,” said the Professor, holding up some invisible object between his thumb and forefinger, “is the finest cambric needle. I will take upon the point of it an invisible portion of the substance I speak of.” Here he carefully picked out a pill from the basin, and as carefully placed it upon the table, where he detached an infinitesimal atom of it and held it up on the point of the needle. “This particle,” he said, “is so small that it cannot be seen except with the aid of a microscope. I will now place needle and all on the machine and touch it off with electric current;” and as his hand hovered over the push-button there were cries of “Stop! stop!” but the finger descended, and instantly there was a terrific explosion. The very foundation seemed shaken, and a dense cloud of smoke rolled over the heads of the audience. As the Professor became visible through the thinning smoke, he looked around for his audience. Every man was under the benches, and groans came from all parts of the hall. “I hope,” said the Professor, in anxious tones, “that no one has been hurt. I am afraid that I took up too much of the substance on the point of the needle, but it will enable you to imagine the effect of a larger quantity. Pray seat yourselves again. This is my last experiment.”

As the audience again seated itself, another mutual sigh ascended to the roof. The Professor drew the chairman’s chair towards him and sat down, wiping his grimy brow.

A man instantly arose and said, “I move a vote of thanks to Professor Slivers for the interesting——”

The Professor raised his hand. “One moment,” he said, “I have not quite finished. I have a proposal to make to you. You see that cloud of smoke hovering over our heads? In twenty minutes that smoke will percolate down through the atmosphere. I have told you but half of the benefits of this terrific explosive.

When that smoke mixes with the atmosphere of the room it becomes a deadly poison. We all can live here for the next nineteen minutes in perfect safety, then at the first breath we draw we expire instantly. It is a lovely death. There is no pain, no contortion of the countenance, but we will be found here in the morning stark and stiff in our seats. I propose, gentlemen, that we teach London the great lesson it so much needs. No cause is without its martyrs. Let us be the martyrs of the great religion of Anarchy. I have left in my room papers telling just how and why we died. At midnight these sheets will be distributed to all the newspapers of London, and to-morrow the world will ring with our heroic names. I will now put the motion. All in favor of this signify it by the usual upraising of the right hand."

The Professor's own right hand was the only one that was raised.

"Now all of a contrary opinion," said the Professor, and at once every hand in the audience went up.

"The noes have it," said the Professor, but he did not seem to feel badly about it. "Gentlemen," he continued, "I see that you have guessed my second proposal, as I imagined you would, and though there will be no newspapers in London to-morrow to chronicle the fact, yet the newspapers of the rest of the world will tell of the destruction of this wicked city. I see by your looks that you are with me in this, my second proposal, which is the most striking thing ever planned, and is that we explode the whole of these pills in the basin. To make sure of this, I have sent to an agent in Manchester the full account of how it was done, and the resolutions brought forward at this meeting, and which doubtless you will accept.

"Gentlemen, all in favor of the instant destruction of London signify it in the usual manner."

"Mr. Professor," said the man who had spoken previously, "before you put that resolution I would like to move an amendment. This is a very serious proposal, and should not be lightly undertaken. I move as an amendment, therefore, that we adjourn this meeting to our rooms at Soho, and do the exploding there. I have some little business that must be settled before this grand project is put in motion."

The Professor then said, "Gentlemen, the amendment takes precedence. It is moved that this meeting be adjourned, so that you may consider the project at your club-rooms in Soho."

“I second that amendment,” said fifteen of the audience rising together to their feet.

“In the absence of the regular chairman,” said the Professor, “it is my duty to put the amendment. All in favor of the amendment signify it by raising the right hand.”

Every hand was raised. “The amendment, gentlemen, is carried. I shall be only too pleased to meet you to-morrow night at your club, and I will bring with me a larger quantity of my explosive. John, kindly go round and tell the man to unlock the doors.”

When Simkins and Slivers called round the next night at the regular meeting-place of the Anarchists, they found no signs of a gathering, and never since the lecture has the Soho Anarchist League been known to hold a meeting. The Club has mysteriously dissolved.

THE FEAR OF IT.

The sea was done with him. He had struggled manfully for his life, but exhaustion came at last, and, realizing the futility of further fighting, he gave up the battle. The tallest wave, the king of that roaring tumultuous procession racing from the wreck to the shore, took him in its relentless grasp, held him towering for a moment against the sky, whirled his heels in the air, dashed him senseless on the sand, and, finally, rolled him over and over, a helpless bundle, high up upon the sandy beach.

Human life seems of little account when we think of the trifles that make toward the extinction or the extension of it. If the wave that bore Stanford had been a little less tall, he would have been drawn back into the sea by one that followed. If, as a helpless bundle, he had been turned over one time more or one less, his mouth would have pressed into the sand, and he would have died. As it was, he lay on his back with arms outstretched on either side, and a handful of dissolving sand in one clinched fist. Succeeding waves sometimes touched him, but he lay there unmolested by the sea with his white face turned to the sky.

Oblivion has no calendar. A moment or an eternity are the same to it. When consciousness slowly returned, he neither knew nor cared how time had fled. He was not quite sure that he was alive, but weakness rather than fear kept him from opening his eyes to find out whether the world they would look upon was the world they had last gazed at. His interest, however, was speedily stimulated by the sound of the English tongue. He was still too much dazed to wonder at it, and to remember that he was cast away on some unknown island in the Southern Seas. But the purport of the words startled him.

“Let us be thankful. He is undoubtedly dead.” This was said in a tone of infinite satisfaction.

There seemed to be a murmur of pleasure at the announcement from those who were with the speaker. Stanford slowly opened his eyes, wondering what these savages were who rejoiced in the death of an inoffensive stranger cast upon their shores. He saw a group standing around him, but his attention speedily became concentrated on one face. The owner of it, he judged, was not more than nineteen years of age, and the face—at least so it seemed to Stanford at the time

—was the most beautiful he had ever beheld. There was an expression of sweet gladness upon it until her eyes met his, then the joy faded from the face, and a look of dismay took its place. The girl seemed to catch her breath in fear, and tears filled her eyes.

“Oh,” she cried, “he is going to live.”

She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed.

Stanford closed his eyes wearily. “I am evidently insane,” he said to himself. Then, losing faith in the reality of things, he lost consciousness as well, and when his senses came to him again he found himself lying on a bed in a clean but scantily furnished room. Through an open window came the roar of the sea, and the thunderous boom of the falling waves brought to his mind the experiences through which he had passed. The wreck and the struggle with the waves he knew to be real, but the episode on the beach he now believed to have been but a vision resulting from his condition.

A door opened noiselessly, and, before he knew of anyone’s entrance, a placid-faced nurse stood by his bed and asked him how he was.

“I don’t know. I am at least alive.”

The nurse sighed, and cast down her eyes. Her lips moved, but she said nothing. Stanford looked at her curiously. A fear crept over him that he was hopelessly crippled for life, and that death was considered preferable to a maimed existence. He felt wearied, though not in pain, but he knew that sometimes the more desperate the hurt, the less the victim feels it at first.

“Are—are any of my—my bones broken, do you know?” he asked.

“No. You are bruised, but not badly hurt. You will soon recover.”

“Ah!” said Stanford, with a sigh of relief. “By the way,” he added, with sudden interest, “who was that girl who stood near me as I lay on the beach?”

“There were several.”

“No, there was but one. I mean the girl with the beautiful eyes and a halo of hair like a glorified golden crown on her head.”

“We speak not of our women in words like those,” said the nurse, severely; “you mean Ruth, perhaps, whose hair is plentiful and yellow.”

Stanford smiled. “Words matter little,” he said.

“We must be temperate in speech,” replied the nurse.

“We may be temperate without, being teetotal. Plentiful and yellow, indeed! I have had a bad dream concerning those who found me. I thought that they—but it does not matter. She at least is not a myth. Do you happen to know if any others were saved?”

“I am thankful to be able to say that every one was drowned.”

Stanford started up with horror in his eyes. The demure nurse, with sympathetic tones, bade him not excite himself. He sank back on his pillow.

“Leave the room,” he cried, feebly, “Leave me—leave me.” He turned his face toward the wall, while the woman left as silently as she had entered.

When she was gone Stanford slid from the bed, intending to make his way to the door and fasten it. He feared that these savages, who wished him dead, would take measures to kill him when they saw he was going to recover. As he leaned against the bed, he noticed that the door had no fastening. There was a rude latch, but neither lock nor bolt. The furniture of the room was of the most meagre description, clumsily made. He staggered to the open window, and looked out. The remnants of the disastrous gale blew in upon him and gave him new life, as it had formerly threatened him with death. He saw that he was in a village of small houses, each cottage standing in its own plot of ground. It was apparently a village of one street, and over the roofs of the houses opposite he saw in the distance the white waves of the sea. What astonished him most was a church with its tapering spire at the end of the street—a wooden church such as he had seen in remote American settlements. The street was deserted, and there were no signs of life in the houses.

“I must have fallen in upon some colony of lunatics,” he said to himself. “I wonder to what country these people belong—either to England or the United States, I imagine—yet in all my travels I never heard of such a community.”

There was no mirror in the room, and it was impossible for him to know how he looked. His clothes were dry and powdered with salt. He arranged them as well as he could, and slipped out of the house unnoticed. When he reached the outskirts of the village he saw that the inhabitants, both men and women, were working in the fields some distance away. Coming towards the village was a girl

with a water-can in either hand. She was singing as blithely as a lark until she saw Stanford, whereupon she paused both in her walk and in her song. Stanford, never a backward man, advanced, and was about to greet her when she forestalled him by saying:

“I am grieved, indeed, to see that you have recovered.”

The young man’s speech was frozen on his lip, and a frown settled off his brow. Seeing that he was annoyed, though why she could not guess, Ruth hastened to amend matters by adding:

“Believe me, what I say is true. I am indeed sorry.”

“Sorry that I live?”

“Most heartily am I.”

“It is hard to credit such a statement from one so—from you.”

“Do not say so. Miriam has already charged me with being glad that you were not drowned. It would pain me deeply if you also believed as she does.”

The girl looked at him with swimming eyes, and the young man knew not what to answer. Finally he said:

“There is some horrible mistake. I cannot make it out. Perhaps our words, though apparently the same, have a different meaning. Sit down, Ruth, I want to ask you some questions.”

Ruth cast a timorous glance towards the workers, and murmured something about not having much time to spare, but she placed the water-cans on the ground and sank down on the grass. Stanford throwing himself on the sward at her feet, but, seeing that she shrank back, he drew himself further from her, resting where he might gaze upon her face.

Ruth’s eyes were downcast, which was necessary, for she occupied herself in pulling blade after blade of grass, sometimes weaving them together. Stanford had said he wished to question her, but he apparently forgot his intention, for he seemed wholly satisfied with merely looking at her. After the silence had lasted for some time, she lifted her eyes for one brief moment, and then asked the first question herself.

“From what land do you come?”

“From England.”

“Ah! that also is an island, is it not?”

He laughed at the “also,” and remembered that he had some questions to ask.

“Yes, it is an island—also. The sea dashes wrecks on all four sides of it, but there is no village on its shores so heathenish that if a man is cast upon the beach the inhabitants do not rejoice because he has escaped death.”

Ruth looked at him with amazement in her eyes.

“Is there, then, no religion in England?”

“Religion? England is the most religious country on the face of the earth. There are more cathedrals, more churches, more places of worship in England than in any other State that I know of. We send missionaries to all heathenish lands. The Government, itself, supports the Church.”

“I imagine, then, I mistook your meaning. I thought from what you said that the people of England feared death, and did not welcome it or rejoice when one of their number died.”

“They do not fear death, and they do not rejoice when it comes. Far from it. From the peer to the beggar, everyone fights death as long as he can; the oldest cling to life as eagerly as the youngest. Not a man but will spend his last gold piece to ward off the inevitable even for an hour.”

“Gold piece—what is that?”

Stanford plunged his hand into his pocket.

“Ah!” he said, “there are some coins left. Here is a gold piece.”

The girl took it, and looked at it with keen interest.

“Isn’t it pretty?” she said, holding the yellow coin on her pink palm, and glancing up at him.

“That is the general opinion. To accumulate coins like that, men will lie, and cheat, and steal—yes, and work. Although they will give their last sovereign to prolong their lives, yet will they risk life itself to accumulate gold. Every business in England is formed merely for the gathering together of bits of metal like that in your hand; huge companies of men are formed so that it may be piled

up in greater quantities. The man who has most gold has most power, and is generally the most respected; the company which makes most money is the one people are most anxious to belong to."

Ruth listened to him with wonder and dismay in her eyes. As he talked she shuddered, and allowed the yellow coin to slip from her hand to the ground. "No wonder such a people fears death."

"Do you not fear death?"

"How can we, when we believe in heaven?"

"But would you not be sorry if someone died whom you loved?"

"How could we be so selfish? Would you be sorry if your brother, or someone you loved, became possessed of whatever you value in England—a large quantity of this gold, for instance?"

"Certainly not. But then you see—well, it isn't exactly the same thing. If one you care for dies you are separated from him, and——"

"But only for a short time, and that gives but another reason for welcoming death. It seems impossible that Christian people should fear to enter Heaven. Now I begin to understand why our forefathers left England, and why our teachers will never tell us anything about the people there. I wonder why missionaries are not sent to England to teach them the truth, and try to civilize the people?"

"That would, indeed, be coals to Newcastle. But there comes one of the workers."

"It is my father," cried the girl, rising. "I fear I have been loitering. I never did such a thing before."

The man who approached was stern of countenance.

"Ruth," he said, "the workers are athirst."

The girl, without reply, picked up her pails and departed.

"I have been receiving," said the young man, coloring slightly, "some instruction regarding your belief. I had been puzzled by several remarks I had heard, and wished to make inquiries concerning them."

“It is more fitting,” said the man, coldly, “that you should receive instruction from me or from some of the elders than from one of the youngest in the community. When you are so far recovered as to be able to listen to an exposition of our views, I hope to put forth such arguments as will convince you that they are the true views. If it should so happen that my arguments are not convincing, then I must request that you will hold no communication with our younger members. They must not be contaminated by the heresies of the outside world.”

Stanford looked at Ruth standing beside the village well.

“Sir,” he said, “you underrate the argumentative powers of the younger members. There is a text bearing upon the subject which I need not recall to you. I am already convinced.”

THE METAMORPHOSES OF JOHNSON.

I was staying for some weeks at a lovely town in the Tyrol which I shall take the liberty of naming Schwindleburg. I conceal its real title because it charges what is termed a visitors' tax, and a heavy visitors' tax, exacting the same from me through the medium of my hotel bill. The town also made me pay for the excellent band that performs morning and afternoon in the Kurpark. Many continental health resorts support themselves by placing a tax upon visitors, a practice resorted to by no English town, and so I regard the imposition as a swindle, and I refuse to advertise any place that practises it. It is true that if you stay in Schwindleburg less than a week they do not tax you, but I didn't know that, and the hotel man, being wise in his own generation, did not present his bill until a day after the week was out, so I found myself in for the visitors' tax and the music money before I was aware of it. Thus does a foolish person accumulate wisdom by foreign travel. I stayed on at this picturesque place, listening to the band every day, trying to get value for my money. I intended to keep much to myself, having work to do, and make no acquaintances, but I fell under the fascination of Johnson, thus breaking my rule. What is the use of making a rule if you can't have the pleasure of breaking it?

I think the thing that first attracted me to Johnson was his utter negligence in the matter of his personal appearance. When he stepped down from the hotel 'bus he looked like a semi-respectable tramp. He wore a blue woolen shirt, with no collar or necktie. He had a slouch hat, without the usual affectation of a Tyrolese feather in it. His full beard had evidently not been trimmed for weeks, and he had one trouser-leg turned up. He had no alpenstock, and that also was a merit. So I said to myself, "Here is a man free from the conventionalities of society. If I become acquainted with anybody it will be with him."

I found Johnson was an American from a Western city named Chicago, which I had heard of, and we "palled on." He was very fond of music, and the band in the Kurpark was a good one, so we went there together twice a day, and talked as we walked up and down the gravel paths. He had been everywhere, and knew his way about; his conversation was interesting. In about a week I had come to love Johnson, and I think he rather liked me.

One day, as we returned together to the Hotel Post, he held out his hand.

“I’m off to-morrow,” he said; “off to Innsbruck. So I shall bid you good-bye. I am very glad indeed to have met you.”

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that.” I replied. “But I won’t say good-bye now, I’ll see you to the station to-morrow.”

“No, don’t do that. I shall be away before you are up. We’ll say good- bye here.”

We did, and when I had breakfast next morning I found Johnson had left by the early train. I wandered around the park that forenoon mourning for Johnson. The place seemed lonely without him. In the afternoon I explored some of the by-paths of the park within hearing distance of the band, when suddenly, to my intense surprise, I met my departed friend.

“Hello! Johnson,” I cried, “I thought you left this morning.”

The man looked at me with no recognition in his face.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, “my name is Baumgarten.”

Looking more closely at him I at once saw I was mistaken. I had been thinking of Johnson at the time, which probably accounted for the error. Still, his likeness to Johnson was remarkable—to Johnson well groomed. He had neatly-trimmed side-whiskers and moustache, while Johnson had a full beard. His round hat was new, and he wore an irreproachable collar, and even cuffs. Besides this he sported a cane, and evidently possessed many weaknesses to which Johnson was superior. I apologized for my mistake, and was about to walk on when Baumgarten showed signs of wishing to become acquainted.

“I have just arrived,” he said, “and know nothing of the place. Have you been here long?”

“About two weeks,” I answered.

“Ah! then, you are a resident as it were. Are there any good ascents to be made around here?”

“I have not been informed that there are. I am not a climber myself, except by funicular railway. I am always content to take other people’s figures for the heights. The only use I have for a mountain is to look at it.”

Then Baumgarten launched into a very interesting account of mountain

dangers he had passed through. I found him a most entertaining talker, almost as fascinating as Johnson himself. He told me he was from Hanover, but he had been educated in Great Britain, which accounted for his perfect English.

"What hotel are you at?" he asked, as the band ceased playing.

"I am staying at the Post," I answered. "And you?"

"I am at the Adler. You must come to dine with me some evening, and I will make it even by dining with you. We can thus compare *table d'hôtes*."

Baumgarten improved on acquaintance in spite of his foppishness in dress. I almost forgot Johnson until one day I was reminded of him one day by Baumgarten saying, "I leave to-night for Innsbruck."

"Innsbruck? Why, that's where Johnson is. You ought to meet him. He's an awfully good fellow. A little careless about his clothes, that's all."

"I should like to meet him. I know no one in Innsbruck. Do you happen to know the name of his hotel?"

"I do not. I don't even know Johnson's first name. But I'll write you a note of introduction on my card, and if you should come across him, give him my regards."

Baumgarten accepted the card with thanks, and we parted.

Next day, being warm, I sat on a bench in the shade listening to the music. Now that Baumgarten had gone, I was meditating on his strange resemblance to Johnson, and remembering things. Someone sat down beside me, but I paid no attention to him. Finally he said: "This seems to be a very good band."

I started at the sound of his voice, and looked at him too much astonished to reply.

He wore a moustache, but no whiskers, and a green Tyrolese felt hat with a feather in it. An alpenstock leaned against the bench beside him, its iron point in the gravel. He wore knickerbockers; in fact, his whole appearance was that of the conventional mountaineer-tourist. But the voice! And the expression of the eyes!

"What did you say?"

“I said the band is very good.”

“Oh, yes. Quite so. It’s expensive, and it ought to be good. I’m helping to pay for it. By the way, you arrived this morning, I take it?”

“I came last night.”

“Oh, indeed. And you depart in a few days for Innsbruck?”

“No, I go to Salzburg when I leave here.”

“And your name isn’t Johnson—or—or Baumgarten, by any chance?”

“It is not.”

“You come neither from Chicago nor Hanover?”

“I have never been in America, nor do I know Hanover. Anything else?”

“Nothing else. It’s all right. It’s none of my business, of course.”

“What is none of your business?”

“Who are you.”

“Oh, there’s no secret about that. I am a Russian. My name is Katzoff. At least, these are the first and last syllables of my name. I never use my full name when I travel; it is too complicated.”

“Thanks. And how do you account for your perfect English? Educated in England, I presume? Baumgarten was.”

“No, I was not. You know we Russians are reputed to be good linguists.”

“Yes, I had forgotten that. We will now return to the point from which we started. The band is excellent, and it is about to play one of four favorite selections, Mr. Katzburg.”

“Katzoff is the name. As to the selection, I don’t know much about music, although I am fond of popular pieces.”

Katzoff and I got along very nicely, although I did not seem to like him as well as either Johnson or Baumgarten. He left for Salzburg without bidding me good-bye. Missing him one day, I called at the Angleterre, and the porter told me he had gone.

Next day I searched for him, wondering in what garb I should find him. I passed him twice as he sat on the bench, before I was sure enough to accost him. The sacrifice of his moustache had made a remarkable difference. His clean-shaven face caused him to look at least ten years younger. He wore a tall silk hat, and a long black morning coat. I found myself hardly able to withdraw my eyes from the white spats that partially covered his polished boots. He was reading an English paper, and did not observe my scrutiny. I approached him.

"Well, Johnson," I said, "this *is* a lay out. You're English this time, I suppose?"

The man looked up in evident surprise. Fumbling around the front of his waistcoat for a moment, he found a black silk string, which he pulled, bringing to his hand a little round disc of glass. This he stuck in one eye, grimacing slightly to keep it in place, and so regarded me apparently with some curiosity. My certainty that it was Johnson wavered for a moment, but I braved it out.

"That monocle is a triumph, Johnson. In combination with the spats it absolutely staggers me. If you had tried that on as Baumgarten I don't know that I should have recognized you. Johnson, what's your game?"

"You seem to be laboring under some delusion," he said at last. "My name is not Johnson. I am Lord Somerset Campbell, if you care to know."

"Really? Oh, well, that's all right. I'm the Duke of Argyll, so we must be relatives. Blood is thicker than water, Campbell. Confess. Whom have you murdered?"

"I knew," said his lordship, slowly, "that the largest lunatic asylum in the Tyrol is near here, but I was not aware that the patients were allowed to stroll in the Kurpark."

"That's all very well, Johnson, but——"

"Campbell, if you please."

"I don't please, as it happens. This masquerade has gone on long enough. What's your crime? Or are you on the other side of the fence? Are you practising the detective business?"

"My dear fellow, I don't know you, and I resent your impertinent curiosity. Allow me to wish you good-day."

“It won’t do, Johnson, it has gone too far. You have played on my feelings, and I won’t stand it. I’ll go to the authorities and relate the circumstances. They are just suspicious enough to——”

“Which? The authorities or the circumstances?” asked Johnson, sitting down again.

“Both, my dear boy, both, and you know it. Now, Johnson, make a clean breast of it, I won’t give you away.”

Johnson sighed, and his glass dropped from his eye. He looked around cautiously. “Sit down,” he said.

“Then you *are* Johnson!” I cried, with some exultation.

“I thought you weren’t very sure,” began Johnson. “However, it doesn’t matter, but you should be above threatening a man. That was playing it low down.”

“I see you’re from Chicago. Go on.”

“It’s all on account of this accursed visitors’ tax. That I decline to pay. I stay just under the week at a hotel, and then take a ‘bus to the station, and another ‘bus to another hotel. Of course my mistake was getting acquainted with you. I never suspected you were going to stay here a month.”

“But why didn’t you let me know? Your misdemeanor is one I thoroughly sympathize with. I wouldn’t have said anything.”

Johnson shook his head.

“I took a fellow into my confidence once before. He told it as a dead secret to a friend, and the friend thought it a good joke, and related it, always under oath that it should go no further. The authorities had me arrested before the week was out, and fined me heavily besides exacting the tax.”

“But doesn’t the ‘bus fares, the changing, and all that amount to as much as the tax?”

“I suppose it does. It isn’t the money I object to, it’s the principle of the thing.”

This interview was the last I ever had with Johnson. About a week later I read

in the Visitors' List that Lord Somerset Campbell, who had been a guest of the Victoria (the swell hotel of the place), had left Schwindleburg for Innsbruck.

THE RECLAMATION OF JOE HOLLENDS.

The public-houses of Burwell Road—and there were many of them for the length of the street—were rather proud of Joe Hollends. He was a perfected specimen of the work a pub produces. He was probably the most persistent drunkard the Road possessed, and the periodical gathering in of Joe by the police was one of the stock sights of the street. Many of the inhabitants could be taken to the station by one policeman; some required two; but Joe's average was four. He had been heard to boast that on one occasion he had been accompanied to the station by seven bobbies, but that was before the force had studied Joe and got him down to his correct mathematical equivalent. Now they tripped him up, a policeman taking one kicking leg and another the other, while the remaining two attended to the upper part of his body. Thus they carried him, followed by an admiring crowd, and watched by other envious drunkards who had to content themselves with a single officer when they went on a similar spree. Sometimes Joe managed to place a kick where it would do the most good against the stomach of a policeman, and when the officer rolled over there was for a few moments a renewal of the fight, silent on the part of the men and vociferous on the part of the drunkard, who had a fine flow of abusive language. Then the procession went on again. It was perfectly useless to put Joe on the police ambulance, for it required two men to sit on him while in transit, and the barrow is not made to stand such a load.

Of course, when Joe staggered out of the pub and fell in the gutter, the ambulance did its duty, and trundled Joe to his abiding place, but the real fun occurred when Joe was gathered in during the third stage of his debauch. He passed through the oratorical stage, then the maudlin or sentimental stage, from which he emerged into the fighting stage, when he was usually ejected into the street, where he forthwith began to make Rome howl, and paint the town red. At this point the policeman's whistle sounded, and the force knew Joe was on the warpath, and that duty called them to the fray.

It was believed in the neighborhood that Joe had been a college man, and this gave him additional standing with his admirers. His eloquence was undoubted, after several glasses varying in number according to the strength of their contents, and a man who had heard the great political speakers of the day admitted that none of them could hold a candle to Joe when he got on the subject

of the wrongs of the working man and the tyranny of the capitalist. It was generally understood that Joe might have been anything he liked, and that he was no man's enemy but his own. It was also hinted that he could tell the bigwigs a thing or two if he had been consulted in affairs of State.

One evening, when Joe was slowly progressing as usual, with his feet in the air, towards the station, supported by the requisite number of policemen, and declaiming to the delight of the accompanying crowd, a woman stood with her back to the brick wall, horror-stricken at the sight. She had a pale, refined face, and was dressed in black. Her self-imposed mission was among these people, but she had never seen Joe taken to the station before, and the sight, which was so amusing to the neighborhood, was shocking to her. She enquired about Joe, and heard the usual story that he was no man's enemy but his own, although they might in justice have added the police. Still, a policeman was hardly looked upon as a human being in that neighborhood. Miss Johnson reported the case to the committee of the Social League, and took counsel. Then it was that the reclamation of Joe Hollends was determined on.

Joe received Miss Johnson with subdued dignity, and a demeanor that delicately indicated a knowledge on his part of her superiority and his own degradation. He knew how a lady should be treated even if he was a drunkard, as he told his cronies afterwards. Joe was perfectly willing to be reclaimed. Heretofore in his life, no one had ever extended the hand of fellowship to him. Human sympathy was what Joe needed, and precious little he had had of it. There were more kicks than halfpence in this world for a poor man. The rich did not care what became of the poor; not they—a proposition which Miss Johnson earnestly denied.

It was one of the tenets of the committee that where possible the poor should help the poor. It was resolved to get Joe a decent suit of clothes and endeavor to find him a place where work would enable him to help himself. Miss Johnson went around the neighborhood and collected pence for the reclamation. Most people were willing to help Joe, although it was generally felt that the Road would be less gay when he took on sober habits. In one room, however, Miss Johnson was refused the penny she pleaded for.

"We cannot spare even a penny," said the woman, whose sickly little boy clung to her skirts. "My husband is just out of work again. He has had only four weeks' work this time."

Miss Johnson looked around the room and saw why there was no money. It was quite evident where the earnings of the husband had gone.

The room was much better furnished than the average apartment of the neighborhood. There were two sets of dishes where one would have been quite sufficient. On the mantelshelf and around the walls were various unnecessary articles which cost money.

Miss Johnson noted all this but said nothing, although she resolved to report it to the committee. In union is strength and in multitude of counsel there is wisdom. Miss Johnson had great faith in the wisdom of the committee.

“How long has your husband been out of work?” she asked.

“Only a few days, but times are very bad and he is afraid he will not get another situation soon.”

“What is his trade?”

“He is a carpenter and a good workman—sober and steady.”

“If you give me his name I will put it down in our books. Perhaps we may be able to help him.”

“John Morris is his name.”

Miss Johnson wrote it down on her tablets, and when she left, the wife felt vaguely grateful for benefits to come.

The facts of the case were reported to the committee, and Miss Johnson was deputed to expostulate with Mrs. Morris upon her extravagance. John Morris’s name was put upon the books among the names of many other unemployed persons. The case of Joe Hollends then came up, and elicited much enthusiasm. A decent suit of clothing had been purchased with part of the money collected for him, and it was determined to keep the rest in trust, to be doled out to him as occasion warranted.

Two persuasive ladies undertook to find a place for him in one of the factories, if such a thing were possible.

Joe felt rather uncomfortable in his new suit of clothes, and seemed to regard the expenditure as, all in all, a waste of good money. He was also disappointed to find that the funds collected were not to be handed over to him in a lump. It was

not the money he cared about, he said, but the evident lack of trust. If people had trusted him more, he might have been a better man. Trust and human sympathy were what Joe Hollends needed.

The two persuasive ladies appealed to Mr. Stillwell, the proprietor of a small factory for the making of boxes. They said that if Hollends got a chance they were sure he would reform. Stillwell replied that he had no place for anyone. He had enough to do to keep the men already in his employ. Times were dull in the box business, and he was turning away applicants every day who were good workmen and who didn't need to be reformed. However, the ladies were very persuasive, and it is not given to every man to be able to refuse the appeal of a pretty woman, not to mention two of them. Stillwell promised to give Hollends a chance, said he would consult with his foreman, and let the ladies know what could be done.

Joe Hollends did not receive the news of his luck with the enthusiasm that might have been expected. Many a man was tramping London in search of employment and finding none, therefore even the ladies who were so solicitous about Joe's welfare thought he should be thankful that work came unsought. He said he would do his best, which is, when you come to think of it, all that we have a right to expect from any man.

Some days afterwards Jack Morris applied to Mr. Stillwell for a job, but he had no sub-committee of persuasive ladies to plead for him. He would be willing to work half-time or quarter-time for that matter. He had a wife and boy dependent on him. He could show that he was a good workman and he did not drink. Thus did Morris recite his qualifications to the unwilling ears of Stillwell the box maker. As he left the place disheartened with another refusal, he was overtaken by Joe Hollends. Joe was a lover of his fellow-man, and disliked seeing anyone downhearted. He had one infallible cure for dejection. Having just been discharged, he was in high spirits, because his prediction of his own failure as a reformed character, if work were a condition of the reclamation, had just been fulfilled.

"Cheer up, old man," he cried, slapping Morris on the shoulder, "what's the matter? Come and have a drink with me. I've got the money."

"No," said Morris, who knew the professional drunkard but slightly, and did not care for further acquaintance with him, "I want work, not beer."

"Every man to his taste. Why don't you ask at the box factory? You can have

my job and welcome. The foreman's just discharged me. Said I wouldn't work myself, and kept the men off theirs. Thought I talked too much about capital and labor."

"Do you think I could get your job?"

"Very likely. No harm in trying. If they don't take you on, come into the Red Lion—I'll be there—and have a drop. It'll cheer you up a bit."

Morris appealed in vain to the foreman. They had more men now in the factory than they needed, he said. So Morris went to the Red Lion, where he found Hollends ready to welcome him. They had several glasses together, and Hollends told him of the efforts of the Social League in the reclamation line, and his doubts of their ultimate success. Hollends seemed to think the ladies of the League were deeply indebted to him for furnishing them with such a good subject for reformation. That night Joe's career reached a triumphant climax, for the four policeman had to appeal to the bystanders for help in the name of the law.

Jack Morris went home unaided. He had not taken many glasses, but he knew he should have avoided drink altogether, for he had some experience of its power in his younger days. He was, therefore, in a quarrelsome mood, ready to blame everyone but himself.

He found his wife in tears, and saw Miss Johnson sitting there, evidently very miserable.

"What's all this?" asked Morris.

His wife dried her eyes, and said it was nothing. Miss Johnson had been giving her some advice, which she was thankful for. Morris glared at the visitor.

"What have you got to do with us?" he demanded rudely. His wife caught him by the arm, but he angrily tossed aside her hand. Miss Johnson arose, fearing.

"You've no business here. We want none of your advice. You get out of this." Then, impatiently to his wife, who strove to calm him, "Shut up, will you?"

Miss Johnson was afraid he would strike her as she passed him going to the door, but he merely stood there, following her exit with lowering brow.

The terrified lady told her experience to the sympathizing members of the

committee. She had spoken to Mrs. Morris of her extravagance in buying so many things that were not necessary when her husband had work. She advised the saving of the money. Mrs. Morris had defended her apparent lavish expenditure by saying that there was no possibility of saving money. She bought useful things, and when her husband was out of work she could always get a large percentage of their cost from the pawnbroker. The pawnshop, she had tearfully explained to Miss Johnson, was the only bank of the poor. The idea of the pawnshop as a bank, and not as a place of disgrace, was new to Miss Johnson, but before anything further could be said the husband had come in. One of the committee, who knew more about the district than Miss Johnson, affirmed that there was something to say for the pawnbroker as the banker of the poor. The committee were unanimous in condemning the conduct of Morris, and it says much for the members that, in spite of the provocation one of them had received, they did not take the name of so undeserving a man from their list of the unemployed.

The sad relapse of Joe Hollends next occupied the attention of the League. His fine had been paid, and he had expressed himself as deeply grieved at his own frailty. If the foreman had been less harsh with him and had given him a chance, things might have been different. It was resolved to send Joe to the seaside so that he might have an opportunity of toning up his system to resist temptation. Joe enjoyed his trip to the sea. He always liked to encounter a new body of police unaccustomed to his methods. He toned up his system so successfully the first day on the sands that he spent the night in the cells.

Little by little, the portable property in the rooms of the Morrises disappeared into the pawnshop. Misfortune, as usual, did not come singly. The small boy was ill, and Morris himself seemed to be unable to resist the temptation of the Red Lion. The unhappy woman took her boy to the parish doctor, who was very busy, but he gave what attention he could to the case. He said all the boy needed was nourishing food and country air. Mrs. Morris sighed, and decided to take the little boy oftener to the park, but the way was long, and he grew weaker day by day.

At last, she succeeded in interesting her husband in the little fellow’s condition. He consented to take the boy to the doctor with her.

“The doctor doesn’t seem to mind what I say,” she complained. “Perhaps he will pay attention to a man.”

Morris was not naturally a morose person, but continued disappointment was rapidly making him so. He said nothing, but took the boy in his arms, and, followed by his wife, went to the doctor.

“This boy was here before,” said the physician, which tended to show that he had paid more attention to the case than Mrs. Morris thought. “He is very much worse. You will have to take him to the country or he will die.”

“How can I send him to the country?” asked Morris, sullenly. “I’ve been out of work for months.”

