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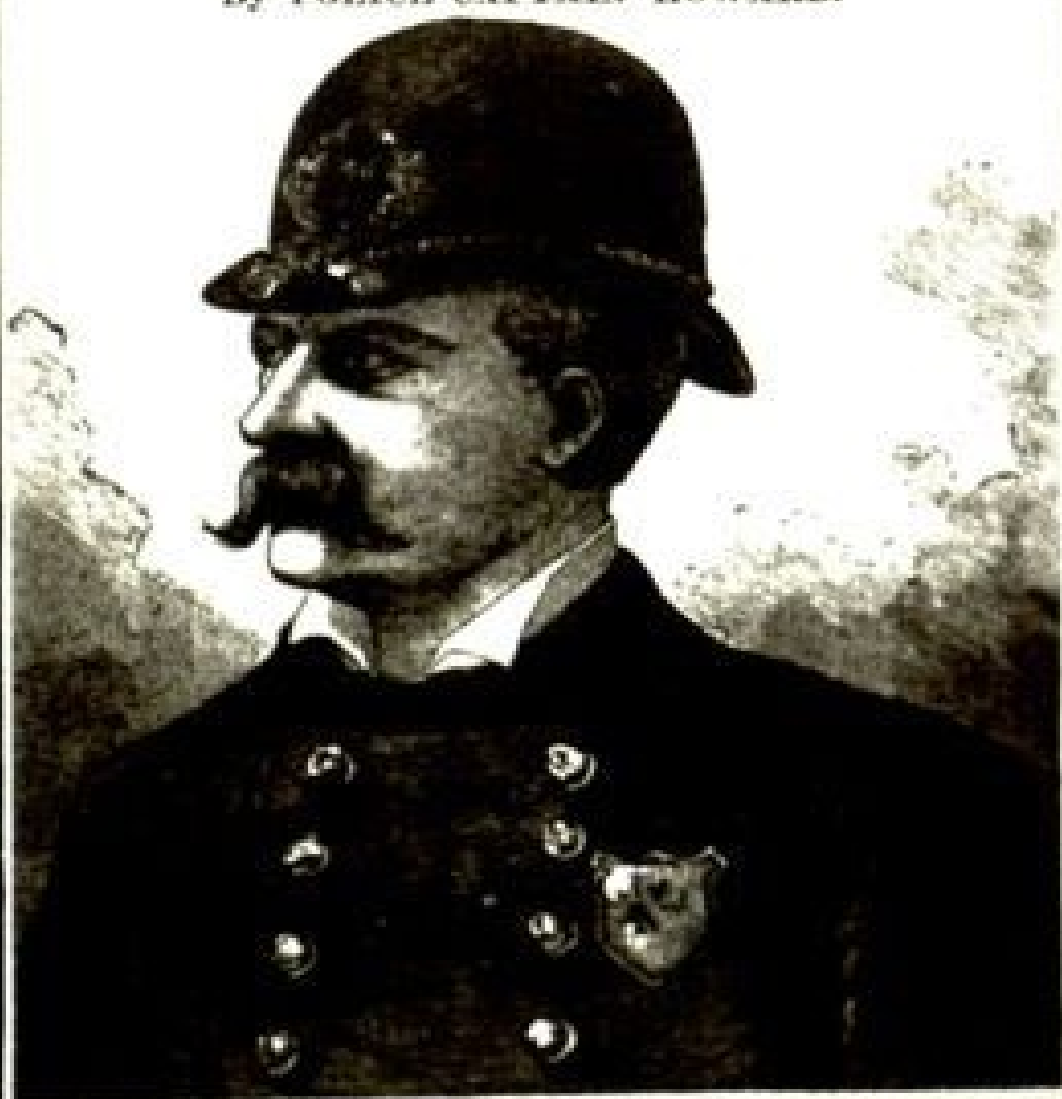
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THE NEW YORK DETECTIVE LIBRARY, Vol. I, No. 70, published by J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO., 100 NASSAU ST., N. Y.

[PRICE]

Vol. I

SHADOW, THE MYSTERIOUS DETECTIVE. By POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD.



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Police Captain Howard

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SHADOW, THE MYSTERIOUS DETECTIVE.

By POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD,

Author of "Old Mystery," "Young Sleuth," "The Silver Dagger," "A Piece of Paper," "The Broken Button,"
etc., etc.

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INTRODUCTORY.

Again I have been called on to entertain my wide circle of young friends, by relating another story of detective life. Before plunging into my story, I have thought it best to address a few words to you personally, and about myself.

It is held as a rule that an author should never introduce himself into the story he is writing, and yet I find, on looking back, that in nearly all of my recent stories I have described myself as playing a more or less conspicuous part.

And yet I could not avoid doing so, as I can plainly see, without having detracted somewhat of interest from the stories.

As I sit here now, prepared to commence, the question arises: "Shall I keep myself in the background, out of sight, or shall I bring myself in, just as I actually took part in the strange story of

"SHADOW, THE MYSTERIOUS DETECTIVE?"

Well, I don't know, but I think it may be just as well to introduce myself when necessary, since when I write thus I feel that my pen is talking to you instead of at you. And, besides, I think that to you the story is more realistic.

Am I right?

Don't each of you feel now as if I had written you a personal letter? And are you not satisfied that there is only one Police Captain Howard, and he that one who now speaks to you?

I am sure of it.

And now for the story.

CHAPTER I.

A MURDER.

It was a dark and stormy night. The rain fell heavily and steadily, and what wind there was roamed through the streets with a peculiar, moaning sound.

It was after the midnight hour.

Not a light was to be seen in any of the houses, nor was there any sound to be heard save that produced by the falling rain, and that sighing of the wind—not unlike the sighs and moans of some uneasy spirit unable to rest in the grave.

It was as disagreeable a night as I ever saw. And I could not help shuddering as I hurried homeward through the storm, with bent head, for I felt somewhat as if I were passing through a city of the dead.

This heavy silence—except for the noises mentioned—was very oppressive; and, while I gave a start, I was also conscious of a sense of relief, when I heard a human voice shouting:

"Help—help!"

I paused short.

My head having been bent, the cry coming so unexpectedly, I could not locate its direction.

Presently it came again.

"Help, for Heaven's sake, help!"

Off I dashed to the rescue.

Crack!

Then came a wild wail.

Crack!

Then I heard a thud, as of a human being falling heavily to the sidewalk. And as the person uttered no further cries, one of two things must be the case—he was either insensible or dead.

I increased my pace, and presently turning a corner, saw a burly fellow just

dragging a body beneath a gas-lamp, the better to enable him to secure the plunder on his victim's body.

The assassin had already secured most of the stricken man's valuables, when my rapid approach alarmed him, and jumping up, he sprang along the street at a break-neck pace.

Crack!

Crack!

I had drawn a revolver, and I sent a couple of bullets after him, hoping to wing him, as well as to extend the alarm which his shots must already have raised.

A policeman put in an appearance some distance down the street, but the flying murderer took a running leap at him, tumbled him head over heels into the gutter, and then succeeded in making his escape.

When I compared notes with the policeman, I found that neither of us had distinctly enough seen the murderer to be able to give any description of him whatever, save that he was a chunky-built man, and seemed roughly dressed.

We were not surprised, on examining into the prostrate man's condition, to find him dead.

Right in the center of his forehead was a small hole, edged with drying, clotted blood, which mutely said:

"Here entered the fatal messenger from a death-dealing weapon."

The body was conveyed to the station-house, there to remain until it was claimed or conveyed to the morgue.

An examination of the pockets resulted in our learning that his name was Tom Smith. As to his residence, we could find no clew from anything he had on his person, or by consulting the directory.

About two o'clock the next afternoon, a wild-eyed woman entered the station-house, and, in trembling tones, asked to see the body.

I was present at the time, and my heart went out in pity to the pale-faced woman—or perhaps I should say girl, for she certainly had not seen her twentieth birthday.

She disappeared into the inner room where the body was lying, and a few seconds later I heard a low and anguished cry. Then I knew that she had

recognized the poor fellow as some one who was near and dear to her.

Kindly hands drew her away from beside the body, and when I saw her again her face was convulsed with anguish, and tears were streaming from her eyes.

For fully half an hour she continued weeping, and not a man of us was there who did not feel uncomfortable. We did not venture to console her, for it seemed like sacrilege to intrude on her during the first period of her sorrow.

Then her sobbing became less loud, and gradually she subdued the more demonstrative expressions of grief.

She finally lifted her head, and in a hollow voice asked to hear the story of his death.

The captain briefly outlined what was known, and she calmly listened to the tale.

"Can I see the person who first reached him?" she asked, when the captain had finished.

"Yes," was the reply. "Detective Howard here is the man you want."

She wished to see me alone, and I conducted her into another room.

Arrived here, she begged me minutely to relate what had happened; and, exhibiting a singular self-control, asked for as close a description of the assassin as I could give.

"You knew him very well?" said I, when an opportunity occurred.

"Yes."

"Perhaps he was your brother?"

"No," she said, and a faint flush flitted into her pallid face for an instant. "No," and then her voice sank to a whisper, "he was to have been my husband."

"Ah! And now, miss, you don't suppose that the assassin could have been an enemy of his? Did he have any enemies, who might rob him, as a blind to cover up their real motive?"

"Tom have an enemy? No—no—he was too good and kind for that. It was done by some murderous wretch for the sake of plunder. Tom must have resisted being robbed, and the ruffian killed him."

"That is my own theory. And—I do not wish to pain you, miss—but what about the body? Has he any family or relations?"

"No, none in this world. He and I were all in all to each other," and the eyes of the girl became moist again; but she fought back the tears, and quite calmly said:

"I will take care of the body."

Then a troubled expression crossed her face; and, to make a long story short, I gained her confidence, learned that she had not enough to properly inter her lover, and loaned her the money.

With tears of gratitude in her eyes, she thanked me, and every word came straight from her heart.

Her name was Nellie Millbank, she said, and she was utterly alone in the world. Until several days before, she had been employed in a store, but had then been discharged.

Tom was a clerk, but had only a small salary, as soon as which was raised they were to have been married. He had been to see her on that fatal night, to tell her he had obtained a day off, and was going to take her on an excursion on the morrow.

She had been dressed and waiting for him, but he had not come.

Alarmed, for he had always kept his word, she knew not what to do, nor what to think, until, having bought an afternoon paper, she saw an account of the shooting.

This was her simple history.

After the inquest, the body was delivered to her, and then she faded from my sight and knowledge for a long while. Exactly how long, the ensuing chapters will inform you.



CHAPTER II.

MAT MORRIS.

"I've been discharged, mother."

"What?"

"I've been discharged."

The face of Mrs. Morris became very grave, and presently her eyes were turned on the boyish yet manly face of her son Mat. Earnestly she gazed at him for several seconds, and then her lips parted with a smile which, wan as it was, expressed satisfaction.

"It was no fault of yours. You did nothing wrong, my son?"

"No, mother, it was not through any fault of mine that I was discharged. Business has fallen off so very much of late that they were compelled to reduce the number of hands. And as I was one of the newest, I was among those laid off."

"Of course I am sorry," said poor Mrs. Morris, "but we must do the best we can."

"I'll not act the part of a sluggard, mother, you can depend on that. I'll try and find something to do to keep the wolf from the door. And my boss gave me a splendid recommendation, and said if business got better he'd send for me at once."

Mat was a good son.

Few better were to be found.

His worst fault, perhaps, was in being a little reckless, or over-brave and independent.

None could insult him with impunity, nor could he nor would he stand by and silently witness anybody being imposed upon. He invariably took the part of the under dog in the fight.

Hardly had Mat finished speaking, when the door opened and a girl entered; a girl whom both mother and son greeted with glances of affection.

Her name was Helen Dilt.

Five years before, when the circumstances of the Morris family had been better, they had taken her from the street—found starving and freezing there on a cold winter's night—and had cared for her.

Mr. Morris had died only a year later, since which time Helen had clung to them, doing what little she could to keep the roof above their heads.

She was not yet sixteen—a slight and winsome little creature; not beautiful, but with a sweet face that when lighted by a smile was remarkably winning.

Of her history she knew nothing.

Her knowledge of herself could be summed up in a few words.

For years cared for by a drunken old hag, with only a faint remembrance of a sweet, sad face before that, she had lost even such a squalid home as she had when the hag died.

Then she had come with the Morris family.

And well did they love her.

Mrs. Morris loved her like a daughter, and Mat loved her much better than a sister. And Helen returned the latter's deep regard.

While no word had openly been spoken, it was tacitly understood by all three that some day, when Mat and Helen were old enough, and the circumstances permitted, they were to be married.

Mat was of slight build, of lithe and willowy frame, in which, however, resided an amount of strength which few would have dreamed possible.

He was just eighteen.

There is an old saying—"that it never rains but it pours."

It seems true sometimes.

Helen, employed in a situation bringing her three dollars a week, had also come home with the news of having been discharged.

It was a grave little trio that gathered about the supper table that night.

Latterly they had been getting along comfortably, but now destitution and want again stared them in the face, and must inevitably take up quarters in the household, unless some one obtained work of some kind to bring in some money.

Mat was up and away early the next morning, and for many mornings thereafter, but although he honestly searched all day long for employment, none was to be found.

And Helen, too, sought for work, but failed to find it, and day by day their slender stock of money diminished, until at last they had eaten the last meal, and had no money wherewith to buy another.

That evening Helen left the house and was gone for a short while, and when she came back she did not say where she had been.

But she had gone with her shawl to a pawn-shop, and hid away in her dress was the pittance which had been loaned on it.

In the morning she stole out unheard, not long after daylight, and invested her capital in newspapers.

Her cheeks were flushed with shame as she stood on the street, offering her papers for sale. But she fought back her pride. They had been very kind to her, and she should be only too glad, she told herself, to make the sacrifice for their dear sakes.

And how happy she was when she hastened to their home, and put her morning's earnings into the hand of Mrs. Morris.

In vain Mat protested against Helen's selling papers. Let him do it, he said.

"It will need all we can both make to live and pay the rent," Helen quietly returned.

"But you must not go on the street to sell papers, Helen," protested Mat.

"I am young and can afford better to do this than that our good mother should work," said Helen, bravely, casting an affectionate glance toward Mrs. Morris.

And Mat said no more.

It was one day several weeks subsequent to the time when she first began selling papers, that a gentleman stopped to purchase a *Herald* of Helen.

He had paid for it in a mechanical way, and was turning away when he chanced to glance at the face of the newsgirl.

He started slightly, then cast a keen glance at her, paused, and then in a tone of assumed carelessness, asked:

"Haven't I seen you somewhere else, my girl? You have not always sold papers?"

"No, sir."

"Where can I have seen you?"

"I don't know, sir," was the only reply, for Helen did not care to talk to him.

But she saw that he was an elderly man, his hair was streaked with gray, and in clothing and manner he bore the impress of apparent respectability.

"What is your name?" he inquired.

"Helen."

"What!" with another start. "Your name is Helen, is it?" recovering himself. "Helen what, my girl?"

"Helen Morris," was the reply, for she had now for a long time used the name of her benefactors as her own.

Again the gentleman glanced keenly at her, and then moved away slowly, muttering to himself:

"Morris—Morris! I can't understand it. That likeness is wonderful, and cannot exist as a mere accident. I must investigate this, and I'd bet anything that that is not her name."

The gentleman entered a large building on Broadway, ascended in the elevator, and opened the door of an office, on which was lettered the legend:

"JOSEPH BROWN,
Attorney at Law."

Having written a note, he dispatched his office boy with it to a liquor saloon, it being directed to James McGinnis, in care of the saloon's proprietor.

Late that afternoon a beetle-browed and forbidding-looking individual entered Brown's office.

"Well, I got your letter and I've come!" was the rather sullen salutation he gave Brown. "What's up now? Want to badger me again?"

"Don't talk to me in that manner!" said Brown, quietly, yet in a grim tone. "Remember that I saved your neck from a halter, which I can again put around it at any moment."

The man shuddered, and became meek as a lamb.

"What do you want?"

"That's better," and Brown smiled. "I don't want much of you just now," and then he sank his voice to a whisper.

"That's easy enough," McGinnis said, a few minutes later. "I can let you know to-morrow morning, I think."

"Very well."

When McGinnis put in an appearance the next morning, it was evident from his expression that he had been successful in the task required of him by Brown.

"I've found out that her name isn't Morris. That's the name of the people as she lives with. She's a kind of an adopted daughter, and they said as how her real name was Dilk, or something like that."

"Ha! I thought so," Brown exclaimed, inwardly. And then he bade McGinnis sit down, and for nearly half an hour they conversed in low tones.