“Have you friends in the country?”

“No.”

“Hasn’t your wife any friends in the country who would take her and the lad for a month or so?”

“No.”

“Have you anything to pawn?”

“Very little.”

“Then I would advise you to pawn everything you own, or sell it if you can, and take the boy on your back and tramp to the country. You will get work there probably more easily than in the city. Here are ten shillings to help you.”

“I don’t want your money,” said Morris, in a surly tone. “I want work.”

“I have no work to give you, so I offer you what I have. I haven’t as much of that as I could wish. You are a fool not to take what the gods send.”

Morris, without replying, gathered up his son in his arms and departed.

“Here is a bottle of tonic for him.” said the doctor to Mrs. Morris.

He placed the half-sovereign on the bottle as he passed it to her. She silently thanked him with her wet eyes, hoping that a time would come when she could repay the money. The doctor had experience enough to know that they were not to be classed among his usual visitors. He was not in the habit of indiscriminately bestowing gold coins.

It was a dreary journey, and they were a long time shaking off the octopus-like

tentacles of the great city, that reached further and further into he country each year, as if it lived on consuming the green fields. Morris walked ahead with the boy on his back, and his wife followed. Neither spoke, and the sick lad did not complain. As they were nearing a village, the boy's head sunk on his father's shoulder. The mother quickened her pace, and came up to them stroking the head of her sleeping son. Suddenly, she uttered a smothered cry and took the boy in her arms.

"What's the matter?" asked Morris, turning round.

She did not answer, but sat by the roadside with the boy on her lap, swaying her body to and fro over him, moaning as she did so. Morris needed no answer. He stood on the road with hardening face, and looked down on his wife and child without speaking.

The kindly villagers arranged the little funeral, and when it was over Jack Morris and his wife stood again on the road.

"Jack, dear," she pleaded, "don't go back to that horrible place. We belong to the country, and the city is so hard and cruel."

"I'm going back. You can do as you like." Then, relenting a little, he added, "I haven't brought much luck to you, my girl."

She knew her husband was a stubborn man, and set in his way, so, unprotesting, she followed him in, as she had followed out, stumbling many times, for often her eyes did not see the road. And so they returned to their empty rooms.

Jack Morris went to look for work at the Red Lion. There he met that genial comrade, Joe Hollends, who had been reformed, and who had backslid twice since Jack had foregathered with him before. It is but fair to Joe to admit that he had never been optimistic about his own reclamation, but being an obliging man, even when he was sober, he was willing to give the Social League every chance. Jack was deeply grieved at the death of his son, although he had said no word to his wife that would show it. It therefore took more liquor than usual to bring him up to the point of good comradeship that reigned at the Red Lion. When he and Joe left the tavern that night it would have taken an expert to tell which was the more inebriated. They were both in good fighting trim, and were both in the humor for a row. The police, who had reckoned on Joe alone, suddenly found a new element in the fight that not only upset their calculations but themselves as

well. It was a glorious victory, and, as both fled down a side street, Morris urged Hollends to come along, for the representatives of law and order have the habit of getting reinforcements which often turn a victory into a most ignominious defeat.

“I can’t,” panted Hollends. “The beggars have hurt me.”

“Come along. I know a place where we are safe.”

Drunk as he was, Jack succeeded in finding the hole in the wall that allowed him to enter a vacant spot behind the box factory. There Hollends lay down with a groan, and there Morris sank beside him in a drunken sleep. The police were at last revenged, and finally.

When the grey daylight brought Morris to a dazed sense of where he was, he found his companion dead beside him. He had a vague fear that he would be tried for murder, but it was not so. From the moment that Hollends, in his fall, struck his head on the curb, the Providence which looks after the drunken deserted him.

But the inquest accomplished one good object. It attracted the attention of the Social League to Jack Morris, and they are now endeavoring to reclaim him.

Whether they succeed or not, he was a man that was certainly once worth saving.

THE TYPE-WRITTEN LETTER.

When a man has battled with poverty all his life, fearing it as he fought it, feeling for its skinny throat to throttle it, and yet dreading all the while the coming of the time when it would gain the mastery and throttle him—when such a man is told that he is rich, it might be imagined he would receive the announcement with hilarity. When Richard Denham realized that he was wealthy he became even more sobered than usual, and drew a long breath as if he had been running a race and had won it. The man who brought him the news had no idea he had told Denham anything novel.

He merely happened to say, “You are a rich man, Mr. Denham, and will never miss it.”

Denham had never before been called a rich man, and up to that moment he had not thought of himself as wealthy. He wrote out the check asked of him, and his visitor departed gratefully, leaving the merchant with something to ponder over. He was as surprised with the suddenness of the thing as if someone had left him a legacy. Yet the money was all of his own accumulating, but his struggle had been so severe, and he had been so hopeless about it, that from mere habit he exerted all his energies long after the enemy was overcome—just as the troops at New Orleans fought a fierce battle not knowing that the war was over. He had sprung from such a hopelessly poor family. Poverty had been their inheritance from generation to generation. It was the invariable legacy that father had left to son in the Denham family. All had accepted their lot with uncomplaining resignation, until Richard resolved he would at least have a fight for it. And now the fight had been won. Denham sat in his office staring at the dingy wall-paper so long, that Rogers, the chief clerk, put his head in and said in a deferential voice:

“Anything more to-night, Mr. Denham?”

Denham started as if that question in that tone had not been asked him every night for years.

“What’s that, what’s that?” he cried.

Rogers was astonished, but too well trained to show it.

“Anything more to-night, Mr. Denham?”

“Ah, quite so. No, Rogers, thank you, nothing more.”

“Good-night, Mr. Denham.”

“Eh? Oh, yes. Good-night, Rogers, good-night.”

When Mr. Denham left his office and went out into the street everything had an unusual appearance to him. He walked along, unheeding the direction. He looked at the fine residences and realized that he might have a fine residence if he wanted it. He saw handsome carriages; he too might set up an equipage. The satisfaction these thoughts produced was brief. Of what use would a fine house or an elegant carriage be to him? He knew no one to invite to the house or to ride with him in the carriage. He began to realize how utterly alone in the world he was. He had no friends, no acquaintances even. The running dog, with its nose to the ground, sees nothing of the surrounding scenery. He knew men in a business way, of course, and doubtless each of them had a home in the suburbs somewhere, but he could not take a business man by the shoulders and say to him, “Invite me to your house; I am lonely; I want to know people.”

If he got such an invitation, he would not know what to do with himself. He was familiar with the counting-room and its language, but the drawing-room was an unexplored country to him, where an unknown tongue was spoken. On the road to wealth he had missed something, and it was now too late to go back for it. Only the day before, he had heard one of the clerks, who did not know he was within earshot, allude to him as “the old man.” He felt as young as ever he did, but the phrase, so lightly spoken, made him catch his breath.

As he was now walking through the park, and away from the busy streets, he took off his hat and ran his fingers through his grizzled hair, looking at his hand when he had done so, as if the grey, like wet paint, might have come off. He thought of a girl he knew once, who perhaps would have married him if he had asked her, as he was tempted to do. But that had always been the mistake of the Denhams. They had all married young except himself, and so sunk deeper into the mire of poverty, pressed down by a rapidly-increasing progeny. The girl had married a baker, he remembered. Yes, that was a long time ago. The clerk was not far wrong when he called him an old man. Suddenly, another girl arose before his mental vision—a modern girl—very different indeed to the one who married the baker. She was the only woman in the world with whom he was on speaking terms, and he knew her merely because her light and nimble fingers

played the business sonata of one note on his office typewriter. Miss Gale was pretty, of course— all typewriter girls are—and it was generally understood in the office that she belonged to a good family who had come down in the world. Her somewhat independent air deepened this conviction and kept the clerks at a distance. She was a sensible girl who realized that the typewriter paid better than the piano, and accordingly turned the expertness of her white fingers to the former instrument. Richard Denham sat down upon a park bench. “Why not?” he asked himself. There was no reason against it except that he felt he had not the courage. Nevertheless, he formed a desperate resolution.

Next day, business went on as usual. Letters were answered, and the time arrived when Miss Gale came in to see if he had any further commands that day. Denham hesitated. He felt vaguely that a business office was not the proper place for a proposal; yet he knew he would be at a disadvantage anywhere else. In the first place, he had no plausible excuse for calling upon the young woman at home, and, in the second place, he knew if he once got there he would be stricken dumb. It must either be at his office or nowhere.

“Sit down a moment, Miss Gale,” he said at last; “I wanted to consult you about a matter—about a business matter.”

Miss Gale seated herself, and automatically placed on her knee the shorthand writing-pad ready to take down his instructions. She looked up at him expectantly. Denham, in an embarrassed manner, ran his fingers through his hair.

“I am thinking,” he began, “of taking a partner. The business is very prosperous now. In fact, it has been so for some time.”

“Yes?” said Miss Gale interrogatively.

“Yes. I think I should have a partner. It is about that I wanted to speak to you.”

“Don’t you think it would be better to consult with Mr. Rogers? He knows more about business than I. But perhaps it is Mr. Rogers who is to be the partner?”

“No, it is not Rogers. Rogers is a good man. But—it is not Rogers.”

“Then I think in an important matter like this Mr. Rogers, or someone who knows the business as thoroughly as he does, would be able to give you advice that would be of some value.”

“I don’t want advice exactly. I have made up my mind to have a partner, if the partner is willing.”

Denham mopped his brow. It was going to be even more difficult than he had anticipated.

“Is it, then, a question of the capital the partner is to bring in?” asked Miss Gale, anxious to help him.

“No, no. I don’t wish any capital. I have enough for both. And the business is very prosperous, Miss Gale—and—and has been.”

The young woman raised her eyebrows in surprise.

“You surely don’t intend to share the profits with a partner who brings no capital into the business?”

“Yes—yes, I do. You see, as I said, I have no need for more capital.”

“Oh, if that is the case, I think you should consult Mr. Rogers before you commit yourself.”

“But Rogers wouldn’t understand.”

“I’m afraid I don’t understand either. It seems to me a foolish thing to do—that is, if you want my advice.”

“Oh, yes, I want it. But it isn’t as foolish as you think. I should have had a partner long ago. That is where I made the mistake. I’ve made up my mind on that.”

“Then I don’t see that I can be of any use—if your mind is already made up.”

“Oh, yes, you can. I’m a little afraid that my offer may not be accepted.”

“It is sure to be, if the man has any sense. No fear of such an offer being refused! Offers like that are not to be had every day. It will be accepted.”

“Do you really think so, Miss Gale? I am glad that is your opinion. Now, what I wanted to consult you about, is the form of the offer. I would like to put it—well—delicately, you know, so that it would not be refused, nor give offence.”

“I see. You want me to write a letter to him?”

“Exactly, exactly,” cried Denham with some relief. He had not thought of sending a letter before. Now, he wondered why he had not thought of it. It was so evidently the best way out of a situation that was extremely disconcerting.

“Have you spoken to him about it?”

“To him? What him?”

“To your future partner, about the proposal?”

“No, no. Oh, no. That is—I have spoken to nobody but you.”

“And you are determined not to speak to Mr. Rogers before you write?”

“Certainly not. It’s none of Roger’s business.”

“Oh, very well,” said Miss Gale shortly, bending over her writing-pad.

It was evident that her opinion of Denham’s wisdom was steadily lowering. Suddenly, she looked up.

“How much shall I say the annual profits are? Or do you want that mentioned?”

“I—I don’t think I would mention that. You see, I don’t wish this arrangement to be carried out on a monetary basis—not altogether.”

“On what basis then?”

“Well—I can hardly say. On a personal basis, perhaps. I rather hope that the person—that my partner—would, you know, like to be associated with me.”

“On a friendly basis, do you mean?” asked Miss Gale, mercilessly.

“Certainly. Friendly, of course—and perhaps more than that.”

Miss Gale looked up at him with a certain hopelessness of expression.

“Why not write a note inviting your future partner to call upon you here, or anywhere else that would be convenient, and then discuss the matter?”

Denham looked frightened.

“I thought of that, but it wouldn’t do. No; it wouldn’t do. I would much rather settle everything by correspondence.”

“I am afraid I shall not be able to compose a letter that will suit you. There seem to be so many difficulties. It is very unusual.”

“That is true, and that is why I knew no one but you could help me, Miss Gale. If it pleases you, it will please me.”

Miss Gale shook her head, but, after a few moments, she said, “How will this do?”

“Dear Sir”—

“Wait a moment,” cried Mr. Denham; “that seems rather a formal opening, doesn’t it? How would it read if you put it ‘Dear friend’?”

“If you wish it so.” She crossed out the “sir” and substituted the word suggested. Then, she read the letter:

“Dear Friend,—I have for some time past been desirous of taking a partner, and would be glad if you would consider the question and consent to join me in this business. The business is, and has been for several years, very prosperous, and, as I shall require no capital from you, I think you will find my offer a very advantageous one. I will——”

“I—I don’t think I would put it quite that way.” said Denham, with some hesitation. “It reads as if I were offering everything, and that my partner—well, you see what I mean.”

“It’s the truth,” said Miss Gale, defiantly.

“Better put it on the friendly basis, as you suggested a moment ago.”

“I didn’t suggest anything, Mr. Denham. Perhaps it would be better if you would dictate the letter exactly as you want it. I knew I could not write one that would please you.”

“It does please me, but I’m thinking of my future partner. You are doing first-rate—better than I could do. But just put it on the friendly basis.”

A moment later she read:

“... join me in this business. I make you this offer entirely from a friendly, and not from a financial, standpoint, hoping that you like me well enough to be associated with me.”

“Anything else, Mr. Denham?”

“No. I think that covers the whole ground. It will look rather short, type-written, won’t it? Perhaps you might add something to show that I shall be exceedingly disappointed if my offer is not accepted.”

“No fear,” said Miss Gale. “I’ll add that though. ‘Yours truly,’ or 'Yours very truly’?”

“You might end it ‘Your friend.’”

The rapid click of the typewriter was heard for a few moments in the next room, and then Miss Gale came out with the completed letter in her hand.

“Shall I have the boy copy it?” she asked.

“Oh, bless you, no!” answered Mr. Denham, with evident trepidation.

The young woman said to herself, “He doesn’t want Mr. Rogers to know, and no wonder. It is a most unbusiness-like proposal.”

Then she said aloud, “Shall you want me again to-day?”

“No, Miss Gale; and thank you very much.”

Next morning, Miss Gale came into Mr. Denham’s office with a smile on her face.

“You made a funny mistake last night, Mr. Denham,” she said, as she took off her wraps.

“Did I?” he asked, in alarm.

“Yes. You sent that letter to my address. I got it this morning. I opened it, for I thought it was for me, and that perhaps you did not need me to-day. But I saw at once that you put it in the wrong envelope. Did you want me to-day?”

It was on his tongue to say, “I want you every day,” but he merely held out his hand for the letter, and looked at it as if he could not account for its having gone astray.

The next day Miss Gale came late, and she looked frightened. It was evident that Denham was losing his mind. She put the letter down before him and said:

“You addressed that to me the second time, Mr. Denham.”

There was a look of haggard anxiety about Denham that gave color to her suspicions. He felt that it was now or never.

“Then why don’t you answer it, Miss Gale?” he said gruffly.

She backed away from him.

“Answer it?” she repeated faintly.

“Certainly. If I got a letter twice, I would answer it.”

“What do you mean?” she cried, with her hand on the door-knob.

“Exactly what the letter says. I want you for my partner. I want to marry you, and d—n financial considerations——”

“Oh!” cried Miss Gale, in a long-drawn, quivering sigh. She was doubtless shocked at the word he had used, and fled to her typewriting room, closing the door behind her.

Richard Denham paced up and down the floor for a few moments, then rapped lightly at her door, but there was no response. He put on his hat and went out into the street. After a long and aimless walk, he found himself again at his place of business. When he went in, Rogers said to him:

“Miss Gale has left, sir.”

“Has she?”

“Yes, and she has given notice. Says she is not coming back, sir.”

“Very well.”

He went into his own room and found a letter marked “personal” on his desk. He tore it open, and read in neatly type-written characters:

“I have resigned my place as typewriter girl, having been offered a better situation. I am offered a partnership in the house of Richard Denham. I have decided to accept the position, not so much on account of its financial attractions, as because I shall be glad, on a friendly basis, to be associated with the gentleman I have named. Why did you put me to all that worry writing that idiotic letter, when a few words would have saved ever so much bother? You

evidently *need* a partner. My mother will be pleased to meet you any time you call. You have the address,—Your friend,

"MARGARET GALE."

"Rogers!" shouted Denham, joyfully.

"Yes, sir," answered that estimable man, putting his head into the room.

"Advertise for another typewriter girl, Rogers."

"Yes, sir," said Rogers.

THE DOOM OF LONDON.

I.—THE SELF-CONCEIT OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

I trust I am thankful my life has been spared until I have seen that most brilliant epoch of the world's history—the middle of the 20th century. It would be useless for any man to disparage the vast achievements of the past fifty years, and if I venture to call attention to the fact, now apparently forgotten, that the people of the 19th century succeeded in accomplishing many notable things, it must not be imagined that I intend thereby to discount in any measure the marvellous inventions of the present age. Men have always been somewhat prone to look with a certain condescension upon those who lived fifty or a hundred years before them. This seems to me the especial weakness of the present age; a feeling of national self-conceit, which, when it exists, should at least be kept as much in the background as possible. It will astonish many to know that such also was a failing of the people of the 19th century. They imagined themselves living in an age of progress, and while I am not foolish enough to attempt to prove that they did anything really worth recording, yet it must be admitted by any unprejudiced man of research that their inventions were at least stepping-stones to those of to-day. Although the telephone and telegraph, and all other electrical appliances, are now to be found only in our national museums, or in the private collections of those few men who take any interest in the doings of the last century, nevertheless, the study of the now obsolete science of electricity led up to the recent discovery of vibratory ether which does the work of the world so satisfactorily. The people of the 19th century were not fools, and although I am well aware that this statement will be received with scorn where it attracts any attention whatever, yet who can say that the progress of the next half-century may not be as great as that of the one now ended, and that the people of the next century may not look upon us with the same contempt which we feel toward those who lived fifty years ago?

Being an old man, I am, perhaps, a laggard who dwells in the past rather than the present; still, it seems to me that such an article as that which appeared recently in *Blackwood* from the talented pen of Prof. Mowberry, of Oxford University, is utterly unjustifiable. Under the title of "Did the People of London Deserve their Fate?" he endeavors to show that the simultaneous blotting out of

millions of human beings was a beneficial event, the good results of which we still enjoy. According to him, Londoners were so dull-witted and stupid, so incapable of improvement, so sodden in the vice of mere money- gathering, that nothing but their total extinction would have sufficed, and that, instead of being an appalling catastrophe, the doom of London was an unmixed blessing. In spite of the unanimous approval with which this article has been received by the press, I still maintain that such writing is uncalled for, and that there is something to be said for the London of the 19th century.

WHY LONDON, WARNED, WAS UNPREPARED.

The indignation I felt in first reading the article alluded to still remains with me, and it has caused me to write these words, giving some account of what I must still regard, in spite of the sneers of the present age, as the most terrible disaster that ever overtook a portion of the human race. I shall not endeavor to place before those who read, any record of the achievements pertaining to the time in question. But I would like to say a few words about the alleged stupidity of the people of London in making no preparations for a disaster regarding which they had continual and ever-recurring warning. They have been compared with the inhabitants of Pompeii making merry at the foot of a volcano. In the first place, fogs were so common in London, especially in winter, that no particular attention was paid to them. They were merely looked upon as inconvenient annoyances, interrupting traffic and prejudicial to health, but I doubt if anyone thought it possible for a fog to become one vast smothering mattress pressed down upon a whole metropolis, extinguishing life as if the city suffered from hopeless hydrophobia. I have read that victims bitten by mad dogs were formerly put out of their sufferings in that way, although I doubt much if such things were ever actually done, notwithstanding the charges of savage barbarity now made against the people of the 19th century.

Probably, the inhabitants of Pompeii were so accustomed to the eruptions of Vesuvius that they gave no thought to the possibility of their city being destroyed by a storm of ashes and an overflow of lava. Rain frequently descended upon London, and if a rainfall continued long enough it would certainly have flooded the metropolis, but no precautions were taken against a flood from the clouds. Why, then, should the people have been expected to prepare for a catastrophe from fog, such as there had never been any experience of in the world’s history? The people of London were far from being the sluggish dolts present-day writers would have us believe.

THE COINCIDENCE THAT CAME AT LAST.

As fog has now been abolished both on sea and land, and as few of the present generation have even seen one, it may not be out of place to give a few lines on the subject of fogs in general, and the London fogs in particular, which through local peculiarities differed from all others. A fog was simply watery vapor rising from the marshy surface of the land or from the sea, or condensed into a cloud from the saturated atmosphere. In my day, fogs were a great danger at sea, for people then travelled by means of steamships that sailed upon the surface of the ocean.

London at the end of the 19th century consumed vast quantities of a soft bituminous coal for the purpose of heating rooms and of preparing food. In the morning and during the day, clouds of black smoke were poured forth from thousands of chimneys. When a mass of white vapor arose in the night these clouds of smoke fell upon the fog, pressing it down, filtering slowly through it, and adding to its density. The sun would have absorbed the fog but for the layer of smoke that lay thick above the vapor and prevented the rays reaching it. Once this condition of things prevailed, nothing could clear London but a breeze of wind from any direction. London frequently had a seven days' fog, and sometimes a seven days' calm, but these two conditions never coincided until the last year of the last century. The coincidence, as everyone knows, meant death—death so wholesale that no war the earth has ever seen left such slaughter behind it. To understand the situation, one has only to imagine the fog as taking the place of the ashes at Pompeii, and the coal-smoke as being the lava that covered it. The result to the inhabitants in both cases was exactly the same.

THE AMERICAN WHO WANTED TO SELL.

I was at the time confidential clerk to the house of Fulton, Brixton & Co., a firm in Cannon Street, dealing largely in chemicals and chemical apparatus. Fulton I never knew; he died long before my time. Sir John Brixton was my chief, knighted, I believe, for services to his party, or because he was an official in the City during some royal progress through it; I have forgotten which. My small room was next to his large one, and my chief duty was to see that no one had an interview with Sir John unless he was an important man or had important business. Sir John was a difficult man to see, and a difficult man to deal with when he was seen. He had little respect for most men's feelings, and none at all for mine. If I allowed a man to enter his room who should have been dealt with by one of the minor members of the company, Sir John made no effort to conceal his opinion of me. One day, in the autumn of the last year of the century, an American was shown into my room. Nothing would do but he must have an interview with Sir John Brixton. I told him that it was impossible, as Sir John was extremely busy, but that if he explained his business to me I would lay it before Sir John at the first favorable opportunity. The American demurred at this, but finally accepted the inevitable. He was the inventor, he said, of a machine that would revolutionize life in London, and he wanted Fulton, Brixton & Co. to become agents for it. The machine, which he had in a small handbag with him, was of white metal, and it was so constructed that by turning an index it gave out greater or less volumes of oxygen gas. The gas, I understood, was stored in the interior in liquid form under great pressure, and would last, if I remember rightly, for six months without recharging. There was also a rubber tube with a mouthpiece attached to it, and the American said that if a man took a few whiffs a day, he would experience beneficial results. Now, I knew there was not the slightest use in showing the machine to Sir John, because we dealt in old-established British apparatus, and never in any of the new- fangled Yankee contraptions. Besides, Sir John had a prejudice against Americans, and I felt sure this man would exasperate him, as he was a most cadaverous specimen of the race, with high nasal tones, and a most deplorable pronunciation, much given to phrases savoring of slang; and he exhibited also a certain nervous familiarity of demeanor towards people to whom he was all but a complete stranger. It was impossible for me to allow such a man to enter the presence of Sir John Brixton, and when he returned some days later I explained to him, I hope with courtesy,

that the head of the house regretted very much his inability to consider his proposal regarding the machine. The ardor of the American seemed in no way dampened by this rebuff. He said I could not have explained the possibilities of the apparatus properly to Sir John; he characterized it as a great invention, and said it meant a fortune to whoever obtained the agency for it. He hinted that other noted London houses were anxious to secure it, but for some reason not stated he preferred to deal with us. He left some printed pamphlets referring to the invention, and said he would call again.

THE AMERICAN SEES SIR JOHN.

Many a time I have since thought of that persistent American, and wondered whether he left London before the disaster, or was one of the unidentified thousands who were buried in unmarked graves. Little did Sir John think when he expelled him with some asperity from his presence, that he was turning away an offer of life, and that the heated words he used were, in reality, a sentence of death upon himself. For my own part, I regret that I lost my temper, and told the American his business methods did not commend themselves to me. Perhaps he did not feel the sting of this; indeed, I feel certain he did not, for, unknowingly, he saved my life. Be that as it may, he showed no resentment, but immediately asked me out to drink with him, an offer I was compelled to refuse. But I am getting ahead of my story. Indeed, being unaccustomed to writing, it is difficult for me to set down events in their proper sequence. The American called upon me several times after I told him our house could not deal with him. He got into the habit of dropping in upon me unannounced, which I did not at all like, but I gave no instructions regarding his intrusions, because I had no idea of the extremes to which he was evidently prepared to go. One day, as he sat near my desk reading a paper, I was temporarily called from the room. When I returned I thought he had gone, taking his machine with him, but a moment later I was shocked to hear his high nasal tones in Sir John's room alternating with the deep notes of my chief's voice, which apparently exercised no such dread upon the American as upon those who were more accustomed to them. I at once entered the room, and was about to explain to Sir John that the American was there through no connivance of mine, when my chief asked me to be silent, and, turning to his visitor, gruffly requested him to proceed with his interesting narration. The inventor needed no second invitation, but went on with his glib talk, while Sir John's frown grew deeper, and his face became redder under his fringe of white hair. When the American had finished, Sir John roughly bade him begone, and take his accursed machine with him. He said it was an insult for a person with one foot in the grave to bring a so-called health invention to a robust man who never had a day's illness, I do not know why he listened so long to the American, when he had made up his mind from the first not to deal with him, unless it was to punish me for inadvertently allowing the stranger to enter. The interview distressed me exceedingly, as I stood there helpless, knowing Sir John was becoming more and more angry with every word the foreigner uttered,

but, at last, I succeeded in drawing the inventor and his work into my own room and closing the door. I sincerely hoped I would never see the American again, and my wish was gratified. He insisted on setting his machine going, and placing it on a shelf in my room. He asked me to slip it into Sir John’s room some foggy day and note the effect. The man said he would call again, but he never did.

HOW THE SMOKE HELD DOWN THE FOG.

It was on a Friday that the fog came down upon us. The weather was very fine up to the middle of November that autumn. The fog did not seem to have anything unusual about it. I have seen many worse fogs than that appeared to be. As day followed day, however, the atmosphere became denser and darker, caused, I suppose, by the increasing volume of coal- smoke poured out upon it. The peculiarity about those seven days was the intense stillness of the air. We were, although we did not know it, under an air-proof canopy, and were slowly but surely exhausting the life-giving oxygen around us, and replacing it by poisonous carbonic acid gas. Scientific men have since showed that a simple mathematical calculation might have told us exactly when the last atom of oxygen would have been consumed; but it is easy to be wise after the event. The body of the greatest mathematician in England was found in the Strand. He came that morning from Cambridge. During the fog there was always a marked increase in the death rate, and on this occasion the increase was no greater than usual until the sixth day. The newspapers on the morning of the seventh were full of startling statistics, but at the time of going to press the full significance of the alarming figures was not realized. The editorials of the morning papers on the seventh day contained no warning of the calamity that was so speedily to follow their appearance. I lived then at Ealing, a Western suburb of London, and came every morning to Cannon Street by a certain train. I had up to the sixth day experienced no inconvenience from the fog, and this was largely due, I am convinced, to the unnoticed operations of the American machine.

On the fifth and sixth days Sir John did not come to the City, but he was in his office on the seventh. The door between his room and mine was closed. Shortly after ten o’clock I heard a cry in his room, followed by a heavy fall. I opened the door, and saw Sir John lying face downwards on the floor. Hastening towards him, I felt for the first time the deadly effect of the deoxygenized atmosphere, and before I reached him I fell first on one knee and then headlong. I realized that my senses were leaving me, and instinctively crawled back to my own room, where the oppression was at once lifted, and I stood again upon my feet, gasping. I closed the door of Sir John’s room, thinking it filled with poisonous fumes, as, indeed, it was. I called loudly for help, but there was no answer. On opening the door to the main office I met again what I thought was the noxious

vapor. Speedily as I closed the door, I was impressed by the intense silence of the usually busy office, and saw that some of the clerks were motionless on the floor, and others sat with their heads on their desks as if asleep. Even at this awful moment I did not realize that what I saw was common to all London, and not, as I imagined, a local disaster, caused by the breaking of some carboys in our cellar. (It was filled with chemicals of every kind, of whose properties I was ignorant, dealing as I did with the accountant, and not the scientific side of our business.) I opened the only window in my room, and again shouted for help. The street was silent and dark in the ominously still fog, and what now froze me with horror was meeting the same deadly, stifling atmosphere that was in the rooms. In falling I brought down the window, and shut out the poisonous air. Again I revived, and slowly the true state of things began to dawn upon me.

I was in an oasis of oxygen. I at once surmised that the machine on my shelf was responsible for the existence of this oasis in a vast desert of deadly gas. I took down the American's machine, fearful in moving it that I might stop its working. Taking the mouthpiece between my lips I again entered Sir John's room, this time without feeling any ill effects. My poor master was long beyond human help. There was evidently no one alive in the building except myself. Out in the street all was silent and dark. The gas was extinguished, but here and there in shops the incandescent lights were still weirdly burning, depending, as they did, on accumulators, and not on direct engine power. I turned automatically towards Cannon Street Station, knowing my way to it even if blindfolded, stumbling over bodies prone on the pavement, and in crossing the street I ran against a motionless 'bus, spectral in the fog, with dead horses lying in front, and their reins dangling from the nerveless hand of a dead driver. The ghostlike passengers, equally silent, sat bolt upright, or hung over the edge boards in attitudes horribly grotesque.

THE TRAIN WITH ITS TRAIL OF THE DEAD.

If a man's reasoning faculties were alert at such a time (I confess mine were dormant), he would have known there could be no trains at Cannon Street Station, for if there was not enough oxygen in the air to keep a man alive, or a gas-jet alight, there would certainly not be enough to enable an engine fire to burn, even if the engineer retained sufficient energy to attend to his task. At times instinct is better than reason, and it proved so in this case. The railway from Ealing in those days came under the City in a deep tunnel. It would appear that in this underground passage the carbonic acid gas would first find a resting-place on account of its weight; but such was not the fact. I imagine that a current through the tunnel brought from the outlying districts a supply of comparatively pure air that, for some minutes after the general disaster, maintained human life. Be this as it may, the long platforms of Cannon Street Underground Station presented a fearful spectacle. A train stood at the down platform. The electric lights burned fitfully. This platform was crowded with men, who fought each other like demons, apparently for no reason, because the train was already packed as full as it could hold. Hundreds were dead under foot, and every now and then a blast of foul air came along the tunnel, whereupon hundreds more would relax their grips, and succumb. Over their bodies the survivors fought, with continually thinning ranks. It seemed to me that most of those in the standing train were dead. Sometimes a desperate body of fighters climbed over those lying in heaps and, throwing open a carriage door, hauled out passengers already in, and took their places, gasping. Those in the train offered no resistance, and lay motionless where they were flung, or rolled helplessly under the wheels of the train. I made my way along the wall as well as I could to the engine, wondering why the train did not go. The engineer lay on the floor of his cab, and the fires were out.

Custom is a curious thing. The struggling mob, fighting wildly for places in the carriages, were so accustomed to trains arriving and departing that it apparently occurred to none of them that the engineer was human and subject to the same atmospheric conditions as themselves. I placed the mouthpiece between his purple lips, and, holding my own breath like a submerged man, succeeded in reviving him. He said that if I gave him the machine he would take out the train as far as the steam already in the boiler would carry it. I refused to

do this, but stepped on the engine with him, saying it would keep life in both of us until we got out into better air. In a surly manner he agreed to this and started the train, but he did not play fair. Each time he refused to give up the machine until I was in a fainting condition with holding in my breath, and, finally, he felled me to the floor of the cab. I imagine that the machine rolled off the train as I fell and that he jumped after it. The remarkable thing is that neither of us needed the machine, for I remember that just after we started I noticed through the open iron door that the engine fire suddenly became aglow again, although at the time I was in too great a state of bewilderment and horror to understand what it meant. A western gale had sprung up—an hour too late. Even before we left Cannon Street those who still survived were comparatively safe, for one hundred and sixty-seven persons were rescued from that fearful heap of dead on the platforms, although many died within a day or two after, and others never recovered their reason. When I regained my senses after the blow dealt by the engineer, I found myself alone, and the train speeding across the Thames near Kew. I tried to stop the engine, but did not succeed. However, in experimenting, I managed to turn on the air brake, which in some degree checked the train, and lessened the impact when the crash came at Richmond terminus. I sprang off on the platform before the engine reached the terminal buffers, and saw passing me like a nightmare the ghastly trainload of the dead. Most of the doors were swinging open, and every compartment was jammed full, although, as I afterwards learned, at each curve of the permanent way, or extra lurch of the train, bodies had fallen out all along the line. The smash at Richmond made no difference to the passengers. Besides myself, only two persons were taken alive from the train, and one of these, his clothes torn from his back in the struggle was sent to an asylum, where he was never able to tell who he was; neither, as far as I know, did anyone ever claim him.

THE PREDICAMENT OF DE PLONVILLE.

This story differs from others in having an assortment of morals. Most stories have one moral; here are several. The moral usually appears at the end—in this case a few are mentioned at the beginning, so that they may be looked out for as the reading progresses. First: it is well for a man—especially a young man—to attend to his own business. Second: in planning a person's life for some little distance ahead, it will be a mistake if an allowance of ten per cent. at least, is not made for that unknown quantity—woman. Third: it is beneficial to remember that one man rarely knows everything. Other morals will doubtless present themselves, and at the end the cynically-inclined person may reflect upon the adage about the frying-pan and the fire.

Young M. de Plonville of Paris enjoyed a most enviable position. He had all the money he needed, which is quite a different thing from saying he had all the money he wanted. He was well educated, and spoke three languages, that is, he spoke his own well and the other two badly, but as a man always prides himself on what he is least able to do, De Plonville fancied himself a linguist. His courage in speaking English to Englishmen and German to Germans showed that he was, at least, a brave man. There was a great deal of good and even of talent in De Plonville. This statement is made at the beginning, because everyone who knows De Plonville will at once unhesitatingly contradict it. His acquaintances thought him one of the most objectionable young men in Paris, and naval officers, when his name was mentioned, usually gave themselves over to strong and unjustifiable language. This was all on account of De Plonville's position, which, although enviable had its drawbacks.

His rank in the navy was such that it entitled him to no consideration whatever, but, unfortunately for his own popularity, De Plonville had a method of giving force to his suggestions. His father was a very big man in the French Government. He was so big a man that he could send a censure to the commander of a squadron in the navy, and the commander dare not talk back. It takes a very big man indeed to do this, and that was the elder De Plonville's size. But then it was well known that the elder De Plonville was an easy-going man who loved comfort, and did not care to trouble himself too much about the navy in his charge, and so when there was trouble, young De Plonville got the credit of it; consequently, the love of the officers did not flow out to him.

Often young De Plonville's idiotic impetuosity gave color to these suspicions. For instance, there is the well-known Toulon incident. In a heated controversy young De Plonville had claimed that the firing of the French ironclads was something execrable, and that the whole fleet could not hold their own at the cannon with any ten of the British navy. Some time after, the naval officers learned that the Government at Paris was very much displeased with the inaccurate gun practice of the fleet, and the hope was expressed that the commander would see his way to improving it. Of course, the officers could do nothing but gnash their teeth, try to shoot better, and hope for a time to come when the Government then in power would be out, and they could find some tangible pretence for hanging young De Plonville from the yard-arm.

All this has only a remote bearing upon this story, but we now come to a matter on which the story sinks or swims. De Plonville had a secret— not such a secret as is common in Parisian life, but one entirely creditable to him. It related to an invention intended to increase the efficiency of the French army. The army being a branch of the defences of his country with which De Plonville had nothing whatever to do, his attention naturally turned towards it. He spoke of this invention, once, to a friend, a lieutenant in the army. He expected to get some practical suggestions. He never mentioned it again to anyone.

"It is based on the principle of the umbrella," he said to his friend; "in fact, it was the umbrella that suggested it to me. If it could be made very light so as not to add seriously to the impedimenta at present carried by the soldier, it seems to me it would be exceedingly useful. Instead of being circular as an umbrella is, it must be oblong with sharp ends. It would have to be arranged so as to be opened and closed quickly, with the cloth thin, but impervious to water. When the army reached a river each soldier could open this, place it in the water, enter it with some care, and then paddle himself across with the butt-end of his gun, or even with a light paddle, if the carrying of it added but little to the weight, thus saving the building of temporary bridges. It seems to me such an invention ought to be of vast use in a forced march. Then at night it might be used as a sort of tent, or in a heavy rain it would form a temporary shelter. What do you think of the idea?" His friend had listened with half-closed eyes. He blew a whiff of cigarette smoke from his nostrils and answered:

"It is wonderful, De Plonville," he said drawlingly. "Its possibilities are vast— more so than even you appear to think. It would be very useful in our Alpine corps as well."

“I am glad you think so. But why there?”

“Well, you see, if the army reached a high peak looking into a deep valley, only to be reached over an inaccessible precipice, all the army would have to do would be to spread out your superb invention and use it as a parachute. The sight of the army of France gradually floating down into the valley would be so terrifying to the nations of Europe, that I imagine no enemy would wait for a gun to be fired. De Plonville, your invention will immortalize you, and immortalize the French army.”

Young De Plonville waited to hear no more, but turned on his heel and strode away.

This conversation caused young De Plonville to make two resolutions; first, to mention his scheme to no one; second, to persevere and perfect his invention, thus causing confusion to the scoffer. There were several sub-resolutions dependent on these two. He would not enter a club, he would abjure society, he would not speak to a woman—he would, in short, be a hermit until his invention stood revealed before an astonished world.

All of which goes to show that young De Plonville was not the conceited, meddlesome fop his acquaintances thought him. But in the large and small resolutions he did not deduct the ten per cent. for the unknown quantity.

Where? That was the question. De Plonville walked up and down his room, and thought it out. A large map of France was spread on the table. Paris and the environs thereof were manifestly impossible. He needed a place of seclusion. He needed a stretch of water. Where then should be the spot to which coming generations would point and say, “Here, at this place, was perfected De Plonville’s celebrated parachute-tent- bateau invention.”

No, not parachute. Hang the parachute! That was the scoffing lieutenant’s word. De Plonville paused for a moment to revile his folly in making a confidant of any army man.

There was a sufficiency of water around the French coast, but it was too cold at that season of the year to experiment in the north and east. There was left the Mediterranean. He thought rapidly of the different delightful spots along the Riviera—Cannes, St. Raphael, Nice, Monte Carlo,—but all of these were too public and too much thronged with visitors. The name of the place came to him suddenly, and, as he stopped his march to and fro, De Plonville wondered why it

had not suggested itself to him at the very first. Hyères! It seemed to have been planned in the Middle Ages for the perfecting of just such an invention. It was situated two or three miles back from the sea, the climate was perfect, there was no marine parade, the sea coast was lonely, and the bay sheltered by the islands. It was an ideal spot.

De Plonville easily secured leave of absence. Sons of fathers high up in the service of a grateful country seldom have any difficulty about a little thing like that. He purchased a ticket for that leisurely train which the French with their delicious sense of humor call the “Rapide,” and in due time found himself with his various belongings standing on the station platform at Hyères.

Few of us are as brave as we think ourselves. De Plonville flinched when the supreme moment came, and perhaps that is why the Gods punished him. He had resolved to go to one of the country inns at Carqueyranne on the coast, but this was in a heroic mood when the lieutenant had laughed at his project. Now in a cooler moment he thought of the cuisine of Carqueyranne and shuddered. There are sacrifices which no man should be called upon to endure, so the naval officer hesitated, and at last directed the porter to put his luggage on the top of the Costebelle Hotel “bus.” There would be society at the hotel it is true, but he could avoid it, while if he went to the rural tavern he could not avoid the cooking. Thus he smothered his conscience. Lunch at Costebelle seemed to justify his choice of an abiding-place. The surroundings of the hotel were dangerously charming to a man whose natural inclination was towards indolent enjoyment. It was a place to “Loaf and invite your soul,” as Walt Whitman phrases it. Plonville, who was there incognito, for he had temporarily dropped the “De,” strolled towards the sea in the afternoon, with the air of one who has nothing on his mind. No one to see him would have suspected he was the future Edison of France. When he reached the coast at the ruins of the ancient Roman naval station called Pomponiana, he smote his thigh with joy. He had forgotten that at this spot there had been erected a number of little wooden houses, each larger than a bathing-machine and smaller than a cottage, which were used in summer by the good people of Hyères, and in winter were silently vacant. The largest of these would be exactly the place for him, and he knew he would have no difficulty in renting it for a month or two. Here, he could bring down his half-finished invention; here, work at it all day unmolested; and here test its sailing qualities with no onlookers.

He walked up the road, and hailed the ancient bus which jogs along between Toulon and Hyères by way of the coast; mounted beside the driver, and speedily

got information about the owner of the cottages at Pomponiana.

As he expected, he had no difficulty in arranging with the proprietor for the largest of the little cottages, but he thought he detected a slight depression on the right eyelid as that person handed him the key. Had the owner suspected his purpose? he asked himself anxiously, as he drove back from the town to Costebelle. Impossible. He felt, however, that he could not be too secret about his intentions. He had heard of inventors being forestalled just at the very moment of success.

He bade the driver wait, and placed that part of his luggage in the cab which consisted of his half-finished invention and the materials for completing it. Then he drove to the coast, and after placing the packages on the ground, paid and dismissed the man. When the cab was out of sight, he carried the things to the cottage and locked them in. His walk up the hill to the hotel rendered the excellent dinner provided doubly attractive.

Next morning he was early at work, and speedily began to realize how many necessary articles he had forgotten at Paris. He hoped he would be able to get them at Hyères, but his remembrance of the limited resources of the town made him somewhat doubtful. The small windows on each side gave him scarcely enough light, but he did not open the door, fearing the curiosity of a chance passer-by. One cannot be too careful in maturing a great invention.

Plonville had been at work for possibly an hour and a half, when he heard someone singing, and that very sweetly. She sang with the joyous freedom of one who suspected no listener. The song came nearer and nearer. Plonville standing amazed, dropped his implements, and stole to the somewhat obscure little window. He saw a vision of fresh loveliness dressed in a costume he never before beheld on a vision. She came down the bank with a light, springy step to the next cottage, took a key that hung at her belt, and threw open the door. The song was hushed, but not silenced, for a moment, and then there came from out the cottage door the half of a boat that made Plonville gasp. Like the costume, he had never before seen such a boat. It was exactly the shape in which he had designed his invention, and was of some extra light material, for the sylph-like girl in the extraordinary dress pushed it forth without even ceasing her song. Next moment, she came out herself and stood there while she adjusted her red head-gear. She drew the boat down to the water, picked out of it a light, silver-mounted paddle, stepped deftly aboard, and settled down to her place with the airy grace of a thistle-down. There was no seat in the boat, Plonville noted with

astonishment. The sea was very smooth, and a few strokes of the paddle sent girl and craft out of sight along the coast. Plonville drew a deep breath of bewilderment. It was his first sight of a Thames boating costume and a canoe.

This, then, was why the man winked when he gave him the key. Plonville was in a quandary. Should he reveal himself when she returned? It did not seem to be quite the thing to allow the girl to believe she had the coast to herself when in fact she hadn't. But then there was his invention to think of. He had sworn allegiance to that. He sat down and pondered. English, evidently. He had no idea English girls were so pretty, and then that costume! It was *very* taking. The rich, creamy folds of the white flannel, so simple, yet so complete, lingered in his memory. Still, what was he there for? His invention certainly. The sneer of the lieutenant stung his memory. That Miss Whatever-her- name-might-be had rented the next box was nothing to him; of course not. He waved her aside and turned to his work. He had lost enough of time as it was; he would lose no more.

Although armed with this heroic resolution, his task somehow did not seem so interesting as before, and he found himself listening now and then for the siren's song. He dramatized imaginary situations, which is always bad for practical work. He saw the frail craft shattered or overturned, and beheld himself bravely buffeting the waves rescuing the fair girl in white. Then he remembered with a sigh that he was not a good swimmer. Possibly she was more at home in the waves than he was. Those English seemed on such terms of comradeship with the sea.

At last, intuition rather than hearing told him she had returned. He walked on tip-toe to the dingy window. She was pulling the light canoe up from the water. He checked his impulse to offer assistance. When the girl sprang lightly up the bank, Plonville sighed and concluded he had done enough work for the day. As he reached the road, he noticed that the white figure in the distance did not take the way to the hotel, but towards one of the neighboring Chateaux.

In the afternoon, Plonville worked long at his invention, and made progress. He walked back to his hotel with the feeling of self- satisfaction which indolent men have on those rare occasions when they are industrious. He had been uninterrupted, and his resolutions were again heroic. What had been done one afternoon might be done all afternoons. He would think no more of the vision he had seen and he would work only after lunch, thus avoiding the necessity of revealing himself, or of being a concealed watcher of her actions. Of course she came always in the morning, for the English are a methodical people, and

Plonville was so learned in their ways that he knew what they did one day they were sure to do the next. An extraordinary nation, Plonville said to himself with a shrug of his shoulders, but then of course, we cannot all be French.

It is rather a pity that temptation should step in just when a man has made up his mind not to deviate from a certain straight line of conduct. There was to be a ball that night at the big hotel. Plonville had refused to have anything to do with it. He had renounced the frivolities of life. He was there for rest, quiet, and study. He was adamant. That evening the invitation was again extended to him, the truth being that there was a scarcity of young men, as is usually the case at such functions. Plonville was about to re-state his objections to frivolity when through the open door he caught a glimpse of two of the arriving guests ascending the stair. The girl had on a long opera cloak with some fluffy white material round the neck and down the front. A filmy lace arrangement rested lightly on her fair hair. It was the lady of the canoe—glorified. Plonville wavered and was lost. He rushed to his room and donned his war paint. Say what you like, evening dress improves the appearance of a man. Besides this, he had resumed the De once more, and his back was naturally straighter. De Plonville looked well.

They were speedily introduced, of course. De Plonville took care of that, and the manager of the ball was very grateful to him for coming, and for looking so nice. There was actually an air of distinction about De Plonville. She was the Hon. Margaret Stansby, he learned. Besides being unfair, it would be impossible to give their conversation. It would read like a section from Ollendorf's French-English exercises. De Plonville, as has been said, was very proud of his English, and, unfortunately, the Hon. Margaret had a sense of humor. He complimented her by saying that she talked French even better than he talked English, which, while doubtless true, was not the most tactful thing De Plonville might have said. It was difficult to listen to such a statement given in his English, and refrain from laughing. Margaret, however, scored a great victory and did not laugh. The evening passed pleasantly, she thought; delightfully, De Plonville thought.

It was hard after this to come down to the prosaic work of completing a cloth canoe-tent, but, to De Plonville's credit, he persevered. He met the young lady on several occasions, but never by the coast. The better they became acquainted the more he wished to have the privilege of rescuing her from some deadly danger; but the opportunity did not come. It seldom does, except in books, as he bitterly remarked to himself. The sea was exasperatingly calm, and Miss Margaret was mistress of her craft, as so many charming women are. He thought of buying a telescope and watching her, for she had told him that one of her own

delights was looking at the evolutions of the ironclads through a telescope on the terrace in front of the Chateau.

At last, in spite of his distractions, De Plonville added the finishing touches to his notable invention, and all that remained was to put it to a practical test. He chose a day when that portion of the French navy which frequents the Rade d'Hyères was not in sight, for he did not wish to come within the field of the telescope at the Chateau terrace. He felt that he would not look his best as he paddled his new-fangled boat. Besides, it might sink with him.

There was not a sail in sight as he put forth. Even the fishing boats of Carqueyranne were in shelter. The sea was very calm, and the sun shone brightly. He had some little difficulty in getting seated, but he was elated to find that his invention answered all expectations. As he went further out he noticed a great buoy floating a long distance away. His evil genius suggested that it would be a good thing to paddle out to the buoy and back. Many men can drink champagne and show no sign, but few can drink success and remain sober. The eccentric airs assumed by noted authors prove the truth of this. De Plonville was drunk, and never suspected it. The tide, what little there is of it in the Mediterranean, helped him, and even the gentle breeze blew from the shore. He had some doubts as to the wisdom of his course before he reached the gigantic red buoy, but when he turned around and saw the appalling distance to the coast, he shuddered.

The great buoy was of iron, apparently boiler plate, and there were rings fastened to its side. It was pear-shaped with the point in the water, fastened to a chain that evidently led to an anchor. He wondered what it was for. As he looked up it was moved by some unseen current, and rolled over as if bent on the destruction of his craft. Forgetting himself, he sprang up to ward it off, and instantly one foot went through the thin waterproof that formed the bottom and sides of his boat. He found himself struggling in the water almost before he realized what had happened. Kicking his foot free from the entanglement that threatened to drag him under, he saw his invention slowly settle down through the clear, green water. He grasped one of the rings of the buoy, and hung there for a moment to catch his breath and consider his position. He rapidly came to the conclusion that it was not a pleasant one, but further than that he found it difficult to go. Attempting to swim ashore would be simply one form of suicide. The thing to do was evidently to get on top of the buoy, but he realized that if he tried to pull himself up by the rings it would simply roll him under. He was surprised to find, however, that such was not the case. He had under- estimated

both its size and its weight.

He sat down on top of it and breathed heavily after his exertions, gazing for a few moments at the vast expanse of shimmering blue water. It was pretty, but discouraging. Not even a fishing-boat was in sight, and he was in a position where every prospect pleases, and only man is in a vile situation. The big iron island had an uncomfortable habit every now and then of lounging partly over to one side or the other, so that De Plonville had to scramble this way or that to keep from falling off. He vaguely surmised that his motions on these occasions lacked dignity. The hot sun began to dry the clothes on his back, and he felt his hair become crisp with salt. He recollected that swimming should be easy here, for he was on the saltest portion of the saltest open sea in the world. Then his gaze wandered over the flat lands about Les Salins where acres of ground were covered artificially with Mediterranean water so that the sun may evaporate it, and leave the coarse salt used by the fishermen of the coast. He did not yet feel hungry, but he thought with regret of the good dinner which would be spread at the hotel that evening, when, perhaps, he would not be there.

He turned himself around and scanned the distant Islands of Gold, but there was as little prospect of help from that quarter as from the mainland. Becoming more accustomed to the swayings of the big globe, he stood up. What a fool he had been to come so far, and he used French words between his teeth that sounded terse and emphatic. Still there was little use thinking of that. Here he was, and here he would stay, as a President of his country had once remarked. The irksomeness and restraint of his position began to wear on his nerves, and he cried aloud for something—anything—to happen rather than what he was enduring.

Something happened.

From between the Islands, there slowly appeared a great modern French ship of war, small in the distance. Hope lighted up the face of De Plonville. She must pass near enough to enable his signalling to be seen by the lookout. Heavens! how leisurely she moved! Then a second war vessel followed the first into view, and finally a third. The three came slowly along in stately procession. De Plonville removed his coat and waved it up and down to attract attention. So intent was he upon this that he nearly lost his footing, and, realizing that the men-of- war were still too far away, he desisted. He sat down as his excitement abated, and watched their quiet approach. Once it seemed to him they had stopped, and he leaned forward, shading his eyes with his hand, and watched

them eagerly. They were just moving—that was all.

Suddenly, from the black side of the foremost battle-ship, there rolled upward a cloud of white smoke, obscuring the funnels and the rigging, thinning out into the blue sky over the top-masts. After what seemed a long interval the low, dull roar of a cannon reached him, followed by the echo from the high hills of the island, and later by the fainter re-echo from the mountains on the mainland. This depressed De Plonville, for, if the ships were out for practice, the obscuring smoke around them would make the seeing of his signalling very improbable; and then that portion of the fleet might return the way it came, leaving him in his predicament. From the second ironclad arose a similar cloud, and this time far to his left there spurted up from the sea a jet of water, waving in the air like a plume for a moment, then dropping back in a shower on the ruffled surface.

The buoy was a target!

As De Plonville realized its use, he felt that uncomfortable creeping of the scalp which we call, the hair standing on end. The third cannon sent up its cloud, and De Plonville's eyes extended at what they saw. Coming directly towards him was a cannon ball, skipping over the water like a thrown pebble. His experience in the navy—at Paris—had never taught him that such a thing was possible. He slid down flat on the buoy, till his chin rested on the iron, and awaited the shock. A hundred yards from him the ball dipped into the water and disappeared. He found that he had ineffectually tried to drive his nails into the boiler plate, until his fingers' ends were sore. He stood up and waved his arms, but the first vessel fired again, and the ball came shrieking over him so low that he intuitively ducked his head. Like a pang of physical pain, the thought darted through his brain that he had instigated a censure on the bad firing of these very boats. Doubtless they saw a man on the buoy, but as no man had any business there, the knocking of him off by a cannon ball would be good proof of accuracy of aim. The investigation which followed would be a feather in the cap of the officer in charge, whatever the verdict. De Plonville, with something like a sigh, more than suspected that his untimely death would not cast irretrievable gloom over the fleet.

Well, a man has to die but once, and there is little use in making a fuss over the inevitable. He would meet his fate calmly and as a Frenchman should, with his face to the guns. There was a tinge of regret that there would be no one to witness his heroism. It is always pleasant on such occasions to have a war correspondent, or at least a reporter, present. It is best to be as comfortable as

possible under any circumstances, so De Plonville sat down on the spheroid and let his feet dangle toward the water. The great buoy for some reason floated around until it presented its side to the ships. None of the balls came so near as those first fired—perhaps because of the accumulated smoke. New features of the situation continued to present themselves to De Plonville as he sat there. The firing had been going on for some time before he reflected that if a shot punctured the buoy it would fill and sink. Perhaps their orders were to fire until the buoy disappeared. There was little comfort in this suggestion.

Firing had ceased for some minutes before he noticed the fact. A bank of thinning smoke rested on the water between the buoy and the ships. He saw the ironclads move ponderously around and steam through this bank turning broadside on again in one, two, three, order. He watched the evolution with his chin resting on his hands, not realizing that the moment for signalling had come. When the idea penetrated his somewhat dazed mind, he sprang to his feet, but his opportunity had gone. The smoke of the first gun rose in the air, there was a clang of iron on iron, and De Plonville found himself whirling in space: then sinking in the sea. Coming breathless to the surface, he saw the buoy revolving slowly, and a deep dinge in its side seemed to slide over its top and disappear into the water, showing where the shot had struck. The second boat did not fire, and he knew that they were examining the buoy with their glasses. He swam around to the other side, intending to catch a ring and have it haul him up where he could be seen. Before he reached the place the buoy was at rest again, and as he laboriously climbed on top more dead than alive, the second ship opened fire. He lay down at full length exhausted, and hoped if they were going to hit they would hit quick. Life was not worth having on these conditions. He felt the hot sun on his back, and listened dreamily to the cannon. Hope was gone, and he wondered at himself for feeling a remote rather than an active interest in his fate. He thought of himself as somebody else, and felt a vague impersonal pity. He criticised the random firing, and suspected the hit was merely a fluke. When his back was dry he rolled lazily over and lay gazing up at the cloudless sky. For greater comfort he placed his hands beneath his head. The sky faded, and a moment’s unconsciousness intervened.

“This won’t do,” he cried, shaking himself. “If I fall asleep I shall roll off.”

He sat up again, his joints stiff with his immersion, and watched the distant ironclads. He saw with languid interest a ball strike the water, take a new flight, and plunge into the sea far to the right. He thought that the vagaries of cannon-balls at sea would make an interesting study.

“Are you injured?” cried a clear voice behind him.

“*Mon Dieu!*” shouted the young man in a genuine fright, as he sprang to his feet.

“Oh, I beg pardon,” as if a rescuer need apologize, “I thought you were M. De Plonville.”

“I *am* De Plonville.”

“Your hair is grey,” she said in an awed whisper; then added, “and no wonder.”

“Mademoiselle,” replied the stricken young man, placing his hand on his heart, “it is needless to deny—I do not deny—that I was frightened— but—I did not think—not so much as that, I regret. It is so—so— theatrical—I am deeply sorrowful.”

“Please say no more, but come quickly. Can you come down? Step exactly in the middle of the canoe. Be careful—it is easily upset—and sit down at once. That was very nicely done.”

“Mademoiselle, allow me at least to row the boat.”

“It is paddling, and you do not understand it. I do. Please do not speak until we are out of range. I am horribly frightened.”

“You are very, very brave.”

“Hs—s—sh.”

Miss Stansby wielded the double-bladed paddle in a way a Red Indian might have envied. Once she uttered a little feminine shriek as a cannon ball plunged into the water behind them; but as they got further away from the buoy those on the iron-clads appeared to notice that a boat was within range, and the firing ceased.

Miss Stansby looked fixedly at the solemn young man sitting before her; then placed her paddle across the canoe, bent over it, and laughed. De Plonville saw the reaction had come. He said sympathetically:—

“Ah, Mademoiselle, do not, I beg. All danger is over, I think.”

“I am not frightened, don’t think it,” she cried, flashing a look of defiance at

him, and forgetting her admission of fear a moment before. “My father was an Admiral. I am laughing at my mistake. It is salt.”

“What is?” asked her astonished passenger.

“In your hair.”

He ran his fingers through his hair, and the salt rattled down to the bottom of the canoe. There was something of relief in *his* laugh.

De Plonville always believes the officers on board the gunboats recognized him. When it was known in Paris that he was to be married to the daughter of an English Admiral, whom rumor said he had bravely saved from imminent peril, the army lieutenant remarked that she could never have heard him speak her language—which, as we know, is not true.

A NEW EXPLOSIVE.

The French Minister of War sat in his very comfortable chair in his own private yet official room, and pondered over a letter he had received. Being Minister of War, he was naturally the most mild, the most humane, and least quarrelsome man in the Cabinet. A Minister of War receives many letters that, as a matter of course, he throws into his waste basket, but this particular communication had somehow managed to rivet his attention. When a man becomes Minister of War he learns for the first time that apparently the great majority of mankind are engaged in the manufacture or invention of rifles, gunpowders, and devices of all kinds for the destruction of the rest of the world.

That morning, the Minister of War had received a letter which announced to him that the writer of it had invented an explosive so terrible that all known destructive agencies paled before it. As a Frenchman, he made the first offer of his discovery to the French Government. It would cost the Minister nothing, he said, to make a test which would corroborate his amazing claims for the substance, and the moment that test was made, any intelligent man would recognize the fact that the country which possessed the secret of this destructive compound would at once occupy an unassailable position in a contentious world.

The writer offered personally to convince the Minister of the truth of his assertions, provided they could go to some remote spot where the results of the explosion would do no damage, and where they would be safe from espionage. The writer went on very frankly to say that if the Minister consulted with the agents of the police, they would at once see in this invitation a trap for the probable assassination of the Minister. But the inventor claimed that the Minister's own good sense should show him that his death was desired by none. He was but newly appointed, and had not yet had time to make enemies. France was at peace with all the world, and this happened before the time of the Anarchist demonstrations in Paris. It was but right, the letter went on, that the Minister should have some guarantee as to the *bona fides* of the inventor. He therefore gave his name and address, and said if the Minister made inquiries from the police, he would find nothing stood in their books against him. He was a student, whose attention, for years, had been given to the subject of explosives. To further show that he was entirely unselfish in this matter, he added that he had no desire to enrich himself by his discovery. He had a private income quite

sufficient for his needs, and he intended to give, and not to sell, his secret to France. The only proviso he made was that his name should be linked with this terrible compound, which he maintained would secure universal peace to the world, for, after its qualities were known, no nation would dare to fight with another. The sole ambition of the inventor, said the letter in conclusion, was to place his name high in the list of celebrated French scientists. If, however, the Minister refused to treat with him he would go to other Governments until his invention was taken up, but the Government which secured it would at once occupy the leading position among nations. He entreated the Minister, therefore, for the sake of his country, to make at least one test of the compound.

It was, as I have said, before the time of the Paris explosions, and ministers were not so suspicious then as they are now. The Minister made inquiries regarding the scientist, who lived in a little suburb of Paris, and found that there was nothing against him on the books of the police. Inquiry showed that all he had said about his own private fortune was true. The Minister therefore wrote to the inventor, and named an hour at which he would receive him in his private office.

The hour and the man arrived together. The Minister had had some slight doubts regarding his sanity, but the letter had been so straightforwardly written, and the appearance of the man himself was so kindly and benevolent and intelligent that the doubts of the official vanished.

“I beg you to be seated,” said the Minister. “We are entirely alone, and nothing you say will be heard by any one but myself.”

“I thank you, Monsieur le Ministre,” replied the inventor, “for this mark of confidence; for I am afraid the claims I made in the letter were so extraordinary that you might well have hesitated about granting me an interview.”

The Minister smiled. “I understand,” he said, “the enthusiasm of an inventor for his latest triumph, and I was enabled thus to take, as it were, some discount from your statements, although I doubt not that you have discovered something that may be of benefit to the War Department.”

The inventor hesitated, looking seriously at the great official before him.

“From what you say,” he began at last, “I am rather afraid that my letter misled you, for, fearing it would not be credited I was obliged to make my claims so mild that I erred in under-estimating rather than in over-stating them. I

have the explosive here in my pocket."

"Ah!" cried the Minister, a shade of pallor coming over his countenance, as he pushed back his chair. "I thought I stated in my note that you were not to bring it."

"Forgive me for not obeying. It is perfectly harmless while in this state. This is one of the peculiarities—a beneficent peculiarity if I may so term it—of this terrible agent. It may be handled with perfect safety, and yet its effects are as inevitable as death," saying which, he took out of his pocket and held up to the light a bottle filled with a clear colorless liquid like water.

"You could pour that on the fire," he said, "with no other effect than to put out the blaze. You might place it under a steam hammer and crush the bottle to powder, yet no explosion would follow. It is as harmless as water in its present condition."

"How, then," said the Minister, "do you deal with it?"

Again the man hesitated.

"I am almost afraid to tell you," he said; "and if I could not demonstrate to your entire satisfaction that what I say is true, it would be folly for me to say what I am about to say. If I were to take this bottle and cut a notch in the cork, and walk with it neck downwards along the Boulevard des Italiens, allowing this fluid to fall drop by drop on the pavement, I could walk in that way in safety through every street in Paris. If it rained that day nothing would happen. If it rained the next or for a week nothing would happen, but the moment the sun came out and dried the moisture, the light step of a cat on any pavement over which I had passed would instantly shatter to ruins the whole of Paris."

"Impossible!" cried the Minister, an expression of horror coming into his face.

"I knew you would say that. Therefore I ask you to come with me to the country, where I can prove the truth of what I allege. While I carry this bottle around with me in this apparently careless fashion, it is corked, as you see with the utmost security. Not a drop of the fluid must be left on the outside of the cork or of the bottle. I have wiped the bottle and cork most thoroughly, and burned the cloth which I used in doing so. Fire will not cause this compound, even when dry, to explode, but the slightest touch will set it off. I have to be extremely careful in its manufacture, so that not a single drop is left unaccounted for in any

place where it might evaporate."

The Minister, with his finger-tips together and his eyes on the ceiling, mused for a few moments on the amazing statement he had heard.

"If what you say is true," he began at last, "don't you think it would be more humane to destroy all traces of the experiments by which you discovered this substance, and to divulge the secret to no one? The devastation such a thing would cause, if it fell into unscrupulous hands, is too appalling even to contemplate."

"I have thought of that," said the inventor; "but some one else—the time may be far off or it may be near—is bound to make the discovery. My whole ambition, as I told you in my letter, is to have my name coupled with this discovery. I wish it to be known as the Lambelle Explosive. The secret would be safe with the French Government."

"I am not so sure of that," returned the Minister. "Some unscrupulous man may become Minister of War, and may use his knowledge to put himself in the position of Dictator. An unscrupulous man in the possession of such a secret would be invincible."

"What you say," replied the inventor, "is undoubtedly true; yet I am determined that the name of Lambelle shall go down in history coupled with the most destructive agent the world has ever known, or will know. If the Government of France will build for me a large stone structure as secure as a fortress, I will keep my secret, but will fill that building with bottles like this, and then——"

"I do not see," said the Minister, "that that would lessen the danger, if the unscrupulous man I speak of once became possessed of the keys; and, besides, the mere fact that such a secret existed would put other inventors upon the track, and some one else less benevolent than yourself would undoubtedly make the discovery. You admitted a moment ago that the chances were a future investigator would succeed in getting the right ingredients together, even without the knowledge that such an explosive existed. See what an incentive it would be to inventors all over the world, if it were known that France had in its possession such a fearful explosive! No Government has ever yet been successful in keeping the secret of either a gun or a gunpowder."

"There is, of course," said Lambelle, "much in what you say; but, equally of

course, all that you say might have been said to the inventor of gunpowder, for gunpowder in its day was as wonderful as this is now."

Suddenly the Minister laughed aloud.

"I am talking seriously with you on this subject," he exclaimed, "as if I really believed in it. Of course, I may say I do nothing of the kind. I think you must have hypnotized me with those calm eyes of yours into crediting your statements for even a few moments."

"All that I say," said the inventor quietly, "can be corroborated to- morrow. Make an appointment with me in the country, and if it chances to be a calm and sunny day you will no longer doubt the evidence of your own eyes."

"Where do you wish the experiment to be made?" asked the Minister.

"It must be in some wild and desolate region, on a hill-top for preference. There should be either trees or old buildings there that we can destroy, otherwise the full effects can hardly be estimated."

"I have a place in the country," said the Minister, "which is wild and desolate and unprofitable enough. There are some useless stone buildings, not on a hill-top, but by the edge of a quarry which has been unworked for many years. There is no habitation for several miles around. Would such a spot be suitable?"

"Perfectly so. When would it be convenient for you to go?"

"I will leave with you to-night," said the Minister, "and we can spend the day to-morrow experimenting."

"Very well," answered Lambelle, rising when the Minister had told him the hour and the railway station at which they should meet.

That evening, when the Minister drove to the railway station in time for his train, he found Lambelle waiting for him, holding, by a leash, two sorry-looking dogs.

"Do you travel with such animals as these?" asked the Minister.

"The poor brutes," said Lambelle, with regret in his voice, "are necessary for our experiments. They will be in atoms by this time to- morrow."

The dogs were put into the railway-van, and the inventor brought his

portmanteau with him into the private carriage reserved for the use of the Minister.

The place, as the Minister of War had said, was desolate enough. The stone buildings near the edge of the deserted quarry were stout and strong, although partly in ruins.

“I have here with me in my portmanteau,” said Lambelle, “some hundreds of metres of electric wire. I will attach one of the dogs by this clip, which we can release from a distance by pressing an electric button. The moment the dog escapes he will undoubtedly explode the compound.”

The insulated wire was run along the ground to a distant elevation. The dog was attached by the electric clip, and chained to a doorpost of one of the buildings. Lambelle then carefully uncorked his bottle, holding it at arm’s length from his person. The Minister looked on with strange interest as Lambelle allowed the fluid to drip in a semicircular line around the chained dog. The inventor carefully re-corked the bottle, wiped it thoroughly with a cloth he had with him, and threw the cloth into one of the deserted houses.

They waited near, until the spots caused by the fluid on the stone pavement in front of the house had disappeared.

“By the time we reach the hill,” said Lambelle, “it will be quite dry in this hot sun.”

As they departed towards the elevation, the forlorn dog howled mournfully, as if in premonition of his fate.

“I think, to make sure,” said the inventor, when they reached the electrical apparatus, “that we might wait for half an hour.”

The Minister lit a cigarette, and smoked silently, a strange battle going on in his mind. He found himself believing in the extraordinary claims made by the inventor, and his thought dwelt on the awful possibilities of such an explosive.

“Will you press the electric lever?” asked Lambelle quietly. “Remember that you are inaugurating a new era.”

The Minister pressed down the key, and then, putting his field-glass to his eye, he saw that the dog was released, but the animal sat there scratching its ear with its paw. Then, realizing that it was loose, it sniffed for a moment at the chain.

Finally, it threw up its head and barked, although the distance was too great for them to hear any sound. The dog started in the direction the two men had gone, but, before it had taken three steps, the Minister was appalled to see the buildings suddenly crumble into dust, and a few moments later the thunder of the rocks falling into the deserted quarry came toward them. The whole ledge had been flung forwards into the chasm. There was no smoke, but a haze of dust hovered over the spot.

“My God!” cried the Minister. “That is awful!”

“Yes,” said Lambelle quietly; “I put more of the substance on the flagging than I need to have done. A few drops would have answered quite as well, but I wanted to make sure. You were very sceptical, you know.”

The Minister looked at him. “I beg of you, M. Lambelle, never to divulge this secret to the Government of France, or to any other power. Take the risk of it being discovered in the future. I implore you to reconsider your original intention. If you desire money, I will see that you get what you want from the secret funds.”

Lambelle shrugged his shoulders.

“I have no desire for money,” he said; “but what you have seen will show you that I shall be the most famous scientist of the century. The name of Lambelle will be known till the end of the world.”

“But, my God, man!” said the Minister, “the end of the world is here the moment your secret is in the possession of another. With you or me it would be safe: but who can tell the minds of those who may follow us? You are putting the power of the Almighty into the hands of a man.”

Lambelle flushed with pride as the pale-faced Minister said this.

“You speak the truth!” he cried, “it is the power of Omnipotence.”

“Then,” implored the Minister, “reconsider your decision.”

“I have labored too long,” said Lambelle, “to forego my triumph now. You are convinced at last, I see. Now then, tell me: will you, as Minister of France, secure for your country this greatest of all inventions?”

“Yes,” answered the Minister; “no other power must be allowed to obtain the

secret. Have you ever written down the names of the ingredients?”

“Never,” answered Lambelle.