Then Brown put a roll of bills into his confederate's hands, and the latter withdrew, saying:

"I'll do the job nately, and there'll be no trouble after it."

And that night Helen did not return home. Half-crazed with alarm, Mat and his mother awaited her coming until nine o'clock, or a little after, and then the young fellow could stand it no longer, but went in search of Helen.

He could not find her.

She did not return during the night, nor even the next day, nor when night again fell.

Mat had scoured the city for her, had visited the places where she usually sold papers, and had questioned all the boot-blacks and newsboys, but had only obtained the meager and unsatisfactory information from one little fellow that he had seen Helen in company with a man just after dusk.

She had disappeared completely, had vanished as utterly as a mist that is dissolved by the sun's warm rays.

"She is gone from us, mother," Mat at last said, in a choking voice. "You remember, mother, what Helen has told us—her impressions concerning her early childhood. And, mother, I believe there is money at the bottom of the thing, that Helen stood in somebody's way, and has been spirited off by this person's orders."

"It is possible."

"Possible! I feel it to be the truth. And I shall not rest night or day, mother, until I have found her. Good-bye, mother, for I am going. Heaven in mercy assist you and care for you until I can come back to do so. Good-bye!"

Mrs. Morris did not wish him to go, but she could not thwart him, for she knew how much he loved Helen. But her face was very pale and anguished as she saw him go.



CHAPTER III.

SHADOW—WHO WAS HE?

Mat Morris was grimly in earnest in his determination to find the missing Helen. He had no clew to follow, no starting-point from which to begin his search, but he would not permit himself to think about it in this light, for fear he would become discouraged.

Helen was alive—was somewhere—could be found—and must be found!

First of all, he paid a visit to police head-quarters, and described the man who had been seen with Helen, as the boy had described him.

From one detective to another he went, giving the description, and inquiring if any could say who tallied in appearance with it.

Among the others he came to me, but, like the others, I could not even guess who the person might be, so meager was the description.

I asked him if he intended turning detective himself.

"I do," he firmly said; "and I shall never give up until I have found her, and unearthed the rascal who has done this."

"Who is this 'her' you speak of?"

"A girl whom I love dearer than my life itself!" was the earnest reply—not given in a mawkish and sentimental tone, but in a manly way that won for the speaker my good opinion.

"Perhaps I can help you," I said. "Tell me your story."

He did so, but so little did it contain that I could see no advice to give him, and told him so frankly.

"I like you for your frankness," said Mat; "but say no more or you may discourage me."

I asked him his name, and when he had told me what it was, I found that I had known his father.

"I hope you may be successful—I sincerely hope so," I told him, as we shook

hands at parting.

Mat Morris went his road and I went mine, and in the busy details of my life soon forgot him.

One afternoon, a lot of us detectives were grouped together, discussing an offer of a reward of one thousand dollars for the discovery of some stolen bonds and the person who had made free with them.

The known facts of the case were in our possession, and when I sat in my room that evening, recalling them one by one, it struck me that a certain criminal might have had a hand in the affair, for the method of making the robbery was in his style.

Singular as it may seem, nearly every professional thief has a method of working up his "jobs," and a detective very frequently can positively say: "Such and such a person had a hand in that affair," merely because they know the style and method of the work.

I put on my coat and hat and went out, my footsteps turned in the direction of this person's haunts.

As I drew near to a saloon which he was accustomed to frequent, I caught sight of the very individual, and followed him.

He passed the saloon, and going on, turned the next corner.

I hastened forward, was about to turn the corner, when a slight thing brought me suddenly to a halt.

It was nothing more nor less than a simple shadow, cast on the walk by a gaslight. It was the shadow of a slender figure, in male attire, a cap on the head, one hand raised, while the index finger was being shaken after somebody in the distance.

Simple as the circumstance was it impressed me, and I stood still and waited.

My eyes wandered from the shadow for an instant, and when my eyes sought the spot where it had been, it was gone.

I sprang to the corner.

The criminal whom I had been following was out of sight, and the person who had cast that shadow was nowhere visible.

And yet I had heard no footsteps, and the time anyhow was too brief for the

person to have gone more than a dozen feet.

I was deeply puzzled.

Soon after I turned my steps toward home, for I was balked for the present, whatever else might be the case. I remember just before leaving the spot that I muttered, rather loud, perhaps:

"Where did that shadow disappear to so suddenly?"

The next day these words were recalled to my mind when a note was handed to me, and I had opened it.

"The bonds are hidden under the dock at the foot of —— street. The person who stole them will recover them to-night. Capture him. Claim the reward; keep half, and be ready to give the other half at an instant's demand to

SHADOW."

"Let the word answer as a countersign."

This note puzzled me not a little, and I hardly knew what to do in regard to it; for I did not wish to be made a fool of, as well as the laughing-stock of the other detectives.

I finally determined to tack my faith to this unknown person who signed "Shadow," and that night took a couple of men to the spot designated, and captured the bond thief after he had taken the bonds from their hiding-place.

I got the reward, and kept five hundred myself, reserving the other five hundred until it should be demanded of me, when, where, or how, I had not the slightest idea.

Several weeks later, after the midnight hour, I was suddenly brought to a halt as I drew near my house, for across the walk was cast that shadow.

I knew it must be the same one, and belonging to the same person, for the hand was raised, and the index finger shaking.

Determined that this shadow should not disappear so suddenly and mysteriously again, I kept my eyes on it as I hastily sprang forward.

The shadow moved, and its owner suddenly stood before me—a lithe figure, in male attire, with a large-peaked cap.

I glanced keenly at the face.

It was a boyish-looking face, with eyes very deep-set, it seemed to me, and a face, besides, that lacked expression.

"Shadow!" was uttered by a low voice, evidently disguised, and then a hand was extended—for the money, as I well knew.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"Shadow!" was the single word of reply.

"What do you want?"

"You know perfectly well. If you are villainous enough to keep it all, why, do so!" and he would have glided away.

"Hold on! Here is your share. And now, who are you?" and I bent closer to the mysterious being, and then discovered that I did not see a real face, but a closely-fitting mask, which defied all but the closest scrutiny.

"I am Shadow."

"A detective?"

"Yes. Now go—leave me alone—cease your questioning. And, as you value my friendship (which may be worth much to you) never speak to me again, but act simply as I shall write. You have compelled me to break an oath—be satisfied and go; and never cause me to break a new oath, which I now again make, or I swear solemnly that you shall regret it."

Thus spoke Shadow, and then he went swiftly away, with the most noiseless steps of any human being I ever saw.

I took a few steps in the same direction, but I paused when he turned and shook that index finger at me in that peculiar way.

He was a deep mystery to me.

"Who was he?"

Disguised as a sailor just arrived in port, I shadowed a man into a low dive some nights later.

Two professional burglars, well known to me, passed near me as I crossed the room.

"Could that little chap have overheard anything we said?" one rather anxiously asked of the other.

"No," was the careless reply. "I've seen him before, and know that he's deaf and dumb. If it hadn't been for that, I'd a told you of his being near us."

Thus much I heard, and then distance swallowed up the sound of their voices.

I glanced around in quest of the little chap alluded to, and my eyes lighted on—Shadow!

Was he playing deaf and dumb?

I got near him after a while, and managed to whisper into his ear:

"I know you now. I detected you from the way you carry your head—you are Mat Morris."

Shadow's hand was resting on the table. Without even glancing up to see if I was looking, his index finger began forming letters on the table—letters, of course, that were invisible.

My eyes followed the finger carefully, and I read the words:

"Fool! Your folly may cost us both our lives. I am Shadow—nothing else. Do not seek to penetrate my disguise. Go."

I turned away rebuked.

If he wished to conceal his identity, it certainly was none of my business.

As I was turning about, a genuine tar—a regular son of Neptune—staggered against me. He was half seas over, and I tried to avoid him.

But he grasped me by the shoulder, gave me a shake, and—

"Come along and have some grog, you son of a sea-cook!"

I tried to get away from him, and to keep up my assumed character was foolish enough to attempt using a sailor-like phrase.

No sooner had the tar heard my words than he bellowed out:

"Hurroo—hurroo! Shiver my timbers if ye ever smelt salt water! You're no tar—smash my headlights if ye are! Can't play that game on me," following his speech with a hearty guffaw.

He raised his hand to slap me on the shoulder, and his fingers caught in and dragged off the bushy whiskers I had put on for a disguise.

All eyes had been drawn to us by the drunken sailor's words, and when my face was seen there was a start of alarm on all sides.

Some one recognized me.

"A detective—a detective!"

And then a hoarse and angry murmur was heard on every side, and I was slowly hemmed in by a crowd of scowling-faced villains.



CHAPTER IV.

OUT OF THE LION'S JAWS.

Things looked remarkably squally where I was concerned, when, on my exposure by the genuine tar, the inmates of the den gathered threateningly about me.

I attempted to draw my shooting-irons, but desisted as a measure of prudence when I saw that I should be killed before being allowed to do so.

It might have gone very hard with me, had it not been for the quick-wittedness of the mysterious being known as Shadow.

Several empty beer-glasses were on the table in front of him.

These he caught up, and swiftly and accurately hurled them at the lights—lamps being used in the place instead of gas.

Crash!

Crash!

Crash!

Ban-n-n-g!

One of the heavy beer-glasses had smashed the bottom of one of the lamps, the oil had ignited, and there came an explosion, followed by the burning oil being scattered in every direction.

Instantly ensued a scene of confusion and consternation.

The oil had set fire to the clothing of several persons, and they cursed and screamed and shouted, as they wildly strove to smother the flames.

Now was my opportunity.

Toward the door I made my way through the surging and excited crowd, some of whom were madly grasping at each other, thinking they were laying hold on me.

By the fluttering blaze of the burning, oil-soaked clothing of the persons on fire, I saw which way to go; and I had nearly reached the door, when some one cried:

"Be careful, boys! Look out for the door; don't let him escape!"

I made a bolt for the door, and reached it just after another person had done so.

I up with my clenched fist and toppled him over, and then dashed into the street and took to my heels, and did not halt until I was a block from the place.

This was not caused by fear, for I could easily have summoned half a dozen policemen to my assistance.

No matter how wicked a man may be, he has rights under the law as well as anybody else, and unless I knew or suspected him (for good reasons) to be guilty of some particular crime, I had no business to interfere with him.

So I did not wish to make any further move by making any arrests of the inmates of the dive.

Nor, on the contrary, did I wish to give them an opportunity of putting a surreptitious bullet in me.

And again, I had begun to consider Shadow as an ally of mine, and did not wish to run the risk of upsetting or balking any scheme he might be working up through his presence in that place.

Nevertheless, I naturally felt resentful toward the men who, for a moment, had my life in their power, and who seemed inclined to use their power. But I knew them all, and I would have my revenge when, some day—as they surely would—they fell into the strong grasp of the law.

I hung around the vicinity for an hour or more, but as I saw nothing of Shadow, I concluded to turn my steps homeward, and did so.

And Shadow?

He, too, had started toward the door, but had been too slow in his movements to reach it before it was barricaded.

Made aware that he could not pass through it, he quietly made his way back to where he had been sitting, and there sat down again, just before a lamp was hastily lighted.

By this time the ignited clothing had all been extinguished, with no more results than a few painful burns, and consequently the first thought of everybody was concerning the detective.

But he was gone.

That somebody had escaped they knew, but had clung to the hope that it was one

of the tars, who had been frightened and bolted out.

But, no, the half-drunken sailors were all huddled together, gazing stupidly about them, not knowing what was to come next.

Some of them had drawn the tar's never-absent companion, their dirk-knives, and were prepared to make resistance in case all this row was but a blind to cover up an attack on them for the purpose of robbing them.

But robbing the tars was the thing furthest from the minds of that rascally crew just at that moment.

They had threatened the life of a detective, he had escaped, and they thought the consequences would be a descent on the place, as soon as enough blue-coats could be gathered for the purpose.

"Now—who fired those beer-glasses?"

The bullet-headed proprietor of the "ranch" asked this question in a gruff tone.

Instantly they began eying each other, and slowly but surely pair after pair of eyes were fastened on Shadow.

"Run out these Jacks."

Immediately the tars were told to "vamosé"—"vacate"—"skip"—and the door being held open for them, they lost no time in giving the place a wide berth.

The proprietor sharply eyed those who remained.

All were friends.

Making a sign to a couple, they separated from the rest, who were then told to "skip and lay low."

Shadow made no attempt to leave with this departing crowd.

He knew that it would be useless, in addition to which it would have implied that he had heard and understood, which would not have been in keeping with his assumed character of a deaf and dumb person.

"Now, then," said the bullet-headed proprietor, when none but a trusted few were left in the place, "into that 'cubby' of ours with him!" indicating Shadow.

The latter eyed them with blank astonishment when they laid hands on him, and signed to know what it meant. And when they commenced running him across the floor, he struggled to prevent them.

But he became quiet when one of them placed the muzzle of a revolver to his temple.

He made no further resistance, but allowed them to gag him, and shove him into a little black cubby-hole or closet, whose door was a segment of the wainscoting, undiscoverable to a person unaware of its existence, save by the closest scrutiny.

The door was banged shut, and Shadow was left to his own reflections in the cramped confines of the dark and moldy-smelling closet.

He was left here until all danger of a raid was thought by the proprietor to be past.

Then he was brought out.

"What did you mean by smashing the lamps and putting them out?" was sternly demanded of him.

Shadow looked vacantly at them.

"Come, come!" and he was given a cuff alongside of his head. "Come, give us an answer, or I'll 'liven you up with something heavier than my hand."

While looking wonderingly and inquiringly at them Shadow pointed first to his mouth and then to his ear.

One of them held a revolver close to the back of his head, unseen by him, and then cocked the weapon, thinking that at the click Shadow would certainly give a start if he was not really deaf.

Not a muscle of face or body could be seen to even twitch.

"It's straight, I guess," said this fellow, as he let down the hammer of the weapon and returned it to his pocket.

They now repeated the question by writing it on a sheet of paper.

Shadow looked at it, his face brightened, and seizing the pencil, he scribbled the reply:

"I knew him for a detective! I thought you'd rush in on him in the dark and slug him!"

The villains looked at each other. There was reason in it. Darkness might easily have proved an aid to them, although, as it chanced, it had really opened the way for the detective's escape.

Then they scrutinized Shadow closely, and tried to intimidate him by saying they

did not believe it. But when they wrote this on paper, Shadow only shrugged his shoulders on reading it.

Then they discussed the advisability of letting him go or putting him out of the way.

"There's no good in killing him, as I can see," one said finally. "It might easily be a bad thing, for there's no tellin' who may show up here afore the body could be got rid of," and in this view all at last concurred.

Shadow was led to the door and pointed out. He hastily gained the street—*and disappeared.*



CHAPTER V.

HELEN DILT.

There are thousands of people in New York, to whom some portions of the metropolis are as much of a mystery as Paris, or Bagdad, or Calcutta, or Cairo in Egypt.

This may seem like a singular statement, yet it is a perfectly true one.

Along the East River front of the city many sights are to be seen, which could not but be as surprising as interesting to those to whom this section of the city is a sealed book.

Here junk-shops flourish in all their glory, side by side with old iron and old chain shops.

Groggeries of the lowest kind abound, and here is the lair of the river-pirate.

Sometimes blocks occur on which not a single building is to be found, save small offices in connection with iron or lumber yards.

At night no section of New York is more lonesome, or more inviting to the performance of deeds of darkness.

Just opposite a tumble-down pier, not far from Grand street ferry, stood, and still stands, a little shanty, built in the rudest manner, only one story in height.

Into this shanty we wish to convey the reader, at least in imagination.

There are but three rooms in the shanty, the front one being about half of the entire floor, and two smaller rooms, answering as bedrooms, took up the other half.

In the outer or larger room an old acquaintance—McGinnis—may be seen, seated at a deal table, before him a half-emptied soda-bottle and a glass. The bottle, however, did not contain soda, but what may well be termed "liquid fire."

"Well, that was a good job," McGinnis was saying to his wife, who was bustling around to get him something to eat. "A bully good job, and no mistake. I don't know as I ever had one before that paid so well for so little trouble."

"That Brown is a foine, liberal gintleman, I'm a-thinkin'," remarked Mrs.

McGinnis, as she turned the slice of ham in the frying-pan.

"He doesn't throw any money away, ye can depind on that," McGinnis abruptly rejoined. "Whin he pays me that sum of money jist to capture the girl, yez can jist bet your life he's a-goin' to make more money by the operation than he gives me."