“Is it not possible for any one to have suspected what your experiments were? If a man got into your laboratory—a scientific man—could he not, from what he saw there, obtain the secret?”

“It would be impossible,” said Lambelle. “I have been too anxious to keep the credit for myself, to leave any traces that might give a hint of what I was doing.”

“You were wise in that,” said the Minister, drawing a deep breath. “Now let us go and look at the ruins.”

As they neared the spot the official’s astonishment at the extraordinary destruction became greater and greater. The rock had been rent as if by an earthquake, to the distance of hundreds of yards.

“You say,” said the Minister, “that the liquid is perfectly safe until evaporation takes place.”

“Perfectly,” answered Lambelle. “Of course one has to be careful, as I told you, in the use of it. You must not get a drop on your clothes, or leave it anywhere on the outside of the bottle to evaporate.”

“Let me see the stuff.”

Lambelle handed him the bottle.

“Have you any more of this in your laboratory?”

“Not a drop.”

“If you wished to destroy this, how would you do it?”

“I should empty the bottle into the Seine. It would flow down to the sea, and no harm would be done.”

“See if you can find any traces of the dog,” said the Minister. “I will clamber down into the quarry, and look there.”

“You will find nothing,” said Lambelle confidently.

There was but one path by which the bottom of the quarry could be reached.

The Minister descended by this until he was out of sight of the man above; then he quickly uncorked the bottle, and allowed the fluid to drip along the narrowest part of the path which faced the burning sun. He corked the bottle, wiped it carefully with his handkerchief, which he rolled into a ball, and threw into the quarry. Coming up to the surface again, he said to the mild and benevolent scientist: “I cannot find a trace of the dog.”

“Nor can I,” said Lambelle. “Of course when you can hardly find a sign of the building it is not to be expected that there should be any remnants of the dog.”

“Suppose we get back to the hill now and have lunch,” said the Minister.

“Do you wish to try another experiment?”

“I would like to try one more after we have had something to eat. What would be the effect if you poured the whole bottleful into the quarry and set it off?”

“Oh, impossible!” cried Lambelle. “It would rend this whole part of the country to pieces. In fact, I am not sure that the shock would not be felt as far as Paris. With a very few drops I can shatter the whole quarry.”

“Well, we’ll try that after lunch. We have another dog left.”

When an hour had passed, Lambelle was anxious to try his quarry experiment.

“By-and-by,” he said, “the sun will not be shining in the quarry, and then it will be too late.”

“We can easily wait until to-morrow, unless you are in a hurry.”

“I am in no hurry,” rejoined the inventor. “I thought perhaps you might be, with so much to do.”

“No,” replied the official. “Nothing I shall do during my administration will be more important than this.”

“I am glad to hear you say so,” answered Lambelle; “and if you will give me the bottle again I will now place a few drops in the sunny part of the quarry.”

The Minister handed him the bottle, apparently with some reluctance.

“I still think,” he said, “that it would be much better to allow this secret to die. No one knows it at present but yourself. With you, as I have said, it will be safe, or with me; but think of the awful possibilities of a disclosure.”

“Every great invention has its risks,” said Lambelle firmly. “Nothing would induce me to forego the fruits of my life-work. It is too much to ask of any man.”

“Very well,” said the Minister. “Then let us be sure of our facts. I want to see the effects of the explosive on the quarry.”

“You shall,” said Lambelle, as he departed.

“I will wait for you here,” said the Minister, “and smoke a cigarette.”

When the inventor approached the quarry, leading the dog behind him, the Minister’s hand trembled so that he was hardly able to hold the field-glass to his eye. Lambelle disappeared down the path. The next instant the ground trembled even where the Minister sat, and a haze of dust arose above the ruined quarry.

Some moments after the pallid Minister looked over the work of destruction, but no trace of humanity was there except himself.

“I could not do otherwise,” he murmured, “It was too great a risk to run.”

THE GREAT PEGRAM MYSTERY.

(*With apologies to Dr. Conan Doyle, and our mutual and lamented friend the late Sherlock Holmes*.)

I dropped in on my friend, Sherlaw Kombs, to hear what he had to say about the Pegram mystery, as it had come to be called in the newspapers. I found him playing the violin with a look of sweet peace and serenity on his face, which I never noticed on the countenances of those within hearing distance. I knew this expression of seraphic calm indicated that Kombs had been deeply annoyed about something. Such, indeed, proved to be the case, for one of the morning papers had contained an article, eulogizing the alertness and general competence of Scotland Yard. So great was Sherlaw Kombs's contempt for Scotland Yard that he never would visit Scotland during his vacations, nor would he ever admit that a Scotchman was fit for anything but export.

He generously put away his violin, for he had a sincere liking for me, and greeted me with his usual kindness.

"I have come," I began, plunging at once into the matter on my mind, "to hear what you think of the great Pegram mystery."

"I haven't heard of it," he said quietly, just as if all London were not talking of that very thing. Kombs was curiously ignorant on some subjects, and abnormally learned on others. I found, for instance, that political discussion with him was impossible, because he did not know who Salisbury and Gladstone were. This made his friendship a great boon.

"The Pegram mystery has baffled even Gregory, of Scotland Yard."

"I can well believe it," said my friend, calmly. "Perpetual motion, or squaring the circle, would baffle Gregory. He's an infant, is Gregory."

This was one of the things I always liked about Kombs. There was no professional jealousy in him, such as characterizes so many other men.

He filled his pipe, threw himself into his deep-seated arm-chair, placed his feet on the mantel, and clasped his hands behind his head.

“Tell me about it,” he said simply.

“Old Barrie Kipson,” I began, “was a stockbroker in the City. He lived in Pegram, and it was his custom to——”

“COME IN!” shouted Kombs, without changing his position, but with a suddenness that startled me. I had heard no knock.

“Excuse me,” said my friend, laughing, “my invitation to enter was a trifle premature. I was really so interested in your recital that I spoke before I thought, which a detective should never do. The fact is, a man will be here in a moment who will tell me all about this crime, and so you will be spared further effort in that line.”

“Ah, you have an appointment. In that case I will not intrude,” I said, rising.

“Sit down; I have no appointment. I did not know until I spoke that he was coming.”

I gazed at him in amazement. Accustomed as I was to his extraordinary talents, the man was a perpetual surprise to me. He continued to smoke quietly, but evidently enjoyed my consternation.

“I see you are surprised. It is really too simple to talk about, but, from my position opposite the mirror, I can see the reflection of objects in the street. A man stopped, looked at one of my cards, and then glanced across the street. I recognized my card, because, as you know, they are all in scarlet. If, as you say, London is talking of this mystery, it naturally follows that *he* will talk of it, and the chances are he wished to consult me about it. Anyone can see that, besides there is always—*Come* in!”

There was a rap at the door this time.

A stranger entered. Sherlaw Kombs did not change his lounging attitude.

“I wish to see Mr. Sherlaw Kombs, the detective,” said the stranger, coming within the range of the smoker’s vision.

“This is Mr. Kombs,” I remarked at last, as my friend smoked quietly, and seemed half-asleep.

“Allow me to introduce myself,” continued the stranger, fumbling for a card.

“There is no need. You are a journalist,” said Kombs.

“Ah,” said the stranger, somewhat taken aback, “you know me, then.”

“Never saw or heard of you in my life before.”

“Then how in the world——”

“Nothing simpler. You write for an evening paper. You have written an article slating the book of a friend. He will feel badly about it, and you will condole with him. He will never know who stabbed him unless I tell him.”

“The devil!” cried the journalist, sinking into a chair and mopping his brow, while his face became livid.

“Yes,” drawled Kombs, “it is a devil of a shame that such things are done. But what would you? as we say in France.”

When the journalist had recovered his second wind he pulled himself together somewhat. “Would you object to telling me how you know these particulars about a man you say you have never seen?”

“I rarely talk about these things,” said Kombs with great composure. “But as the cultivation of the habit of observation may help you in your profession, and thus in a remote degree benefit me by making your paper less deadly dull, I will tell you. Your first and second fingers are smeared with ink, which shows that you write a great deal. This smeared class embraces two sub-classes, clerks or accountants, and journalists. Clerks have to be neat in their work. The ink-smear is slight in their case. Your fingers are badly and carelessly smeared; therefore, you are a journalist. You have an evening paper in your pocket. Anyone might have any evening paper, but yours is a Special Edition, which will not be on the streets for half-an-hour yet. You must have obtained it before you left the office, and to do this you must be on the staff. A book notice is marked with a blue pencil. A journalist always despises every article in his own paper not written by himself; therefore, you wrote the article you have marked, and doubtless are about to send it to the author of the book referred to. Your paper makes a specialty of abusing all books not written by some member of its own staff. That the author is a friend of yours, I merely surmised. It is all a trivial example of ordinary observation.”

“Really, Mr. Kombs, you are the most wonderful man on earth. You are the equal of Gregory, by Jove, you are.”

A frown marred the brow of my friend as he placed his pipe on the sideboard and drew his self-cocking six-shooter.

“Do you mean to insult me, sir?”

“I do not—I—I assure you. You are fit to take charge of Scotland Yard to-morrow——. I am in earnest, indeed I am, sir.”

“Then Heaven help you,” cried Kombs, slowly raising his right arm.

I sprang between them.

“Don’t shoot!” I cried. “You will spoil the carpet. Besides, Sherlaw, don’t you see the man means well. He actually thinks it is a compliment!”

“Perhaps you are right,” remarked the detective, flinging his revolver carelessly beside his pipe, much to the relief of the third party. Then, turning to the journalist, he said, with his customary bland courtesy—

“You wanted to see me, I think you said. What can I do for you, Mr. Wilber Scribbings?”

The journalist started.

“How do you know my name?” he gasped.

Kombs waved his hand impatiently.

“Look inside your hat if you doubt your own name?”

I then noticed for the first time that the name was plainly to be seen inside the top-hat Scribbings held upside down in his hands.

“You have heard, of course, of the Pegram mystery——“.

“Tush,” cried the detective; “do not, I beg of you, call it a mystery. There is no such thing. Life would become more tolerable if there ever *was* a mystery. Nothing is original. Everything has been done before. What about the Pegram affair?”

“The Pegram—ah—case has baffled everyone. The *Evening Blade* wishes you to investigate, so that it may publish the result. It will pay you well. Will you accept the commission?”

“Possibly. Tell me about the case.”

“I thought everybody knew the particulars. Mr. Barrie Kipson lived at Pegram. He carried a first-class season ticket between the terminus and that station. It was his custom to leave for Pegram on the 5.30 train each evening. Some weeks ago, Mr. Kipson was brought down by the influenza. On his first visit to the City after his recovery, he drew something like £300 in notes, and left the office at his usual hour to catch the 5.30. He was never seen again alive, as far as the public have been able to learn. He was found at Brewster in a first-class compartment on the Scotch Express, which does not stop between London and Brewster. There was a bullet in his head, and his money was gone, pointing plainly to murder and robbery.”

“And where is the mystery, may I ask?”

“There are several unexplainable things about the case. First, how came he on the Scotch Express, which leaves at six, and does not stop at Pegram? Second, the ticket examiners at the terminus would have turned him out if he showed his season ticket; and all the tickets sold for the Scotch Express on the 21st are accounted for. Third, how could the murderer have escaped? Fourth, the passengers in the two compartments on each side of the one where the body was found heard no scuffle and no shot fired.”

“Are you sure the Scotch Express on the 21st did not stop between London and Brewster?”

“Now that you mention the fact, it did. It was stopped by signal just outside of Pegram. There was a few moments’ pause, when the line was reported clear, and it went on again. This frequently happens, as there is a branch line beyond Pegram.”

Mr. Sherlaw Kombs pondered for a few moments, smoking his pipe silently.

“I presume you wish the solution in time for to-morrow’s paper?”

“Bless my soul, no. The editor thought if you evolved a theory in a month you would do well.”

“My dear sir, I do not deal with theories, but with facts. If you can make it convenient to call here to-morrow at 8 a.m. I will give you the full particulars early enough for the first edition. There is no sense in taking up much time over so simple an affair as the Pegram case. Good afternoon, sir.”

Mr. Scribbings was too much astonished to return the greeting. He left in a speechless condition, and I saw him go up the street with his hat still in his hand.

Sherlaw Kombs relapsed into his old lounging attitude, with his hands clasped behind his head. The smoke came from his lips in quick puffs at first, then at longer intervals. I saw he was coming to a conclusion, so I said nothing.

Finally he spoke in his most dreamy manner. “I do not wish to seem to be rushing things at all, Whatson, but I am going out to-night on the Scotch Express. Would you care to accompany me?”

“Bless me!” I cried, glancing at the clock, “you haven’t time, it is after five now.”

“Ample time, Whatson—ample,” he murmured, without changing his position. “I give myself a minute and a half to change slippers and dressing gown for boots and coat, three seconds for hat, twenty-five seconds to the street, forty-two seconds waiting for a hansom, and then seven at the terminus before the express starts. I shall be glad of your company.”

I was only too happy to have the privilege of going with him. It was most interesting to watch the workings of so inscrutable a mind. As we drove under the lofty iron roof of the terminus I noticed a look of annoyance pass over his face.

“We are fifteen seconds ahead of our time,” he remarked, looking at the big clock. “I dislike having a miscalculation of that sort occur.”

The great Scotch Express stood ready for its long journey. The detective tapped one of the guards on the shoulder.

“You have heard of the so-called Pegram mystery, I presume?”

“Certainly, sir. It happened on this very train, sir.”

“Really? Is the same carriage still on the train?”

“Well, yes, sir, it is,” replied the guard, lowering his voice, “but of course, sir, we have to keep very quiet about it. People wouldn’t travel in it, else, sir.”

“Doubtless. Do you happen to know if anybody occupies the compartment in which the body was found?”

“A lady and gentleman, sir; I put ‘em in myself, sir.”

“Would you further oblige me,” said the detective, deftly slipping half-a-sovereign into the hand of the guard, “by going to the window and informing them in an offhand casual sort of way that the tragedy took place in that compartment?”

“Certainly, sir.”

We followed the guard, and the moment he had imparted his news there was a suppressed scream in the carriage. Instantly a lady came out, followed by a florid-faced gentleman, who scowled at the guard. We entered the now empty compartment, and Kombs said: “We would like to be alone here until we reach Brewster.”

“I’ll see to that, sir,” answered the guard, locking the door.

When the official moved away, I asked my friend what he expected to find in the carriage that would cast any light on the case.

“Nothing,” was his brief reply.

“Then why do you come?”

“Merely to corroborate the conclusions I have already arrived at.”

“And may I ask what those conclusions are?”

“Certainly,” replied the detective, with a touch of lassitude in his voice. “I beg to call your attention, first, to the fact that this train stands between two platforms, and can be entered from either side. Any man familiar with the station for years would be aware of that fact. This shows how Mr. Kipson entered the train just before it started.”

“But the door on this side is locked,” I objected, trying it.

“Of course. But every season ticket-holder carries a key. This accounts for the guard not seeing him, and for the absence of a ticket. Now let me give you some information about the influenza. The patient’s temperature rises several degrees above normal, and he has a fever. When the malady has run its course, the temperature falls to three- quarters of a degree below normal. These, facts are unknown to you, I imagine, because you are a doctor.”

I admitted such was the case.

“Well, the consequence of this fall in temperature is that the convalescent’s mind turns toward thoughts of suicide. Then is the time he should be watched by his friends. Then was the time Mr. Barrie Kipson’s friends did *not* watch him. You remember the 21st, of course. No? It was a most depressing day. Fog all around and mud under foot. Very good. He resolves on suicide. He wishes to be unidentified, if possible but forgets his season ticket. My experience is that a man about to commit a crime always forgets something.”

“But how do you account for the disappearance of the money?”

“The money has nothing to do with the matter. If he was a deep man, and knew the stupidness of Scotland Yard, he probably sent the notes to an enemy. If not, they may have been given to a friend. Nothing is more calculated to prepare the mind for self-destruction than the prospect of a night ride on the Scotch Express, and the view from the windows of the train as it passes through the northern part of London is particularly conducive to thoughts of annihilation.”

“What became of the weapon?”

“That is just the point on which I wish to satisfy myself. Excuse me for a moment.”

Mr. Sherlaw Kombs drew down the window on the right hand side, and examined the top of the casing minutely with a magnifying glass. Presently he heaved a sigh of relief, and drew up the sash.

“Just as I expected,” he remarked, speaking more to himself than to me. “There is a slight dent on the top of the window-frame. It is of such a nature as to be made only by the trigger of a pistol falling from the nerveless hand of a suicide. He intended to throw the weapon far out of the window, but had not the strength. It might have fallen into the carriage. As a matter of fact, it bounced away from the line and lies among the grass about ten feet six inches from the outside rail. The only question that now remains is where the deed was committed, and the exact present position of the pistol reckoned in miles from London, but that, fortunately, is too simple to even need explanation.”

“Great heavens, Sherlaw!” I cried. “How can you call that simple? It seems to me impossible to compute.”

We were now flying over Northern London, and the great detective leaned

back with every sign of *ennui*, closing his eyes. At last he spoke wearily:

"It is really too elementary, Whatson, but I am always willing to oblige a friend. I shall be relieved, however, when you are able to work out the A B C of detection for yourself, although I shall never object to helping you with the words of more than three syllables. Having made up his mind to commit suicide, Kipson naturally intended to do it before he reached Brewster, because tickets are again examined at that point. When the train began to stop at the signal near Pegram, he came to the false conclusion that it was stopping at Brewster. The fact that the shot was not heard is accounted for by the screech of the air- brake, added to the noise of the train. Probably the whistle was also sounding at the same moment. The train being a fast express would stop as near the signal as possible. The air-brake will stop a train in twice its own length. Call it three times in this case. Very well. At three times the length of this train from the signalpost towards London, deducting half the length of the train, as this carriage is in the middle, you will find the pistol."

"Wonderful!" I exclaimed.

"Commonplace," he murmured.

At this moment the whistle sounded shrilly, and we felt the grind of the air-brakes.

"The Pegram signal again," cried Kombs, with something almost like enthusiasm. "This is indeed luck. We will get out here, Whatson, and test the matter."

As the train stopped, we got out on the right-hand side of the line. The engine stood panting impatiently under the red light, which changed to green as I looked at it. As the train moved on with increasing speed, the detective counted the carriages, and noted down the number. It was now dark, with the thin crescent of the moon hanging in the western sky throwing a weird half-light on the shining metals. The rear lamps of the train disappeared around a curve, and the signal stood at baleful red again. The black magic of the lonesome night in that strange place impressed me, but the detective was a most practical man. He placed his back against the signal-post, and paced up the line with even strides, counting his steps. I walked along the permanent way beside him silently. At last he stopped, and took a tapeline from his pocket. He ran it out until the ten feet six inches were unrolled, scanning the figures in the wan light of the new moon. Giving me the end, he placed his knuckles on the metals, motioning me to

proceed down the embankment. I stretched out the line, and then sank my hand in the damp grass to mark the spot.

“Good God!” I cried, aghast, “what is this?”

“It is the pistol,” said Kombs quietly.

It was!!

Journalistic London will not soon forget the sensation that was caused by the record of the investigations of Sherlaw Kombs, as printed at length in the next day’s *Evening Blade*. Would that my story ended here. Alas! Kombs contemptuously turned over the pistol to Scotland Yard. The meddlesome officials, actuated, as I always hold, by jealousy, found the name of the seller upon it. They investigated. The seller testified that it had never been in the possession of Mr. Kipson, as far as he knew. It was sold to a man whose description tallied with that of a criminal long watched by the police. He was arrested, and turned Queen’s evidence in the hope of hanging his pal. It seemed that Mr. Kipson, who was a gloomy, taciturn man, and usually came home in a compartment by himself, thus escaping observation, had been murdered in the lane leading to his house. After robbing him, the miscreants turned their thoughts towards the disposal of the body—a subject that always occupies a first-class criminal mind before the deed is done. They agreed to place it on the line, and have it mangled by the Scotch Express, then nearly due. Before they got the body half- way up the embankment the express came along and stopped. The guard got out and walked along the other side to speak with the engineer. The thought of putting the body into an empty first-class carriage instantly occurred to the murderers. They opened the door with the deceased’s key. It is supposed that the pistol dropped when they were hoisting the body in the carriage.

The Queen’s evidence dodge didn’t work, and Scotland Yard ignobly insulted my friend Sherlaw Kombs by sending him a pass to see the villains hanged.

DEATH COMETH SOON OR LATE.

It was Alick Robbins who named the invalid the Living Skeleton, and probably remorse for having thus given him a title so descriptively accurate, caused him to make friends with the Living Skeleton, a man who seemed to have no friends.

Robbins never forgot their first conversation. It happened in this way. It was the habit of the Living Skeleton to leave his hotel every morning promptly at ten o'clock, if the sun was shining, and to shuffle rather than walk down the gravel street to the avenue of palms. There, picking out a seat on which the sun shone, the Living Skeleton would sit down and seem to wait patiently for someone who never came. He wore a shawl around his neck and a soft cloth cap on his skull. Every bone in his face stood out against the skin, for there seemed to be no flesh, and his clothes hung as loosely upon him as they would have upon a skeleton. It required no second glance at the Living Skeleton to know that the remainder of his life was numbered by days or hours, and not by weeks or months. He didn't seem to have energy enough even to read, and so it was that Robbins sat down one day on the bench beside him, and said sympathetically:—

"I hope you are feeling better to-day."

The Skeleton turned towards him, laughed a low, noiseless, mirthless laugh for a moment, and then said, in a hollow, far-away voice that had no lungs behind it: "I am done with feeling either better or worse."

"Oh, I trust it is not so bad as that," said Robbins; "the climate is doing you good down here, is it not?"

Again the Skeleton laughed silently, and Robbins began to feel uneasy. The Skeleton's eyes were large and bright, and they fastened themselves upon Robbins in a way that increased that gentleman's uneasiness, and made him think that perhaps the Skeleton knew he had so named him.

"I have no more interest in climate," said the Skeleton. "I merely seem to live because I have been in the habit of living for some years; I presume that is it, because my lungs are entirely gone. Why I can talk or why I can breathe is a mystery to me. You are perfectly certain you can hear me?"

“Oh, I hear you quite distinctly,” said Robbins.

“Well, if it wasn’t that people tell me that they can hear me, I wouldn’t believe I was really speaking, because, you see, I have nothing to speak with. Isn’t it Shakespeare who says something about when the brains are out the man is dead? Well, I have seen some men who make me think Shakespeare was wrong in his diagnosis, but it is generally supposed that when the lungs are gone a man is dead. To tell the truth, I *am* dead, practically. You know the old American story about the man who walked around to save funeral expenses; well, it isn’t quite that way with me, but I can appreciate how the man felt. Still I take a keen interest in life, although you might not think so. You see, I haven’t much time left; I am going to die at eight o’clock on the 30th of April. Eight o’clock at night, not in the morning, just after *table d’hôte*.”

“You are going to *what*!” cried Robbins in astonishment.

“I’m going to die that day. You see I have got things to such a fine point, that I can die any time I want to. I could die right here, now, if I wished. If you have any mortal interest in the matter I’ll do it, and show you what I say is true. I don’t mind much, you know, although I had fixed April the 30th as the limit. It wouldn’t matter a bit for me to go off now, if it would be of any interest to you.”

“I beg you,” said Robbins, very much alarmed, “not to try any experiments on my account. I am quite willing to believe anything you say about the matter—of course you ought to know.”

“Yes, I do know.” answered the Living Skeleton sadly. “Of course I have had my struggle with hope and fear, but that is all past now, as you may well understand. The reason that I have fixed the date for April 30th is this: you see I have only a certain amount of money—I do not know why I should make any secret of it. I have exactly 240 francs today, over and above another 100 francs which I have set aside for another purpose. I am paying 8 francs a day at the Golden Dragon; that will keep me just thirty days, and then I intend to die.”

The Skeleton laughed again, without sound, and Robbins moved uneasily on the seat.

“I don’t see,” he said finally, “what there is to laugh about in that condition of affairs.”

“I don’t suppose there is very much; but there is something else that I consider

very laughable, and that I will tell you if you will keep it a secret. You see, the Golden Dragon himself—I always call our innkeeper the Golden Dragon, just as you call me, the Living Skeleton."

"Oh, I—I—beg your pardon," stammered Robbins, "I——."

"It really doesn't matter at all. You are perfectly right, and I think it a very apt term. Well, the old Golden Dragon makes a great deal of his money by robbing the dead. You didn't know that, did you? You thought it was the living who supported him, and goodness knows he robs *them* when he has a chance. Well, you are very much mistaken. When a man dies in the Golden Dragon, he, or his friends rather, have to pay very sweetly for it. The Dragon charges them for re-furnishing the room. Every stick of furniture is charged for, all the wall-paper, and so on. I suppose it is perfectly right to charge something, but the Dragon is not content with what is right. He knows he has finally lost a customer, and so he makes all he can out of him. The furniture so paid for, is not re-placed, and the walls are not papered again, but the Dragon doesn't abate a penny of his bill on that account. Now, I have inquired of the furnishing man, on the street back of the hotel, and he has written on his card just the cost of mattress, sheets, pillows, and all that sort of thing, and the amount comes to about 50 francs. I have put in an envelope a 50-franc note, and with it the card of the furniture man. I have written a letter to the hotel-keeper, telling him just what the things will cost that he needs, and have referred the Dragon to the card of the furniture man who has given me the figures. This envelope I have addressed to the Dragon, and he will find it when I am dead. This is the joke that old man Death and myself have put up on our host, and my only regret is that I shall not be able to enjoy a look at the Dragon's countenance as he reads my last letter to him. Another sum of money I have put away, in good hands where he won't have a chance to get it, for my funeral expenses, and then you see I am through with the world. I have nobody to leave that I need worry about, or who would either take care of me or feel sorry for me if I needed care or sympathy, which I do not. So that is why I laugh, and that is why I come down and sit upon this bench, in the sunshine, and enjoy the posthumous joke."

Robbins did not appear to see the humor of the situation quite as strongly as the Living Skeleton did. At different times after, when they met he had offered the Skeleton more money if he wanted it, so that he might prolong his life a little, but the Skeleton always refused.

A sort of friendship sprang up between Robbins and the Living Skeleton, at

least, as much of a friendship as can exist between the living and the dead, for Robbins was a muscular young fellow who did not need to live at the Riviera on account of his health, but merely because he detested an English winter. Besides this, it may be added, although it really is nobody's business, that a Nice Girl and her parents lived in this particular part of the South of France.

One day Robbins took a little excursion in a carriage to Toulon. He had invited the Nice Girl to go with him, but on that particular day she could not go. There was some big charity function on hand, and one necessary part of the affair was the wheedling of money out of people's pockets, so the Nice Girl had undertaken to do part of the wheedling.

She was very good at it, and she rather prided herself upon it, but then she was a very nice girl, pretty as well, and so people found it difficult to refuse her. On the evening of the day there was to be a ball at the principal hotel of the place, also in connection with this very desirable charity. Robbins had reluctantly gone to Toulon alone, but you may depend upon it he was back in time for the ball.

"Well," he said to the Nice Girl when he met her, "what luck collecting, to-day?"

"Oh, the greatest luck," she replied enthusiastically, "and whom do you think I got the most money from?"

"I am sure I haven't the slightest idea—that old English Duke, he certainly has money enough."

"No, not from him at all; the very last person you would expect it from—your friend, the Living Skeleton."

"What!" cried Robbins, in alarm.

"Oh, I found him on the bench where he usually sits, in the avenue of the palms. I told him all about the charity and how useful it was, and how necessary, and how we all ought to give as much as we could towards it, and he smiled and smiled at me in that curious way of his. 'Yes,' he said in a whisper, 'I believe the charity should be supported by everyone; I will give you eighty francs.' Now, wasn't that very generous of him? Eighty francs, that was ten times what the Duke gave, and as he handed me the money he looked up at me and said in that awful whisper of his: 'Count this over carefully when you get home and see if you can find out what else I have given you. There is more than eighty francs

there.’ Then, after I got home, I——”

But here the Nice Girl paused, when she looked at the face of Robbins, to whom she was talking. That face was ghastly pale and his eyes were staring at her but not seeing her.

“Eighty francs,” he was whispering to himself, and he seemed to be making a mental calculation. Then noticing the Nice Girl’s amazed look at him, he said:

“Did you take the money?”

“Of course I took it,” she said, “why shouldn’t I?”

“Great Heavens!” gasped Robbins, and without a word he turned and fled, leaving the Nice Girl transfixed with astonishment and staring after him with a frown on her pretty brow.

“What does he mean by such conduct?” she asked herself. But Robbins disappeared from the gathering throng in the large room of the hotel, dashed down the steps, and hurried along the narrow pavements toward the “Golden Dragon.” The proprietor was standing in the hallway with his hands behind him, a usual attitude with the Dragon.

“Where,” gasped Robbins, “is Mr.—Mr.——” and then he remembered he didn’t know the name. “Where is the Living Skeleton?”

“He has gone to his room,” answered the Dragon, “he went early to- night, he wasn’t feeling well, I think.”

“What is the number of his room?”

“No. 40,” and the proprietor rang a loud, jangling bell, whereupon one of the chambermaids appeared. “Show this gentleman to No. 40.”

The girl preceded Robbins up the stairs. Once she looked over her shoulder, and said in a whisper, “Is he worse?”

“I don’t know,” answered Robbins, “that’s what I have come to see.”

At No. 40 the girl paused, and rapped lightly on the door panel. There was no response. She rapped again, this time louder. There was still no response.

“Try the door,” said Robbins.

“I am afraid to,” said the girl.

“Why?”

“Because he said if he were asleep the door would be locked, and if he were dead the door would be open.”

“When did he say that?”

“He said it several times, sir; about a week ago the last time.”

Robbins turned the handle of the door; it was not locked. A dim light was in the room, but a screen before the door hid it from sight. When he passed round the screen he saw, upon the square marble-topped arrangement at the head of the bed, a candle burning, and its light shone on the dead face of the Skeleton, which had a grim smile on its thin lips, while in its clenched hand was a letter addressed to the proprietor of the hotel.

The Living Skeleton had given more than the eighty francs to that deserving charity.

HIGH STAKES.

The snow was gently sifting down through the white glare of the electric light when Pony Rowell buttoned his overcoat around him and left the Metropolitan Hotel, which was his home. He was a young man, not more than thirty, and his face was a striking one. It was clean cut and clean shaven. It might have been the face of an actor or the face of a statesman. An actor's face has a certain mobility of expression resulting from the habit of assuming characters differing widely. Rowell's face, when you came to look at it closely, showed that it had been accustomed to repress expression rather than to show emotion of any kind. A casual look at Pony Rowell made you think his face would tell you something; a closer scrutiny showed you that it would tell you nothing. His eyes were of a piercing steely gray that seemed to read the thoughts of others, while they effectually concealed his own. Pony Rowell was known as a man who never went back on his word. He was a professional gambler.

On this particular evening he strolled up the avenue with the easy carriage of a man of infinite leisure. He hesitated for a moment at an illy-lighted passage-way in the middle of a large building on a side street, then went in and mounted a stair. He rapped lightly at a door. A slide was shoved back and a man inside peered out at him for a moment. Instantly the door was opened, for Pony's face was good for admittance at any of the gambling rooms in the city. There was still another guarded door to pass, for an honest gambling-house keeper can never tell what streak of sudden morality may strike the police, and it is well to have a few moments' time in which to conceal the paraphernalia of the business. Of course, Mellish's gambling rooms were as well known to the police as to Pony Rowell, but unless some fuss was made by the public, Mellish knew he would be free from molestation.

Mellish was a careful man, and a visitor had to be well vouched for, before he gained admission. There never was any trouble in Mellish's rooms. He was often known to advise a player to quit when he knew the young gambler could not afford to lose, and instances were cited where he had been the banker of some man in despair. Everybody liked Mellish, for his generosity was unbounded, and he told a good story well.

Inside the room that Pony Rowell had penetrated, a roulette table was at its

whirling work and faro was going on in another spot. At small tables various visitors were enjoying the game of poker.

“Hello, Pony,” cried Bert Ragstock, “are you going to give me my revenge to-night?”

“I’m always willing to give anyone his revenge.” answered Pony imperturbably, lighting a fresh cigarette.

“All right then; come and sit down here.”

“I’m not going to play just yet. I want to look on for a while.”

“Nonsense. I’ve been waiting for you ever so long already. Sit down.”

“You ought to know by this time, Bert, that when I say a thing I mean it. I won’t touch a card till the clock begins to strike 12. Then I’m wid ye.”

“Pshaw, Pony, you ought to be above that sort of thing. That’s superstition, Rowell. You’re too cool a man to mind when you touch a card. Come on.”

“That’s all right. At midnight, I said to myself, and at midnight it shall be or not at all.”

The old gamblers in the place nodded approval of this resolution. It was all right enough for Bert Ragstock to sneer at superstition, because he was not a real gambler. He merely came to Mellish’s rooms in the evening because the Stock Exchange did not keep open all night. Strange to say Ragstock was a good business man as well as a cool gambler. He bemoaned the fate that made him so rich that gambling had not the exhilarating effect on him which it would have had if he had been playing in desperation.

When the clock began to chime midnight Pony Rowell took up the pack and began to shuffle.

“Now, old man,” he said, “I’m going in to win. I’m after big game to- night.”

“Right you are.” cried Bert, with enthusiasm. “I’ll stand by you as long as the spots stay on the cards.”

In the gray morning, when most of the others had left and even Mellish himself was yawning, they were still at it. The professional gambler had won a large sum of money; the largest sum he ever possessed. Yet there was no gleam

of triumph in his keen eyes. Bert might have been winning for all the emotion his face showed. They were a well matched pair, and they enjoyed playing with each other.

“There,” cried Pony at last, “haven’t you had enough? Luck’s against you. I wouldn’t run my head any longer against a brick wall, if I were you.”

“My dear Pony, how often have I told you there is no such thing as luck. But to tell the truth I’m tired and I’m going home. The revenge is postponed. When do I meet the enemy again?”

Pony Rowell shuffled the cards idly for a few moments without replying or raising his eyes. At last he said:

“The next time I play you, Bert, it will be for high stakes.”

“Good heavens, aren’t you satisfied with the stakes we played for to- night?”

“No. I want to play you for a stake that will make even your hair stand on end. Will you do it?”

“Certainly. When?”

“That I can’t tell just yet. I have a big scheme on hand. I am to see a man to-day about it. All I want to know is that you promise to play.”

“Pony, this is mysterious. I guess you’re not afraid I will flunk out. I’m ready to meet you on any terms and for any stake.”

“Enough said. I’ll let you know some of the particulars as soon as I find out all I want myself. Good-night.”

“Good-night to you, rather,” said Bert, as Mellish helped him on with his overcoat. “You’ve won the pile: robbing a poor man of his hard- earned gains!”

“Oh, the poor man does not need the money as badly as I do. Besides, I’m going to give you a chance to win it all back again and more.”

When Ragstock had left, Pony still sat by the table absent-mindedly shuffling the cards.

“If I were you,” said Mellish, laying his hand on his shoulder, “I would put that pile in the bank and quit.”

“The faro bank?” asked Pony, looking up with a smile.

“No, I’d quit the business altogether if I were you. I’m going to myself.”

“Oh, we all know that. You’ve been going to quit for the last twenty years. Well, I’m going to quit, too, but not just yet. That’s what they all say, of course, but I mean it.”

In the early and crisp winter air Pony Rowell walked to the Metropolitan Hotel and to bed. At 3 that afternoon the man he had an appointment with, called to see him.

“You wanted to see me about an Insurance policy,” the visitor began. An agent is always ready to talk of business. “Now, were you thinking of an endowment scheme or have you looked into our new bond system of insurance? The twenty-pay-life style of thing seems to be very popular.”

“I want to ask you a few questions,” said Pony. “If I were to insure my life in your company and were to commit suicide would that invalidate the policy?”

“Not after two years. After two years, in our company, the policy is incontestable.”

“Two years? That won’t do for me. Can’t you make it one year?”

“I’ll tell you what I will do,” said the agent, lowering his voice, “I can ante-date the policy, so that the two years will end just when you like, say a year from now.”

“Very well. If you can legally fix it so that the two years come to an end about this date next year I will insure in your company for $100,000.”

The agent opened his eyes when the amount was mentioned.

“I don’t want endowments or bonds, but the cheapest form of life insurance you have, and——”

“Straight life is what you want.”

“Straight life it is, then, and I will pay you for the two years or say, to make it sure, for two years and a half down, when you bring me the papers.”

Thus it was that with part of the money he had won, Pony Rowell insured his life for $100,000, and with another part he paid his board and lodging for a year

ahead at the Metropolitan Hotel.

The remainder he kept to speculate on.

During the year that followed he steadily refused to play with Bert Ragstock, and once or twice they nearly had a quarrel about it—that is as near as Pony could come to having a row with anybody, for quarrelling was not in his line. If he had lived in a less civilized part of the community Pony might have shot, but as it was quarrels never came to anything, therefore he did not indulge in any.

“A year from the date of our last game? What nonsense it is waiting all that time. You play with others, why not with me? Think of the chances we are losing,” complained Bert.

“We will have a game then that will make up for all the waiting,” answered Rowell.

At last the anniversary came and when the hour struck that ushered it in Pony Rowell and Bert Ragstock sat facing each other, prepared to resume business on the old stand.

“Ah,” said Bert, rubbing his hands, “it feels good to get opposite you once more. Pony, you’re a crank. We might have had a hundred games like this during the past year, if there wasn’t so much superstition about you.”

“Not quite like this. This is to be the last game I play, win or lose. I tell you that now, so that there won’t be any talk of revenge if I win.”

“You don’t mean it! I’ve heard talk like that before.”

“All right. I’ve warned you. Now I propose that this be a game of pure luck. We get a new pack of cards, shuffle them, cut, then you pull one card and I another. Ace high. The highest takes the pot. Best two out of three. Do you agree?”

“Of course. How much is the pile to be?”

“One hundred thousand dollars.”

“Oh, you’re dreaming.”

“Isn’t it enough?”

“Thunder! You never *saw* $100,000.”

“You will get the money if I lose.”

“Say, Pony, that’s coming it a little strong. One hundred thousand dollars! Heavens and earth! How many business men in this whole city would expect their bare word to be taken for $100,000?”

“I’m not a business man. I’m a gambler.”

“True, true. Is the money in sight?”

“No; but you’ll be paid. Your money is not in sight. I trust you. Can’t you trust me?

“It isn’t quite the same thing, Pony. I’ll trust you for three times the money you have in sight, but when you talk about $100,000 you are talking of a lot of cash.”

“If I can convince Mellish here that you will get your money, will you play?”

“You can convince me just as easily as you can Mellish. What’s the use of dragging him in?”

“I could convince you in a minute, but you might still refuse to play. Now I’m bound to play this game and I can’t take any risks. If my word and Mellish’s isn’t good enough for you, why, say so.”

“All right,” cried Bert. “If you can convince Mellish that you will pay if you lose I’ll play you.”

Rowell and Mellish retired into an inner room and after a few minutes reappeared again.

Mellish’s face was red when he went in. He was now a trifle pale.

“I don’t like this, Bert,” Mellish said, “and I think this game had better stop right here.”

“Then you are not convinced that I am sure of my money?”

“Yes, I am, but——”

“That’s enough for me. Get out your new pack.”

“You’ve given your word, Mellish,” said Pony, seeing the keeper of the house

was about to speak. “Don’t say any more.”

“For such a sum two out of three is too sudden. Make it five out of nine,” put in Bert.

“I’m willing.”

The new pack of cards was brought and the wrappings torn off.

“You shuffle first; I’ll cut,” said Rowell. His lips seemed parched and he moistened them now and then, which was unusual for so cool a gambler. Mellish fidgeted around with lowered brow. Bert shuffled the cards as nonchalantly as if he had merely a $5 bill on the result. When each had taken a card, Bert held an ace and Pony a king. Pony shuffled and the turn up was a spot in Pony’s hand and queen in that of his opponent. Bert smiled and drops began to show on Pony’s forehead in spite of his efforts at self-control. No word was spoken by either players or onlookers. After the next deal Pony again lost. His imperturbability seemed to be leaving him. He swept the cards from the table with an oath. “Bring another pack,” he said hoarsely.

Bert smiled at him across the table. He thought, of course, that they were playing for even stakes.

Mellish couldn’t stand it any longer. He retired to one of the inner rooms. The first deal with the new pack turned in Pony’s favor and he seemed to feel that his luck had changed, but the next deal went against him and also the one following.

“It’s your shuffle,” said Rowell, pushing the cards towards his opponent. Bert did not touch the cards, but smiled across at the gambler.

“What’s the matter with you? Why don’t you shuffle?”

“I don’t have to,” said Bert, quietly, “I’ve won five.”

Rowell drew his hand across his perspiring brow and stared at the man across the table. Then he seemed to pull himself together.

“So you have,” he said, “I hadn’t noticed it. Excuse me. I guess I’ll go now.”

“Sit where you are and let us have a game for something more modest. I don’t care about these splurges myself and I don’t suppose you do— now.”

“Thanks, no. I told you this was my last game. As to the splurge, if I had the

money I would willingly try it again. So long."

When Mellish came in and saw that the game was over he asked where Pony was.

"He knew when he had enough, I guess," answered Bert. "He's gone home."

"Come in here, Bert. I want to speak with you," said Mellish.

When they were alone Mellish turned to him.

"I suppose Pony didn't tell you where the money is to come from?"

"No, he told you. That was enough for me."

"Well, there's no reason why you should not know now. I promised silence till the game was finished. He's insured his life for $100,000 and is going to commit suicide so that you may be paid."

"My God!" cried Bert, aghast. "Why did you let the game go on?"

"I tried to stop it, but I had given my word and you——"

"Well, don't let us stand chattering here. He's at the Metropolitan, isn't he? Then come along. Hurry into your coat."

Mellish knew the number of Rowell's room and so no time was lost in the hotel office with inquiries. He tried the door, but, as he expected, it was locked.

"Who's that?" cried a voice within.

"It's me—Mellish. I want to speak with you a moment."

"I don't want to see you."

"Bert wants to say something. It's important. Let us in."

"I won't let you in. Go away and don't make a fuss. It will do no good. You can get in ten minutes from now."

"Look here, Pony, you open that door at once, or I'll kick it in. You hear me? I want to see you a minute, and then you can do what you like," said Bert, in a voice that meant business.

After a moment's hesitation Rowell opened the door and the two stepped in.

Half of the carpet had been taken up and the bare floor was covered with old newspapers. A revolver lay on the table, also writing materials and a half-finished letter. Pony was in his shirt sleeves and he did not seem pleased at the interruption.

“What do you want?” he asked shortly.

“Look here, Pony,” said Bert, “I have confessed to Mellish and I’ve come to confess to you. I want you to be easy with me and hush the thing up. I cheated. I stocked the cards.”

“You’re a liar,” said Rowell, looking him straight in the eye.

“Don’t say that again,” cried Ragstock, with his fingers twitching. “There’s mighty few men I would take that from.”

“You stocked the cards on me? I’d like to see the man that could do it!”

“You were excited and didn’t notice it.”

“You’re not only a liar, but you’re an awkward liar. I have lost the money and I’ll pay it. It would have been ready for you now, only I had a letter to write. Mellish has told you about the insurance policy and my will attached to it. Here they are. They’re yours. I’m no kicker. I know when a game’s played fair.”

Bert took the policy and evidently intended to tear it in pieces, while Mellish, with a wink at him, edged around to get at the revolver. Ragstock’s eye caught the name in big letters at the head of the policy, beautifully engraved. His eyes opened wide, then he sank into a chair and roared with laughter. Both the other men looked at him in astonishment.

“What’s the matter?” asked Mellish.

“Matter? Why, this would have been a joke on Pony. It would do both of you some good to know a little about business as well as of gambling. The Hardfast Life Insurance Company went smash six months ago. It’s the truth this time, Pony, even if I didn’t stock the cards. Better make some inquiries in business circles before you try to collect any money from this institution. Now, Pony, order up the drinks, if anything can be had at this untimely hour. We are your guests so you are expected to be hospitable. I’ve had all the excitement I want for one night. We’ll call it square and begin over again.”

“WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS.”

The splendid steamship Adamant, of the celebrated Cross Bow line, left New York on her February trip under favorable auspices. There had just been a storm on the ocean, so there was every chance that she would reach Liverpool before the next one was due.

Capt. Rice had a little social problem to solve at the outset, but he smoothed that out with the tact which is characteristic of him. Two Washington ladies—official ladies—were on board, and the captain, old British sea-dog that he was, always had trouble in the matter of precedence with Washington ladies. Capt. Rice never had any bother with the British aristocracy, because precedence is all set down in the bulky volume of “Burke’s Peerage,” which the captain kept in his cabin, and so there was no difficulty. But a republican country is supposed not to meddle with precedence. It wouldn’t, either, if it weren’t for the women.

So it happened that Mrs. Assistant-Attorney-to-the-Senate Brownrig came to the steward and said that, ranking all others on board, she must sit at the right hand of the captain. Afterwards Mrs. Second-Adjutant-to- the-War-Department Digby came to the same perplexed official and said she must sit at the captain’s right hand because in Washington she took precedence over everyone else on board. The bewildered steward confided his woes to the captain, and the captain said he would attend to the matter. So he put Mrs. War-Department on his right hand and then walked down the deck with Mrs. Assistant-Attorney and said to her:

“I want to ask a favor, Mrs. Brownrig. Unfortunately I am a little deaf in the right ear, caused, I presume, by listening so much with that ear to the fog horn year in and year out. Now, I always place the lady whose conversation I wish most to enjoy on my left hand at table. Would you oblige me by taking that seat this voyage? I have heard of you, you see, Mrs. Brownrig, although you have never crossed with me before.”

“Why, certainly, captain,” replied Mrs. Brownrig; “I feel especially complimented.”

“And I assure you, madam,” said the polite captain, “that I would not for the world miss a single word that,” etc.

And thus it was amicably arranged between the two ladies. All this has nothing whatever to do with the story. It is merely an incident given to show what a born diplomat Capt. Rice was and is to this day. I don't know any captain more popular with the ladies than he, and besides he is as good a sailor as crosses the ocean.

Day by day the good ship ploughed her way toward the east, and the passengers were unanimous in saying that they never had a pleasanter voyage for that time of the year. It was so warm on deck that many steamer chairs were out, and below it was so mild that a person might think he was journeying in the tropics. Yet they had left New York in a snow storm with the thermometer away below zero.

"Such," said young Spinner, who knew everything, "such is the influence of the Gulf Stream."

Nevertheless when Capt. Rice came down to lunch the fourth day out his face was haggard and his look furtive and anxious.

"Why, captain," cried Mrs. Assistant-Attorney, you look as if you hadn't slept a wink last night."

"I slept very well, thank you, madam." replied the captain. "I always do."

"Well, I hope your room was more comfortable than mine. It seemed to me too hot for anything. Didn't you find it so, Mrs. Digby?"

"I thought it very nice," replied the lady at the captain's right, who generally found it necessary to take an opposite view from the lady at the left.

"You see," said the captain, "we have many delicate women and children on board and it is necessary to keep up the temperature. Still, perhaps the man who attends to the steam rather overdoes it. I will speak him."

Then the captain pushed from him his untasted food and went up on the bridge, casting his eye aloft at the signal waving from the masthead, silently calling for help to all the empty horizon.

"Nothing in sight, Johnson?" said the captain.

"Not a speck, sir."

The captain swept the circular line of sea and sky with his glasses, then laid

them down with a sigh.

“We ought to raise something this afternoon, sir,” said Johnson; “we are right in their track, sir. The Fulda ought to be somewhere about.”

“We are too far north for the Fulda, I am afraid,” answered the captain.

“Well, sir, we should see the Vulcan before night, sir. She’s had good weather from Queenstown.”

“Yes. Keep a sharp lookout, Johnson.”

“Yes, sir.”

The captain moodily paced the bridge with his head down.

“I ought to have turned back to New York,” he said to himself.

Then he went down to his own room, avoiding the passengers as much as he could, and had the steward bring him some beef-tea. Even a captain cannot live on anxiety.

“Steamer off the port bow, sir,” rang out the voice of the lookout at the prow. The man had sharp eyes, for a landsman could have seen nothing.

“Run and tell the captain,” cried Johnson to the sailor at his elbow, but as the sailor turned the captain’s head appeared up the stairway. He seized the glass and looked long at a single point in the horizon.

“It must be the Vulcan,” he said at last.

“I think so, sir.”

“Turn your wheel a few points to port and bear down on her.”

Johnson gave the necessary order and the great ship veered around.

“Hello!” cried Spinner, on deck. “Here’s a steamer. I found her. She’s mine.”

Then there was a rush to the side of the ship. “A steamer in sight!” was the cry, and all books and magazines at once lost interest. Even the placid, dignified Englishman who was so uncommunicative, rose from his chair and sent his servant for his binocular. Children were held up and told to be careful, while they tried to see the dim line of smoke so far ahead.

“Talk about lane routes at sea,” cried young Spinner, the knowing. “Bosh, I say. See! we’re going directly for her. Think what it might be in a fog! Lane routes! Pure luck, I call it.”

“Will we signal to her, Mr. Spinner?” gently asked the young lady from Boston.

“Oh, certainly,” answered young Spinner. “See there’s our signal flying from the masthead now. That shows them what line we belong to.”

“Dear me, how interesting,” said the young lady. “You have crossed many times, I suppose, Mr. Spinner.”

“Oh, I know my way about,” answered the modest Spinner.

The captain kept the glasses glued to his eyes. Suddenly he almost let them drop.

“My God! Johnson,” he cried.

“What is it, sir?”

“*She’s* flying a signal of distress, *too*!”

The two steamers slowly approached each other and, when nearly alongside and about a mile apart, the bell of the Adamant rang to stop.

“There, you see,” said young Spinner to the Boston girl, “she is flying the same flag at her masthead that we are.”

“Then she belongs to the same line as this boat?”

“Oh, certainly,” answered Mr. Cock-Sure Spinner.

“Oh, look! look! look!” cried the enthusiastic Indianapolis girl who was going to take music in Germany.

Everyone looked aloft and saw running up to the masthead a long line of fluttering, many-colored flags. They remained in place for a few moments and then fluttered down again, only to give place to a different string. The same thing was going on on the other steamer.

“Oh, this is too interesting for anything,” said Mrs. Assistant. “I am just dying to know what it all means. I have read of it so often but never saw it before. I

wonder when the captain will come down. What does it all mean?" she asked the deck steward.

"They are signalling to each other, madam."

"Oh, I know *that*. But what *are* they signalling?"

"I don't know, madam."

"Oh, see! see!" cried the Indianapolis girl, clapping her hands with delight. "The other steamer is turning round."

It was indeed so. The great ship was thrashing the water with her screw, and gradually the masts came in line and then her prow faced the east again. When this had been slowly accomplished the bell on the Adamant rang full speed ahead, and then the captain came slowly down the ladder that led from the bridge.

"Oh, captain, what does it all mean?"

"Is she going back, captain? Nothing wrong, I hope."

"What ship is it, captain?"

"She belongs to our line, doesn't she?"

"Why is she going back?"

"The ship," said the captain slowly, "is the Vulcan, of the Black Bowling Line, that left Queenstown shortly after we left New York. She has met with an accident. Ran into some wreckage, it is thought, from the recent storm. Anyhow there is a hole in her, and whether she sees Queenstown or not will depend a great deal on what weather we have and whether her bulkheads hold out. We will stand by her till we reach Queenstown."

"Are there many on board, do you think, captain?"

"There are thirty-seven in the cabin and over 800 steerage passengers," answered the captain.

"Why don't you take them on board, out of danger, captain?"

"Ah, madam, there is no need to do that. It would delay us, and time is everything in a case like this. Besides, they will have ample warning if she is

going down and they will have time to get everybody in the boats. We will stand by them, you know."

"Oh, the poor creatures," cried the sympathetic Mrs. Second-Adjutant. "Think of their awful position. May be engulfed at any moment. I suppose they are all on their knees in the cabin. How thankful they must have been to see the Adamant."

On all sides there was the profoundest sympathy for the unfortunate passengers of the Vulcan. Cheeks paled at the very thought of the catastrophe that might take place at any moment within sight of the sister ship. It was a realistic object lesson on the ever-present dangers of the sea. While those on deck looked with new interest at the steamship plunging along within a mile of them, the captain slipped away to his room. As he sat there there was a tap at his door.

"Come in," shouted the captain.

The silent Englishman slowly entered.

"What's wrong, captain," he asked.

"Oh, the Vulcan has had a hole stove in her and I signalled——"

"Yes, I know all that, of course, but what's wrong *with us*?"

"With us?" echoed the captain blankly.

"Yes, with the Adamant? What has been amiss for the last two or three days? I'm not a talker, nor am I afraid any more than you are, but I want to know."

"Certainly," said the captain. "Please shut the door, Sir John."

Meanwhile there was a lively row on board the Vulcan. In the saloon Capt. Flint was standing at bay with his knuckles on the table.

"Now what the devil's the meaning of all this?" cried Adam K. Vincent,

member of Congress.

A crowd of frightened women were standing around, many on the verge of hysterics. Children clung, with pale faces, to their mother’s skirts, fearing they knew not what. Men were grouped with anxious faces, and the bluff old captain fronted them all.

“The meaning of all *what*, sir?”

“You know very well. What is the meaning of our turning-round?”

“It means, sir, that the Adamant has eighty-five saloon passengers and nearly 500 intermediate and steerage passengers who are in the most deadly danger. The cotton in the hold is on fire, and they have been fighting it night and day. A conflagration may break out at any moment. It means, then, sir, that the Vulcan is going to stand by the Adamant.”

A wail of anguish burst from the frightened women at the awful fate that might be in store for so many human beings so near to them, and they clung closer to their children and thanked God that no such danger threatened them and those dear to them.

“And dammit, sir,” cried the Congressman, “do you mean to tell us that we have to go against our will—without even being consulted—back to Queenstown?”

“I mean to tell you so, sir.”

“Well, by the gods, that’s an outrage, and I won’t stand it, sir. I must be in New York by the 27th. I won’t stand it, sir.”

“I am very sorry, sir, that anybody should be delayed.”

“Delayed? Hang it all, why don’t you take the people on board and take 'em to New York? I protest against this. I’ll bring a lawsuit against the company, sir.”

“Mr. Vincent,” said the captain sternly, “permit me to remind you that *I* am captain of this ship. Good afternoon, sir.”

The Congressman departed from the saloon exceeding wroth, breathing dire threats of legal proceedings against the line and the captain personally, but most of the passengers agreed that it would be an inhuman thing to leave the Adamant alone in mid-ocean in such terrible straits.

“Why didn’t they turn back, Captain Flint?” asked Mrs. General Weller.

“Because, madam, every moment is of value in such a case, and we are nearer Queenstown than New York.”

And so the two steamships, side by side, worried their way toward the east, always within sight of each other by day, and with the rows of lights in each visible at night to the sympathetic souls on the other. The sweltering men poured water into the hold of the one and the pounding pumps poured water out of the hold of the other, and thus they reached Queenstown.

On board the tender that took the passengers ashore at Queenstown from both steamers two astonished women met each other.

“Why! *Mrs.—General*—WELLER!!! You don’t mean to say you were on board that unfortunate Vulcan!”

“For the land’s sake, Mrs. Assistant Brownrig! Is that really *you*? Will wonders never cease? Unfortunate, did you say? Mightily fortunate for you, I think. Why! weren’t you just frightened to death?”

“I was, but I had no idea anyone I knew was on board.”

“Well, you were on board yourself. That would have been enough to have killed me.”

“On board myself? Why, what *do* you mean? I wasn’t on board the Vulcan. Did you get any sleep at all after you knew you might go down at any moment?”

“My sakes, Jane, what *are* you talking about? *Down* at any moment? It was you that might have gone down at any moment or, worse still, have been burnt to death if the fire had got ahead. You don’t mean to say you didn’t know the Adamant was on fire most of the way across?”

“*Mrs.—General—Weller!!* There’s some *horrible* mistake. It was the Vulcan. Everything depended on her bulkheads, the captain said. There was a hole as big

as a barn door in the Vulcan. The pumps were going night and day."

Mrs. General looked at Mrs. Assistant as the light began to dawn on both of them.

"Then it wasn't the engines, but the pumps," she said.

"And it wasn't the steam, but the fire," screamed Mrs. Assistant. "Oh, dear, how that captain lied, and I thought him such a nice man, too. Oh, I shall go into hysterics, I know I shall."

"I wouldn't if I were you," said the sensible Mrs. General, who was a strong-minded woman; "besides, it is too late. We're all safe now. I think both captains were pretty sensible men. Evidently married, both of 'em."

Which was quite true.

THE DEPARTURE OF CUB MCLEAN.

Of course no one will believe me when I say that Mellish was in every respect, except one, an exemplary citizen and a good-hearted man. He was generous to a fault and he gave many a young fellow a start in life where a little money or a few encouraging words were needed. He drank, of course, but he was a connoisseur in liquors, and a connoisseur never goes in for excess. Few could tell a humorous story as well as Mellish, and he seldom dealt in chestnuts. No man can be wholly bad who never inflicts an old story on his friends, locating it on some acquaintance of his, and alleging that it occurred the day before.

If I wished to write a heart-rending article on the evils of gambling, Mellish would be the man I would go to for my facts and for the moral of the tale. He spent his life persuading people not to gamble. He never gambled himself, he said. But if no attention was paid to his advice, why then he furnished gamblers with the most secluded and luxurious gambling rooms in the city. It was supposed that Mellish stood in with the police, which was, of course, a libel. The idea of the guardians of the city standing in with a gambler or a gambling house! The statement was absurd on the face of it. If you asked any policeman in the city where Mellish's gambling rooms were, you would speedily learn that not one of them had ever even heard of the place. All this goes to show how scandalously people will talk, and if Mellish's rooms were free from raids, it was merely Mellish's good luck, that was all. Anyhow, in Mellish's rooms you could have a quiet, gentlemanly game for stakes about as high as you cared to go, and you were reasonably sure there would be no fuss and that your name would not appear in the papers next morning.

One night as Mellish cast his eye around his well-filled main room he noticed a stranger sitting at the roulette table. Mellish had a keen eye for strangers and in an unobtrusive way generally managed to find out something about them. A stranger in a gambling room brings in with him a certain sense of danger to the habitués.

"Who is that boy?" whispered Mellish to his bartender, generally known as Sotty, an ex-prize fighter and a dangerous man to handle if it came to trouble. It rarely came to trouble there, but Sotty was, in a measure, the silent symbol of

physical force, backing the well-known mild morality of Mellish.

“I don’t know him,” answered Sotty.

“Whom did he come in with?”

“I didn’t see him come in. Hadn’t noticed him till now.”

Mellish looked at the boy for a few minutes. He had the fresh, healthy, smooth face of a lad from the country, and he seemed strangely out of place in the heated atmosphere of that room, under the glare of the gas. Mellish sighed as he looked at him, then he turned to Sotty and said:

“Just get him away quietly and bring him to the small poker room. I want to have a few words with him.”

Sotty, who had the utmost contempt for the humanitarian feelings of his boss, said nothing, but a look of disdain swept over his florid features as he went on his mission. If he had his way, he would not throw even a sprat out of the net. Many a time he had known Mellish to persuade a youngster with more money than brains to go home, giving orders at the double doors that he was not to be admitted again.

The young man rose with a look of something like consternation on his face and followed Sotty. The thing was done quietly, and all those around the tables were too much absorbed in the game to pay much attention.

“Look here, my boy,” said Mellish, when they were alone, “who brought you to this place?”

“I guess,” said the lad, with an expression of resentment, “I’m old enough to go where I like without being brought.”

“Oh, certainly, certainly,” said Mellish, diplomatically, knowing how much very young men dislike being accused of youth, “but I like to know all visitors here. You couldn’t get in unless you came with someone known at the door. Who vouched for you?”

“See here, Mr. Mellish,” said the youth angrily, “what are you driving at? If your doorkeepers don’t know their own business why don’t you speak to them about it? Are you going to have me turned out?”

“Nothing of the sort,” said Mellish, soothingly, putting his hand in a fatherly

manner on the young fellow's shoulder. "Don't mistake my meaning. The fact that you are here shows that you have a right to be here. We'll say no more about that. But you take my advice and quit the business here and now. I was a gambler before you were born, although I don't gamble any more. Take the advice of a man who knows. It doesn't pay."

"It seems to have paid you reasonably well."

"Oh, I don't complain. It has its ups and downs like all businesses. Still, it doesn't pay me nearly as well as perhaps you think, and you can take my word that in the long run it won't pay you at all. How much money have you got?"

"Enough to pay if I lose," said the boy impudently; then seeing the look of pain that passed over Mellish's face, he added more civilly:

"I have three or four hundred dollars."

"Well, take my advice and go home. You'll be just that much better off in the morning."

"What! Don't you play a square game here?"

"Of course we play a square game here," answered Mellish with indignation. "Do you think I am a card-sharper?"

"You seem so cock-sure I'll lose my money that I was just wondering. Now, I can afford to lose all the money I've got and not feel it. Are you going to allow me to play, or are you going to chuck me out?"

"Oh, you can play if you want to. But don't come whining to me when you lose. I've warned you."

"I'm not a whiner," said the young fellow; "I take my medicine like a man."

"Right you are," said Mellish with a sigh. He realized that this fellow, young as he looked, was probably deeper in vice than his appearance indicated and he knew the uselessness of counsel in such a case. They went into the main room together and the boy, abandoning roulette, began to play at one of the card tables for ever-increasing stakes. Mellish kept an eye on him for a time. The boy was having the luck of most beginners. He played a reckless game and won hand over fist. As one man had enough and rose from the table another eagerly took his place, but there was no break in the boy's winnings.

Pony Rowell was always late in arriving at the gambling rooms. On this occasion he entered, irreproachably dressed, and with the quiet, gentlemanly demeanor habitual with him. The professional gambler was never known to lose his temper. When displeased he became quieter, if possible, than before. The only sign of inward anger was a mark like an old scar which extended from his right temple, beginning over the eye and disappearing in his closely-cropped hair behind the ear. This line became an angry red that stood out against the general pallor of his face when things were going in a way that did not please him. He spoke in a low tone to Mellish.

“What’s the excitement down at the other end of the room? Every one seems congregated there.”

“Oh,” answered Mellish, “it’s a boy—a stranger—who is having the devil’s own luck at the start. It will be the ruin of him.”

“Is he playing high?”

“High? I should say so. He’s perfectly reckless. He’ll be brought up with a sharp turn and will borrow money from me to get out of town. I’ve seen a flutter like that before.”

“In that case,” said Pony tranquilly, “I must have a go at him. I like to tackle a youngster in the first flush of success, especially if he is plunging.”

“You will soon have a chance,” answered Mellish, “for even Ragstock knows when he has enough. He will get up in a moment. I know the signs.”

With the air of a gentleman of leisure, somewhat tired of the frivolities of this world, Rowell made his way slowly to the group. As he looked over their shoulders at the boy a curious glitter came into his piercing eyes, and his lips, usually so well under control, tightened. The red mark began to come out as his face paled. It was evident that he did not intend to speak and that he was about to move away again, but the magnetism of his keen glance seemed to disturb the player, who suddenly looked up over the head of his opponent and met the stern gaze of Rowell.

The boy did three things. He placed his cards face downward on the table, put his right hand over the pile of money, and moved his chair back.

“What do you mean by that?” cried Ragstock.

The youth ignored the question, still keeping his eyes on Rowell.

“Do you squeal?” he asked.

“I squeal,” said Pony, whatever the question and answer might mean. Then Rowell cried, slightly raising his voice so that all might hear:

“This man is Cub McLean, the most notorious card-sharper, thief, and murderer in the west. He couldn’t play straight if he tried.”

McLean laughed. “Yes,” he said; “and if you want to see my trademark look at the side of Greggs’ face.”

Every man looked at Pony, learning for the first time that he had gone under a different name at some period of his life.

During the momentary distraction McLean swept the money off the table and put it in his pockets.

“Hold on,” cried Ragstock, seemingly not quite understanding the situation. “You haven’t won that yet.”

Again McLean laughed.

“It would have been the same in ten minutes.”

He jumped up, scattering the crowd behind him.

“Look to the doors,” cried Pony. “Don’t let this man out.”

McLean had his back to the wall. From under his coat he whipped two revolvers which he held out, one in each hand.

“You ought to know me better than that, Greggs,” he said, “do you want me to have another shot at you? I won’t miss this time. Drop that.”

The last command was given in a ringing voice that attracted every one’s attention to Sotty. He had picked up a revolver from somewhere behind the bar and had come out with it in his hand. McLean’s eye seemed to take in every motion in the room and he instantly covered the bartender with one of the pistols as he gave the command.

“Drop it,” said Mellish. “There must be no shooting. You may go quietly. No one will interfere with you.”

“You bet your sweet life they won’t,” said McLean with a laugh.

“Gentlemen,” continued Mellish, “the house will stand the loss. If I allow a swindler in my rooms it is but right that I alone should suffer. Now you put up your guns and walk out.”

“Good old Mellish,” sneered McLean, “you ought to be running a Sunday-school.”

Notwithstanding the permission to depart McLean did not relax his precautions for a moment. His shoulders scraped their way along the wall as he gradually worked towards the door. He kept Pony covered with his left hand while the polished barrel of the revolver in his right seemed to have a roving commission all over the room, to the nervous dread of many respectable persons who cowered within range. When he reached the door he said to Pony:

“I hope you’ll excuse me, Greggs, but this is too good an opportunity to miss. I’m going to kill you in your tracks.”

“That’s about your size,” said Pony putting his hands behind him and standing in his place, while those near him edged away. “I’m unarmed, so it is perfectly safe. You will insure your arrest so blaze away.”

“Dodge under the table, then, and I will spare you.”

Pony invited him to take up his abode in tropical futurity.

Cub laughed once more good naturedly, and lowered the muzzle of his revolver. As he shoved back his soft felt hat, Mellish, who stood nearest him, saw that the hair on his temples was grey. Lines of anxiety had come into his apparently youthful face as he had scraped his way along the wall.

“Good-night, all,” he shouted back from the stairway.

OLD NUMBER EIGHTY-SIX.

John Saggart stood in a dark corner of the terminus, out of the rays of the glittering arc lamps, and watched engine Number Eighty-six. The engineer was oiling her, and the fireman, as he opened the furnace-door and shovelled in the coal, stood out like a red Rembrandt picture in the cab against the darkness beyond. As the engineer with his oil can went carefully around Number Eighty-six, John Saggart drew his sleeve across his eyes, and a gulp came up his throat. He knew every joint and bolt in that contrary old engine—the most cantankerous iron brute on the road—and yet, if rightly managed, one of the swiftest and most powerful machines the company had, notwithstanding the many improvements that had been put upon locomotives since old Eighty-six had left the foundry.

Saggart, as he stood there, thought of the seven years he had spent on the foot-board of old Eighty-six, and of the many tricks she had played him during that period. If, as the poet says, the very chains and the prisoner become friends through long association, it may be imagined how much of a man's affection goes out to a machine that he thoroughly understands and likes—a machine that is his daily companion for years, in danger and out of it. Number Eighty-six and John had been in many a close pinch together, and at this moment the man seemed to have forgotten that often the pinch was caused by the pure cussedness of Eighty-six herself, and he remembered only that she had bravely done her part several times when the situation was exceedingly serious.

The cry "All aboard" rang out and was echoed down from the high-arched roof of the great terminus, and John with a sigh turned from his contemplation of the engine, and went to take his seat in the car. It was a long train with many sleeping-cars at the end of it. The engineer had put away his oil-can, and had taken his place on the engine, standing ready to begin the long journey at the moment the signal was given.

John Saggart climbed into the smoking-carriage at the front part of the train. He found a place in one of the forward seats, and sank down into it with a vague feeling of uneasiness at being inside the coach instead of on the engine. He gazed out of the window and saw the glittering electric lights slide slowly behind, then, more quickly, the red, green, and white lights of the signal lamps, and finally there flickered swiftly past the brilliant constellation of city windows,

showing that the town had not yet gone to bed. At last the flying train plunged into the country, and Saggart pressed his face against the cold glass of the window, unable to shake off his feeling of responsibility, although he knew there was another man at the throttle.

He was aroused from his reverie by a touch on the shoulder, and a curt request, “Tickets, please.”

He pulled out of his pocket a pass, and turned to hand it to the conductor who stood there with a glittering, plated, and crystal lantern on his arm.

“Hello, John, is this you?” cried the conductor, as soon as he saw the face. “Hang it, man, you didn’t need a pass in travelling with me.”

“They gave it to me to take me home,” said Saggart, a touch of sadness in his voice, “and I may as well use it as not. I don’t want to get you into trouble.”

“Oh, I’d risk the trouble,” said the conductor, placing the lantern on the floor and taking his seat beside the engineer. “I heard about your worry to-day. It’s too bad. If a man had got drunk at his post, as you and I have known ‘em to do, it wouldn’t have seemed so hard; but at its worst your case was only an error of judgment, and then nothing really happened. Old Eighty-six seems to have the habit of pulling herself through. I suppose you and she have been in worse fixes than that, with not a word said about it.”

“Oh, yes,” said John, “we’ve been in many a tight place together, but we won’t be any more. It’s rough, as you say. I’ve been fifteen years with the company, and seven on old Eighty-six, and at first it comes mighty hard. But I suppose I’ll get used to it.”

“Look here, John,” said the conductor, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, “the president of the road is with us to-night; his private car is the last but one on the train. How would it do to speak to him? If you are afraid to tackle him, I’ll put in a word for you in a minute, and tell him your side of the story.”

John Saggart shook his head.

“It wouldn’t do,” he said; “he wouldn’t overrule what one of his subordinates had done, unless there was serious injustice in the case. It’s the new manager, you know. There’s always trouble with a new manager. He sweeps clean. And I suppose that he thinks by ‘bouncing’ one of the oldest engineers on the road, he will scare the rest.”

“Well, I don’t think much of him between ourselves,” said the conductor. “What do you think he has done to-night? He’s put a new man on Eighty-six. A man from one of the branch lines who doesn’t know the road. I doubt if he’s ever been over the main line before. Now, it’s an anxious enough time for me anyhow with a heavy train to take through, with the thermometer at zero, and the rails like glass, and I like to have a man in front that I can depend on.”