"Ah, McGinnis, you're a sharp one, that's what ye are," said his wife, admiringly. "Now, shure, I'd never a-thought of the likes of that. It's an alderman ye'd ought to be, instead of what ye are."

"Whist!" interrupted McGinnis, bringing her to a halt. "Niver mind mentioning me occupation. Walls sometimes have ears, so they do. But, I say, be lively, old woman, for the boss is a-comin' to-night to have a look at the gal."

The ham had been discussed, and McGinnis had just lighted his pipe, when a low knock came at the door.

"That's him!" exclaimed McGinnis, as he started for the door. "He's on time, jist."

Surely enough, it was the highly respectable-looking lawyer, who had asked Helen if he had not seen her somewhere before, and also what her name was.

As the door was opened, he glided in swiftly, and himself hastily closed the door, and stood by until it was secured.

"Well," said he, as he advanced into the center of the apartment, rubbing his hands, "well, you were successful?"

"That I was!" with a hoarse laugh.

"This is your wife?"

"It is, sor."

"She can be depended on?"

"Every bit as much as meself, sor. No fear of her—not a bit."

"And the girl?"

"Is below," was the reply, as McGinnis pointed downward, to signify that Helen was somewhere beneath the floor.

"Good! Excellent!" and the rascally lawyer laughed quietly.

"Would ye be after wantin' to see her?" McGinnis now inquired.

"Yes."

At a sign from her lord and master, Mrs. McGinnis lighted a candle, then took a look at the two small windows to see that the curtains were closely drawn, and then handing the lighted candle to McGinnis, she bent and raised a trap-door.

This disclosed a dark-looking hole, up from which came a rush of damp, cold air, which almost chilled the marrow in the lawyer's bones.

But he must descend, if he wished to see the girl, for it would hardly be safe to bring her up.

An idea that flashed across his brain just as he was about to descend caused him to suddenly pause and bend a keen gaze on the rascally pair.

The life of McGinnis was in his hands.

Suppose the villain should take this opportunity of putting it forever out of his power to again threaten him?

It was a startling reflection.

Brown had come there secretly; nobody knew of where he was going, nobody had seen him enter this shanty—facts concerning which McGinnis was as well posted as himself.

But in the faces of man and wife no sign of treachery was to be seen.

He could trust them.

"There is no danger," Brown mentally said. "They will not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs—they are too avaricious for that."

He judged them rightly.

Brown descended into the sort of half-cellar beneath the house, of so little depth that it was necessary to bend the head to move about.

"Careful, sor," said McGinnis, who was ahead. "Bad cess to it——"

Splash!

"There ye go!" McGinnis went on; "I forgot that the tide is up, and that the hole was filled with water."

"Deuce take it!" growled Brown. "I'm wet up to my knees. Does the water rise in here with the tide?"

"It do, sir. In the spring tides the water comes up close to the flure of the rooms

above."

A few steps further, and then the villainous abductor of Helen Dilt said:

"Here we are, sir!"

They had reached one corner of the cellar, and when McGinnis held up the light, Brown saw the fair young girl, stretched on a pallet of straw, which kindness even the cruel McGinnis had not been able to deny her.

"Is she dead?" asked Brown, in a hoarse whisper.

"I think not. She wasn't less than two hours ago when the old woman brought down some grub to her."

So very still did Helen lie that the lawyer thought she surely was dead, until having drawn very close it became evident that she was only sleeping.

Poor Helen!

It was the first time that her eyes had closed in slumber in the three days which had elapsed since she had been forcibly brought to this place.

Approached by McGinnis, he had told her some plausible story, and led her away from the more public thoroughfares, and then had suddenly turned on her, and putting a revolver to her head had threatened to kill her did she make any outcry.

He had hurried her into a "ranch" where he was known, had kept her there until after midnight, and then had forced her through the deserted streets to his own shanty.

The flashing of the light into her face woke her up.

One moment she seemed confused in mind, and then appeared to recognize her surroundings.

She did not know, could not guess, why she had been brought here at the expense of so much trouble and risk, but she could not but feel certain that it was for the furtherance of some evil design.

She started to a sitting position and glanced at her visitors.

The light of the candle shone across Brown's face, and before he could turn and hide his features in shadow she had recognized him.

"Sir, what have I done to you that you should persecute me thus?" she asked, in a tone that trembled with a mixture of indignation and fear. "I know you; you

bought a *Herald* of me once, and asked my name."

"Curse the luck! I had not intended this," muttered Brown. "All I wanted was to see the girl and make sure he had abducted the right one. Well, since you know me, then, let me ask you a question: *What do you know of your early life?*"

For a minute Helen was silent.

Why this peculiar question?

Earnestly she gazed at him, but she could find no clew from his face, for he kept it in the shadow.

"I know nothing at all of it," she finally answered.

"Positively nothing?"

"Nothing whatever, save that a sad, sweet face seems sometimes to rise before me, as if seen through a mist. But it never lasts long, for the mists thicken until it has disappeared again."

An evil and exultant smile flitted across the lawyer's face.

"Come," he said, and he and McGinnis ascended to the rooms above, leaving Helen alone in that dark and damp and dank place—left her there alone to encounter a terrible ordeal.

It was a time of neap or spring tide, besides which the wind was in the right direction to make the water rise very high.

Helen slept again. And so heavily that she was not awakened by the water which crept up around her and saturated her clothing, until it reached her lips, and partially strangled her by being drawn in along with a breath.

She started up with a wild shriek.

"Quiet down there!" bellowed the harsh voice of McGinnis, as he raised the trap-door a little. "Quiet, I say, or I'll keep my word and murder you if you make any noise."

And Helen was silent, even though so horrified, and stood there trembling, with lips pallid and heart at almost a standstill, as the cold and treacherous tide mounted higher and higher.

It reached her knees, her waist, her arm-pits, and even here did not stop. Higher still it mounted, until it reached her pallid lips.



CHAPTER VI.

THE REMEMBERED BILLS.

Some few days subsequent to my adventure in the dive I met a lady on the street, at sight of whose face I gave a slight start.

I had seen the face somewhere before; in fact, felt that I had once been quite familiar with it.

Ah!

"Mrs. Morris!" I said.

The lady turned swiftly, not a little startled at being thus addressed. Then I saw her face light up with a look of recognition.

"I thought I was not mistaken," I said. "You remember me, I hope?"

"I do. You are Howard, who became a detective after I last saw you."

"Right," I rejoined, and then I walked along beside her towards her humble home.

I had not thought of Mat in some days, but at sight of her he flashed into my mind.

I finally inquired about him.

"I have not see him in some time," Mrs. Morris said, in reply.

I told her of my having seen him, and then she told me about Helen.

We reached her humble home.

She then told me that she had heard from Mat, although she had not seen him. Several mornings before she had awakened to find an envelope thrust beneath the door, on opening which she found its contents to be five hundred dollars.

"Five hundred dollars!" I exclaimed, in surprise. "Will you let me see the money, Mrs. Morris?"

"Certainly."

The amount was precisely that which I had paid Shadow. I remembered some of

the bills, and was curious to see if they were contained in the money.

They were.

Every bill that I had specially noted was in the roll of bills she handed to me in response to my request.

The last lingering doubt as to Mat Morris and Shadow being one and the same person was swept from my mind by this circumstance.

I said nothing, however, to Mrs. Morris of where and how I had last seen Shadow—or Mat—for I knew it could only make her more anxious on his account.

While wondering where Mat could have obtained so large a sum of money, the mother's confidence in her son was so great that she felt it had been come by in none other than a proper and honest manner.

"Will you not do what you can toward finding our Helen?" Mrs. Morris asked at parting.

"I will," was the reply; and, indeed, I kept the subject constantly before me, and my ears always open, when I visited the many haunts of vice in the pursuit of my duties.

But weeks glided away and I found no clew, nor had I heard or seen aught of Shadow.

Yet he was not idle, and I now know that though I did not see him he saw me many times, and avoided me on purpose.

Steadily, although slowly, he pursued the one object of his present mode of life.

Any man who was known to be "crooked," and who at all resembled a certain description, he would persistently shadow until he knew that the person was not guilty of that particular crime.

Again and again was he disappointed.

But he would only make a dissatisfied gesture with his hand, and then in thin air write the words:

"Try, try again! Success must come at last!"

And then he would go relentlessly on, pursuing some unknown person who was even more shadowy than himself.

Besides searching for this one person, Shadow had devoted himself from a

feeling of resentment toward the whole tribe of evil-doers, to the exposure of villainy whenever and wherever he found it.

The two burglars whom I had overheard talking about some "job" on entering the dive, were being cared for by Shadow.

Supposed to be deaf and dumb they had talked freely before him—it was destined to be to their sorrow.

They laid their plans for the robbery of a bank with the most consummate skill.

Having rented a vacant store adjoining the building in which the bank was located, they opened an oyster saloon, but rather discouraged than encouraged trade.

With the fall of night they would descend to the cellar, and until break of day would work at cutting through the foundation wall.

It was thick and strongly built, but this they had expected, and were prepared for. Digging out the mortar between the bricks, first one and then another was pried out, until at last only one layer of four inches in thickness remained, which a single blow from the blunt end of a crowbar would knock out.

This was accomplished on Friday night.

They now quit work until the following night, when they intended entering, knowing that in all probability they would have until Monday morning to "tap" the vault and safe.

But, safe as they felt themselves, a pair of keen eyes were upon them.

They were those of Shadow.

Late on Sunday afternoon a note was handed me. It was from the mysterious being, whom I felt sure was none other than Mat Morris.

The note was very brief.

It simply said:

"Be at the corner of —— street and —— avenue at eleven o'clock to-night, with a dozen men. You must be in citizens' clothes.

SHADOW."

This time I did not hesitate about getting ready to act upon the communication of the mysterious detective.

Promptly at the hour indicated I was at the designated spot, while the required number of men were scattered about in the concealment of various doorways there, and waiting, but out of sight.

I had not long to wait.

It seemed as if Shadow had arisen out of the ground, for I had not seen or heard him approach, yet on turning on feeling my elbow touched, found him at my side.

Holding up his hands between me and the light of the nearest lamp, so that I could plainly see what he was about, he asked me in the deaf and dumb alphabet:

"Can you understand this?"

There are few school-boys who have not at some time learned the art of thus talking with the fingers, and I have once been able to do almost as well as the mutes who are compelled to converse in this way.

Making an effort I found that I could recall the alphabet, and answered:

"I can understand."

"Pretend to be drunk, and follow me. When I cough, quietly capture the man you will see."

Side by side we reeled up the avenue, and several blocks away I saw a fellow coming in the opposite direction.

"The lookout," I mentally said, and placed my revolver in a handy position.

I was not mistaken.

Just as we were about to pass the fellow, Shadow coughed. Quick as a flash, I wheeled and planted the muzzle of my weapon to the lookout's head, sternly saying:

"Not a word—not a bit of noise—or I'll put a bullet in your noddle!"

Surprised completely, the fellow caved, and I ran him along to where the men were walking, handcuffed him, and sent him to the station in charge of two men, but not until after Shadow had gone through his pockets.

We now all followed Shadow.

"Wait here," he finally spelled on his fingers. "In five minutes, at the farthest, I will return."

From the lookout's pocket he had taken a pass-key, which admitted him to a hall connecting with the bogus oyster saloon, and leaving the door unlocked, disappeared from sight.

Five minutes passed, lengthened into ten, twelve, fifteen, and still Shadow had not returned.

Had he been detected and murdered?

I could wait no longer. I opened the door and entered, followed by my men.

We heard stealthy steps, and paused.

Then the slide of a dark lantern was opened by some one, and in the big strong patch of light it threw we saw Shadow.

There was a rush of feet, the light was covered, and we—the silent witnesses—heard a low cry and a heavy fall.

Had Shadow's boldness cost him his life? I thought of Mrs. Morris, and my heart was saddened.



CHAPTER VII.

A HAPPY MOMENT.

When Shadow left us outside and entered through the door which he opened by aid of the pass-key taken from the captured "lookout," he turned aside from the hall, into the store.

As before stated, one marked peculiarity of his was his light tread, so light that none but a suspicious and very acute ear could detect it.

From his pocket he took a wax match and lighted it. Before it had burned so low as to necessitate his blowing it out, he had gained such additional knowledge as he required, which was principally that the movable articles in the room were in the same positions as when he had come here to eat oysters on several occasions.

The trap-door that had been cut through the floor behind the counter was open; to its head Shadow softly went.

Noiselessly as a cat he descended the stairs to the cellar, and there was guided forward by the light that shone through the breach in the foundation wall.

He soon reached the breach, without having aroused any suspicion of his proximity, and obtained a hasty although comprehensive glance into the vault beneath the bank.

The burglars had had easy work, and had already secured the "swag."

In fact, at that very moment two of their number were engaged in bringing loads of specie to the breach.

So close were they that Shadow could not retreat without discovering himself to them.

He shrank back against the wall, and edging away, paused only when a dozen or fifteen feet from the breach.

Through this the two burglars passed, entering the cellar beneath the store.

Shadow supposed that after depositing their loads both would return to the bank building. In this he was mistaken, for while one returned the other remained for the purpose of receiving the loads which now began to arrive.

The detective was in a box.

To attempt to retreat now was equivalent to detection: to remain, he would be spotted the very minute a light was brought into the cellar. While it was dark, and he even suppressed his breath, he was safe, but for no greater length of time.

Shadow at last determined on making an attempt to reach the stairs and mount them, so as to give us the word.

Holding his breath, he took a step, and then paused.

In a minute he took one more step and paused again.

He had not been heard.

Still another step.

And yet he was undetected.

Taking advantage of the bustle at the time of the delivery of each armful, he would glide along several feet. In this manner he had nearly reached the foot of the stairs, and so far as he could judge was unsuspected.

But as yet he had only had play when compared with the tact required to mount the stairs.

When half way up he overheard whispers. The words he could not comprehend, but, as he heard no movement toward the stairs, he thought they did not refer to him.

But they did.

The stairs had cracked and squeaked, notwithstanding his carefulness in stepping.

And the earth which had softened his footfalls so that they had not been heard, now performed the same kindly office for the burglars.

They were edging toward the stairs.

They reached the foot, as Shadow reached the head of them.

Any doubt which the burglars may have had was put to flight by hearing the sigh of relief which unconsciously fell from Shadow's lips as he took the last upward step.

At once there was a rush up-stairs by the villainous crew.

So promptly did they accomplish the ascent of the stairs that Shadow had no

time to cross the store floor to the hall.

As already described, the bull's-eye flashed its light on him, after which there was a grand rush at him, followed by a low groan and the thud of a falling body.

"Poor fellow!" I inwardly exclaimed. "Poor Mrs. Morris—how her son's death will grieve her."

Meanwhile I was not idle.

My hand had dipped into my pocket, and now held a parlor match.

"Ready!"

So I lowly said to my men.

Then I suddenly struck the match, glanced around, sprang to the gas fixture my eye lighted on, turned on the gas, and in less than five seconds from the time of striking the match, the scene was lighted by a blazing gas jet.

"Surrender!" I sternly ordered, leveling a brace of revolvers, before the rascals had ceased to gasp in surprise at the sudden turn affairs had taken.

Then they turned and made a rush toward the trap-door behind the bar.

But with equal swiftness I sprang upon the counter, kneeling in a position to command the entrance to the cellar.

"The first man who tries to escape in that direction gets a bullet in his noddle!" I grimly told them, and they halted short in their stampede, and dumbly looked at each other.

"Close in, boys!"

This to my men.

"Now then, my hearties, you're fairly cornered, and the wisest thing for you to do is to cave."

"Don't give in, lads!" yelled a gruff voice. "We're almost as many as they are, and a good bold stroke will carry us out."

Thus encouraged, the desperate men made a wild, although irresolute and wavering charge.

"Stand firm!" I yelled to my men, and then aimed at the leader of the gang.

He had cocked his revolver, was aiming at my head with deadly intent.

It was my life or his, and I pulled the trigger.

Crack!

With a single groan, he sank to the floor, with a bullet in his brain.

"Close in now! And shoot every man who offers resistance!"

The men did as directed.

The charge had been only half-hearted anyhow, and the fall of their leader completely demoralized the remainder, and dropping their weapons, they flung up their hands in token of surrender.

In less than two minutes we had them all handcuffed.

When I had heard the last pair of bracelets click, I put up my revolver, but not before; and then I wiped the perspiration from my forehead.

It is singular how quickly a man begins to perspire in moments of excitement like this through which I had passed, but perspire he always does, and freely at that.

I had caught a glimpse of a body stretched on the floor at the farther side of the room from where I was perched on the counter.