“It’s bad enough not to know the road,” said John gloomily, “but it’s worse not to know old Eighty-six. She’s a brute if she takes a notion.”

“I don’t suppose there is another engine that could draw this train and keep her time,” said the conductor.

“No! She’ll do her work all right if you’ll only humor her,” admitted Saggart, who could not conceal his love for the engine even while he blamed her.

“Well,” said the conductor, rising and picking up his lantern, “the man in front may be all right, but I would feel safer if you were further ahead than the smoker. I’m sorry I can’t offer you a berth to-night, John, but we’re full clear through to the rear lights. There isn’t even a vacant upper on the train.”

“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” said Saggart. “I couldn’t sleep, anyhow. I’d rather sit here and look out of the window.”

“Well, so long,” said the conductor. “I’ll drop in and see you as the night passes on.”

Saggart lit his pipe and gazed out into darkness. He knew every inch of the road—all the up grades and the down grades and the levels. He knew it even better in the murkiest night than in the clearest day. Now and then the black bulk of a barn or a clump of trees showed for one moment against the sky, and Saggart would say to himself, “Now he should shut off an inch of steam,” or, “Now he should throw her wide open.” The train made few stops, but he saw that they were losing time. Eighty-six was sulking, very likely. Thinking of the engine turned his mind to his own fate. No man was of very much use in the world, after all, for the moment he steps down another is ready to stand in his place. The wise men in the city who had listened to his defence knew so well that an engine was merely a combination of iron and steel and brass, and that a given number of pounds of steam would get it over a given number of miles in a given number of hours, and they had smiled incredulously when he told them that an engine had her tantrums, and informed them that sometimes she had to be

coddled up like any other female. Even when a man did his best there were occasions when nothing he could do would mollify her, and then there was sure to be trouble, although, he added, in his desire to be fair, she was always sorry for it afterward. Which remark, to his confusion, had turned the smile into a laugh.

He wondered what Eighty-six thought of the new man. Not much, evidently, for she was losing time, which she had no business to do on that section of the road. Still it might be the fault of the new man not knowing when to push her for all she was worth and when to ease up. All these things go to the making of time. But it was more than probable that old Eighty-six, like Gilpin's horse, was wondering more and more what thing upon her back had got. "He'll have trouble," muttered John to himself, "when she finds out."

The conductor came in again and sat down beside the engineer. He said nothing, but sat there sorting his tickets, while Saggart gazed out of the window. Suddenly the engineer sprang to his feet with his eyes wide open. The train was swaying from side to side and going at great speed.

The conductor looked up with a smile.

"Old Eighty-six," he said, "is evidently going to make up for lost time."

"She should be slowing down for crossing the G. & M. line," replied the engineer. "Good heavens!" he cried a moment after, "we've gone across the G. & M. track on the keen jump."

The conductor sprang to his feet. He knew the seriousness of such a thing. Even the fastest expresses must stop dead before crossing on the level the line of another railway. It is the law.

"Doesn't that fool in front know enough to stop at a crossing?"

"It isn't that." said Saggart. "He knows all right. Even the train boys know that. Old Eighty-six has taken the bit between her teeth. He can't stop her. Where do you pass No. 6 to-night?"

"At Pointsville."

"That's only six miles ahead," said the engineer; "and in five minutes at this rate we will be running on her time and on her rails. She's always late, and won't be on the side track. I must get to Eighty-six."

Saggart quickly made his way through the baggage-coach, climbed on the express car, and jumped on the coal of the tender. He cast his eye up the track and saw glimmering in the distance, like a faint wavering star, the headlight of No. 6. Looking down into the cab he realized the situation in a glance. The engineer, with fear in his face and beads of perspiration on his brow, was throwing his whole weight on the lever, the fireman helping him. Saggart leaped down to the floor of the cab.

“Stand aside,” he shouted; and there was such a ring of confident command in his voice that both men instantly obeyed.

Saggart grasped the lever, and instead of trying to shut off steam flung it wide open. Number Eighty-six gave a quiver and a jump forward. “You old fiend!” muttered John between his teeth. Then he pushed the lever home, and it slid into place as if there had never been any impediment. The steam was shut off, but the lights of Pointsville flashed past them with the empty side-track on the left, and they were now flying along the single line of rails with the headlight of No. 6 growing brighter and brighter in front of them.

“Reverse her, reverse her!” cried the other engineer, with fear in his voice.

“Reverse nothing,” said Saggart. “She’ll slide ten miles if you do. Jump, if you’re afraid.”

The man from the branch line promptly jumped.

“Save yourself,” said Saggart to the stoker; “there’s bound to be a smash.”

“I’ll stick by you, Mr. Saggart,” said the fireman, who knew him. But his hand trembled.

The air-brake was grinding the long train and sending a shiver of fear through every timber, but the rails were slippery with frost, and the speed of the train seemed as great as ever. At the right moment Saggart reversed the engine, and the sparks flew up from her great drivers like catharine wheels.

“Brace yourself,” cried Saggart. “No. 6 is backing up, thank God!”

Next instant the crash came. Two headlights and two cow-catchers went to flinders, and the two trains stood there with horns locked, but no great damage done, except a shaking up for a lot of panic-stricken passengers.

The burly engineer of No. 6 jumped down and came forward, his mouth full of oaths.

“What the h—l do you mean by running in on our time like this? Hello, is that you, Saggart? I thought there was a new man on to-night. I didn’t expect this from *you*.”

“It’s all right, Billy. It wasn’t the new man’s fault. He’s back in the ditch with a broken leg, I should say, from the way he jumped. Old Eighty-six is to blame. She got on the rampage. Took advantage of the greenhorn.”

The conductor came running up.

“How is it?” he cried.

“It’s all right. Number Eighty-six got her nose broke, and served her right, that’s all. Tell the passengers there’s no danger, and get ‘em on board. We’re going to back up to Pointsville. Better send the brakesmen to pick up the other engineer. The ground’s hard tonight, and he may be hurt.”

“I’m going back to talk to the president,” said the conductor emphatically. “He’s in a condition of mind to listen to reason, judging from the glimpse I got of his face at the door of his car a moment ago. Either he re-instates you or I go gathering tickets on a street-car. This kind of thing is too exciting for my nerves.”

The conductor’s interview with the president of the road was apparently satisfactory, for old Number Eighty-six is trying to lead a better life under the guidance of John Saggart.

PLAYING WITH MARKED CARDS.

“I’m bothered about that young fellow,” said Mellish early one morning, to the professional gambler, Pony Rowell.

“Why?”

“He comes here night after night, and he loses more than he can afford, I imagine. He has no income, so far as I can find out, except what he gets as salary, and it takes a mighty sight bigger salary than his to stand the strain he’s putting on it.”

“What is his business?”

“He is cashier in the Ninth National Bank. I don’t know how much he gets, but it can’t be enough to permit this sort of thing to go on.”

Pony Rowell shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t think I would let it trouble me, if I were you, Mellish.”

“Nevertheless it does. I have advised him to quit, but it is no use. If I tell the doorkeeper not to let him in here, he will merely go somewhere else where they are not so particular.”

“I must confess I don’t quite understand you, Mellish, long as I have known you. In your place, now, I would either give up keeping a gambling saloon or I would give up the moral reformation line of business. I wouldn’t try to ride two horses of such different tempers at the same time.”

“I’ve never tried to reform you, Pony,” said Mellish, with reproach in his voice.

“No; I will give you credit for that much sense.”

“It’s all right with old stagers like you and me, Pony, but with a boy just beginning life, it is different. Now it struck me that you might be able to help me in this.”

“Yes, I thought that was what you were leading up to,” said Rowell, thrusting

his hands deep in his trousers' pockets. "I'm no missionary, remember. What did you want me to do?"

"I wanted you to give him a sharp lesson. Couldn't you mark a pack of cards and get him to play high? Then, when you have taken all his ready money and landed him in debt to you so that he can't move, give him back his cash if he promises not to gamble again."

Rowell looked across at the subject of their conversation. "I don't think I would flatter him so much as to even stock the cards on him. I'll clean him out if you like. But it won't do any good, Mellish. Look at his eyes. The insanity of gambling is in them. I used to think if I had $100,000, I would quit. I'm old enough now to know that I wouldn't. I'd gamble if I had a million."

"I stopped after I was your age."

"Oh, yes, Mellish, you are the virtuous exception that proves the rule. You quit gambling the way the old woman kept tavern," and Rowell cast a glance over the busy room.

Mellish smiled somewhat grimly, then he sighed. "I wish I was out of it," he said. "But, anyhow, you think over what I've been talking about, and if you can see your way to giving him a sharp lesson I wish you would."

"All right I will, but merely to ease your tender conscience, Mellish. It's no use, I tell you. When the snake has bitten, the victim is doomed. Gambling isn't a simple thing like the opium habit."

Reggie Forme, the bank cashier, rose at last from the roulette table. He was flushed with success, for there was a considerable addition to the sum he had in his pockets when he sat down. He flattered himself that the result was due to the system he had elaborately studied out.

Nothing lures a man to destruction quicker than a system that can be mathematically demonstrated. It gives an air of business to gambling which is

soothing to the conscience of a person brought up on statistics. The system generally works beautifully at first; then a cog slips and you are mangled in the machinery before you know where you are. As young Forme left the table he felt a hand on his shoulder, and looking around, met the impassive gaze of Pony Rowell.

“You’re young at the business, I see,” remarked the professional quietly.

“Why do you think that?” asked the youngster, coloring, for one likes to be taken for a veteran, especially when one is an amateur.

“Because you fool away your time at roulette. That is a game for boys and women. Have you nerve enough to play a real game?”

“What do you call a real game?”

“A game with cards in a private room for something bigger than half- dollar points.”

“How big?”

“Depends on what capital you have. How much capital can you command?”

The cashier hesitated for a moment and his eyes fell from the steady light of Rowell’s, which seemed to have an uncomfortable habit of looking into one’s inmost soul.

“I can bring $1,000 here on Saturday night.”

“All right. That will do as a starter. Is it an appointment then?”

“Yes, if you like. What time?”

“I generally get here pretty late, but I can make an exception in your case. What do you say to 10 o’clock?”

“That will suit me.”

“Very well, then. Don’t fool away any of your money or nerve until I come. You will need all you have of both.”

The professional gambler and the amateur began their series of games a few minutes after ten in a little private room. The young man became more and more excited as the play went on. As for Pony, he was cool under any circumstances. Before an hour had passed the $1,000 was transferred from the possession of Forme into the pockets of the professional, and by midnight the younger man was another $1,000 in Rowell's debt.

"It isn't my practice," said Rowell slowly, "to play with a man unless he has the money in sight. I've made an exception in your case, as luck was against you, but I think this has gone far enough. You may bring me the $1,000 you owe any day next week. No particular hurry, you know."

The young fellow appeared to be dazed. He drew his hand across his brow and then said mechanically, as if he had just heard his opponent's remark:

"No hurry? All right. Next week. Certainly. I guess I'll go home now."

Forme went out, leaving Rowell idly shuffling the cards at the small table. The moment the young man had disappeared all Rowell's indolence vanished. He sprang up and put on his overcoat, then slipped out by the rear exit into the alley. He had made up his mind what Forme would do. Mentally he tracked him from the gambling rooms to the river and he even went so far as to believe he would take certain streets on his way thither. A gambler is nothing if not superstitious and so Rowell was not in the least surprised when he saw the young man emerge from the dark stairway, hesitate for a moment between the two directions open to him, and finally choose the one that the gambler expected him to take. The cold streets were deserted and so Rowell had more difficulty in following his late victim unperceived than he would have had earlier in the evening. Several times the older man thought the pursued had become aware of the pursuit, for Forme stopped and looked around him; once coming back and taking another street as if trying to double on the man who was following him.

Rowell began to realize the difficulty of the task he had set for himself, and as he had never had any faith in it anyhow, he began to feel uncomfortable and to curse the tender heart of Mellish. If the youngster got the idea into his head that he was followed he might succeed in giving his pursuer the slip, and then Rowell would find himself with the fool's death on his conscience, and what was to him infinitely worse, with a thousand dollars in his pocket that had been unfairly won. This thought made him curse Mellish afresh. It had been entirely against his own will that he had played with marked cards, but Mellish had insisted that they should take no chances, and the veteran knew too well the uncertainties of playing a fair game where a great object lesson was to be taught. It would make them look like two fools, Mellish had said, if Forme won the money. In answer to this Rowell had remarked that they were two fools anyhow, but he had finally succumbed to Mellish as the whole scheme was Mellish's. As Rowell thought bitterly of these things his attention was diverted from the very matter he had in hand. Few men can pursue a course of thought and a fellow-creature at the same time. He suddenly realized that young Forme had escaped him. Rowell stood alone in the dimly-lighted silent street and poured unuttered maledictions on his own stupidity. Suddenly a voice rang out from a dark doorway.

"What the devil are you following me for?"

"Oh, you're there, are you?" said Pony calmly.

"I'm here. Now what do you want of me? Aren't you satisfied with what you have done to-night?"

"Naturally not, or I wouldn't be fool-chasing at such an hour as this."

"Then you admit you have been following me?"

"I never denied it."

"What do you want of me? Do I belong to myself or do you think I belong to you, because I owe you some money?"

"I do not know, I am sure, to whom you belong," said Rowell with his slow drawl. "I suspect, however, that the city police, who seem to be scarce at this hour, have the first claim upon you. What do I want of you? I want to ask you a question. Where did you get the money you played with to-night?"

"It's none of your business."

“I presume not. But as there are no witnesses to this interesting conversation I will venture an opinion that you robbed the bank.”

The young man took a step forward, but Pony stood his ground, using the interval to light another cigarette.

“I will also venture an opinion, Mr. Rowell, and say that the money came as honestly into my pocket as it did into yours.”

“That wouldn’t be saying much for it. I have the advantage of you, however, because the nine points are in my favor. I have possession.”

“What are you following me for? To give me up?”

“You admit the robbery, then.”

“I admit nothing.”

“It won’t be used against you. As I told you, there are no witnesses. It will pay you to be frank. Where did you get the money?”

“Where many another man gets it. Out of the bank.”

“I thought so. Now, Forme, you are not such a fool as you look—or act. You know where all that sort of thing leads to. You haven’t any chance. All the rules of the game are against you. You have no more show than you had against me to-night. Why not chuck it, before it is too late?”

“It is easy for you to talk like that when you have my money in your pocket.”

“But that simply is another rule of the game. The money of a thief is bound to go into someone else’s pocket. Whoever enjoys the cash ultimately, he never does. Now if you had the money in your pocket what would you do?”

“I would go back to Mellish’s and have another try.”

“I believe you,” said Rowell with, for the first time, some cordiality in his voice. He recognized a kindred spirit in this young man. “Nevertheless it would be a foolish thing to do. You have two chances before you. You can become a sport as I am and spend your life in gambling rooms. Or you can become what is called a respectable business man. But you can’t be both. In a very short time you will not have the choice. You will be found out and then you can only be what I am— probably not as successful as I have been. If you add bank robbery

to your other accomplishments then you will go to prison or, what is perhaps worse, to Canada. Which career are you going to choose?”

“Come down to plain facts. What do you mean by all this talk? If I say I’ll quit gambling do you mean that you will return to me the thousand dollars and call the other thousand square?”

“If you give me your word of honor that you will quit.”

“And if I don’t, what then?”

“Then on Monday I will hand over this money to the bank and advise them to look into your accounts.”

“And suppose my accounts prove to be all right, what then?”

Rowell shrugged his shoulders. “In that remote possibility I will give the thousand dollars to you and play you another game for it.”

“I see. Which means that you cheated to-night.”

“If you like to put it that way.”

“And what if I denounced you as a self-confessed cheat?”

“It wouldn’t matter to me. I wouldn’t take the trouble to deny it. Nobody would believe you.”

“You’re a cool hand, Pony, I admire your cheek. Still, you’ve got some silly elements in you.”

“Oh, you mean my trying to reform you? Don’t make any mistake about that. It is Mellish’s idea, not mine. I don’t believe in you for a moment.”

The young man laughed. He reflected for a few seconds, then said: “I’ll take your offer. You give me back the money and I will promise never to gamble again in any shape or form.”

“You will return the cash to the bank, if you took it from there?”

“Certainly. I will put it back the first thing on Monday morning.”

“Then here is your pile,” said Rowell, handing him the roll of bills.

Forme took it eagerly and, standing where the light struck down upon him,

counted the bills, while Rowell looked on silently with a cynical smile on his lips.

“Thank you,” said the young man, “you’re a good fellow, Rowell.”

“I’m obliged for your good opinion. I hope you found the money correct?”

“Quite right,” said Forme, flushing a little. “I hope you did not mind my counting it. Merely a business habit, you know.”

“Well, stick to business habits, Mr. Forme. Good night.”

Rowell walked briskly back to Mellish’s. Forme walked toward the railway station and found that there was a train for Chicago at 4 in the morning. He had one clear day and part of another before he was missed, and as it turned out all trace of him was lost in the big city. The bank found about $6,000 missing. Two years after, news came that Forme had been shot dead in a gambling hall in Southern Texas.

“We are two first-class fools,” said Rowell to Mellish, “and I for one don’t feel proud of the episode, so we’ll say nothing more about it. The gambling mania was in his blood. Gambling is not a vice; it is a disease, latent in all of us.”

THE BRUISER’S COURTSHIP.

While the Northern Bruiser sat in the chair in his corner and was being fanned he resolved to finish the fight at the next round. The superior skill of his opponent was telling upon him, and although the Bruiser was a young man of immense strength, yet, up to that time, the alertness and dexterity of the Yorkshire Chicken had baffled him, and prevented him from landing one of his tremendous shoulder thrusts. But even though skill had checkmated strength up to this point, the Chicken had not entirely succeeded in defending himself, and was in a condition described by the yelling crowd as “groggy.”

When time was called the Bruiser was speedily on his feet. His face did not present the repulsive appearance so visible on the countenance of his opponent, but the Bruiser had experience enough to know that the body blows received in this fight had had their effect on his wind and staying powers; and that although the Chicken presented an appalling appearance with his swollen lips and cheeks, and his eyes nearly closed, yet he was in better trim for continuing the battle than the Bruiser.

The Chicken came up to the mark less promptly than his big antagonist, but whether it was from weakness or lack of sight, he seemed uncertain in his movements, and the hearts of his backers sank as they saw him stagger rather than walk to his place.

Before the Chicken, as it were, fully waked up to the situation, the Bruiser lunged forward and planted a blow on his temple that would have broken the guard of a man who was in better condition than the Chicken. The Yorkshireman fell like a log, and lay where he fell. Then the Bruiser got a lesson which terrified him. A sickly ashen hue came over the purple face of the man on the ground. The Bruiser had expected some defence, and the terrible blow had been even more powerful than he intended. A shivering whisper went round the crowd, “He is killed,” and instantly the silenced mob quietly scattered. It was every man for himself before the authorities took a hand in the game.

The Bruiser stood there swaying from side to side, his gaze fixed upon the prostrate man. He saw himself indicted and hanged for murder, and he swore that if the Chicken recovered he would never again enter the ring. This was a

phase of prize-fighting that he had never before had experience of. On different occasions he had, it is true, knocked out his various opponents, and once or twice he had been knocked out himself; but the Chicken had fought so pluckily up to the last round that the Bruiser had put forth more of his tremendous strength than he had bargained for, and now the man's life hung on a thread.

The unconscious pugilist was carried to an adjoining room. Two physicians were in attendance upon him, and at first the reports were most gloomy, but towards daylight the Bruiser learned with relief that the chances were in favor of his opponent.

The Bruiser had been urged to fly, but he was a man of strong common sense, and he thoroughly understood the futility of flight. His face and his form were too well known all around the country. It would have been impossible for him to escape, even if he had tried to do so.

When the Yorkshire Chicken recovered, the Bruiser's friends laughed at his resolve to quit the ring, but they could not shake it. The money he had won in his last fight, together with what he had accumulated before—for he was a frugal man—was enough to keep him for the rest of his days, and he resolved to return to the Border town where he was born, and where doubtless his fame had preceded him.

He buckled his guineas in a belt around him, and with a stout stick in his hand he left London for the North. He was a strong and healthy young man, and had not given way to dissipation, as so many prizefighters had done before, and will again. He had a horror of a cramped and confined, seat in a stage coach. He loved the free air of the heights and the quiet stillness of the valleys.

It was in the days of highwaymen, and travelling by coach was not considered any too safe. The Bruiser was afraid of no man that lived, if he met him in the open with a stick in his hand, or with nature's weapons, but he feared the muzzle of a pistol held at his head in the dark by a man with a mask over his face. So he buckled his belt around him with all his worldly gear in gold, took his own almost forgotten name, Abel Trenchon, set his back to the sun and his face to the north wind, and journeyed on foot along the king's highway. He stopped at night in the wayside inns, taking up his quarters before the sun had set, and leaving them when it was broad daylight in the morning. He disputed his reckonings like a man who must needs count the pennies, and no one suspected the sturdy wayfarer of carrying a fortune around his body.

As his face turned toward the North his thought went to the Border town where he had spent his childhood. His father and mother were dead, and he doubted now if anyone there remembered him, or would have a welcome for him. Nevertheless no other spot on earth was so dear to him, and it had always been his intention, when he settled down and took a wife, to retire to the quiet little town.

The weather, at least, gave him a surly welcome. On the last day's tramp the wind howled and the rain beat in gusts against him, but he was a man who cared little for the tempest, and he bent his body to the blast, trudging sturdily on. It was evening when he began to recognize familiar objects by the wayside, and he was surprised to see how little change there had been in all the years he was away. He stopped at an inn for supper, and, having refreshed himself, resolved to break the rule he had made for himself throughout the journey. He would push on through the night, and sleep in his native village.

The storm became more pitiless as he proceeded, and he found himself sympathizing with those poor creatures who were compelled to be out in it, but he never gave a thought to himself.

It was nearly midnight when he saw the square church tower standing blackly out against the dark sky; and when he began to descend the valley, on the other side of which the town stood, a thrill of fear came over him, as he remembered what he had so long forgotten—that the valley was haunted, and was a particularly dangerous place about the hour of midnight. To divert his thoughts he then began to wonder who the woman was he would marry. She was doubtless now sleeping calmly in the village on the hill, quite unconscious of the approach of her lover and her husband. He could not conceal from himself the fact that he would be reckoned a good match when his wealth was known, for, excepting the Squire, he would probably be the richest man in the place. However, he resolved to be silent about his riches, so that the girl he married would little dream of the good fortune that awaited her. He laughed aloud as he thought of the pleasure he would have in telling his wife of her luck, but the laugh died on his lips as he saw, or thought he saw, something moving stealthily along the hedge.

He was now in the depth of the valley in a most lonesome and eerie spot. The huge trees on each side formed an arch over the roadway and partially sheltered it from the rain.

He stood in his tracks, grasped his stick with firmer hold, and shouted valiantly, “Who goes there?”

There was no answer, but in the silence which followed he thought he heard a woman’s sob.

“Come out into the road,” he cried, “or I shall fire.”

His own fear of pistols was so great that he expected everyone else to be terrorized by the threat of using them; and yet he had never possessed nor carried a pistol in his life.

“Please—please don’t fire,” cried a trembling voice, from out the darkness. “I will do as you tell me.” And so saying the figure moved out upon the road.

Trenchon peered at her through the darkness, but whether she was old or young he could not tell. Her voice seemed to indicate that she was young.

“Why, lass,” said Trenchon, kindly, “what dost thou here at such an hour and in such a night?”

“Alas!” she cried, weeping; “my father turned me out, as he has often done before, but to-night is a bitter night, and I had nowhere to go, so I came here to be sheltered from the rain. He will be asleep ere long, and he sleeps soundly. I may perhaps steal in by a window, although sometimes he fastens them down.”

“God’s truth!” cried Trenchon, angrily. “Who is thy brute of a father?”

The girl hesitated, and then spoke as if to excuse him, but again Trenchon demanded his name.

“He is the blacksmith of the village, and Cameron is his name.”

“I remember him,” said Trenchon. “Is thy mother, then, dead?”

“Yes,” answered the girl, weeping afresh. “She has been dead these five years.”

“I knew her when I was a boy,” said Trenchon. “Thy father also, and many a grudge I owe him, although I had forgotten about them. Still, I doubt not but as a boy I was as much in fault as he, although he was harsh to all of us, and now it seems he is harsh to thee. My name is Trenchon. I doubt if any in the village now remember me, although, perhaps, they may have heard of me from

London," he said, with some pride, and a hope that the girl would confirm his thoughts. But she shook her head.

"I have never heard thy name," she said.

Trenchon sighed. This, then, was fame!

"Ah, well!" he cried, "that matters not; they shall hear more of me later. I will go with thee to thy father's house and demand for thee admittance and decent usage."

But the girl shrank back. "Oh, no, no!" she cried; "that will never do. My father is a hard man to cross. There are none in the village who dare contend with him."

"That is as it may be," said Trenchon, with easy confidence. "I, for one, fear him not. Come, lass, with me, and see if I cannot, after all these years, pick out thy father's dwelling. Come, I say, thou must not longer tarry here; the rain is coming on afresh, and these trees, thick as they are, form scant protection. It is outrageous that thou should wander in this storm, while thy brutal father lies in shelter. Nay, do not fear harm for either thee or me; and as for him, he shall not suffer if thou but wish it so." And, drawing the girl's hand through his arm, he took her reluctantly with him, and without direction from her soon stood before the blacksmith's house.

"You see," he said, triumphantly, "I knew the place, and yet I have not seen the town for years."

Trenchon rapped soundly on the oaken door with his heavy stick, and the blows re-echoed through the silent house. The girl shrank timidly behind him, and would have fled, but that he held her firmly by the wrist.

"Nay, nay," he said: "believe me there is naught to fear. I will see that thou art not ill-used."

As he spoke the window above was thrown up, and a string of fearful oaths greeted the two, whereat the girl once more tried to release her imprisoned wrist, but Trenchon held it lightly, though with a grip like steel.

The stout old man thrust his head through the open window.

"God's blight on thee!" he cried, "thou pair of fools who wish to wed so much

that ye venture out in such a night as this. Well, have your way, and let me have my rest. In the name of the law of Scotland I pronounce ye man and wife. There, that will bind two fools together as strongly as if the Archbishop spoke the words. Place thou the money on the steps. I warrant none will venture to touch it when it belongs to me." And with that he closed the window.

"Is he raving mad or drunk?" cried Trenchon.

The girl gave a wailing cry. "Alas! alas!" she said; "he is neither. He is so used to marrying folk who come from England across the Border that he thinks not it his daughter who came with thee, but two who wished to wed. They come at all hours of the night and day, and he has married us. I am thy wife."

The astonished man dropped her wrist, and she put her hands before her eyes and wept.

"Married!" cried Trenchon. "We two married!"

He looked with interest at the girl, but in the darkness could see nothing of her. The unheeded rain pelted on them both.

"Hast thou"—he hesitated—"hast thou some other lover, since you weep?"

The girl shook her head. "No one," she said, "comes near us. They fear my father."

"Then, if this be true, why dost thou weep? I am not considered so bad a fellow."

"I weep not for myself, but for thee, who through the kindness of thy heart hast been led into this trap. Believe me, it was not my intention."

"Judging from thy voice, my girl, and if thou favorest thy mother, as I think, whom I remember well, this is a trap that I shall make little effort to get my foot out of. But thou art dripping, and I stand chattering here. Once more I will arouse my father-in-law."

So saying, he stoutly rapped again with his stick upon the door.

Once more the window was pushed up, and again the angry head appeared.

"Get you gone!" cried the maddened blacksmith, but before he could say anything further Trenchon cried out:

“It is thy daughter here who waits. Open the door, thou limb of hell, or I will burst it in and cast thee out as thou hast done thy daughter.”

The blacksmith, who had never in his life been spoken to in tones or words like these, was so amazed that he could neither speak nor act, but one stout kick against the door so shook the fabric that he speedily saw another such would break into his domicile; so, leaving the window open that his curses might the better reach them, the blacksmith came down and threw the barrier from the door, flinging it open and standing on the threshold so as to bar all ingress.

“Out of the way,” cried Trenchon, roughly placing his hand on the other’s breast with apparent lightness, but with a push that sent him staggering into the room.

The young man pulled the girl in after him and closed the door.

“Thou knowest the way,” he whispered. “Strike thou a light.”

The trembling girl lit a candle, and as it shone upon her face Trenchon gave a deep sigh of happiness and relief. No girl in the village could be more fair.

The blacksmith stood, his fingers clenched with rage; but he looked with hesitation and respect upon the burly form of the prizefighter. Yet the old man did not flinch.

“Throw aside thy stick,” he cried, “or wait until I can get me another.”

Trenchon flung his stick into the corner.

“Oh! oh!” cried the girl, clasping her hands. “You must not fight.” But she appealed to her husband and not to her father, which caused a glow of satisfaction to rise from the heart of the young man.

“Get thee out of this house,” cried her father, fiercely, turning upon her.

“Talk not thus to my wife,” said Trenchon, advancing upon him.

“Thy wife?” cried the blacksmith, in amaze.

“My wife,” repeated the young man with emphasis. “They tell me, blacksmith, that thou art strong. That thou art brutal I know, but thy strength I doubt. Come to me and test it.”

The old man sprang upon him, and the Bruiser caught him by the elbows and

held him helpless as a child. He pressed him up against the wall, pushed his wrists together, and clasped them both in his one gigantic hand. Then, placing the other on the blacksmith's shoulder, he put his weight upon him, and the blacksmith, cursing but helpless, sank upon his knees.

"Now, thou hardened sinner," cried the Bruiser, bending over him. "Beg from thy daughter on thy knees for a night's shelter in this house. Beg, or I will thrust thy craven face against the floor."

The girl clung to her newly-found husband, and entreated him not to hurt her father.

"I shall not hurt him if he do but speak. If he has naught but curses on his lips, why then those lips must kiss the flags that are beneath him. Speak out, blacksmith: what hast thou to say?"

"I beg for shelter," said the conquered man.

Instantly the Bruiser released him.

"Get thee to bed," he said, and the old man slunk away.

"Wife," said Abel Trenchon, opening his arms, "I have come all the way from London for thee. I knew not then what drew me north, but now I know that One wiser than me led my steps hither. As far as erring man may promise I do promise thee that thou shalt ne'er regret being cast out this night into the storm."

THE RAID ON MELLISH.

Some newspapers differ from others. One peculiarity about the Argus was the frequency with which it changed its men. Managing editors came who were going to revolutionize the world and incidentally the Argus, but they were in the habit of disappearing to give place to others who also disappeared. Newspaper men in that part of the country never considered themselves full-fledged unless they had had a turn at managing the Argus. If you asked who was at the head of the Argus the answer would very likely be: “Well, So-and-so was managing it this morning. I don’t know who is running it this afternoon.”

Perhaps the most weird period in the history of the Argus was when the owners imported a crank from Pittsburg and put him in as local editor, over the heads of the city staff. His name was McCrasky, christened Angus or Archie, I forget which, at this period of time. In fact, his Christian name was always a moot point; some of the reporters saying it was Angus and others Archie, no one having the courage to ask him. Anyhow, he signed himself A. McCrasky. He was a good man, which was rather an oddity on the staff, and puzzled the reporters not a little. Most of his predecessors had differed much from each other, but they were all alike in one thing, and that was profanity. They expressed disapproval in language that made the hardened printers’ towel in the composing room shrink.

McCrasky’s great point was that the local pages of the paper should have a strong moral influence on the community. He knocked the sporting editor speechless by telling him that they would have no more reports of prize-fights. Poor Murren went back to the local room, sat down at his table and buried his head in his hands. Every man on a local staff naturally thinks the paper is published mainly to give his department a show, and Murren considered a fight to a finish as being of more real importance to the world than a presidential election. The rest of the boys tried to cheer him up. “A fine state of things,” said Murren bitterly. “Think of the scrap next week between the California Duffer and Pigeon Billy and no report of it in the Argus! Imagine the walk- over for the other papers. What in thunder does he think people want to read?”

But there was another surprise in store for the boys. McCrasky assembled them all in his room and held forth to them. He suddenly sprung a question on the criminal reporter—so suddenly that Thompson, taken unawares, almost

spoke the truth.

“Do you know of any gambling houses in this city?”

Thompson caught his breath and glanced quickly at Murren.

“No,” he said at last. “I don’t, but perhaps the religious editor does. Better ask him.”

The religious editor smiled and removed his corn-cob pipe.

“There aren’t any,” he said. “Didn’t you know it was against the law to keep a gambling house in this state? Yes, sir!” Then he put his corn- cob pipe back in its place.

McCrasky was pleased to see that his young men knew so little of the wickedness of a great city; nevertheless he was there to give them some information, so he said quietly:

“Certainly it is against the law; but many things that are against the law flourish in a city like this. Now I want you to find out before the week is past how many gambling houses there are and where they are located. When you are sure of your facts we will organize a raid and the news will very likely be exclusive, for it will be late at night and the other papers may not hear of it.”

“Suppose,” said the religious editor, with a twinkle in his eye, as he again removed his corn-cob, “that—assuming such places to exist—you found some representatives of the other papers there? They are a bad lot, the fellows on the other papers.”

“If they are there,” said the local editor, “they will go to prison.”

“They won’t mind that, if they can write something about it,” said Murren gloomily. In his opinion the Argus was going to the dogs.

“Now, Thompson,” said McCrasky, “you as criminal reporter must know a lot of men who can give you particulars for a first-rate article on the evils of gambling. Get it ready for Saturday’s paper—a column and a half, with scare heads. We must work up public opinion.”

When the boys got back into the local room again, Murren sat with his head in his hands, while Thompson leaned back in his chair and laughed.

“Work up public opinion,” he said. “Mac had better work up his own knowledge of the city streets, and not put Bolder avenue in the East End, as he did this morning.”

The religious editor was helping himself to tobacco from Murren’s drawer. “Are you going to put Mellish on his guard?” he asked Thompson.

“I don’t just know what I’m going to do,” said Thompson; “are you?”

“I’ll think about it,” replied the R. E. “Beastly poor tobacco, this of yours, Murren. Why don’t you buy cut plug?”

“You’re not compelled to smoke it,” said the sporting editor, without raising his head.

“I am when mine is out, and the other fellows keep their drawers locked.”

Thompson dropped in on Mellish, the keeper of the swell gambling rooms, to consult with him on the article for Saturday’s paper. Mellish took a great interest in it, and thought it would do good. He willingly gave Thompson several instances where the vice had led to ruin of promising young men.

“All men gamble in some way or another,” said Mellish meditatively. “Some take it one way and some another. It is inherent in human nature, like original sin. The beginning of every business is a gamble. If I had $30,000 I would rather run my chance of doubling it at these tables here than I would, for instance, by starting a new newspaper or putting it on wheat or in railway stocks. Take a land boom, for instance, such as there was in California or at Winnipeg—the difference between putting your money in a thing like that or going in for legitimate gambling is that, in the one case, you are sure to lose your cash, while in the other you have a chance of winning some. I hold that all kinds of gambling are bad, unless a man can easily afford to lose what he stakes. The trouble is that gambling affects some people like liquor. I knew a man once who ——” but you can read the whole article if you turn up the back numbers of the Argus.

Thompson told Mellish about McCrasky. Mellish was much interested, and said he would like to meet the local editor. He thought the papers should take more interest in the suppression of gambling dens than they did, and for his part he said he would like to see them all stopped, his own included. “Of course,” he added, “I could shut up my shop, but it would simply mean that someone else

would open another, and I don't think any man ever ran such a place fairer than I do."

McCrasky called on the chief of police, and introduced himself as the local editor of the Argus.

"Oh," said the chief, "has Gorman gone, then?"

"I don't know about Gorman," said McCrasky; "the man I succeeded was Finnigan. I believe he is in Cincinnati now."

When the chief learned the purport of the local editor's visit he became very official and somewhat taciturn. He presumed that there were gambling houses in the city. If there were, they were very quiet and no complaints ever reached his ears. There were many things, he said, that it was impossible to suppress, and the result of attempted suppression was to drive the evil deeper down. He seemed to be in favor rather of regulating, than of attempting the impossible; still, if McCrasky brought him undoubted evidence that a gambling house was in operation, he would consider it his duty to make a raid on it. He advised McCrasky to go very cautiously about it, as the gamblers had doubtless many friends who would give a tip and so frustrate a raid, perhaps letting somebody in for damages. McCrasky said he would be careful.

Chance played into the hands of McCrasky and "blew in" on him a man who little recked what he was doing when he entered the local editor's room. Gus Hammerly, sport and man-about-town, dropped into the Argus office late one night to bring news of an "event" to the sporting editor. He knew his way about in the office, and, finding Murren was not in, he left the item on his table. Then he wandered into the local editor's room. The newspaper boys all liked Hammerly, and many a good item they got from him. They never gave him away, and he saw that they never got left, as the vernacular is.

"Good-evening. You're the new local editor, I take it. I've just left a little item for Murren, I suppose he's not in from the wrestle yet. My name's Hammerly. All the boys know me and I've known in my time fourteen of your predecessors, so I may as well know you. You're from Pittsburg, I hear."

"Yes. Sit down, Mr. Hammerly. Do you know Pittsburg at all?"

"Oh, yes. Borden, who keeps the gambling den on X street, is an old friend of mine. Do you happen to know how old Borden's getting along?"

“Yes, his place was raided and closed up by the police.”

“That’s just the old man’s luck. Same thing in Kansas City.”

“By the way, Mr. Hammerly, do you know of any gambling houses in this city?”

“Why, bless you, haven’t the boys taken you round yet? Well, now, that’s inhospitable. Mellish’s is the best place in town. I’m going up there now. If you come along with me I’ll give you the knock-down at the door and you’ll have no trouble after that.”

“I’ll go with you,” said McCrasky, reaching for his hat, and so the innocent Hammerly led the lamb into the lion’s den.

McCrasky, unaccustomed to the sight, was somewhat bewildered with the rapidity of the play. There was a sort of semicircular table, around the outside rim of which were sitting as many men as could be comfortably placed there. A man at the inside of the table handled the cards. He flicked out one to each player, face downward, with an expertness and speed that dazzled McCrasky. Next he dealt out one to each player face upward and people put sums of money on the table beside their cards, after looking at them. There was another deal and so on, but the stranger found it impossible to understand or follow the game. He saw money being raked in and paid out rapidly and over the whole affair was a solemn decorum that he had not been prepared for. He had expected fierce oaths and the drawing of revolvers.

“Here, Mellish,” said the innocent Hammerly, “let me introduce you to the new local editor of the Argus. I didn’t catch your name,” he said in a whisper.

“My name’s McCrasky.”

“Mr. McCrasky; Mr. Mellish. Mellish is proprietor here and you’ll find him a first-rate fellow.”

“I am pleased to meet you,” said Mellish quietly; “any friend of Hammerly’s is welcome. Make yourself at home.”

Edging away from the two, Mellish said in a quick whisper to Sotty, the bartender: “Go and tell the doorkeeper to warn Thompson, or any of the rest of the Argus boys, that their boss is in here.”

At 12 o’clock that night the local editor sat in his room. “Is that you, Thompson?” he shouted, as he heard a step.

“Yes, sir;” answered Thompson, coming into the presence.

“Shut the door, Thompson. Now I have a big thing on for to-night, but it must be done quietly. I’ve unearthed a gambling den in full blast. It will be raided to-night at 2 o’clock. I want you to be on the ground with Murren; will you need anybody else?”

“Depends on how much you wish to make of it.”

“I want to make it the feature of to-morrow’s paper. I think we three can manage, but bring some of the rest if you like. The place is run by a man named Mellish. Now, if you boys kept your eyes open you would know more of what is going on in your own city than you do.”

“We haven’t all had the advantage of metropolitan training,” said Thompson humbly.

“I will go there with the police. You and Murren had better be on the ground, but don’t go too soon, and don’t make yourselves conspicuous or they might take alarm. Here is the address. You had better take it down.”

“Oh, I’ll find the place all——” Then Thompson thought a moment and pulled himself together. “Thanks,” he said, carefully noting down the street and number.

The detachment of police drew up in front of the place a few minutes before 2 o’clock. The streets were deserted, and so silent were the blue coats that the footsteps of a belated wayfarer sounded sharply in the night air from the stone pavement of a distant avenue.

“Are you sure,” said McCrasky to the man in charge of the police, “that there is not a private entrance somewhere?”

“Certainly there is,” was the impatient reply: “Sergeant McCollum and four men are stationed in the alley behind. We know our business, sir.”

McCrasky thought this was a snub, and he was right. He looked around in the darkness for his reporters. He found them standing together in a doorway on the opposite side of the street.

“Been here long?” he whispered.

Murren was gloomy and did not answer. The religious editor removed his corn-cob and said briefly; “About ten minutes, sir.” Thompson was gazing with interest at the dark building across the way.

“You’ve seen nobody come out?”

“Nobody. On the contrary, about half a dozen have gone up that stairway.”

“Is that the place, sir?” asked Thompson with the lamb-like innocence of the criminal reporter.

“Yes, upstairs there.”

“What did I tell you?” said the religious editor. “Thompson insisted it was next door.”

“Come along,” said McCrasky, “the police are moving at last.”

A big bell in the neighborhood solemnly struck two slow strokes, and all over the city the hour sounded in various degrees of tone and speed. A whistle rang out and was distantly answered. The police moved quickly and quietly up the stairway.

“Have you tickets, gentlemen,” asked the man at the door politely; “this is a private assembly.”

“The police,” said the sergeant shortly, “stand aside.”

If the police were astonished at the sight which met their gaze, their faces did not show it. But McCrasky had not such control over his features and he looked dumbfounded. The room was the same, undoubtedly, but there was not the vestige of a card to be seen. There were no tables, and even the bar had disappeared. The chairs were nicely arranged and most of them were occupied. At the further end of the room Pony Rowell stood on a platform or on a box or some elevation, and his pale, earnest face was lighted up with the enthusiasm of the public speaker. He was saying: “On the purity of the ballot, gentlemen, depends the very life of the republic. That every man should be permitted, without interference or intimidation, to cast his vote, and that every vote so cast should be honestly counted is, I take it, the desire of all who now listen to my words.” (Great applause, during which Pony took a sip from a glass that may

have contained water.)

The police had come in so quietly that no one, apparently, had noticed their entrance, except that good man Mellish, who hurried forward to welcome the intruders.

“Will you take a seat?” he asked. “We are having a little political talk from Mr. Rowell, sergeant.”

“Rather an unusual hour, Mr. Mellish,” said the sergeant grimly.

“It is a little late,” admitted Mellish, as if the idea had not occurred to him before.

The police who had come in by the back entrance appeared at the other end of the room and it was evident that Rowell’s oration had come to an untimely end. Pony looked grieved and hurt, but said nothing.

“We will have to search the premises, Mr. Mellish,” said the sergeant.

Mellish gave them every assistance, but nothing was found.

As the four men walked back together to the Argus office, McCrasky was very indignant.

“We will expose the police to-morrow,” he said. “They evidently gave Mellish the tip.”

“I don’t think so,” said Thompson. “We will say nothing about it.”

“You forget yourself, Mr. Thompson. It rests with me to say what shall go on the local page. Not with you.”

“I don’t forget myself,” answered Thompson sadly; “I’ve just remembered myself. The Directors of the Argus appointed me local editor yesterday. Didn’t they tell you about it? That’s just like them. They forgot to mention the fact to Corbin that he had been superseded and the manager went off fishing after appointing Jonsey local editor, so that for a week we had two local editors, each one countermanding the orders of the other. It was an awful week. You remember it, Murren?” Murren’s groan seemed to indicate that his recollection of the exciting time was not a pleasant memory.

“In case of doubt,” murmured the religious editor, this time without removing

his corn-cob, “obey the orders of the new man where the Argus is concerned. Thompson, old man, I’m wid you. When did the blow fall?”

“Yesterday afternoon,” said Thompson, almost with a sob; “I’ll be dismissed within a month, so I am rather sorry. I liked working on the Argus—as a reporter. I never looked for such ill luck as promotion. But we all have our troubles, haven’t we, Mac?”

McCrasky did not answer. He is now connected with some paper in Texas.

STRIKING BACK.

George Streeter was in Paris, because he hoped and expected to meet Alfred Davison there. He knew that Davison was going to be in Paris for at least a fortnight, and he had a particular reason for wishing to come across him in the streets of that city rather than in the streets of London.

Streeter was a young author who had published several books, and who was getting along as well as could be expected, until suddenly he met a check. The check was only a check as far as his own self-esteem was concerned; for it did not in the least retard the sale of his latest book, but rather appeared to increase it. The check was unexpected, for where he had looked for a caress, he received a blow. The blow was so well placed, and so vigorous, that at first it stunned him. Then he became unreasonably angry. He resolved to strike back.

The review of his book in the Argus was vigorously severe, and perhaps what maddened him more than anything else was the fact that, in spite of his self-esteem he realized the truth of the criticism. If his books had been less successful, or if he had been newer as an author, he might possibly have set himself out to profit by the keen thrusts given him by the Argus. He might have remembered that although Tennyson struck back at Christopher North, calling him rusty, crusty, and musty, yet the poet eliminated from later editions all blemishes which musty Christopher had pointed out.

Streeter resolved to strike back with something more tangible than a sarcastic verse. He quite admitted, even to himself, that a critic had every right to criticise —that was what he was for—but he claimed that a man who pretended to be an author’s friend and who praised his books to his face, had no right to go behind his back and pen a criticism so scathing as that which appeared in the Argus: for Streeter knew that Alfred Davison had written the criticism in the Argus, and Davison had posed as his friend; and had pretended as well, that he had a great admiration for Streeter’s books.

As Streeter walked down the Boulevard des Italians, he saw, seated in front of a café, the man whom he hoped to meet: and furthermore, he was pleased to see that the man had a friend with him. The recognition of author and critic was mutual.

“Hallo, Streeter,” cried Davison; “when did you come over?”

“I left London yesterday,” answered Streeter.

“Then sit down and have something with us,” said Davison, cordially. “Streeter, this is my friend Harmon. He is an exile and a resident in Paris, and, consequently, likes to meet his countrymen.”

“In that case,” said Streeter, “he is probably well acquainted with the customs of the place?”

“Rather!” returned Davison; “he has become so much of a Frenchman—he has been so contaminated, if I may put it that way—that I believe quite recently he was either principal or second in a duel. By the way, which was it, Harmon?”

“Merely a second,” answered the other.

“I don’t believe in duelling myself,” continued Davison: “it seems to me an idiotic custom, and so futile.”

“I don’t agree with you,” replied Streeter, curtly; “there is no reason why a duel should be futile, and there seem to be many reasons why a duel might be fought. There are many things, worse than crimes, which exist in all countries, and for which there is no remedy except calling a man out; misdemeanors, if I may so term them, that the law takes no cognisance of; treachery, for instance;—a person pretending to be a man’s friend, and then the first chance he gets, stabbing him in the back.”

Harmon nodded his approval of these sentiments, while Davison said jauntily:

“Oh, I don’t know about that! It seems to me these things, which I suppose undoubtedly exist, should not be made important by taking much notice of them. What will you have to drink, Streeter?”

“Bring me a liqueur of brandy,” said Streeter to the garçon who stood ready to take the order.

When the waiter returned with a small glass, into which he poured the brandy with the deftness of a Frenchman, filling it so that not a drop more could be added, and yet without allowing the glass to overflow, Streeter pulled out his purse.

“No, no!” cried Davison; “you are not going to pay for this—you are drinking

with me."

"I pay for my own drinks," said Streeter, surlily.

"Not when I invite you to drink with me," protested the critic. "I pay for this brandy."

"Very well, take it, then!" said Streeter, picking up the little glass and dashing the contents in the face of Davison.

Davison took out his handkerchief.

"What the devil do you mean by that, Streeter?" he asked, as the color mounted to his brow.

Streeter took out his card and pencilled a word or two on the pasteboard.

"There," he said, "is my Paris address. If you do not know what I mean by that, ask your friend here; he will inform you."

And with that the novelist arose, bowed to the two, and departed.

When he returned to his hotel, after a stroll along the brilliantly- lighted Boulevards, he found waiting for him Mr. Harmon and a Frenchman.

"I had no idea you would come so soon," said Streeter, "otherwise I would not have kept you waiting."

"It does not matter," replied Harmon; "we have not waited long. Affairs of this kind require prompt action. An insult lasts but twenty-four hours, and my friend and principal has no desire to put you to the inconvenience of repeating your action of this evening. We are taking it for granted that you have a friend prepared to act for you; for your conduct appeared to be premeditated."

"You are quite right," answered Streeter; "I have two friends to whom I shall be pleased to introduce you. Come this way, if you will be so kind."

The preliminaries were speedily arranged, and the meeting was to take place next morning at daylight, with pistols.

Now that everything was settled, the prospect did not look quite so pleasant to Streeter as it had done when he left London. Davison had asked for no explanation; but that, of course, could be accounted for, because this critical sneak must be well aware of the reason for the insult. Still, Streeter had rather

expected that he would perhaps have simulated ignorance, and on receiving enlightenment might have avoided a meeting to apologizing.

Anyhow, Streeter resolved to make a night of it. He left his friends to arrange for a carriage, and see to all that was necessary, while he donned his war-paint and departed for a gathering to which he had been invited, and where he was to meet many of his countrymen and countrywomen, in a fashionable part of Paris.

His hostess appeared to be overjoyed at seeing him.

“You are so late,” she said, “that I was afraid something had occurred to keep you from coming altogether.”

“Nothing could have prevented me from coming,” said Streeter, gallantly, “where Mrs. Woodford is hostess!”

“Oh, that is very nice of you, Mr. Streeter!” answered the lady; “but I must not stand here talking with you, for I have promised to introduce you to Miss Neville, who wishes very much to meet you. She is a great admirer of yours, and has read all your books.”

“There are not very many of them,” said Streeter, with a laugh; “and such as they are, I hope Miss Neville thinks more of them than I do myself.”

“Oh, we all know how modest authors are!” replied his hostess, leading him away to be introduced.

Miss Neville was young and pretty, and she was evidently pleased to meet the rising young author.

“I have long wanted to see you,” she said, “to have a talk with you about your books.”

“You are very kind,” said Streeter, “but perhaps we might choose something more profitable to talk about?”

“I am not so sure of that. Doubtless you have been accustomed to hear only the nice things people say about you. That is the misfortune of many authors.”

“It is a misfortune,” answered Streeter.

“What a writer needs is somebody to tell him the truth.”

“Ah!” said Miss Neville, “that is another thing I am not so sure about. Mrs.

Woodford has told you, I suppose, that I have read all your books? Did she add that I detested them?”

Even Streeter was not able to conceal the fact that this remark caused him some surprise. He laughed uneasily, and said:

“On the contrary, Mrs. Woodford led me to believe that you had liked them.”

The girl leaned back in her chair, and looked at him with half-closed eyes.

“Of course,” she said, “Mrs. Woodford does not know. It is not likely that I would tell her I detested your books while I asked for an introduction to you. She took it for granted that I meant to say pleasant things to you, whereas I had made up my mind to do the exact reverse. No one would be more shocked than Mrs. Woodford—unless, perhaps, it is yourself—if she knew I was going to speak frankly with you.”

“I am not shocked,” said the young man, seriously; “I recognize that there are many things in my books that are blemishes.”

“Of course you don’t mean that,” said the frank young woman; “because if you did you would not repeat the faults in book after book.”

“A man can but do his best,” said Streeter, getting annoyed in spite of himself, for no man takes kindly to the candid friend. “A man can but do his best, as Hubert said, whose grandsire drew a longbow at Hastings.”

“Yes,” returned Miss Neville, “a man can but do his best, although we should remember that the man who said that, said it just before he was defeated. What I feel is that you are not doing your best, and that you will not do your best until some objectionable person like myself has a good serious talk with you.”

“Begin the serious talk,” said Streeter; “I am ready and eager to listen.”

“Did you read the review of your latest book which appeared in the Argus?”

“Did I?” said Streeter, somewhat startled—the thought of the meeting that was so close, which he had forgotten for the moment, flashing over him. “Yes, I did; and I had the pleasure of meeting the person who wrote it this evening.”

Miss Neville almost jumped in her chair.

“Oh, I did not intend you to know that!” she said. “Who told you? How did

you find out that I wrote reviews for the Argus?”

“You!” cried Streeter, astonished in his turn. “Do you mean to say that you wrote that review?”

Miss Neville sank back in her chair with a sigh.

“There!” she said, “my impetuosity has, as the Americans say, given me away. After all, you did not know I was the writer!”

“I thought Davison was the writer. I had it on the very best authority.”

“Poor Davison!” said Miss Neville, laughing, “why, he is one of the best and staunchest friends you have: and so am I, for that matter— indeed, I am even more your friend than Mr. Davison; for I think you *can* do good work, while Mr. Davison is foolish enough to believe you are doing it.”

At this point in the conversation Streeter looked hurriedly at his watch.

“Ah! I see,” said Miss Neville; “this conversation is not to your taste. You are going to plead an appointment—as if anyone could have an appointment at this hour in the morning!”

“Nevertheless,” said Streeter, “I have; and I must bid you good-bye. But I assure you that my eyes have been opened, and that I have learned a lesson to-night which I will not soon forget. I hope I may have the pleasure of meeting you again, and continuing this conversation. Perhaps some time I may tell you why I have to leave.”

Streeter found his friends waiting for him. He knew it was no use trying to see Davison before the meeting. There was a long drive ahead of them, and it was grey daylight when they reached the ground, where they found the other party waiting.

Each man took his place and the pistol that was handed to him. When the word “Fire!” was given, Streeter dropped his hand to his side. Davison stood with his pistol still pointed, but he did not fire.

“Why don’t you shoot, George?” said Davison.

Harmon, at this point, rebuked his principal, and said he must have no communication with the other except through a second.

“Oh!” said Davison, impatiently, “I don’t pretend to know the rules of this idiotic game!”

Streeter stepped forward.

“I merely wished to give you the opportunity of firing at me if you cared to do so,” he said; “and now I desire to apologize for my action at the café. I may say that what I did was done under a misapprehension. Anything that I can do to make reparation I am willing to do.”

“Oh, that’s all right!” said Davison; “nothing more need be said. I am perfectly satisfied. Let us get back to the city; I find it somewhat chilly out here.”

“And yet,” said Harmon, with a sigh, “Englishmen have the cheek to talk of the futility of French duels!”

CRANDALL'S CHOICE.

John Crandall sat at his office desk and thought the situation over. Everybody had gone and he was in the office alone. Crandall was rather tired and a little sleepy, so he was inclined to take a gloomy view of things. Not that there was anything wrong with his business; in fact, it was in a first-rate condition so far as it went, but it did not go far enough; that was what John thought as he brooded over his affairs. He was making money, of course, but the trouble was that he was not making it fast enough.

As he thought of these things John gradually and imperceptibly went to sleep, and while he slept he dreamt a dream. It would be quite easy to pretend that the two persons who came to him in the vision, actually entered the office and that he thought them regular customers or something of that sort, while at the end of the story, when everybody was bewildered, the whole matter might be explained by announcing the fact that it was all a dream, but this account being a true and honest one, no such artifice will be used and at the very beginning the admission is made that John was the victim of a vision.

In this dream two very beautiful ladies approached him. One was richly dressed and wore the most dazzling jewelry. The other was clad in plain attire. At first, the dreaming Mr. Crandall thought, or dreamt he thought, that the richly dressed one was the prettier. She was certainly very attractive, but, as she came closer, John imagined that much of her beauty was artificial. He said to himself that she painted artistically perhaps, but at any rate she laid it on rather thick.

About the other there was no question. She was a beauty, and what loveliness she possessed was due to the bounties of Providence and not to the assistance of the chemist. She was the first to speak.

"Mr. Crandall," she said, in the sweetest of voices, "we have come here together so that you may choose between us. Which one will you have?"

"Bless me," said Crandall, so much surprised at the unblushing proposal that he nearly awoke himself, "bless me, don't you know that I am married?"

"Oh, *that* doesn't matter," answered the fair young lady, with the divinest of smiles.

“Doesn’t it?” said Mr. Crandall. “If you had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Crandall I think you would find that it did—very much indeed.”

“But we are not mortals; we are spirits.”

“Oh, are you? Well, of course that makes a difference,” replied Mr. Crandall much relieved, for he began to fear from the turn the conversation had taken that he was in the presence of two writers of modern novels.

“This lady,” continued the first speaker, “is the spirit of wealth. If you choose her you will be a very rich man before you die.”

“Oh, ho!” cried Crandall. “Are you sure of that?”

“Quite certain.”

“Well, then I won’t be long making my choice. I choose her, of course.”

“But you don’t know who I am. Perhaps when you know, you may wish to reverse your decision.”

“I suppose you are the spirit of power or of fame or something of that sort. I am not an ambitious person; money is good enough for me.”

“No, I am the spirit of health. Think well before you make your choice. Many have rejected me, and afterwards, have offered all their possessions fruitlessly, hoping to lure me to them.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Crandall, with some hesitation. “You are a very pleasant young person to have around the house. But why cannot I have both of you? How does *that* strike you?”

“I am very sorry, but I am not permitted to give you the choice of both.”

“Why is that? Many people are allowed to choose both.”

“I know that; still we must follow our instructions.”

“Well, if that is the case, without wishing to offend you in the least, I think I will stand by my first choice. I choose wealth.”

As he said this the other lady advanced toward him and smiled somewhat triumphantly as she held out her hand. Crandall grasped it and the first spirit sighed. Just as the spirit of wealth seemed about to speak, there was a shake at

the office door, and Mr. John Crandall saw the spirits fade away. He rubbed his eyes and said to himself: “By George! I have been asleep. What a remarkably vivid dream that was.”

As he yawned and stretched his arms above his head, the impatient rattle at the door told him that at least was not a part of the dream.

He arose and unlocked the door.

“Hello, Mr. Bullion,” he said, as that solid man came in. “You’re late, aren’t you.”

“Why, for that matter, so are you. You must have been absorbed in your accounts or you would have heard me sooner. I thought I would have to shake the place down.”

“Well, you know, the policeman sometimes tries the door and I thought at first it was he. Won’t you sit down?”

“Thanks! Don’t care if I do. Busy tonight?”

“Just got through.”

“Well, how are things going?”

“Oh, slowly as usual. Slowly because we have not facilities enough, but we’ve got all the work we can do.”

“Does it pay you for what work you do?”

“Certainly. I’m not in this business as a philanthropist, you know.”

“No. I didn’t suppose you were. Now, see here, Crandall, I think you have a good thing of it here and one of the enterprises that if extended would develop into a big business.”

“I know it. But what am I to do? I’ve practically no capital to enlarge the business, and I don’t care to mortgage what I have and pay a high rate of interest when, just at the critical moment, we might have a commercial crisis and I would then lose everything.”

“Quite right; quite right, and a safe principle. Well, that’s what I came to see you about. I have had my eye on you and this factory for some time. Now, if you want capital I will furnish it on the condition that an accountant of mine

examines the books and finds everything promising a fair return for enlarging the business. Of course I take your word for the state of affairs all right enough, but business is business, you know, and besides I want to get an expert opinion on how much enlargement it will stand. I suppose you could manage a manufactory ten or twenty times larger as easily as you do this one."

"Quite," said Mr. Crandall.

"Then what do you say to my coming round to-morrow at 9 with my man?"

"That would suit me all right."

Mr. John Crandall walked home a very much elated man that night.

"Well, doctor," said the patient in a very weak voice, "what is the verdict!"

"It is just as I said before. You will have to take a rest. You know I predicted this breakdown."

"Can't you give me something that will fix me up temporarily? It is almost imperative that I should stay on just now."

"Of course it is. It has been so for the last five years. You forget that in that time you have been fixed up temporarily on several occasions. Now, I will get you 'round so that you can travel in a few days and then I insist on a sea voyage or a quiet time somewhere on the continent. You will have to throw off business cares entirely. There are no ifs or buts about it."

"Look here, doctor. I don't see how I am to leave at this time. I have been as bad as this a dozen times before. *You* know that. I'm just a little fagged out and when I go back to the office I can take things easier. You see, we have a big South American contract on hand that I am very anxious about. New business, you know."

"I suppose you could draw your cheque for a pretty large amount, Mr. Crandall."

“Yes, I can. If money can bridge the thing over, I will arrange it.”

“Well, money can’t. What I wanted to say was that if, instead of having a large sum in the bank, you had overdrawn your account about as much as the bank would stand, would you be surprised if your cheque were not honored?”

“No, I wouldn’t.”

“Well, that is your state physically. You’ve overdrawn your vitality account. You’ve got to make a deposit. You must take a vacation.”

“Any other time, doctor. I’ll go sure, as soon as this contract is off. Upon my word I will. You needn’t shake your head. A vacation just now would only aggravate the difficulty. I wouldn’t have a moment’s peace knowing this South American business might be bungled. I’d worry myself to death.”

The funeral of Mr. Crandall was certainly one of the most splendid spectacles the city had seen for many a day. The papers all spoke highly of the qualities of the dead manufacturer, whose growth had been typical of the growth of the city. The eloquent minister spoke of the inscrutable ways of Providence in cutting off a man in his prime, and in the very height of his usefulness.

THE FAILURE OF BRADLEY.

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The skater lightly laughs and glides,
  Unknowing that beneath the ice
  On which he carves his fair device
A stiffened corpse in silence glides.

It glareth upward at his play;
  Its cold, blue, rigid fingers steal
  Beneath the tracings of his heel.
It floats along and floats away.

                        —Unknown Poem.
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“If I only had the courage,” said Bradley, as he looked over the stone parapet of the embankment at the dark waters of the Thames as they flashed for a moment under the glitter of the gaslight and then disappeared in the black night to flash again farther down.

“Very likely I would struggle to get out again the moment I went over,” he muttered to himself. “But if no help came it would all be done with, in a minute. Two minutes perhaps. I’ll warrant those two minutes would seem an eternity. I would see a hundred ways of making a living, if I could only get out again. Why can’t I see one now while I *am* out. My father committed suicide, why shouldn’t I? I suppose it runs in the family. There seems to come a time when it is the only way out. I wonder if he hesitated? I’m a coward, that’s the trouble.”

After a moment’s hesitation the man slowly climbed on the top of the stone wall and then paused again. He looked with a shudder at the gloomy river.

“I’ll do it,” he cried aloud, and was about to slide down, when a hand grasped his arm and a voice said:

“*What* will you do?”

In the light of the gas-lamp Bradley saw a man whose face seemed familiar and although he thought rapidly, “Where have I seen that man before?” he could not place him.

“Nothing,” answered Bradley sullenly.

“That’s right,” was the answer. “I’d do nothing of that kind, if I were you.”

“Of course you wouldn’t. You have everything that I haven’t—food, clothes, shelter. Certainly you wouldn’t. Why should you?”

“Why should you, if it comes to that?”

“Because ten shillings stands between me and a job. That’s why, if you want to know. There’s eight shillings railway fare, a shilling for something to eat to-night and a shilling for something in the morning. But I haven’t the ten shillings. So that’s why.”

“If I give you the ten shillings what assurance have I that you will not go and get drunk on it?”

“None at all. I have not asked you for ten shillings, nor for one. I have simply answered your question.”

“That is true. I will give you a pound if you will take it, and so if unfortunately you spent half of it in cheering yourself, you will still have enough left to get that job. What is the job?”

“I am a carpenter.”

“You are welcome to the pound.”

“I will take it gladly. But, mind you, I am not a beggar. I will take it if you give me your address, so that I may send it back to you when I earn it.”

By this time Bradley had come down on the pavement. The other man laughed quietly.

“I cannot agree to that. You are welcome to the money. More if you like. I merely doubled the sum you mentioned to provide for anything unseen.”

“Unless you let me return it, I will not take the money.”

“I have perfect confidence in your honesty. If I had not, I would not offer the money. I cannot give you my address, or, rather, I will not. If you will pay the pound to some charity or will give it to someone who is in need, I am more than satisfied. If you give it to the right man and tell him to do the same, the pound will do more good than ever it will in my pocket or in my usual way of spending it.”

“But how are you to know I will do that?”

“I am considered rather a good judge of men. I am certain you will do what you say.”

“I’ll take the money. I doubt if there is anyone in London to-night who needs it much worse than I do.”

Bradley looked after the disappearing figure of the man who had befriended him.

“I have seen that man somewhere before,” he said to himself. But in that he was wrong. He hadn’t.

Wealth is most unevenly and most unfairly divided. All of us admit that, but few of us agree about the remedy. Some of the best minds of the century have wrestled with this question in vain. “The poor ye have always with you” is as true to-day as it was 1800 years ago. Where so many are in doubt, it is perhaps a comfort to meet men who have no uncertainty as to the cause and the remedy. Such a body of men met in a back room off Soho Square.

“We are waiting for you, Bradley,” said the chairman, as the carpenter took his place and the doors were locked. He looked better than he had done a year before on the Thames embankment.

“I know I’m late, but I couldn’t help it. They are rushing things at the exhibition grounds. The time is short now, and they are beginning to be anxious for fear everything will not be ready in time.”

“That’s it,” said one of the small group, “we are slaves and must be late or early as our so-called masters choose.”

“Oh, there is extra pay,” said Bradley with a smile, as he took a seat.

“Comrades,” said the chairman, rapping on the desk, “we will now proceed to business. The secret committee has met and made a resolution. After the lots are drawn it will be my task to inform the man chosen what the job is. It is desirable that as few as possible, even among ourselves, should know who the man is,

who has drawn the marked paper. Perhaps it may be my own good fortune to be the chosen man. One of the papers is marked with a cross. Whoever draws that paper is to communicate with me at my room within two days. He is to come alone. It is commanded by the committee that no man is to look at his paper until he leaves this room and then to examine it in secret. He is bound by his oath to tell no one at any time whether or not he is the chosen man."

The papers were put into a hat and each man in the room drew one. The chairman put his in his pocket, as did the others. The doors were unlocked and each man went to his home, if he had one.

Next evening Bradley called at the room of the chairman and said: "There is the marked paper I drew last night."

The exhibition building was gay with bunting and was sonorous with the sounds of a band of music. The machinery that would not stop for six months was still motionless, for it was to be started in an hour's time by His Highness. His Highness and suite had not yet arrived but the building was crowded by a well-dressed throng of invited guests—the best in the land as far as fame, title or money was concerned. Underneath the grand stand where His Highness and the distinguished guests were to make speeches and where the finger of nobility was to press the electric button, Bradley walked anxiously about, with the same haggard look on his face that was there the night he thought of slipping into the Thames. The place underneath was a wilderness of beams and braces. Bradley's wooden tool chest stood on the ground against one of the timbers. The foremen came through and struck a beam or a brace here and there.

"Everything is all right," he said to Bradley. "There will be no trouble, even if it was put up in a hurry, and in spite of the strain that will be on it to-day."

Bradley was not so sure of that, but he said nothing. When the foreman left him alone, he cautiously opened the lid of his tool chest and removed the carpenter's apron which covered something in the bottom. This something was a small box with a clockwork arrangement and a miniature uplifted hammer that

hung like the sword of Damocles over a little copper cap. He threw the apron over it again, closed the lid of the chest, leaned against one of the timbers, folded his arms and waited.

Presently there was a tremendous cheer and the band struck up. “He is coming,” said Bradley to himself, closing his lips tighter. “Carpenter,” cried the policeman putting in his head through the little wooden door at the foot of the stage, “come here, quick. You can get a splendid sight of His Highness as he comes up the passage.” Bradley walked to the opening and gazed at the distinguished procession coming toward him. Suddenly he grasped the arm of the policeman like a vice.

“Who is that man in the robes—at the head of the procession?”

“Don’t you know? That is His Highness.”

Bradley gasped for breath. He recognized His Highness as the man he had met on the embankment.

“Thank you,” he said to the policeman, who looked at him curiously. Then he went under the grand stand among the beams and braces and leaned against one of the timbers with knitted brows.

After a few moments he stepped to his chest, pulled off the apron and carefully lifted out the machine. With a quick jerk he wrenched off the little hammer and flung it from him. The machinery inside whirred for a moment with a soft purr like a clock running down. He opened the box and shook out into his apron a substance like damp sawdust. He seemed puzzled for a moment what to do with it. Finally he took it out and scattered it along the grass-grown slope of a railway cutting. Then he returned to his tool chest, took out a chisel and grimly felt its edge with his thumb.

It was admitted on all hands that His Highness never made a better speech in his life than on the occasion of the opening of that exhibition. He touched lightly on the country’s unexampled prosperity, of which the marvelous collection

within those walls was an indication. He alluded to the general contentment that reigned among the classes to whose handiwork was due the splendid examples of human skill there exhibited. His Highness was thankful that peace and contentment reigned over the happy land and he hoped they would long continue so to reign. Then there were a good many light touches of humor in the discourse — touches that are so pleasing when they come from people in high places. In fact, the chairman said at the club afterwards (confidentially, of course) that the man who wrote His Highness's speeches had in that case quite outdone himself.

The papers had very full accounts of the opening of the exhibition next morning, and perhaps because these graphic articles occupied so much space, there was so little room for the announcement about the man who committed suicide. The papers did not say where the body was found, except that it was near the exhibition buildings, and His Highness never knew that he made that excellent speech directly over the body of a dead man.

RINGAMY'S CONVERT.

Mr. Johnson Ringamy, the author, sat in his library gazing idly out of the window. The view was very pleasant, and the early morning sun brought out in strong relief the fresh greenness of the trees that now had on their early spring suits of foliage. Mr. Ringamy had been a busy man, but now, if he cared to take life easy, he might do so, for few books had had the tremendous success of his latest work. Mr. Ringamy was thinking about this, when the door opened, and a tall, intellectual-looking young man entered from the study that communicated with the library. He placed on the table the bunch of letters he had in his hand, and, drawing up a chair, opened a blank notebook that had, between the leaves, a lead pencil sharpened at both ends.

"Good morning, Mr. Scriver," said the author, also hitching up his chair towards the table. He sighed as he did so, for the fair spring prospect from the library window was much more attractive than the task of answering an extensive correspondence.

"Is there a large mail this morning, Scriver?"

"A good-sized one, sir. Many of them, however, are notes asking for your autograph."

"Enclose stamps, do they?"