"Poor Mat! Poor Shadow!"

So I muttered as I made my way toward the body. It laid just where I had last seen Shadow standing, in the full glare of the light from the bull's-eye lantern.

I reached the body, and—*it was not that of Shadow!*

I rubbed my eyes. No, it was not Shadow. I arose to my feet and glanced about the room. But naught was to be seen of the lithe figure of the mysterious detective.

Nobody had seen him go out by way of the hall. Then, I thought, he must have descended to the cellar.

But when we went down-stairs, we could find no trace of him there.

He had disappeared.

But how, or where to, not the wisest one of us could say.

Neither could I imagine how he had escaped with his life, when they made that wild rush at him.



CHAPTER VIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Afraid to incur the anger of McGinnis, Helen made no further outcry after receiving his harsh command to be silent, but stood there, trembling with horror, as the treacherous waters continued to rise.

Tiny waves were rippling the surface of the water, and one of these at last sprang against her lips.

Panting, worn out, Helen felt like permitting herself to sink, and thus quickly end the horrors of her situation.

But the ripple receded, and she was again able to breathe.

She did not wish to die.

Above all, she did not wish to meet such an awful death as this.

She pictured her dead body floating in the water or stretched in the mud of the floor, and her frame was convulsed by swift-flying thrills of horror.

This mental picture nearly crazed Helen.

"No, no," she moaned. "No, no, I cannot, I will not, die in this terrible manner."

She beat the water with her hands, and clutched at it, and tried to push it back.

Slowly but softly the water continued to rise, and she could lift her head no higher, for it was even then against the under side of the floor above her.

The water was at her lips now—not a ripple, but the whole body was on a level with them.

She closed her lips, but a minute later it filled her nostrils when she breathed.

Out of her very desperation was now born a singular calmness and self-possession.

She was now able to think and reason as she could not have done before.

It is singular but true that in the face of death many people, in times of lesser danger absolute cowards, become brave and calm as any one can be.

So it was with Helen.

Whether or not she was to be drowned like a rat she did not know.

But she did know that her situation was a precarious one.

Calm now as she was, she was not long in striking on the only means whereby she could preserve her life a little longer, perhaps for a long time longer.

Throwing her head backward, she let it rest against one of the floor-beams, and thrust her face upward close to the floor.

She could now breathe again.

But she had played her last card, so to speak, and did the water rise another three inches her fate was unalterably sealed.

The position she had assumed was an uncomfortable one, but she did not allow her resolution to waver even though the tide continued to creep higher and higher, although not so rapidly as before.

At last—what a fervent prayer of thanks Helen uttered—at last she knew that the water had ceased to rise.

And then presently it began slowly falling.

At the expiration of a quarter of an hour she was able to move her head from the unnatural position in which she had placed it.

Lower and lower the water now went, in just the same regular, even pace with which it had arisen in the cellar.

Lower and lower—lower and lower—until Helen sank on her knees, her head remaining above the surface, and then she prayed as perhaps she had never prayed before.

As she was thus engaged she heard a heavy tread on the floor over her head.

McGinnis had just come in.

And he came with haste, for he had just heard of the remarkably high tide, and feared that his prisoner had fallen a victim to its cold embrace.

He now understood the meaning of Helen's cries, and their not having been repeated under such circumstances, he considered as indicating her death.

"I say—I say, down there!" he yelled. "Are you alive and kicking?"

Helen had nothing to gain by keeping silence, and as she arose from her knees,

she replied in the affirmative.

"Good enough!" grunted her jailer, banging shut the trap-door.

When he afterwards brought Helen down something to eat, and saw the height to which the water had risen, he gazed at her in blank astonishment.

He could not understand how it was that she had preserved her life.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed. "How did you do it, gal? Why, there wasn't more'n an inch of space left between the water and the floor."

"I did it, though, with His assistance," said Helen, reverently.

"Whose assistance?" and McGinnis glared about him, as he asked the question, in an alarmed tone.

"His!" and Helen pointed upward as she uttered the one word in a solemn tone.

"Oh!" in a relieved tone, and the villain then laughed harshly.

He stayed by Helen while she was eating, and his evil eyes were lighted with admiration as they rested on her.

"I say," he remarked, when she had finished eating—"I say, you're a trump, even though you be such a young gal."

Helen's puzzled look was evidence that she did not comprehend at what he was driving.

"You're a smart one, too," said McGinnis. "And I think it's blamed tough on you to pen you in here."

"Then why did you do so?" demanded Helen.

"Orders, my sweet, orders—and orders must be obeyed. But, I say, how'd you like to take the place of the old woman up-stairs? You're a piece of good stuff, you are, and with a little edication, could take the shine out of any crooked woman I ever seen. As for the old crow up-stairs, jist say the word, and I'll put her out of the way, after which, orders or no orders, I'll take you outer this place."

The young girl was completely taken aback by this offer of McGinnis to make her his wife, after murdering the one he now possessed.

She was unable to say a word.

McGinnis construed her silence in another way, and advancing, would have

kissed Helen, had not she retreated, holding up her hands to ward him off, her face expressive of horror and deep disgust.

He pursued her.

Helen faced him, her back to the wall.

"Keep away—leave me alone," she cried. "Keep away, or I will shriek until somebody hears me."

Her tone was a determined one, and McGinnis was shrewd enough to see that it would be foolish to bother her any farther, or her cries might be heard, and be the means of getting him into serious trouble.

He backed away, and, with an oath on his lips, went up-stairs, banging shut the trap-door behind him.

A number of times he brought her meals down to her, but never again attempted to renew his suit.

Then one night Joseph Brown paid him another visit, and they held a long conference together.

It was about Helen.

In the dead of night, not long after that, Helen was brought up from the damp and noisome place.

Some clothing was flung to her, which she was compelled to attire herself in while guarded by Mrs. McGinnis.

After being led several blocks away she was forced to enter a carriage, which was then rapidly driven away.

"Where am I being taken to?" asked Helen, in a tone that trembled as much as her body.

She felt that there were greater dangers to dread in this midnight ride than if she had remained in the cellar.

McGinnis only laughed delightedly for reply.

"I demand of you to tell me where I am being taken," and the girl spoke now more firmly.

"I'll tell you—ha-ha-ha! let me whisper," and bending forward the villain whispered a few words into her ear—words that caused the color to desert her face, that caused her to clasp her hands together, and to sink moaning into her

corner of the conveyance.



CHAPTER IX.

IN THE BLACK HOLE.

Where had Shadow gone to?

At the instant that the murderous crew rushed at him, he quietly sank to the floor.

The first one to reach the spot where he had been standing struck his body.

The cry of surprise on his lips was changed into a death-groan, as the man nearest him grabbed at and stabbed him, under the impression that it was the strange, and to them, unknown person whom they had detected spying on them.

Shadow had seen us and knew that we would now take care of the gang, and he had edged toward the door communicating with the hall, and had disappeared unseen by my men, deeply interested just then in another quarter.

The villains were marched away and locked up, and to make a long story short were properly punished in due course of time.

The bank officials, grateful at having been saved a heavy loss, voted me a handsome sum in reward for my services.

This, I felt, belonged entirely to Shadow, and I kept it about me in the shape of a check, to be given him at the first opportunity.

From the fact that he had not been found anywhere around, I was assured that he had escaped, although the manner of it was then a mystery to me.

And I fully expected to hear something from or see him within a very few days.

But I did not.

He seemed to have disappeared from the face of earth.

I went around among the dens of the east side, but could neither see nor learn anything of him.

Again and again I made the tour of the dives, but always with the same result.

Then, put to work on a case, I plunged into it, became interested, and Shadow slowly faded from my mind.

It was a murder case.

The murder had been committed under peculiar circumstances, and I had not been long at work before I became convinced that it had been done by the hands of a regularly organized gang of evil-doers.

At last I struck a clew.

I became convinced that I knew the very individual who had committed the bloody deed, but I delayed arresting him, as by this time I had gained an inkling of greater work to be done at the same time.

I was ambitious of entrapping the whole gang, instead of this solitary member of it.

I laid my plans accordingly.

Disguise was always a forte of mine, and I proceeded now to conceal my identity as thoroughly as possible.

My next step was to ingratiate myself with a member of the gang.

I picked my man, and proved an apt student of human nature when I did so, for perhaps of all the gang he was the only one who could have been so easily gulled.

His confidence gained, I knew the rest would be easy enough.

By him I was made acquainted with several others belonging to the same gang, and on his guarantee of my trustworthiness, they talked freely before me.

One day Shadow was brought forcibly to my mind by a chance remark dropped by one of my new friends.

"Have you seen the young chap we've got in the Black Hole?"

This was the remark.

Could they mean Shadow?

At once I pricked up my ears.

"No," was the reply. "I want to see him, though. What does he look like?"

"A young fellow with a smooth face, not more than eighteen, and slender as a girl."

It tallied with Shadow's appearance.

"None know him?"

"So it seems; leastways, none as has seen him yet ever saw him before. We had Dick Stanton come in and take a peep at him, and Dick says he ain't a detective—that is, a regular detective, at any rate."

"He was caught nosing around, though?"

"Yes."

"Had he tumbled to anything much?"

"That we don't know, for he won't say a word—aye, yes or no."

"And what does the cap'n mean to do with him?"

"I give it up. One of the boys told me that in the end he meant to have him knifed."

"The best thing to do. 'Dead men tell no tales,'" remarked the other.

Here they let the thing drop.

I wanted to find out where this Black Hole was, but dared ask no questions, nor press the subject of the young fellow's captivity.

For the present I was compelled to adopt a waiting policy, or run the risk of killing the confidence I had already gained, by the asking of too many questions.

Still, it was a horrible thought to me that, while I was doing nothing, Shadow (otherwise Mat Morris) was in captivity in the Black Hole, a place whose name implied nothing but the horrible, and in hourly danger of being butchered like an animal.

In this dilemma I changed my disguise and took to tracking these men to find out where their head-quarters were, presuming that it would be there where the Black Hole would be found.

I tracked them finally to an old and ruined brick building near the East River.

It had once been a sugar-house, but had burned out, leaving only its walls standing.

The remains of the building had been turned to advantage—its walls squared on top and roofed over, leaving a structure in some places one story high, in other places two stories.

It was for the most part occupied by old junk and chain men, and among them were several well-known to the police, and suspected of being receiving shops for the "swag" of the river pirates.

Was the Black Hole only one of the vaults of the old sugar-house?

Was it located here?

I would have given a thousand dollars to have been sure of this.

In the dead of night I again drew near this old sugar-house, and stretched myself out alongside of a big piece of dock timber that chanced to lie in a good position.

About two o'clock I heard footsteps approaching from the direction of the river, and when the persons drew nearer I recognized one voice as that of the individual whom I had thus far bamboozled.

The scent was getting "hot."

They were carrying several heavy coils of rope, the result of their depredations on the river during a few preceding hours.

They passed me and approached the building, and I heard one of them whistle twice, very softly.

Then a peculiar knock was given on a particular door, which at once promptly opened to give them ingress.

At once a desperate scheme flashed across my brain.

I wanted to save Shadow, but still I did not wish to make a descent on the place with a body of officers, as it would make it impossible for me to carry out my original plan of bagging the whole gang.

I had heard mentioned the name of Dick Stanton. He was a detective, and, as I now knew, a false one, through whom had leaked out the intentions of the police on several occasions, rendering well-laid plans fruitless; so that the police had found empty nests when they expected a bag full of game.

I arose and went forward.

I whistled thrice, and knocked at the door as I had heard the others knock.

As the door opened I glided in.

The guard spotted me as a stranger at once, and laid his hand on his revolver.

"I am sent by Stanton," I promptly said. "He gave me the points, and told me to carry a message of warning to 'cap.'"

Closing the door, the guard conducted me into a large room, where was gathered an immense quantity of old junk and rigging of all descriptions.

"Cap!" he called.

"Yes," came from the distant side of the room, where a lot of men were gathered about a lantern.

"Somebody to see you," with which the guard went back to the door, leaving his lantern beside me.

A slight noise caused me to look around, and I was startled at seeing a human hand protruding up through a crevice in a junk pile. The hand held a bit of paper, at which I blankly stared, thinking it held by a dead hand.

But no—the fingers stirred, the note was shaken. It was clear that it was intended for me.

I took it.

Cap had not yet started toward me. I read the few words on the note by the aid of the guard's lantern.

"Fly! Although the guard does not know—Stanton is here! Your first word will betray you.

SHADOW."

Here was a fix.

How could I pass the guard on the portal? Yet I must go.

CHAPTER X.

FAVORING FORTUNE.

In the course of my professional career I have been in many tight places, and among the tightest I count that night, when in the old sugar-house, converted into a "fence" for receiving the "swag" brought in by the river pirates.

Immediately on reading the note written by Shadow I commenced retreating, even while Cap was coming forward to see who wanted him, and what for.

I had pretended to have been sent with a message by Dick Stanton, who, as Shadow had informed me, was already there, a fact unknown to the guard, else I must have been roughly used before this.

To have told this to Cap would have at once betrayed me, and my heart swelled with gratitude to Shadow—for I considered that he had saved my life.

Did misfortune attend my efforts to pass the guard, it would not be Shadow's fault, but my own in venturing into this place.

And yet I had done so on his account, had done so because I had learned that a young fellow answering his description was kept close prisoner in a place significantly called the "Black Hole."

Toward the guarded portal I went as rapidly as I could without an appearance of noisy haste.

I reached it at last.

Cap had not yet reached the spot where he expected to see me.

I had now just as long to fool the guard as it would take Cap to grow impatient at not seeing me, and bellow out some question as to where I was.

"Here's your lantern, my friend, and I'm much obliged for it," I said, as I drew near the guarded portal.

"See him?"

"Yes."

"All right?"

"Yes."

"Cap's in one of his black humors to-night."

"Phew! I should say so."

"Nothing wrong, was there?"

"Nothing particular," I answered. "What's the matter with that bolt? Does it stick?"

"Like thunderation. There it goes. I've got it now. Now for another one—you see we keep this place well guarded—now another, and all that now remains is to turn the knob."

"Suppose you do it, then, as I've got one or two messages more to deliver yet."

"Kerect."

The guard's hand was on the knob.

He was in the act of turning it when he suddenly paused.

"Got the pass?" he inquired.

"The what?"

"The pass."

"What pass?"

"Why, every night the cap'n gives out a new pass, and none go through this door without giving it."

"He must have forgotten to give it to me," I returned, clenching my fists unseen by the guard. "It's all right, though, so let me out, as I'm in a hurry."

"Can't help it. Hurry or no hurry, you can't get through here until the cap'n gives me orders to let you, or you give me the password."

I set my teeth.

With liberty before me I was not going to be balked in this way.

"Let me out!" I ordered.

"I can't do it."

"Let me out, I say."

"I dare not, and I won't 'thout the cap'n's orders. So you might's well be easy."

From the interior of the densely dark place I now heard an angry oath.

"I say, where are you?" cap was impatiently asking.

There was no time to lose.

"Growler!"

"Aye, aye!" returned the guard.

"Didn't you say somebody was here to see me?"

Growler turned on me a glance filled with mistrust, and making a dive, tried to shoot several bolts.

Now was my last and only chance.

I raised my clenched fist.

Spat!

It took him squarely between the eyes, and felled him to the ground like a log.

"A spy—a spy!" he yelled, as he was falling.

Cap heard the cry.

Toward the door he came flying, drawing his revolver on the way.

But I was not slow in taking advantage of my opportunity, and seizing and turning the knob, I flung open the door and bounded out into the darkness.

Fearing pursuit, and knowing myself to be in a mighty hard neighborhood, where every man I might chance to meet would be more likely friends of the pirates than friends of mine, I dashed around the old building and flung myself down in a place of hiding.

I heard a door open on that side of the building, only a few seconds later.

The person who emerged was Dick Stanton, the false detective.

I recognized him by a peculiar snuffle that had long been a settled habit of his.

Quick to think and act, I sprang to my feet, and dropping all fears of pursuit, followed him.

When he had got into a section of the city where there was no chance of his being rescued by the pirates, I hastened my pace and finally reached his side.

"How are you, Dick?"

He gave a start as I called him by name, and turning swiftly, glanced keenly at me, pausing beneath a street lamp that he might see me better.

"Is my disguise so good, then?" I asked, with a laugh, speaking in my natural tone.

"Howard!"

"Correct."

"Your disguise is perfect."

"Would my own mother know me?"

"Not a bit of it. How in the world do you manage to get yourself up so thoroughly?"

"It's a knack of mine. I say, Dick, got anything on hand?"

"No."

"Lend me your revolvers, then, will you? Mine I forgot when I left the house."

"Did you? That's funny, for I forgot mine also. I haven't got so good a weapon about me as a jack-knife."

"Then," and I spoke very sternly, and quickly drawing a revolver, placed it to his temple, "then consider yourself my prisoner."

"Wh-what do you mean?" he gasped.

"I'll show you."

"This must be a joke of yours," said the trembling wretch.

"It will be a sorry joke for you," said I. "Hold out your hands."

"What for?"

"Hold 'em out."

I pressed the cold muzzle of the revolver against his temple a little harder.

He understood the significance of the movement, and loathfully put out his hands.

"Howard, I don't like this," he said, in an assumed angry tone, to carry out the idea that he considered it in the light of a practical joke.

"You'll like it less before I get through with you," as I snapped the handcuffs on

his wrists. "To be a thief is bad enough, but to call yourself a detective and then be in league with a gang of cut-throats, river-pirates and burglars, is far worse, and I give you my word that I intend to shove you as hard as I can."

Stanton's jaw fell.

He was cornered and confounded.

"Lost!" he groaned.

And then, with bent head, he walked dumbly along at my side.

"Howard, will you not let up on me?" he pleaded, humbly, his tone trembling with fear.

"What will I gain by it?" I artfully said.

"Why, they always let the one go who turns State's evidence," he said, eagerly. "Give me a chance, won't you?"

How disgusted I was with Stanton!

A traitor to the force, he was no sooner found out than he was ready to turn traitor to his pals.

"I'll promise you nothing," I coldly returned. "You can tell me what you please, and if I then think your information worthy of mercy to you, you shall have it."

"You always were a good fellow," he said, fawningly, "and I'll trust you."

"You must do exactly as I say."

"I will," he promptly answered.

An idea had occurred to me.

It was, instead of taking Stanton to the police station—where I would have been obliged to enter a specific charge against him—to take him to a secret place of confinement, and there keep him until I had bagged the river-pirates, penetrated to the Black Hole, and bursted up the villainous den.

To reach the place I had in my mind's eye, it was necessary to retrace some of our steps, and we once again entered the rough precincts right along the East River.

As Stanton had been treacherous to the force of which he was a member, was willing to be treacherous toward his pals, so, now, in keeping with his character, he acted treacherously toward me.

While passing a low drinking place—"boozing ken" was its popular name in that locality—he suddenly pursed up his lips and whistled sharply in a peculiar way, repeated a given number of times.

I knew he intended it for a signal.

I was not mistaken.

Within half a minute a little squad of men dashed out of the "boozing ken" to rescue him who had given this signal.



CHAPTER XI.

IN THE MAD-HOUSE.

What were those whispered words of McGinnis' which so affected Helen Dilt?

Let them be what they might, there could be no doubt that they struck terror to her soul.

She sank back in the corner of the conveyance, and audibly moaned.

Poor girl!

She was a heroine in her way, and could have borne a great deal were it to advance some good cause, or because she merited it.

But to be compelled to endure untold horrors, why and wherefore she knew not, was terrible.

"Why am I persecuted?"

So she asked McGinnis a little later, appealingly, in a wavering voice.

"Can't tell you—don't know."

"You are employed by that monster whom I saw in that cellar?"

"I am. There's no good denying that."

"Has he no heart? Have you no heart, that you conspire with him to persecute a friendless girl?"

"I gets paid for it."

So McGinnis dryly replied.

"Paid for it? Then you lack conscience as well as heart. I beg of you, do not do this horrible thing. Release me, restore me to my friends, and I will pray for you as long as I live."

"Pray for me? Ha-ha!" laughed McGinnis. "That's a good one!"

Helen moaned bitterly.

Nothing could move the villain except money, and that Helen did not have.

McGinnis watched her for some time in silence, a gloating expression in his

eyes.

He had something in his mind, and presently it came out.

"There is one way," he said to Helen, "to escape this thing which you appear not to hanker after very much.

"And that?" she exclaimed eagerly.

"Can't you guess?"

As he asked the question he leered at her in a meaning way.

The girl's heart sank.

She knew at once what he meant.

"What do you say?"

Helen made no reply, only shuddered and shrank away from the villain besides her.

"It's your last chance," urged McGinnis. "And you'll not get another, I kin tell ye. Once them doors close behind your back you're done for. Got any answer for me?"

"Mercy!" gasped Helen. "Anything but that. Pity me—spare me—do not stain your soul with a crime so dreadful as this."

"Yes or no, plain," growled McGinnis. "Come now, speak up right sharp and don't waste any time in palavering. Yes or no? And remember, it's your last chance. Say 'yes,' and yer gits McGinnis for a husband, McGinnis as is known to be one of the sharpest and best men on a 'lay' in the country. Say 'no,' and you're done for. Into the mad-house you'll go, never to come out until you're carried out, feet first."

She could never marry him, after he had imbrued his hands in the blood of the woman he now called his wife. She could never have married him anyhow. Better the mad-house, better death itself, than that.

There was nothing gained by attempting to fool him. Suppose she did say 'yes,' and by means of it staved off incarceration in the mad-house for several days, what would it amount to in the end? Nothing. Had there been any reason for her to expect a rescue, she might have tried on the game. But she knew of no efforts being made to find her.

Then a shudder convulsed her frame.

"Yes," she could not say, now that a new thought came to her, even though she knew it would lead to her rescue before such time as McGinnis claimed the fulfillment of her pledge.

The little word "yes" would be the death-warrant of a living human being—no matter how fallen and wicked, a human being all the same.

To say "yes" would seal the fate of the woman McGinnis now called his wife.

Poor Helen!

She bent her head and hid her face in her hands, and wept bitterly as the closed carriage rolled swiftly onward.

A strange fancy, a love for Helen had taken root in the evil heart of McGinnis.

That it possessed depth was evidenced by his being willing to brave the wrath of the man in whose hands his life rested, provided Helen would become his wife.

"It will be 'yes,' won't it, deary?"

His tone was softer, more affectionate, more tender than we could have expected from such a man.

He had leaned over toward Helen, and as he asked the question, he placed one arm about her.

With a shiver she sprang to her feet, wrenching herself from his grasp, and then she cried:

"No, no! I would sooner die than marry you! Help—*help*—HELP! Oh, Heaven! is there no one to help me?"

Like lightning came a change in McGinnis' tone and demeanor.

"Silence!" he hoarsely and angrily hissed. "Silence, I say! Do you hear me?"

"Help!" shrieked Helen.

"Silence!" and now the villain threw both arms about her to pull her down.

"Help!"

McGinnis wasted no more breath in senseless orders.

Down beside him he dragged the girl.

Bravely Helen battled, but her strength was insufficient to maintain the struggle long.

He seized her by the throat, and tightened his grasp on it.

She gasped for breath.

Her brain reeled.

Consciousness finally fled.

McGinnis now glanced from the carriage window. The driver perfectly understood his business, and at the instant of Helen's first cry had commenced winding a tortuous course through the crooked streets.

His prompt action prevented Helen's cries procuring for her the help for which she had shrieked.

"Get there as quick as you can," McGinnis told the driver, and then sat there and watched Helen until the carriage rolled up and paused before the gate of a private insane asylum.

Into this she was carried in her unconscious condition, the carriage departing as soon as she was removed from it.

To the sour-visaged dame who was encountered in the hall McGinnis handed a note.

"Brown, eh?" as she read it. "Well, the poor dear's room is ready. Right this way with her."

When she had been deposited on a bed McGinnis took his departure.

At the door he paused for a last glance at the pale face of Helen.

"Blast it!" he muttered. "It's too bad. Such a plucky critter ought to a been married to a good feller like me, who could make somethin' outen her."

An hour later Helen recovered her senses with a wild start.

Opening her eyes she saw an evil-faced hag above her, who laughed, held up a big bloody pin, and remarked:

"Pins is better'n water to bring a pusson outen a fainting fit."

Helen tried to move.

She found on doing so that her feet and hands were secured by stout cords to the four corners of the bedstead.

"Now, my gal," said her tormentor, "how is it agoin' to be? Are you goin' for to be good an' docile, or are agoin' to give me a heap of trouble? There," jabbing

the pin into Helen, "how do you like that? That's what I allers does when my patients is bad."

Poor Helen!

A terrible fate opened before her.



CHAPTER XII.

SHADOW.

A keen pair of eyes scanned the faces of a party of men, all of them criminals of the worst class.

Those eyes belonged to Shadow.

On one man in the group his eyes rested long and earnestly, although covertly.

"He's just about the build," Shadow mentally said. "And he tallies with the description."

With what description?

We shall see in due course of time.

"Shall I dog him?" thought Shadow, and then his eyes sought the floor and remained fastened there in a reflective way for some minutes.

The result of his reflections was apparent when, the man having left the saloon, Shadow followed him.

"I have been disappointed a dozen times," Shadow told himself, and then sighed. "If I am disappointed again it can make but little difference, for in the end I shall take a fitting revenge for that great wrong."

And Woglom, river-pirate, murderer, burglar, anything so long as it paid him well enough, was from that minute under the surveillance of as keen a pair of eyes as were ever set in human head.

The villain was one of the gang connected with the old sugar-house, and thither Shadow had tracked him.

The mysterious detective determined to secretly gain access to the place, though that would have been a task to appall the heart of the stoutest detective on the force.

But he accomplished it.

Having gained access to one of the shops in another part of the building, he at once turned his attention to the vaults.

Once these had connected from one end of the building to the other.

Some of the arched communicating doorways had been closed up by wooden barriers.

These Shadow found means to get the better of, and passing through, would replace the boards he loosened, so that they bore no signs of having been tampered with.

At last he gained access to the vault beneath the portion of the building used as a "fence."

It was not a hard job now for him to get up-stairs.

He had only to wait his chance, and then quietly slide up the stairs communicating with the store-room above.

Once this was performed without being observed, he found no difficulty in concealing himself in the piles of old junk and goods of all descriptions with which the place was filled.

There were times when the place was left without a single occupant.

These occasions were few, but Shadow did not fail to take advantage of them, and by moving various articles a little to this side or that, he constructed a little avenue or passage under the miscellaneous truck and plunder.

On his hands and knees he used this passage, and he was in it when he heard the writer of these lines speaking to the guard, and saying that he was sent by Dick Stanton.

Hastily tearing a leaf from a blank-book, he had written the note, as well as he was able in the darkness, and had thrust up the hand containing it through one of the interstices in the big pile.

Anxiously he laid there, awaiting the result of that almost foolish venturing of my head into the lion's jaws.

A sigh of relief escaped his lips as he heard the thud caused by Growler's fall, followed by the deep-chested oaths of Cap, who, in his rage, turned his revolver on the guard, and was within an ace of pulling the trigger.

Cap took it for granted that the spy was a detective, and supposed that the game was up; that the place would surely be in the hands of the police in an hour or two.

"Lock that door, and keep it locked!" he savagely ordered Growler, and then started on a run for the other side of the building, hoping to catch Stanton.

Meantime, however, the latter had taken his departure, to be nabbed a few minutes later.

Hastily Cap got his portable valuables together, and prepared for flight at a moment's notice from the scouts sent out in all directions.

No alarm came in.

Hours passed, daylight broke, and still they had not been molested.

A message was privately sent to Stanton, asking him to ferret out the true meaning of the strange visit, as well as who the visitor was.

Cap moved his money and valuables to a place of safety, and then sat down, assuming an air of injured innocence to fool the police with in case they came.

Meanwhile Shadow was busy.

Off in one corner was a sort of room made by piling up boxes and rubbish. This Cap used as an office, and here he took those with whom he wished to confer privately.

Having learned this, Shadow had determined to extend the passage right up to the office, so that he could overhear what passed within.

Sometimes a natural crevice was made large enough for him to crawl through by a little exertion of strength, and the thing could be done without producing any noise whatever.

Like a mole beneath the surface he worked his way on toward the goal, knowing full well that I would not put my knowledge into use, now that I knew he was on the ground with some object in view.

Singular, was it not, that we should have so much confidence in each other?

Still we had.

Little by little Cap's confidence began to return, and he was quite himself again when a note came from Dick Stanton.

At least it was signed with Stanton's name.

"Cap, everything's O. K. I gave a *true blue* a message for you a couple of nights ago, about the same matter of which I spoke to you.

"He didn't try to deliver it until the following night, the same when I was there. After getting inside he got scared and forced his way out by knocking down Growler. Don't worry at all over the affair, for I know what I am talking about. He's a good fellow, no coward, and once he is given a show will do some good work."

"DICK STANTON."

The explanation was satisfactory to Cap, although he thought it a little singular that the note should be shoved under the door, instead of delivered personally.

The scouts were called in.

Work was resumed; in other words, Cap's gang again began pillaging on the river and around the harbor.

And Cap had confidential talks with his men in the office.

As silently as the mole, which we have just likened Shadow to, he made his way toward the office, until, at last, he drew so near as to be able to distinguish any ordinary toned conversation.

Still closer he wished to go.

"I must get near enough to overhear a whisper," he told himself. "Out of his own mouth must the monster I am after convict himself."

And closer he got.

And then his steady successes were offset by a disaster that caused even his face to blanch.

The stuff he moved settled and closed up the passage behind him, hemmed him into a little space of two feet by six and high enough for him to kneel in, and here he must stay until released, for the stuff just there was too heavy for him to even budge.

He must reveal himself or starve to death!



CHAPTER XIII.

IN A BAD BOX.

Shadow was in a fix.

And it was a fix as bad as it was strange.

The pile of old junk through which the passage ran had settled down, closing it up.

Retreat was now an impossibility. He must either find a way out of the narrow prison he now found himself in by forging ahead, or else must either reveal himself or starve to death like a rat in a trap.

He was in a bad box and no mistake.

For the present he was compelled to lie perfectly quiet where he was, for the noise of the pile in settling had drawn to the spot several of the den's inmates.

Cap was seized with a fit of ill-humor over the occurrence, which he accepted as evidence that the miscellaneous stuff had been carelessly stowed.

"Come—come, Cap?" Shadow heard one of the men rather impatiently say. "You've said enough now, so haul in your horns, for I, for one, won't stand any more."

They were all in one boat, to adopt a much-used simile. And a certain number of them belonged to a co-operative sort of an association, and consequently were on an even footing.

Over these men Cap had no authority, save that which he had acquired from the fact of his being a very important man in the association.

So now, when spoken to in this plain manner, Cap swallowed his wrath, and discontinued his cursing the men with him.

He said that he was afraid that the noise would attract attention that might prove unwelcome.

But that was not the only reason for his anger at the settling down of the big pile.

Another and stronger reason was that he had not a few articles of considerable value stowed away in crannies at the base of the big pile of junk.

These things were breakable, and for all he knew then, had been completely destroyed.

Hiding his mingled anxiety and wrath, he now directed his efforts toward drawing the men away from the spot, and succeeded soon in doing so.

The moment Shadow heard them take their departure he commenced moving about, examining into the facts of his singular imprisonment.

He found himself in a place high enough to permit his crawling about on his hands and knees, and about two feet in width and ten in length.

Had it not been that he received a certain quantity of air through the interstices of the pile, he must have suffocated.

As it was, it took only a very few minutes after the settling down occurred before the air contained in the narrow place became foul, and really unfit to breathe.

But it contained enough oxygen to support life, and once satisfied of this, Shadow calmly pursued the task he was at.

Before long, however, Cap returned to inquire into the condition of his hidden articles of value, and Shadow was compelled to again become as quiet as a mouse.

He was more than satisfied with the result, since Cap's examination involved the moving of a number of articles, and the disposition of others in a manner which promised to make it much easier for the mysterious detective to extricate himself from his predicament.

Cap grunted.

And it was a grunt that indicated relief and satisfaction.

Although endangered, the articles concerning which he was solicitous had not been injured.

Once more he took his departure, and again Shadow made good use of his time.

The change which Cap had made permitted the better ingress of air into Shadow's prison-pen, and he could now breathe more easily.

Not a few times was he compelled to pause by the coming of some of the gang, and it required hours of careful labor before he had assured himself of having found a safe means of exit from his narrow cell.

But he did not take immediate advantage of this means of escape.

It would not have been in accordance with his plans.

Once having emerged he would have been compelled to walk some distance in open sight, by a much used path, to reach the stairs descending to the vaults beneath.

It was all he could hope for, could he once traverse the distance without being observed.

He was hungry and thirsty, to be sure, and stood sadly in need of rest.