"Most of them, sir; those that did not, I threw in the waste basket."

"Quite right. And as to the autographs you might write them this afternoon, if you have time."

"I have already done so, sir. I flatter myself that even your most intimate friend could not tell my version of your autograph from your own."

As he said this, the young man shoved towards the author a letter which he had written, and Mr. Ringamy looked at it critically.

"Very good, Scriver, very good indeed. In fact, if I were put in the witness-box I am not sure that I would be able to swear that this was not my signature. What's this you have said in the body of the letter about sentiment? Not making

me write anything sentimental, I hope. Be careful, my boy, I don't want the newspapers to get hold of anything that they could turn into ridicule. They are too apt to do that sort of thing if they get half a chance."

"Oh, I think you will find that all right," said the young man; "still I thought it best to submit it to you before sending it off. You see the lady who writes has been getting up a 'Ringamy Club' in Kalamazoo, and she asks you to give her an autographic sentiment which they will cherish as the motto of the club. So I wrote the sentence, 'All classes of labor should have equal compensation.' If that won't do, I can easily change it.'

"Oh, that will do first rate—first rate."

"Of course it is awful rot, but I thought it would please the feminine mind."

"Awful *what* did you say, Mr. Scriver?"

"Well, slush—if that expresses it better. Of course, you don't believe any such nonsense."

Mr. Johnson Ringamy frowned as he looked at his secretary.

"I don't think I understand you," he said, at last.

"Well, look here, Mr. Ringamy, speaking now, not as a paid servant to his master, but——"

"Now, Scriver, I won't have any talk like that. There is no master or servant idea between us. There oughtn't to be between anybody. All men are free and equal."

"They are in theory, and in my eye, as I might say if I wanted to make it more expressive."

"Scriver, I cannot congratulate you on your expressive language, if I may call it so. But we are wandering from the argument. You were going to say that speaking as——Well, go on."

"I was going to say that, speaking as one reasonably sensible man to another, without any gammon about it; don't you think it is rank nonsense to hold that one class of labor should be as well compensated as another. Honestly now?"

The author sat back in his chair and gazed across the table at his secretary.

Finally, he said:

“My dear Scriver, you can’t really mean what you say. You know that I hold that all classes of labor should have exactly the same compensation. The miner, the blacksmith, the preacher, the postal clerk, the author, the publisher, the printer—yes, the man who sweeps out the office, or who polishes boots, should each share alike, if this world were what it should be—yes, and what it *will* be. Why, Scriver, you surely couldn’t have read my book——”

“Read it? why, hang it, I *wrote* it.”

“You wrote it? The deuce you did! I always thought I was the author of ——”

“So you are. But didn’t I take it all down in shorthand, and didn’t I whack it out on the type-writer, and didn’t I go over the proof sheets with you. And yet you ask me if I have read it!”

“Oh, yes, quite right, I see what you mean. Well, if you paid as much attention to the arguments as you did to the mechanical production of the book, I should think you would not ask if I really meant what I said.”

“Oh, I suppose you meant it all right enough—in a way—in theory, perhaps, but——”

“My dear sir, allow me to say that a theory which is not practical, is simply no theory at all. The great success of ‘Gazing Upward,’ has been due to the fact that it is an eminently practical work. The nationalization of everything is not a matter of theory. The ideas advocated in that book, can be seen at work at any time. Look at the Army, look at the Post Office.”

“Oh, that’s all right, looking at things in bulk. Let us come down to practical details. Detail is the real test of any scheme. Take this volume, ‘Gazing Upward.’ Now, may I ask how much this book has netted you up to date?”

“Oh, I don’t know exactly. Somewhere in the neighborhood of £20,000.”

“Very well then. Now let us look for a moment at the method by which that book was produced. You walked up and down this room with your hands behind your back, and dictated chapter after chapter, and I sat at this table taking it all down in shorthand. Then you went out and took the air while I industriously whacked it out on the type-writer.”

“I wish you wouldn’t say ‘whacked,’ Scriver. That’s twice you’ve used it.”

“All right:—typographical error—For ‘whacked’ read ‘manipulated.’ Then you looked over the type-written pages, and I erased and wrote in and finally got out a perfect copy. Now I worked as hard—probably harder—than you did, yet the success of that book was entirely due to you, and not to me. Therefore it is quite right that you should get £20,000 and that I should get two pounds a week. Come now, isn’t it? Speaking as a man of common sense.”

“Speaking exactly in that way I say no it is not right. If the world were properly ruled the compensation of author and secretary would have been exactly the same.”

“Oh, well, if you go so far as that,” replied the Secretary, “I have nothing more to say.”

The author laughed, and the two men bent their energies to the correspondence. When the task was finished, Scriver said:

“I would like to get a couple of days off, Mr. Ringamy. I have some private business to attend to.”

“When could you get back?”

“I’ll report to you on Thursday morning.”

“Very well, then. Not later than Thursday. I think I’ll take a couple of days off myself.”

On Thursday morning Mr. Johnson Ringamy sat in his library looking out of the window, but the day was not as pleasant as when he last gazed at the hills, and the woods, and green fields. A wild spring storm lashed the landscape, and rattled the raindrops against the pane. Mr. Ringamy waited for some time and then opened the study door and looked in. The little room was empty. He rang the bell, and the trim servant-girl appeared.

“Has Mr. Scriver come in yet?”

“No, sir, he haven’t.”

“Perhaps the rain has kept him.”

“Mr. Scriver said that when you come back, sir, there was a letter on the table as was for you.”

“Ah, so there is. Thank you, that will do.”

The author opened the letter and read as follows:

“MY DEAR MR. RINGAMY,—Your arguments the other day fully convinced me that you were right, and I was wrong (“Ah! I thought they would,” murmured the author). I have therefore taken a step toward putting your theories into practice. The scheme is an old one in commercial life, but new in its present application, so much so that I fear it will find no defenders except yourself, and I trust that now when I am far away (“Dear me, what does this mean!” cried the author) you will show any doubters that I acted on the principles which will govern the world when the theories of ‘Gazing Upward’ are put into practice. For fear that all might not agree with you at present, I have taken the precaution of going to that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no extradition treaty forces the traveler to return—sunny Spain. You said you could not tell my rendition of your signature from your own. Neither could the bank cashier. My exact mutation of your signature has enabled me to withdraw £10,000 from your bank account. Half the profits, you know. You can send future accumulations, for the book will continue to sell, to the address of

“ADAM SCRIVER.

“Poste Restant, Madrid, Spain”

Mr. Ringamy at once put the case in the hands of the detectives, where it still remains.

A SLIPPERY CUSTOMER.

When John Armstrong stepped off the train at the Union Station, in Toronto, Canada, and walked outside, a small boy accosted him.

“Carry your valise up for you, sir?”

“No, thank you,” said Mr. Armstrong.

“Carry it up for ten cents, sir?”

“No.”

“Take it up for five cents, sir?”

“Get out of my way, will you?”

The boy got out of the way, and John Armstrong carried the valise himself.

There was nearly half a million dollars in it, so Mr. Armstrong thought it best to be his own porter.

In the bay window of one of the handsomest residences in Rochester, New York, sat Miss Alma Temple, waiting for her father to come home from the bank. Mr. Horace Temple was one of the solid men of Rochester, and was president of the Temple National Bank. Although still early in December, the winter promised to be one of the most severe for many years, and the snow lay crisp and hard on the streets, but not enough for sleighing. It was too cold for snow, the weatherwise said. Suddenly Miss Alma drew back from the window with a quick flush on her face that certainly was not caused by the coming of her father. A dapper young man sprang lightly up the steps, and pressed the electric button at the door. When the young man entered the room a moment later Miss Alma was sitting demurely by the open fire. He advanced quickly toward her,

and took both her outstretched hands in his. Then, furtively looking around the room, he greeted her still more affectionately, in a manner that the chronicler of these incidents, is not bound to particularize. However, the fact may be mentioned that whatever resistance the young woman thought fit to offer was of the faintest and most futile kind, and so it will be understood, at the beginning, that these two young persons had a very good understanding with each other.

“You seem surprised to see me,” he began.

“Well, Walter, I understood that you left last time with some energetically expressed resolutions never to darken our doors again.”

“Well, you see, my dear, I am sometimes a little hasty; and, in fact, the weather is so dark nowadays, anyhow, that a little extra darkness does not amount to much, and so I thought I would take the risk of darkening them once more.”

“But I also understood that my father made you promise, or that you promised voluntarily, not to see me again without his permission?”

“Not voluntarily. Far from it. Under compulsion, I assure you. But I didn’t come to see you at all. That’s where you are mistaken. The seeing you is merely an accident, which I have done my best to avoid. Fact! The girl said, ‘Won’t you walk into the drawing-room,’ and naturally I did so. Never expected to find you here. I thought I saw a young lady at the window as I came up, but I got such a momentary glimpse that I might have been mistaken.”

“Then I will leave you and not interrupt——”

“Not at all. Now I beg of you not to leave on my account, Alma. You know I would not put you to any trouble for the world.”

“You are very kind, I am sure, Mr. Brown.”

“I am indeed, Miss Temple. All my friends admit that. But now that you are here—by the way, I came to see Mr. Temple. Is he at home?”

“I am expecting him every moment.”

“Oh, well, I’m disappointed; but I guess I will bear up for awhile— until he comes, you know.”

“I thought your last interview with him was not so pleasant that you would so

soon seek another."

"The fact is, Alma, we both lost our tempers a bit, and no good ever comes of that. You can't conduct business in a heat, you know."

"Oh, then the asking of his daughter's hand was business—a mere business proposition, was it?"

"Well, I confess he put it that way—very strongly, too. Of course, with me there would have been pleasure mixed with it if he had—but he didn't. See here, Alma—tell me frankly (of course he talked with you about it) what objection he has to me anyhow."

"I suppose you consider yourself such a desirable young man that it astonishes you greatly that any person should have any possible objection to you?"

"Oh, come now, Alma; don't hit a fellow when he's down, you know. I don't suppose I have more conceit than the average young man; but then, on the other hand, I am not such a fool, despite appearances, as not to know that I am considered by some people as quite an eligible individual. I am not a pauper exactly, and your father knows that. I don't think I have many very bad qualities. I don't get drunk; I don't —oh, I could give quite a list of the things I don't do."

"You are certainly frank enough, my eligible young man. Still you must not forget that my papa is considered quite an eligible father-in-law, if it comes to that."

"Why, of course, I admit it. How could it be otherwise when he has such a charming daughter?"

"You know I don't mean that, Walter. You were speaking of wealth and so was I. Perhaps we had better change the subject."

"By the way, that reminds me of what I came to see you about. What do——"

"To see me? I thought you came to see my father."

"Oh, yes—certainly—I did come to see him, of course, but in case I saw you, I thought I would ask you for further particulars in the case. I have asked you the question but you have evaded the answer. You did not tell me why he is so prejudiced against me. Why did he receive me in such a gruff manner when I spoke to him about it? It is not a criminal act to ask a man for his daughter. It is

not, I assure you. I looked up the law on the subject, and a young friend of mine, who is a barrister, says there is no statute in the case made and provided. The law of the State of New York does not recognize my action as against the peace and prosperity of the commonwealth. Well, he received me as if I had been caught robbing the bank. Now I propose to know what the objection is. I am going to hear——"

"Hush! Here is papa now."

Miss Alma quickly left the room, and met her father in the hall. Mr. Brown stood with his hands in his pockets and his back to the fire. He heard the gruff voice of Mr. Temple say, apparently in answer to some information given him by his daughter: "Is he? What does he want?"

There was a moment's pause, and then the same voice said:

"Very well, I will see him in the library in a few minutes."

Somehow the courage of young Mr. Brown sank as he heard the banker's voice, and the information he had made up his mind to demand with some hauteur, he thought he would ask, perhaps, in a milder manner.

Mr. Brown brightened up as the door opened, but it was not Miss Alma who came in. The servant said to him:

"Mr. Temple is in the library, sir. Will you come this way!"

He followed and found the banker seated at his library table, on which he had just placed some legal-looking papers, bound together with a thick rubber band. It was evident that his work did not stop when he left the bank. Young Brown noticed that Mr. Temple looked careworn and haggard, and that his manner was very different from what it had been on the occasion of the last interview.

"Good evening, Mr. Brown. I am glad you called. I was on the point of writing to you, but the subject of our talk the other night was crowded from my mind by more important matters."

Young Mr. Brown thought bitterly that there ought not to be matters more important to a father than his daughter's happiness, but he had the good sense not to say so.

"I spoke to you on that occasion with a—in a manner that was—well, hardly

excusable, and I wish to say that I am sorry I did so. What I had to state might have been stated with more regard for your feelings."

"Then may I hope, Mr. Temple, that you have changed your mind with——"

"No, sir. What I said then—that is, the substance of what I said, not the manner of saying it—I still adhere to."

"May I ask what objection you have to me?"

"Certainly. I have the same objection that I have to the majority of the society young men of the present day. If I make inquiries about you, what do I find? That you are a noted oarsman—that you have no profession—that your honors at college consisted in being captain of the football team, and——"

"No, no, the baseball club."

"Same thing, I suppose."

"Quite different, I assure you, Mr. Temple."

"Well, it is the same to me at any rate. Now, in my time young men had a harder row to hoe, and they hoed it. I am what they call a self-made man and probably I have a harsher opinion of the young men of the present day than I should have. But if I had a son I would endeavor to have him know how to do something, and then I would see that he did it."

"I am obliged to you for stating your objection, Mr. Temple. I have taken my degree in Harvard law school, but I have never practiced, because, as the little boy said, I didn't have to. Perhaps if some one had spoken to me as you have done I would have pitched in and gone to work. It is not too late yet. Will you give me a chance? The position of cashier in your bank, for instance?"

The effect of these apparently innocent words on Mr. Temple was startling. He sprang to his feet and brought down his clenched fist on the table with a vehemence that made young Mr. Brown jump. "What do you mean, sir?" he cried, sternly. "What do you mean by saying such a thing?"

"Why, I—I—I—mean——" stammered Brown, but he could get no further. He thought the old man had suddenly gone crazy. He glared across the library table at Brown as if the next instant he would spring at his throat. Then the haggard look came into his face again, he passed his hand across his brow, and

sank into his chair with a groan.

“My dear sir,” said Brown, approaching him, “what is the matter? Is there anything I can——”

“Sit down, please,” answered the banker, melancholy. “You will excuse me I hope, I am very much troubled. I did not intend to speak of it, but some explanation is due to you. A month from now, if you are the kind of man that most of your fellows are, you will not wish to marry my daughter. There is every chance that at that time the doors of my bank will be closed.”

“You astonish me, sir. I thought——”

“Yes, and so every one thinks. I have seldom in my life trusted the wrong man, but this time I have done so, and the one mistake seems likely to obliterate all that I have succeeded in doing in a life of hard work.”

“If I can be of any financial assistance I will be glad to help you.”

“How much?”

“Well, I don’t know—50,000 dollars perhaps or——”

“I must have 250,000 dollars before the end of this month.”

“Two hundred and fifty thousand!”

“Yes, sir. William L. Staples, the cashier of our bank, is now in Canada with half a million of the bank funds. No one knows it but myself and one or two of the directors. It is generally supposed that he has gone to Washington on a vacation.”

“But can’t you put detectives on his track?”

“Certainly. Then the theft would be made public at once. The papers would be full of it. There might be a run on the bank, and we would have to close the doors the next day. To put the detectives on his track would merely mean bringing disaster on our own heads. Staples is quite safe, and he knows it. Thanks to an idiotic international arrangement he is as free from danger of arrest in Canada as you are here. It is impossible to extradite him for stealing.”

“But I think there is a law against bringing stolen money into Canada.”

“Perhaps there is. It would not help us at the present moment. We must

compromise with him, if we can find him in time. Of course, even if the bank closed, we would pay everything when there was time to realize. But that is not the point. It would mean trouble and disaster, and would probably result in other failures all through one man's rascality."

"Then it all resolves itself to this. Staples must be found quietly and negotiated with. Mr. Temple, let me undertake the finding of him, and the negotiating, also, if you will trust me."

"Do you know him?"

"Never saw him in my life."

"Here is his portrait. He is easily recognized from that. You couldn't mistake him. He is probably living at Montreal under an assumed name. He may have sailed for Europe. You will say nothing of this to anybody?"

"Certainly not. I will leave on to-night's train for Montreal, or on the first train that goes."

Young Mr. Brown slipped the photograph into his pocket and shook hands with the banker. Somehow his confident, alert bearing inspired the old man with more hope than he would have cared to admit, for, as a general thing, he despised the average young man.

"How long can you hold out if this does not become public?"

"For a month at least; probably for two or three."

"Well, don't expect to hear from me too soon. I shall not risk writing. If there is anything to communicate, I will come myself."

"It is very good of you to take my trouble on your shoulders like this. I am very much obliged to you."

"I am not a philanthropist, Mr. Temple," replied young Brown.

When young Mr. Brown stepped off the train at the Central Station in Toronto, a small boy accosted him.

“Carry your valise up for you, sir?”

“Certainly,” said Brown, handing it to him.

“How much do I owe you?” he asked at the lobby of the hotel.

“Twenty-five cents,” said the boy promptly, and he got it.

Brown registered on the books of the hotel as John A. Walker, of Montreal.

Mr. Walter Brown, of Rochester, was never more discouraged in his life than at the moment he wrote on the register the words, “John A. Walker, Montreal.” He had searched Montreal from one end to the other, but had found no trace of the man for whom he was looking. Yet, strange to say, when he raised his eyes from the register they met the face of William L. Staples, ex-cashier. It was lucky for Brown that Staples was looking at the words he had written, and not at himself, or he would have noticed Brown’s involuntary start of surprise, and flush of pleasure. It was also rather curious that Mr. Brown had a dozen schemes in his mind for getting acquainted with Staples when he met him, and yet that the first advance should be made by Staples himself.

“You are from Montreal,” said Mr. Staples, alias John Armstrong.

“That’s my town,” said Mr. Brown.

“What sort of a place is it in winter? Pretty lively?”

“Oh, yes. Good deal of a winter city, Montreal is. How do you mean, business or sport?”

“Well, both. Generally where there’s lots of business there’s lots of fun.”

“Yes, that’s so,” assented Brown. He did not wish to prolong the conversation. He had some plans to make, so he followed his luggage up to his room. It was

evident that he would have to act quickly. Staples was getting tired of Toronto.

Two days after Brown had his plans completed. He met Staples one evening in the smoking-room of the hotel.

“Think of going to Montreal?” asked Brown.

“I did think of it. I don’t know, though. Are you in business there?”

“Yes. If you go, I could give you some letters of introduction to a lot of fellows who would show you some sport, that is, if you care for snow-shoeing, toboganning, and the like of that.”

“I never went in much for athletics,” said Staples.

“I don’t care much for exertion myself,” answered Brown. “I come up here every winter for some ice-yachting. That’s my idea of sport. I own one of the fastest ice-boats on the bay. Ever been out?”

“No, I haven’t. I’ve seen them at it a good deal. Pretty cold work such weather as we’ve been having, isn’t it?”

“I don’t think so. Better come out with me tomorrow?”

“Well, I don’t care if I do.”

The next day and the next they spun around the bay on the ice-boat. Even Staples, who seemed to be tired of almost everything, liked the swiftness and exhilaration of the iceboat.

One afternoon, Brown walked into the bar of the hotel, where he found Staples standing.

“See here, Armstrong.” he cried, slapping that gentleman on the shoulder. “Are you in for a bit of sport? It’s a nice moonlight night, and I’m going to take a spin down to Hamilton to meet some chaps, and we can come back on the iceboat, or if you think it too late, you can stay over, and come back on the train.”

“Hamilton? That’s up the lake, isn’t it?”

“Yes, just a nice run from here. Come along—I counted on you.”

An hour later they were skimming along the frozen surface of the lake.

“Make yourself warm and snug,” said Brown. “That’s what the buffalo robes are for. I must steer, so I have to keep in the open. If I were you I’d wrap up in those robes and go to sleep. I’ll wake you when we’re there.”

“All right,” answered Staples. “That’s not a bad idea.”

“General George Washington!” said young Brown to himself. “This is too soft a snap altogether. I’m going to run him across the lake like a lamb. Before he opens his eyes we’ll have skimmed across the frozen lake, and he’ll find himself in the States again when he wakes up. The only thing now to avoid are the air-holes and ice-hills, and I’m all right.”

He had been over the course before and knew pretty well what was ahead of him. The wind was blowing stiffly straight up the lake and the boat silently, and swifter than the fastest express, was flying from Canada and lessening the distance to the American shore.

“How are you getting along, Walker,” cried Staples, rousing himself up. “First rate,” answered Brown. “We’ll soon be there, Staples.”

That unfortunate slip of the tongue almost cost young Mr. Brown his life. He had been, thinking of the man under his own name, and the name had come out unconsciously. He did not even notice it himself in time to prepare, and the next instant the thief flung himself upon him and jammed his head against the iron rod that guided the rudder, with such a force that the rudder stayed in its place and the boat flew along the ice without a swerve.

“You scoundrel!” roared the bank-robber. “That’s your game, is it? By the gods, I’ll teach you a lesson in the detective business!”

Athlete as young Brown was, the suddenness of the attack, and the fact that Staples clutched both hands round his neck and had his knee on his breast, left him as powerless as an infant. Even then he did not realize what had caused the robber to guess his position.

“For God’s sake, let me up!” gasped Brown. “We’ll be into an air-hole and drowned in a moment.”

“I’ll risk it, you dog! till I’ve choked the breath out of your body.” Brown wriggled his head away from the rudder iron, hoping that the boat would slew around, but it kept its course. He realized that if he was to save his life he would have to act promptly. He seemed to feel his tongue swell in his parched mouth.

His strength was gone and his throat was in an iron vice. He struck out wildly with his feet and one fortunate kick sent the rudder almost at right angles.

Instantly the boat flashed around into the wind. Even if a man is prepared for such a thing, it takes all his nerve and strength to keep him on an iceboat. Staples was not prepared. He launched head first into space and slid for a long distance on the rough ice. Brown was also flung on the ice and lay for a moment gasping for breath. Then he gathered himself together, and slipping his hand under his coat, pulled out his revolver. He thought at first that Staples was shamming, but a closer examination of him showed that the fall on the ice had knocked him senseless.

There was only one thing that young Mr. Brown was very anxious to know. He wanted to know where the money was. He had played the part of private detective well in Toronto, after the very best French style, and had searched the room of Staples in his absence, but he knew the money was not there nor in his valise. He knew equally well that the funds were in some safe deposit establishment in the city, but where he could not find out. He had intended to work on Staples' fears of imprisonment when once he had him safe on the other side of the line. But now that the man was insensible, he argued that it was a good time to find whether or not he had a record of the place of deposit in his pocket-book. He found no such book in his pockets. In searching, however, he heard the rustling of paper apparently in the lining of his coat. Then he noticed how thickly it was padded. The next moment he had it ripped open, and a glance showed him that it was lined with bonds. Both coat and vest were padded in this way—the vest being filled with Bank of England notes, so the chances were that Staples had meditated a tour in Europe. The robber evidently put no trust in Safe Deposits nor banks. Brown flung the thief over on his face, after having unbuttoned coat and vest, doubled back his arms and pulled off these garments. His own, Brown next discarded, and with some difficulty got them on the fallen man and then put on the clothes of mammon.

"This is what I call rolling in wealth." said Brown to himself. He admitted that he felt decidedly better after the change of clothing, cold as it was.

Buttoning his own garments on the prostrate man, Brown put a flask of liquor to his lips and speedily revived him. Staples sat on the ice in a dazed manner, and passed his hand across his brow. In the cold gleam of the moonlight he saw the shining barrel of Brown's revolver "covering" him.

“It’s all up, Mr. Staples. Get on board the iceboat.”

“Where are you going to take me to?”

“I’ll let you go when we come to the coast if you tell me where the money is.”

“You know you are guilty of the crime of kidnapping,” said Mr. Staples, apparently with the object of gaining time. “So you are in some danger of the law yourself.”

“That is a question that can be discussed later on. You came voluntarily, don’t forget that fact. Where’s the money?”

“It is on deposit in the Bank of Commerce.”

“Well, here’s paper and a stylographic pen, if the ink isn’t frozen— no, it’s all right—write a cheque quickly for the amount payable to bearer. Hurry up, or the ink will freeze.”

There was a smile of satisfaction on the face of Staples as he wrote the check.

“There,” he said, with a counterfeited sigh. “That is the amount.”

The check was for 480,000 dollars.

When they came under the shadow of the American coast, Brown ordered his passenger off.

“You can easily reach land from here, and the walk will do you good. I’m going further up the lake.”

When Staples was almost at the land he shouted through the clear night air: “Don’t spend the money recklessly when you get it, Walker.”

“I’ll take care of it, Staples,” shouted back young Brown.

Young Mr. Brown sprang lightly up the steps of the Temple mansion,

Rochester, and pressed the electric button.

“Has Mr. Temple gone to the bank yet?” he asked the servant.

“No, sir; he is in the library.”

“Thank you. Don’t trouble. I know the way.”

Mr. Temple looked around as the young man entered, and, seeing who it was, sprang to his feet with a look of painful expectancy on his face. “There’s a little present for you,” said Mr. Brown, placing a package on the table. “Four hundred and seventy-eight thousand: Bank of England notes and United States bonds.” The old man grasped his hand, strove to speak, but said nothing.

People wondered why young Mr. and Mrs. Brown went to Toronto on their wedding tour in the depth of winter. It was so very unusual, don’t you know.

THE SIXTH BENCH.

She was in earnest; he was not. When that state of things exists anything may happen. The occurrence may be commonplace, comic, or tragic, depending on the temperament and experience of the woman. In this instance the result was merely an appointment—which both of them kept.

Hector McLane came to Paris with noble resolutions, a theory of color, and a small allowance. Paris played havoc with all of these. He was engaged to a nice girl at home, who believed him destined to become a great painter; a delusion which McLane shared.

He entered with great zest into the life of a Parisian art student, but somehow the experience did not equal his anticipations. What he had read in books—poetry and prose—had thrown a halo around the Latin Quarter, and he was therefore disappointed in finding the halo missing. The romance was sordid and mercenary, and after a few months of it he yearned for something better.

In Paris you may have nearly everything—except the something better. It exists, of course, but it rarely falls in the way of the usually impecunious art student. Yet it happened that, as luck was not against the young man, he found it when he had abandoned the search for it.

McLane's theory was that art had become too sombre. The world was running overmuch after the subdued in color. He wanted to be able to paint things as they are, and was not to be deterred if his pictures were called gaudy. He obtained permission to set up his easel in the Church of Notre Dame, and in the dim light there, he endeavored to place on canvas some semblance of the splendor of color that came through the huge rose window high above him. He was discouraged to see how opaque the colors in the canvas were as compared with the translucent hues of the great window. As he leaned back with a sigh of defeat, his wandering eyes met, for one brief instant, something more beautiful than the stained glass, as the handiwork of God must always be more beautiful than the handiwork of man. The fleeting glimpse was of a melting pair of dark limpid eyes, which, meeting his, were instantly veiled, and then he had a longer view of the sweet face they belonged to. It was evident that the young girl had been admiring his work, which was more than he could hope to have the professor at Julien's do.

Lack of assurance was never considered, even by his dearest friend, to be among McLane's failings. He rose from his painting stool, bowed and asked her if she would not sit down for a moment; she could see the— the—painting so much better. The girl did not answer, but turned a frightened look upon him, and fled under the wing of her kneeling duenna, who had not yet finished her devotions. It was evident that the prayers of the girl had been briefer than those of the old woman in whose charge she was. Where the need is greatest the prayer is often the shortest. McLane had one more transitory glimpse of those dark eyes as he held open the swinging door. The unconscious woman and the conscious girl passed out of the church.

This was how it began.

The painting of the colored window of Notre Dame now occupied almost all the time at the disposal of Hector McLane. No great work is ever accomplished without unwearied perseverance. It was remarkable that the realization of this truth came upon him just after he had definitely made up his mind to abandon the task. Before he allowed the swinging door to close he had resolved to pursue his study in color. It thus happened, incidentally, that he saw the young girl again, always at the same hour, and always with the same companion. Once he succeeded, unnoticed by the elder, in slipping a note into her hand, which he was pleased and flattered to see she retained and concealed. Another day he had the joy of having a few whispered words with her in the dim shadow of one of the gigantic pillars. After that, progress was comparatively easy.

Her name was Yvette, he learned, and he was amused to find with what expert dexterity a perfectly guileless and innocent little creature such as she was, managed to elude the vigilance of the aged and experienced woman who had her in charge. The stolen interviews usually took place in the little park behind Notre Dame. There they sat on the bench facing the fountain, or walked up and down on the crunching gravel under the trees. In the afternoons they walked in the secluded part of the park, in the shadow of the great church. It was her custom to send him dainty little notes telling him when she expected to be in the park, giving the number of the bench, for sometimes the duenna could not be eluded, and was seated there with Yvette. On these occasions McLane had to content himself with gazing from afar.

She was so much in earnest that the particular emotion which occupied the place of conscience in McLane's being, was troubled. He thought of the nice girl at home, and fervently hoped nothing of this would ever reach her ears. No

matter how careful a man is, chance sometimes plays him a scurvy trick. McLane remembered instances, and regretted the world was so small. Sometimes a cry of recognition from one on the pavement to a comrade in the park, shouted through the iron railings, sent a shiver through McLane. Art students had an uncomfortable habit of roaming everywhere, and they were boisterous in hailing an acquaintance. Besides, they talked, and McLane dreaded having his little intrigue the joke of the school. At any moment an objectionable art student might drop into the park to sketch the fountain, or the nurses and children, or the back of the cathedral at one end of the park, or even the low, gloomy, unimposing front of the Morgue at the other.

He was an easy-going young fellow, who hated trouble, and perhaps, knowing that the inevitable day of reckoning was approaching, this accounted for the somewhat tardy awakening of his conscience.

He sometimes thought it would be best simply to leave Paris without any explanation, but he remembered that she knew his address, having written to him often, and that by going to the school she could easily find out where his home was. So if there was to be a scene it was much better that it should take place in Paris, rather than where the nice girl lived.

He nerved himself up many times to make the explanation and bring down the avalanche, but when the time came he postponed it. But the inevitable ultimately arrives. He had some difficulty at first in getting her to understand the situation clearly, but when he at last succeeded there was no demonstration. She merely kept her eyes fixed on the gravel and gently withdrew her hand from his. To his surprise she did not cry, nor even answer him, but walked silently to and fro with downcast eyes in the shadow of the church. No one, he said, would ever occupy the place in his heart that she held. He was engaged to the other girl, but he had not known what love was until he met Yvette. He was bound to the other girl by ties he could not break, which was quite true, because the nice girl had a rich father. He drew such a pathetic picture of the loveless life he must in the future lead, that a great wave of self-pity surged up within him and his voice quavered. He felt almost resentful that she should take the separation in such an unemotional manner. When a man gets what he most desires he is still unsatisfied. This was exactly the way he had hoped she would take it.

All things come to an end, even explanations.

“Well, good-bye, Yvette,” he said, reaching out his hand. She hesitated an

instant, then without looking up, placed her small palm in his.

They stood thus for a moment under the trees, while the fountain beside them plashed and trickled musically. The shadow of the church was slowly creeping towards them over the gravel. The park was deserted, except by themselves. She tried gently to withdraw her hand, which he retained.

“Have you nothing to say to me, Yvette?” he asked, with a touch of reproach in his voice.

She did not answer. He held her fingers, which were slipping from his grasp, and the shadow touched her feet.

“Yvette, you will at least kiss me goodbye?”

She quickly withdrew her hand from his, shook her head and turned away. He watched her until she was out of sight, and then walked slowly towards his rooms on the Boulevard St. Germain. His thoughts were not comfortable. He was disappointed in Yvette. She was so clever, so witty, that he had at least expected she would have said something cutting, which he felt he thoroughly deserved. He had no idea she could be so heartless. Then his thoughts turned to the nice girl at home. She, too, had elements in her character that were somewhat bewildering to an honest young man. Her letters for a long time had been infrequent and unsatisfactory. It couldn’t be possible that she had heard anything. Still, there is nothing so easy as point-blank denial, and he would see to that when he reached home.

An explanation awaited him at his rooms on the Boulevard. There was a foreign stamp on the envelope, and it was from the nice girl. There had been a mistake, she wrote, but happily she had discovered it before it was too late. She bitterly reproached herself, taking three pages to do it in, and on the fourth page he gathered that she would be married by the time he had the letter. There appeared to be no doubt that the nice girl fully realized how basely she had treated a talented, hard- working, aspiring, sterling young man, but the realization had not seemingly postponed the ringing of the wedding-bells to any appreciable extent.

Young McLane crushed the letter in his hand and used strong language, as, indeed, he was perfectly justified in doing. He laughed a hard dry laugh at the perfidy of woman. Then his thoughts turned towards Yvette. What a pity it was she was not rich! Like so many other noble, talented men, he realized he could

not marry a poor woman. Suddenly it occurred to him that Yvette might not be poor. The more he pondered over the matter the more astonished he was that he had ever taken her poverty for granted. She dressed richly, and that cost money in Paris. He remembered that she wore a watch which flashed with jewels on the one occasion when he had seen it for a moment. He wished he had postponed his explanation for one more day; still, that was something easily remedied. He would tell her he had thrown over the other girl for her sake. Like a pang there came to him the remembrance that he did not know her address, nor even her family name. Still, she would be sure to visit the little park, and he would haunt it until she came. The haunting would give additional point to his story of consuming love. Anyhow, nothing could be done that night.

In the morning he was overjoyed to receive a letter from Yvette, and he was more than pleased when he read its contents. It asked for one more meeting behind the church.

“I could not tell you to-day,” she wrote, “all I felt. To-morrow you shall know, if you meet me. Do not fear that I will reproach you. You will receive this letter in the morning. At twelve o’clock I shall be waiting for you on the sixth bench on the row south of the fountain—the sixth bench—the farthest from the church.”

“YVETTE.”

McLane was overjoyed at his good luck. He felt that he hardly merited it. He was early at the spot, and sat down on the last bench of the row facing the fountain. Yvette had not yet arrived, but it was still half an hour before the time. McLane read the morning paper and waited. At last the bells all around him chimed the hour of twelve. She had not come. This was unusual, but always possible. She might not have succeeded in getting away. The quarter and then the half hour passed before McLane began to suspect that he had been made the victim of a practical joke. He dismissed the thought; such a thing was so unlike her. He walked around the little park, hoping he had mistaken the row of benches. She was not there. He read the letter again. It was plain enough—the sixth bench. He counted the benches beginning at the church. One—two—three—four—five. There were only five benches in the row.

As he gazed stupidly at the fifth bench a man beside him said—“That is the bench, sir.”

“What do you mean?” cried McLane, turning toward him, astonished at the remark.

“It was there that the young girl was found dead this morning— poisoned, they say.”

McLane stared at him—and then he said huskily—

“Who—was she?”

“Nobody knows that—yet. We will soon know, for everybody, as you see, is going into the Morgue. She’s the only one on the bench to-day. Better go before the crowd gets greater. I have been twice.”

McLane sank on the seat and drew his hand across his forehead.

He knew she was waiting for him on the sixth bench—the furthest from the church!

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