But to have reached the vaults and gone through them to procure food, then return and make the passage again to his hiding-place, and then hope to reach the stairs by a third passage of the open space, would have been to hug a foolish hope to his breast.

No, he could not hope to more than once successfully make the passage of the open space without being observed.

So it was practically a question to go hungry and thirsty, or give up all idea of carrying his quest to completion.

The latter he would not do, until absolutely driven to it.

He decided on going hungry.

Only a light packing-case now stood between him and liberty—that is, liberty as far as emerging from his prison was concerned.

Having moved the box in and out to be sure that it did not bind anywhere, and that he would not be delayed when the time had come, in his judgment, to beat a retreat, he then turned his attention toward extending the passage in the direction of the office, in pursuance of his original intention.

It was already so close to the office that he could overhear what was said, although not as clearly at all times as he wished.

Conquering his rebellious stomach, which clamored for food, Shadow stuck to the task he had set for himself.

His pluck was properly rewarded, for he at last gained a position in which the lowest-toned and most confidential conversation, if above a low whisper, could be overheard.

And in the office there was a gathering not long after he had gained this point of vantage.

Than that company of men in the so-called office, it would have been a next to impossible task to have found an equal number of deep-dyed scoundrels or red-handed villains.

There was a full moon, and the night was a clear one, and the river-pirates do not choose such nights in which to ply their vocation.

As men in honest callings in life will boast sometimes of what they have done or can do, so villains when in secret quarters, and believing themselves beyond prying ears, will boast of their rascally feats.

An exceptional good humor and communicativeness seemed to have descended on this occasion on the party in the office, for they revealed many secret chapters of their lives to each other in illustrating their various exploits.

One fellow told, with a hearty laugh, how, when engaged in making away with a coil of rope, he had shot down the captain of the sloop, the mate and the cook.

"It was just—pop—pop—pop—in reg'lar one, two, three style, and down they went. They all 'kicked,' every one of 'em. Mebbe there wasn't a howl? Well, I just guess! But the police never yet have found out who was responsible for them there 'stiffs.'"

Another had even a more horrible story to tell of robbery and bloodshed.

Another owned up to have "laid out" six men since the day he first "gripped the graft."

And every word was drank eagerly in by a pair of acute and hungering ears.

Shadow was highly excited, and his face was filled with an expectant light.

He fully believed that one among the men gathered there was the will-o'-the-wisp which he had so long been following, and he was waiting until this one should utter a word that would commit him, one word by which he would fasten on himself a crime by which Shadow had sworn solemnly to avenge in as terrible a manner as was within his power.



CHAPTER XIV.

DICK STANTON.

"You treacherous hound!" I angrily and indignantly exclaimed, as I gave Stanton a hearty shaking when I learned to a certainty that he had given a signal to call a crowd of desperadoes to his assistance.

As the roughs began to pile out of the darkened saloon, the false detective gave vent to a nervous laugh. He was afraid he would not be rescued, and yet did not see how it could be possible for me to retain him as a prisoner in the face of these friends of his.

I was, however, determined to do so.

I was considerably riled up just about then, and could have laid down my life rather than have let him escape.

I set my teeth.

Through them I hissed:

"Stanton, you cannot escape me! You know me well in private life, and know that I am a determined man—a man of my word. Now, then, I place the muzzle of my revolver to your head, and by all that is holy I swear to shoot you rather than let you escape."

Stanton gasped.

A hollow moan followed, and he became paler than a corpse.

He knew me for a man of my word, and when I had thus spoken he was positive that any attempt at rescue would cause me to keep my word good.

Suddenly he brightened.

His tone was hopeful.

"How can I help it now?" he said; "I am helpless now, either one way or the other."

There was a ring of something like triumph in his tone.

"Not so," I said sternly. "Order them back. You can do that, and must do it! You

know the alternative."

Stanton quivered and shook in his boots.

He was in a bad fix.

Instead of having the upper-hand of me, as he expected, he was precisely under my thumb.

He saw all the ins and outs of his predicament at a glance.

He looked up at me in an uneasy, scared manner, and then at the help he had summoned by that secret cry of distress.

He knew not what to do.

But decide he must, and that without further delay.

By this time the villainous gang he had summoned were beginning to close in on me.

I pressed the muzzle more firmly against his temple, and I heard his teeth chatter.

"Go back, boys!"

So he implored them.

"And furthermore, do not reveal your identity," I sternly ordered him.

The gang halted in surprise.

They were stumped by his pleading with them not to make any attempt at rescuing him.

"What in thunder did you give the secret cry for, then?" demanded a gruff and angry voice. "Who are you, anyhow? Give your number."

"Do it at your peril!" I hissed in Stanton's ear.

He understood the significance of the slightly harder pressure of the deadly weapon against his temple.

I grimly maintained silence, save when I whispered a few threatening words in the ear of the false detective.

It was a moment of quiet, yet intense excitement.

Bound by a terrible oath to answer that signal of distress, the villains had rushed out to the rescue. Yet here was the man who gave it now begging them not to interfere.

They were puzzled, and knew not what to do.

"Give your number," was again called out by the same gruff voice as before.

"At your peril!"

So I again breathed into the false detective's ear, and he made no reply.

"Now, then, let's get away from this spot," I said, in a low tone; and still holding firmly to my prisoner, I began slowly retreating, taking good care always to have an eye on the gang, who were undecided what to do.

I quickly put a different aspect on the state of affairs when I got a chance, and I gave the night-call for a policeman.

The gang continued to follow.

Had Stanton given his number, they were ready to rush in and rescue him.

But for a good reason he did not give his number, and when two blue-coats, having heard my summons, swiftly approached the spot, the villainous crew's indecision vanished as well as themselves.

Again warning Stanton not to reveal his identity, I met and satisfied the guardians of the peace as to who I was.

They offered to accompany me to the station with my prisoner.

I declined their proffered services.

Having been assured that I considered all danger past, they saluted and returned to their respective beats, and I resumed my course with my prisoner.

Stanton was very chopfallen.

I had nipped his scheme of rescue in the bud, and he knew that he was now in for it. His action, he felt sure, would kill all sympathy I might have previously had for him.

Since his plan had failed, he knew it would have been better for him had he never attempted to put it into execution.

I kept silence.

And Stanton never said a word.

I reached the place at last where I wanted to keep him in confinement.

It was at the house of a deputy sheriff, who had built several strong cells in his

cellar, for occasions similar to the present. And it not infrequently happens that when a detective has captured a particular prisoner it is a decided benefit to be able to keep the capture a profound secret for a while.

The place afforded the means of keeping the capture a secret.

Fortunately the deputy was at home, and I soon had Stanton locked up in one of the cells.

"Well," said I, as I entered the cell with the false detective, "here you are, in a safe place, where the dogs won't bite you."

"What do you intend doing with me?" the rascal tremblingly asked me.

"Whatever I think you may deserve having done with you," was the grim reply.

"Howard, I—I—didn't think any one was in that saloon, or may be I wouldn't a-given that signal," he faltered.

"You know you lie!"

He winced.

He saw he could not fool or bamboozle me in the slightest degree.

"Now, then," I said, presently, "are you going to make a clean breast of it?"

"Yes," he loathfully answered.

The Black Hole, so called, crossed my mind.

"Who did you have in the Black Hole?"

"Black Hole! What Black Hole?"

"You can't come that. I know pretty much all about the old sugar-house and Cap, and the kind of a business you carry on there."

"How did you find out?"

"Never mind that. The Black Hole is in the cellar under the store-house?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"You had a prisoner in it?"

"Yes."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know."

"Describe him."

"A young fellow."

"A young fellow, inside of twenty, and of a slim build."

The description tallied.

"When did you last see him?"

"Just about dark."

"He was safe then?"

"He was."

"Could he have escaped from the Black Hole, think you?"

Stanton gave a great start.

"It is possible," he said. "They thought it a mighty strong place, but I didn't. A fellow with any grit could have dug his way out."

That settled it to my satisfaction.

Shadow had been the prisoner in the Black Hole. That he had got out somehow I had received ample proof by the hand thrust up through the pile of junk holding that note for me.

I pumped Stanton for all he was worth. He kept back many things, I knew; but I pretended to believe that he had made a clean breast of it.

I had seen him glance about his cell, and knew that he hoped to be able to make his escape.

"Ain't you a-goin' to take these irons off?" he inquired, holding up his wrists, just as I was about to take my departure.

"Not at all."

"Why?"

"I don't intend that you shall have your hands free to dig your way out," with which I left him, decidedly crestfallen in demeanor.

A few nights later I spent the entire period of darkness in the neighborhood of the old sugar-house. Leaving just before dawn, I was on my way home, when, as I drew near a corner, I was suddenly confronted by a slenderly-built mulatto.

Gliding up before me, he extended his hand, and uttered one word:

"Shadow!"



CHAPTER XV.

A FIEND IN HUMAN SHAPE.

Poor Helen Dilt!

Better, much better, would it be for her to die at once, if she was to be called on to long endure the torments that were devised and executed by the ugly-faced hag who presided over that private mad-house.

The hag was literally a fiend.

And a fiend in human form at that.

We speak of the natural love that resides in the human heart, that is an indestructible part of it, that is born with it, and never departs until the member has ceased to pulse, and lies silent and heavy in the heart that contains it.

This fancy is a pretty one.

Few of us are there who do not try to paint humanity as more humane than it really is.

Instead of love being the natural resident of the human heart, it is something that is cultivated.

Left to itself, the feelings of the human heart are as savage and fierce as those that reside in the hearts of the Indians of the plains, or of the tigers in the Eastern jungles.

The old hag was one in whose heart tender feelings had never been cultivated, and she was not burdened with sensations of sympathy or pity.

On the contrary, the natural inclinations of a cruel nature had been cultivated until it had become callous to all sensations of pleasure save at the sight of the sufferings of some living, breathing thing.

There is money in a private mad-house run by unscrupulous persons, and several evil men had advanced the money and set this human fiend up in business.

Few people have an idea of how easy it is, when there is a splendid property to reward the horrible deed, for relations to get a wealthy member of the family adjudged insane.

A single eccentricity is sufficient to do the thing.

And once the person is declared insane, into a private mad-house he is inveigled, never again to see the light of day. And there he is kept until he is actually driven mad, or until death steps in and releases him.

The old hag had given herself, and delighted in, the name of Tige.

It was a corruption or contraction of tigress.

And it was into such hands that poor Helen Dilt had fallen!

Again and again did the hag stick a big pin into Helen.

And again and again did she exultantly laugh at the evidences of pain which the poor creature could not avoid displaying.

"Will you be quiet and docile?"

A jab with the pin.

"Will you?"

Another jab.

"Will you?"

Another prod with the bright pin, whose point was reddened with Helen's blood.

"Will you, I say?"

Still another jab.

"Yes—yes," Helen almost shrieked.

"It's a good thing for you if you will bear your promise in mind," said Tige, grimly. "I always make people regret breaking their word with me."

Helen was left for some hours stretched on the bed, her arms and feet extended and secured by ropes to the four corners of the bed.

There was agony to be endured in even this quiet position.

Place a pound weight on the palm of your hand, and endeavor to keep that hand extended, for, say five minutes.

Can you do it?

You think you can, that is if you have never tried it.

Try it now.

You will not be able to do it.

Long before the five minutes have expired your arm will be a pathway for a succession of spasms of pain such as you have never felt before.

All that you can voluntarily endure, quadrupled and more, Helen was forced to pass through because of the strained position of her arms.

It was terrible.

The pains that shot through her arms were frightful for a while, and then the intensity diminished and her arms became numb and felt as if dead.

She could no longer feel the cords so tightly fastened to her wrists.

Her arms were perfectly bloodless, and to all intents and purposes were dead.

They might almost have been amputated without causing her any pain.

Food was finally brought her by a male attendant, a short, thick-set, bull-headed individual, with the most brutal expressed face of any that Helen had ever seen.

He released her arms, and then lifted her by the shoulders to a sitting posture on the bed.

Her hands were useless.

She could not raise them, could scarcely more than barely move her fingers.

The attendant laughed gleefully.

"Don't they feel bully, eh?" he said, as he noted Helen's face twitch with pain.

What anguish she presently suffered!

The tingling and burning as the blood began to flow back into her arms were something awful.

"Tige understands the 'biz' if any one ever did," said the bullet-headed attendant, laughing gayly. "But, I say, ain't yer hungry? 'Cos if yer ain't, there's no good of my stayin' here with this grub, which yer hain't touched these last ten minutes."

But, although he badgered Helen, he did not take his departure with the food.

He knew better than that.

Tige had ordered the food taken to Helen, and if she cared to eat it he dared not leave until she had done so.

The old hag wanted to do nothing as yet that could in any way injure Helen or disable her.

She made a point of doing with her patients exactly as was ordered by her customers, and Brown had as yet not told her what he wanted done with Helen.

Brown was expected when night had again fallen, and the hag's expectations were not amiss.

Brown came.

At once he was closeted with the hag.

"Come, Brown, spit out just what you want," Tige impatiently said, some minutes later. "I positively refuse to act on hints, so you might's well say plumply what you want."

Brown was thoughtful.

It was his usual style to make people take what he wanted for granted, as in the case of McGinnis.

This enabled him to lay back in his chair and say:

"I did not tell you to do anything of the kind. If you chose to put that interpretation on my words I can't help it. It wasn't my fault that you did."

He was a wily man.

But Tige was equally as wily.

Her safety lay in forcing her customers to commit themselves, and knowing that she would take no steps as regarded any patient without having received point-blank orders.

Brown was Helen's uncle.

Property of hers, which he had robbed her of, he managed to hold himself without question. But he dared not sell it or try to transfer it.

If Helen were insane, then it would be policy to prove her identity, be appointed her guardian, and then when she died, the court would decide that he was the legal heir, and confirm him in his title to the property.

It was this which he was now conning over in his mind.

"Well?" from Tige.

"The girl is insane?"

"Of course," with a curl of the lip.

"I should like to carry her before some big physicians, and have them certify to the fact."

"In other words, you want me to drive the girl to real insanity? Is that the plain English of it—yes or no?"

"Yes."

"And if it can't be done?"

"She must be put out of the way unless you can drive her mad," Brown said, in a low tone. "Fix your own price for the job; I only ask that you do it well."

This was the horrid compact that they entered into regarding Helen.

Poor Helen! poor—poor Helen!

With fiendish zest the hag set about her horrid work without loss of time.

That very night Helen was gagged to stifle her cries, and was securely bound to the bed, after which Tige amused herself by stripping the victim's feet, and then pulling the nails from her toes with a pincers.

And during the terrible ordeal, the sweat-drops of awful agony rolled down Helen's face, and she writhed and strained, but in vain, to burst the bonds which held her.



CHAPTER XVI.

DISAPPOINTED AGAIN.

With ears wide open, and with an expression of intense interest, Shadow remained stretched in the narrow passage in the pile of old junk, listening to the words that fell from the lips of the villains gathered there in the office.

He was all expectancy.

He fully believed that one among the rascals could solve the mystery which he had so long been endeavoring to probe.

Would this particular fellow tell of this particular rascally exploit?

Shadow hoped so.

As time passed by, however, without one word being said, the mysterious detective began to grow impatient, since the particular thing about which he wished to learn was not mentioned.

However, he paid strict attention to the many stories of rascality which they told. The knowledge thus derived might be of use some time.

More than once the secret listener shuddered on hearing the tales that were told.

It seemed to him as if all the crimes that were ever committed could not sum up as large a total as these men boasted of having committed.

And, at the moment when his cheeks were paling over some horrid relation, he could hear the whole gang joining in a hearty laugh.

That they were able to laugh over descriptions of bloodshed and death was ample evidence of the manner of men they were, and Shadow more fully realized the peril which surrounded him so long as he should remain in the old sugar-house.

"That's the list of the things I've done, and never been nabbed yet," said one, as he finished a story of crime.

"You've heard all my exploits," said another.

"And mine."

"And mine."

Shadow sighed.

Not one word concerning that of which he wished to hear had been uttered.

He had waited expectantly—had hoped until the very last boastful tale had been told, but had hoped in vain.

And now the sigh that he gave utterance to was filled with disappointment.

His head sadly drooped, and he felt as if he hardly cared whether his presence was discovered or not. Repeated disappointments had taken away his courage for the time being.

It was now very late.

Morning was not so very far distant, and the villainous party broke up and left the place, to separate and depart for their various places of abode.

At last an intense silence rested over the place, and except the sentinel at the door and Cap in a distant corner, in a partitioned-off room, Shadow was alone in the big place.

Reckless, and disheartened, and discouraged as he had felt, he had been wise enough to remain so silent as not to betray himself.

Up to the present moment he had not stirred. But now he shifted his position a little to a more comfortable one, and became lost in thought.

He had been disappointed before—had been cast down, but had recovered both confidence and courage. Why could he not do so now?

So he asked himself.

Patience and perseverance never yet failed to meet with a proper reward, he told himself, and presently he began to brighten up—became more hopeful.

Was there any use in longer remaining here in the old sugar-house?

Clearly not, he thought.

Then to bid it farewell.

He backed down the passage until he reached the spot where Cap had so disarranged the "stuff" as to leave only an empty box between the passage and the open floor beyond.

After listening a minute, Shadow then softly shoved back the box, without

making any noise, and next crawled out of his cramped quarters.

Before attempting to move away from the spot, he was sensible enough to wait until he had got some fresh breath, and had limbered himself up a little.

Perhaps five minutes later, he started toward the stairs that descended to the vaults below.

It was necessary to approach within a dozen or fifteen feet of the sentinel.

Knowing of the latter's presence, Shadow exercised great caution as he drew near him. Had the sentinel been wide-awake and bright, Shadow could hardly have made the passage undetected.

But the fellow was nodding in a state of half-slumber, and failed to hear the light-footed detective.

Shadow safely reached the head of the stairs, and commenced descending. The descent was safely accomplished, and once in the vault, all danger was passed.

On stepping forth into the streets, his first care was to visit a restaurant; and how he did eat.

"I say," remarked the waiter, after having received a third and a fourth order from Shadow, "I say," and his eyes were big as saucers in his surprise, "be you holler clean down to your heels?"

"I'm hungry, that's all."

"Hungry? Well, I should say so."

On receiving a fifth order from the detective, the waiter, before filling it, took the proprietor of the place into a consultation.

Shadow's grub bill was of a pretty good size, and from his appearance the waiter was in doubt as to whether he was good for the amount, let alone a greater one.

"Show your hand, young feller," remarked the waiter, on returning, before placing the ordered edibles before Shadow.

The latter understood, and a quiet smile began playing about his lips.

Placing his hand in his pocket he took out and ostentatiously laid down a five-dollar bill.

"Good enough!" grunted the waiter, setting down the plates. "Fill up the cavity. I guess I kin fetch the grub as fast as you kin stow it away."

With Shadow's departure from the restaurant we must drop him for a while. But we again introduce him, disguised as a mulatto, as he glided up to the writer of these lines, and, with extended hand, simply said:

"Shadow!"

Was this Shadow?

I could hardly believe my eyes.

Adept as I was myself in the arts of disguise, if this was the mysterious detective, he was able to equal if not even outdo my ability.

"Shadow!"

So he repeated, when I allowed a full minute to pass without having spoken a word.

"Are you Shadow?"

He made a disdainful gesture, and in an impatient tone repeated that one word.

"I want you to answer me a few questions," I said.

An instant later I could no longer doubt his identity. He raised his hand, and I saw him shake his index finger in that peculiar way, as I saw him do on the occasion of our first acquaintance, when I saw his shadow do the same thing. But there was a difference, since, on the present occasion, the finger was shaken at me.

Then he remained holding out his hand, and I could not but know what it was he wanted.

It was his share of the reward, which he had not yet claimed.

I found that to ask him any questions would only result in angering him, so I placed a roll of bills in his hands, which I had kept ready and waiting for him.

Without a word of thanks or farewell, he turned on his heel, and within the space of a minute had vanished from my sight.

Our meeting had occurred on a corner, before the doors of a liquor saloon. Several hard characters had watched us, and by aid of the lamp on the corner had seen that it was a roll of bills that I handed Shadow, although, of course, they knew neither of us.

Instantly they took a hasty departure by means of a back entrance, their object being to attack and rob the mysterious detective.

By means of an alley-way they headed him off, and lying in ambush, sprang out upon his approach, and flung themselves toward him.



CHAPTER XVII.

HELEN'S TORTURE.

Bound so tightly that she could not rise—could not resist, Helen Dilt was put to the torture by the cruel hag, who had received orders to either drive her actually mad or kill her.

Helen at first had screamed.

A continuance of this was prevented by the hag, who gagged Helen most effectually.

Tige was a fiend.

A fiend!

The word has not sufficient meaning to describe what she really was.

If Satan ever quits his sulphurous house to take up his residence in a particular human being, he certainly was residing then in the earthly form of the terrible woman who presided over that private mad-house, and was the arbiter of the fates of so many beings who were helpless in her vile clutches.

And torture!

And the sight of human agony!

She loved them.

She loved to hear the shrieks of agony that she wrung from her victims. As prudence made it necessary to still these sounds by gags, the fiendish woman refined her cruelties the more, that the loss of this horrid music might be compensated for by the greater writhings of her victims.

Regarding Helen, her instructions were as plain as they were fiendish!

"Drive her mad or kill her!"

In few cases was she allowed so broad a latitude of action, and she proceeded to Helen's torture with the same zest that a gourmand exhibits when he sits down before a table that groans beneath the weight of some particular thing which he loves to exercise his teeth upon.

Helen was fastened to the bed securely, and, as we have said, was gagged.

And then, as stated in a previous chapter, Tige amused herself by taking a pincers and dragging out the nails of Helen's toes.

Kind Heaven, what agony that is!

It is terrible!

Terrible! Yes, and awful and horrible as well!

How Helen suffered!

How she strained—but in vain—to burst the bonds which held her!

How Tige chuckled!

How she gloated!

How she made Helen writhe and moan!

The dewdrops of agony were not long in making their appearance on the victim's forehead—great, large drops, which rolled off and down her face to make room for others.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tige, showing her teeth like a snarling dog; "oh-ho! don't I love this! Groan and moan and twist and squirm; it is all a feast to me."

And Helen suffered so much that she would have hailed death as a welcome release.

Aye, she even prayed that she might die.

She had nothing to hope for; rescue she thought impossible, or it would have been accomplished before this. To die would be the easiest way for her.

"There, how did that feel?"

Tige asked the question with a chuckle, as she ripped another nail out of the living flesh.

Feel!

Helen was writhing in anguish.

She made one more effort to burst her bonds.

She strained until the veins were swollen out on her face and neck like whipcords, and seemed on the point of bursting.

But the work of tying her had been too well done, and she finally fell back in a state of utter exhaustion, with moan after moan coming in a sort of ripple.

"What!" exclaimed the fiendish hag; "make such a fuss about a little one like that, which came out so easily? Why, I should have considered that one a pleasure. Just wait until I get hold of the big one. Ha, ha! that's where the fun comes in. You see, it's more deeply rooted, and I've seen some I wasn't strong enough to pull until I rigged up a sort of tackle I have for the purpose."

Helen shuddered.

And well she might.

Poor girl!

It was monstrous that the law should permit the existence of such places—such private mad-houses—where such infernal wickedness can be enacted.

Tige was grinning like a hyena.

She made one or two feints of pursuing her hideous work, and then halted to gloat over the shudder which each time thrilled her victim's frame.

At last she fastened the pincers on the nail of one of Helen's great toes.

She gave a strong twitch.

Helen groaned.

The human hyena gave a stronger pull.

Helen lifted herself to the limit her bonds permitted, and flung herself against the ropes, which would not break, but held her with cruel rigor.

Again Tige pulled.

And this time pulled direct, and with an amount of strength which could not have dwelt in a less sinewy frame than hers.

Then she twisted the pincers.

Had she been free from her gag, Helen must have shrieked so loudly that she would have been heard for blocks around.

Again Tige pulled direct.

She meanwhile kept watch of Helen's face.

Her victim could stand no more.

This Tige saw.

"Now!" she hissed.

Then, exerting her strength, she threw it all into that one motion, and—— As the nail was dragged out by the roots, Helen uttered one long, quivering moan, and then laid there pallid and motionless.

One would have thought her dead.

But Tige's experience told her different.

She knew that Helen had only fainted.

And she knew, also, that the suffering she had endured would produce a nervous shock from which Helen might never recover.

Tige made no attempt to release Helen from her bonds.

She merely loosened the gag a little, that she might breathe easier.

Then flinging a pail of water over her victim, as she might have flung a worthless bone to a cur, Tige took her departure, allowing Helen to return to consciousness or die, she did not much care which.

But she did not forget to take with her the nails she had extracted.

Reaching the door of her own room, secured by a number of strong and elaborately made locks, she paused to unlock it, and then entered.

At one side of the room was a bed, in the center a table, in one recess a sofa, which, in addition to a few chairs, made up the furniture of the room, save a small glass-front cabinet that was attached to the wall.

The door of this she unlocked.

Glancing in, she gave vent to a chuckle that was perfectly horrid.

What was it—perhaps you ask—that produced this chuckle on Tige's part?

Nothing more nor less than a few score of human toe-nails, dragged out by the roots as Helen's had been.

They were the horrible mementoes that drew back to her memory those whom she had tortured in days gone by.

And to this collection she now had an addition to make, an addition furnished at the expense of a poor girl who had never wronged a person in the world, who had never made herself an enemy, but who simply stood in an evil man's way to

a fortune.

Helen did not die.

No, she lived, ardently as she prayed that she might not.

And of a strength of character that is unusual in a woman, she did not suffer as great a nervous shock as Tige had anticipated.

"I guess it'll have to be 'kill her!'" the hyena-like woman muttered to herself. "But I'll not do that until I've had a little more fun with her."

Fun!

If fun it was to her, she had plenty of it. But to her victim it was something far—far different!



CHAPTER XVIII.

PUZZLED.

Several days after meeting Shadow in his disguise of a mulatto, I was the recipient of a letter which puzzled me not a little.

The text was simple enough.

The letter read:

"MR. HOWARD.—Herewith I return you the money you so kindly loaned me on an occasion that was filled with sadness for me. You will remember the occasion to which I refer—when Tom Smith was killed, and you so generously provided me with the means of interring him in mother earth.

"That I am deeply grateful you may rest assured, and perhaps at some future time I may be able to testify to the depth of my gratitude.

"Accept my thanks with the money I return, a kind of interest on the loan, which I am satisfied you will best like.

"Yours gratefully,

"NELLIE MILLBANK."

A very nicely worded and straightforward letter. Don't you think so?

Of course you do.

Then, why was I puzzled?

Simply because when I received the letter, and before opening it, I said as I glanced at the penmanship of the address:

"Another letter from Shadow," and then, on opening it, found that it was not.

I had preserved Shadow's letters or notes, and these I now brought out and compared with this epistle from Nellie Millbank.

The penmanship was "as like as two peas."

Now, then, if you have read the foregoing chapters with any interest, you can see why I was puzzled.

Was Nellie Millbank the mysterious little detective?

As I said, provided your interest has been deep enough, you know that I had strong reasons, and many of them, for supposing Shadow to be none other than young Mat Morris.

Let us recount some reasons.

I had taxed Shadow with being Mat Morris, and he had not denied it.

Then, I had paid Shadow five hundred dollars, and had afterwards seen the very bills themselves in the hands of Mat's mother.

This last circumstance was of itself strong evidence that Mat and Shadow were one and the same person.

Then there was the manner Shadow had of carrying himself—Mat Morris' style exactly.

A person's manner of bearing himself, and his mode of walking, and the use of his hands and head when speaking, are things that no disguise can hide.

Knowing this, I had been ready to almost take an oath as to the true identity of Shadow.

Yet here comes a letter that completely upsets all my faith in my powers of penetration.

If the writing of Nellie Millbank and of Shadow was the same, then Mat evidently was not Shadow. And if Mat was not Shadow, who was?

Nellie Millbank?

It was barely possible.

That slip of a girl do what I knew Shadow was capable of doing, as well as what he had done?

It was not to be credited.

And yet—the similarity of the handwriting. How was that to be accounted for?

I thought of Mrs. Morris.

I intended to go and show her one of the Shadow letters, and inquire if she knew the writing.

When I arrived at the house where Mrs. Morris lived, it was to learn that she had moved away early that morning.

Where to, nobody knew.

Balked in this direction, I turned my steps toward the house of the deputy sheriff, in a cell beneath whose house, it will be remembered, I had in confinement Dick Stanton, the false detective.

No sooner did the treacherous detective see me than he began whining like a whipped cur, and begged like a dog to be let go, or be dealt with mercifully.

If I would only release him, he said, he would "give away" his pals of the sugar-house, besides putting into my hands numbers of clues in connection with various crimes.

"And they won't be false scents," he said earnestly. "I'll deal square with you, Howard, I swear I will. It will get promotion for you, sure, if you bag the game I can put you on the track of."

I had, however, paid him a visit for a particular purpose, and evading all his questions and turning a deaf ear to his entreaties, I told him I wanted to know if the prisoner who had been confined in the black hole was male or female.

He looked at me in surprise.

"Male or female?" he said.

"Yes."

"Male, of course."

"You are sure of it?"

"Sure of it? Why, he was a man just as much as you are a man, or I am one."

"*You* are not a man—except in name," I rejoined (and the words made him wince) "so do not bring yourself into the comparison."

I made him give me a close description of the prisoner who had been confined in the black hole, and after listening to it, I could have no manner of doubt that the person was other than Mat Morris.

"And," volunteered Stanton, "moreover, he was a surly sort of a customer. We couldn't get a word out of him."

This tallied with Shadow.

I left Stanton still ironed, despite his prayers to at least have the handcuffs taken off.

"You deserve all the punishment you are enduring," I bitingly told him.

I no longer doubted that Mat Morris and the mysterious detective were one and the same person. All the evidence pointed toward that conclusion.

It was a stickler.

I dropped in to see a writing expert, and after examining them, he said that the two specimens might or might not be written by the same person.

"It is penmanship as taught in our public schools," he said. "Pupils are drilled into a set way of forming their letters, as a consequence of which there is a great similarity in writing until the persons have been for years out of school."

That settled it.

The similarity was one caused by education, and I was more than ever convinced of Mat and Shadow being one individual.

I went home in a thoughtful mood.

There I found a letter awaiting me from the chief, asking why I had not reported in a certain matter which had been placed in my hands.

I felt conscience-stricken.

In my great interest in what concerned Shadow I had neglected my duty, to which the last few hours should have been devoted, instead of to an endeavor to find out whether Shadow was Mat Morris, or Nellie Millbank, or somebody else.

Immediately I donned the disguise in which I had acted a part, and wound my way into the confidence of Woglom and his companion, by means of which I had learned of the prisoner in the black hole.

At once I started out.

In their usual place of resort I, that evening, encountered the precious pair of rascals.

They were rather shy of me at first, not liking my sudden and unaccounted-for absence, but an off-hand manner and a few drinks fixed matters all right.

After that they seemed to take to me amazingly, and I noticed them glancing first at me and then at each other with an askance expression.

I knew that something was afoot, and patiently waited to hear what it was.

After awhile they withdrew to a little distance and began to earnestly converse,

concerning me, I was quite positive.

Such indeed was the truth.

They were discussing the advisability of taking me into their confidence, and making me a party in a villainous scheme that was already hatched.

"Want to go into a big job with us?" Woglom asked me, on their resuming their seats.

"Certainly, if there's enough 'swag' to pay for the trouble," I replied. "What is the line?"

My answer satisfied them, and they unfolded their scheme. It was a scheme into which I entered for a purpose; they were to put it into execution that night, and I accompanied them—accompanied them into as great a peril as ever threatened my life.

I shudder, even now, when I think of that night.



CHAPTER XIX.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

Never shall I forget the adventures of the night when I accompanied Woglom and his pal on that expedition.

I have been in many ticklish places, but I never got into one where I was worse stumped than I was that night.

The circumstances were very peculiar, and the knowledge that at any moment I might be——

But, perhaps, it would be more intelligible to the reader, did I begin at the beginning and narrate the incidents of that escapade.

While the pair of precious villains pretended to have taken me fully into their confidence, they had not really done so.

They were going to break into a house.

This much was truth.

But, as I understood them, the house was in the suburbs—somewhere in the neighborhood of Fort Washington, I took it.

It was because I believed that vicinity contained the intended scene of robbery, that I so readily consented to accompany them.

I would probably be left outside to keep guard, and would take advantage of the circumstance to call the police, and be on hand to bag them when they came out with their plunder.

It was not until after we had got started that I was undeceived.

I then learned that the "suburbs," as they meant it, was in New Jersey, on the line of the Central Railroad.

A train left near midnight.

This was the train we were to take, to reach which we were compelled to somewhat hasten our pace.

I was puzzled to know what to do.

I might have called for assistance on the policemen we passed, and have taken them into custody.

But this would have been worse than useless under the circumstances.

The rascals could not be held and punished because it could not be proved that they had *intended* committing a robbery.

Men cannot be sent to prison for intention of wrong. They must be proved to have committed the wrong.

Should I back out of accompanying them?

So I asked myself.

While still in a state of uncertainty we reached the ferry.

"I will go along," I mentally decided. "I may be able to give an alarm and collar them there as well as if it had taken place here."

And so I went.

We reached the little town after a short ride in the cars, a little town which I shall not name, but which is noted for its handsome residences, and its wealthy people.

While on a tramp through the country Woglom had applied at the house for something to eat.

He was provided with food, and asked if he did not wish to work. He said "Yes." He was put to work cleaning out the cellar of the house.

Such an opportunity was not to be thrown aside.

He made a diagram of the interior of the house, and located its rooms and the furniture in them with an accuracy that comes only by practice.

This was the house that we were on the way to "crack" that night.

We reached it.

Passing by, we paused at a little distance to hold a consultation.

The house was all dark and silent, the sky was somewhat clouded, and everything seemed favorable for our undertaking.

I was given a bottle of chloroform, and on my pleading ignorance, was instructed how to use it.

There was no need here of any one remaining outside to watch.

We were all to enter.

When Woglom was in the house, he had made use of a "crooked" man's never-absent companion, a screw-driver.

With this he had loosened the screws of the iron buttons which secured the cellar windows, which were then left so poorly secured that a slight push would be sufficient to open them.

Consulting his diagram by the light of a match, Woglom located the particular window which he considered it most advisable to attack.

With soft steps we crept around the house, keeping close to it.

We reached the window.

Woglom went down on his knees before it.

Listening a minute, and finding everything continued quiet, the master-villain applied a gentle pressure to the window.

It did not give.

He pressed harder.

Still it remained firmly secured.

Harder still he pressed.

Then I heard him utter an oath.

By some manner, or by accident, the inmates had discovered that the windows had been tampered with, and had re-fastened the buttons.

Again we consulted, having withdrawn for that purpose.

It was Woglom's opinion, that while the looseness of the buttons had been noticed, the inhabitants of the house would hardly be likely to suppose it a piece of work preparatory to a robbery.

"Shall we go ahead then?" I asked.

"Yes," was the decision.

Back to the house we went.

Again we paused at the window.

From his pockets Woglom now produced a number of implements.

Against the window pane he pressed a bit of a sticky substance resembling putty, and then sunk the head of a tool he did not wish to use in the stuff.

This done, he made use of a glazier's point.

He made a circular cut on the pane, the putty forming the central point or axis.

Now he tapped gently on the cut glass with an iron chisel, whose head was covered by a piece of felt cloth to deaden the sound.

Presently the cut portion gave way.

Now the use of the putty became apparent. It was to prevent the cut-out part of the glass from falling and shattering on the floor inside.

The ingenuity, the great care, the art with which burglars work is a revelation to those who have no knowledge of the methods by which such startling robberies are made possible.

The circular piece of glass was brought to the outside and laid carefully down.

Through the aperture thus formed a hand could be inserted, and the buttons turned about, when the window could be easily opened, permitting ingress to the cellar.

Once this was gained, little or no trouble would be experienced in reaching the upper portions of the house.

Woglom inserted his hand.

He reached the button at one side and turned it.

He then reached out for the other button, and—a wild howl gave me an awful start.

Woglom had uttered it.

Following close upon its heels came a string of horrible oaths.

"What's up—what's wrong?"

"My hand is caught in some sort of a contrivance!" moaned or groaned Woglom.

"Quick—the hole is big enough—try and get my hand loose."

His pal inserted his hand.

Now was my time to capture them!

I drew my revolver, and had taken a forward stop, when——

Bang!

Almost beneath my feet a spring gun was discharged, and I could hear the big buckshot—each one a young bullet—buzzing about my ears, like a swarm of hungry flies on a hot summer's day.

I paused.

A window went up.

A head appeared and a stern voice said:

"Aha! I've got you now, you rascals;" and I saw the muzzle of a gun appear. "Stay where you are if you value your lives! A dozen spring guns are concealed just there, and a single step may discharge them all."

Heaven!

The cold sweat started from every pore of my body.

Spring guns!

What infernal things they are, anyhow.

I trembled. Yes, I own up to it—I trembled. And so, I think, any man would who was made of flesh and blood.

It was an awful feeling, to know that a mine was concealed right beneath your feet, which the slightest move might cause to explode.

Did I stand still?

Well—I think I did. I was rooted to the spot, and with horror watched Woglom's struggles to free himself, for I feared that his movements would cause the dreaded explosion.



CHAPTER XX.

STILL SEARCHING.

All possibility of Shadow being Nellie Millbank would have been driven from my mind had I been where I could see him after parting with him on the night when I gave him the money.

Seen to receive a roll of bills by a party of rascals, they had made use of an alley-way to head him off, and then suddenly sprang on him from an ambush.

The possibility alluded to would have been killed by the coolness of Shadow's demeanor, by his quick-witted promptness taking his measures to disconcert the villains, by the exhibition of courage displayed by him.

The whole thing could never be a part of a woman's character.

Only a man, and not an ordinary man at that, could have acted as Shadow did under those trying circumstances.

He showed no disconcertion whatever when so suddenly attacked.

Agile as a cat in every movement, he gave a backward spring the moment they broke cover.

Before they could reach him, his hand had clasped the butt of his revolver.

The next second it was out.

They had then reached him—had him hemmed in, but he forced a passage by grimly pointing his revolver at the head of one of them.

He uttered not a word.

He did not forget himself, nor cease to maintain that singular silence which he seemed to have forced upon himself.

Perhaps his silence added to the effect of his threatening movements, but at any rate the villainous quartette shrank away from him, feeling they had caught a Tartar.

Shadow never lost his composure.

Keeping his face to them, he slowly backed away from them.

They followed him up, chagrined, yet resolute, wishing to retrieve their mistake. One or two swift glances Shadow threw behind him, then changed the line of his retreat, at last fetching up in a doorway.

With his back planted against the door, the villains could only attack him from the front, and this—well, Shadow smiled. He gauged their temper and courage to a T.

Fire-arms are tools too noisy for such fellows, and they were armed with knives. To make these effective it was necessary to get within arm's length.

But to do this in the face of Shadow's revolver was a task they had little relish to attempt.

Silent as the grave itself, and grim as a man of stone, Shadow kept his revolver raised, his finger on the trigger, ready to defend himself.

Nearer came the villains.

Shadow made no movement until they were within a half-dozen feet of him, and then he slightly waved his deadly weapon to warn them away.

They paused.

Glaring at him, they cursed under their breaths.

To be balked was bad enough.

But to be balked in this off-hand, cool, easy manner, was far worse.

But what could they do?

They could not fail to see and understand that a revolver was aimed at them with deadly intent.

They well knew that a bullet is a messenger which travels rapidly, and if the mulatto's aim was as true as his arm was steady, to attempt to rush on him would be the death-signal of at least one of their number.

This fact was evident.

And they hung back in an undecided state of mind.

Shadow laughed quietly.

He had the advantage—had turned the tables, and was aware of it.

He now assumed the aggressive, and took a step toward them, menacing them

with the loaded and cocked weapon.

They retreated.

Finally one uttered a few low, hoarse-toned words, and then they took to their heels, Shadow after them.

Around the corner they dashed, but the detective kept them in sight until they disappeared into the alley-way which they had used to head him off. It was a singular incident, and would have appeared so to any one who could have been there to witness it. Nor was it any the less thrilling that it was so quiet.

During the whole affair, from beginning to end, Shadow had uttered no word, but had preserved that mysterious silence in which he had wrapped himself, for causing him to break which on a certain occasion he had poured out on my head the vials of his wrath.

He had conquered four desperate men, had done it in as calm a manner as he would have eaten his dinner.

Verily, he was a mysterious being.

In thinking of him afterward, it seemed to me as if his path and mine were always crossing, for it was due to him that Woglom and his pal and myself were placed in our horrible fix.

The gentleman who lived in this place had been visited one evening by a mulatto.

"A mulatto—a negro?" he said, when the girl told him that such a person wished to see him. "What does he want?"

"I don't know, sir. He jist showed me a bit of paper wid 'I want to see the master of the house' on it."

"Take him into the library."

As the reader will readily suppose, the mulatto was Shadow.

It will be remembered that Woglom and his pal were connected with the sugar-house gang.

Woglom was "down on his luck" so badly as to have been obliged to dispose of his burglarious implements. He had visited Cap to be supplied with some tools.

Cap demanded to know what Woglom was going to do with them, and what were the chances of his success, before lending him what he wanted—for a good

round consideration.

Thus, while in concealment in the passage under the junk pile, Shadow had learned the particulars of this "job."

"You wished to see me?" said the master of the house, as he entered the library, where Shadow had been shown.

The detective bowed, pointed to the open desk, then took paper and pencil and wrote:

"A plan has been formed to rob your house."

Reading this, the gentleman gave a start of surprise, then looked more closely at Shadow.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"A detective," Shadow replied, in writing.

In terms as brief as possible he outlined the case, spoke of the tramp they had given food and a day's work to, and told him he would find that the fastenings of the cellar windows had been tampered with.

Having warned the gentleman, Shadow retired, refusing either pay or refreshment tendered him.

At once the owner of the house had prepared his trap and the spring guns, while Shadow went back to the city to continue the discouraging search for a criminal to whose identity he had only the faintest possible clew.

Like a very shadow he was, as he silently stole hither and thither, and glided in and out of the haunts of vice, searching for the man who had done him a great wrong and had aroused his enmity.

And then, ere night, his lips involuntarily parted, and the long silence was unconsciously broken, as he fervently exclaimed:

"Thank Heaven!"

His keen gaze rested on a man whom he felt an inward conviction was the individual whom he had for so long in vain endeavored to discover. And, with eyes beginning to flame, the mysterious detective gradually drew nearer to the individual, while one hand rested on his revolver.

Was the hour of his vengeance at hand?



CHAPTER XXI.

FUN!

Helen Dilt's brain had withstood the shock of the torture to which she had been subjected by the human hyena who presided over that establishment, called a "first-class private asylum, where excellent care is guaranteed for those unfortunates who are mentally deranged."

It was Tige's business to drive her crazy or kill her, and apart from the sum to be made by boarding her after being made mad, the fiend cared very little which fate she assigned to Helen.

"I must try a few more tortures on her," muttered the tigress, "and if she don't begin to weaken soon, I'll take the bull by the horns and prepare her for transplanting."

The wretch laughed at her own facetiousness, and at once took steps to have some more "fun," as she called it.

Perhaps it was fun to her.

If everything that a person enjoys is fun, then it was fun for her to torture her patients and watch the exhibition of their anguish.

Poor Helen!

It was enough to make a heart of adamant soften to see her lying there, quivering and shivering.

It was enough to cause the stoniest eyes to shed tears of blood.

But Tige was not a human being.

It would be a libel on the whole human race to call her so.

She was rather a form of flesh and blood, without feeling, without heart, the spirit, the life, which animated her being that of Satan himself, or else one of his arch fiends.

A few words had been received from Brown.

They were to the effect that Tige was to endeavor, above all things, to actually craze Helen. It suited his ends better. But in case it was impossible to drive her

mad, then to kill her.

A keeper entered Helen's room, removed the gag, and motioned her to eat.

She shook her head. She could not eat. He then offered her some liquor or wine, but this she also refused.

"You must take something to keep up your strength," the keeper said. "I've got orders to see that you take some wine, and in this establishment orders has got to be obeyed, even if I have to force the stuff down your grub-tube."

He placed a glass of wine to Helen's lips, and when she would not take it—fearing poison—he throttled her, and when she gasped let the wine run down her throat, almost strangling her.

The keeper waited.

Finding that the wine was undrugged, so far as she could tell, and feeling the generous glow it produced, she drank another glass without compelling the keeper to resort to violence.

"Will you eat now?"

"No."

"Ain't you hungry?"

"Not a bit."

"Better eat it," said the fellow. "Patients is never sure here when they'll get another meal. If you ain't hungry now, you might better eat this grub ag'in the time when you will be."

But Helen motioned the food away.

She could not eat.

Before taking his leave, the fellow replaced the gag. When Helen saw him take it up, and divined what he intended to do, she filled her lungs for screaming.

But the keeper's eyes were quick ones.

He was accustomed to similar scenes, and quick as a flash had Helen by the throat, and choked the first shriek short off.

"Now be quiet, curse you!" he hissed, as the poor girl's tongue began to protrude. "You're mighty slow in learning that it ain't best to kick against the pricks in this 'ere shebang."

Letting go of Helen's throat now, he deftly applied the gag before she could recover sufficient breath to finish the cry for help which he had choked down.

Then he left her.

An hour later she had another visitor.

It was Tige.

Helen was a brave girl. She had proved her courage when in the cellar beneath the house of McGinnis, when the cruel tide mounted higher and higher about her.

Yes, she was a brave girl.

There could be no question about that.

Yet she could not help cowering down in terror as she saw her tormentor entering the room—could not help shrinking down close to the bed, while cold chills crept up her spine, accompanied by a feeling as if she were telescoping into herself.

Tige paused.

As she stood and gloated over this unconscious action of Helen's, the fiendish woman gave utterance to a blood-chilling chuckle.

The sight of this fear that was manifested for her, was the highest compliment which Tige could be paid.

"Well, how does my deary feel after our last little picnic party?" inquired Tige, as she approached the bed, her face distorted by a horrible grimace.

Helen quivered from head to foot.

But she was silent.

The gag prevented all speech, smothered all sound, save moans and groans, and these there was no occasion for now, although there soon would be.

Helen's feet were still bare.

Toward these the hag directed her attention, and as a first move lightly ran her fingers over the soles.

The victim drew them hastily up as far as the ropes about her ankles permitted.

Tige exultantly chuckled.

Helen's feet were very sensitive.

There was a world of fun in store for the she-hyena.

From her pocket the human she-hyena now took a bunch of feathers—innocent-looking things of themselves, but capable of being made an instrument of terrible torture.

These feathers Tige commenced drawing over and brushing around on the soles of Helen's feet.

It was torture indeed!

Torture!

The word does not describe it.

Soon Helen was writhing again, and straining again, until the veins were swollen nearly to bursting.

It was agony to endure.

Don't you think so?

Well, try it.

It can be easily done; there is no costly apparatus to procure. Just two or three feathers, to be drawn over your bare feet.

Laughing, exultantly crowing, chuckling as she watched the evidences of Helen's sufferings, the she-hyena pursued her hideous work with relentless energy.

It was awful.

At last human nature could not stand it, and Helen went into convulsions.

Then Tige threw down the feathers, and sprang to get a pitcher of water.

"I must be quick," she muttered, "or she may die before I can get her out of the fit."



CHAPTER XXII.

OUT OF JEOPARDY.

We were in a fix of the worst possible description, and I felt at that minute that no matter how important a capture I might expect to make thereby, I would never again put myself in seeming league with house-breakers.

No, sir!

Spring guns was just one too many to suit my taste.

This was my first experience in the art of "crib-cracking," and if I could only get safely out of this I felt that I should be perfectly contented to have it my last as well as my first.

If you have never been in a similar situation you can only have a faint conception of my feelings as I stood there, not daring to move lest I might set those concealed springs to going.

I do not think my bitterest enemy would accuse me of cowardice, and I don't think that my trembling just then was the result of cowardice on my part.

Such a feeling as came over me then I never had before and have never had since.

In reaching for the button of the window Woglom's hand was made a prisoner by the same means.

At once both commenced to wildly thrash about with their heels, in an attempt to get loose and make their escape.

"For Heaven's sake," I gasped, "keep your feet quiet. You may set the infernal machine at work."

But they only thrashed harder.

I momentarily expected to be blown to pieces, to be riddled by a teacupful of young bullets, a certainly not very pleasing reflection.

It occurred to me that it was a singular sort of position for a detective to be caught in, and I groaned as I thought of the laugh my brother professionals would have at my expense.

That I would eventually be able to exonerate myself, I had no doubt. But before I could do so I would of necessity be obliged to spend the remainder of the present night, and possibly several additional days and nights, in jail before being set free.

It was not a pleasant prospect.

Indeed, it was quite the contrary.

And it would, in all probability, hurt my standing in the force, and give my envious enemies a handle for sneers and innuendoes.

Some of these—and I knew I had enemies—would not hesitate to hint that there was "a nigger in the fence;" in other words, that I was not as innocent as I tried to make out.

I am afraid that I uttered an oath or two. In fact, I am quite sure I did.

But how to help myself?

Was I to stand there like a stake until I was reached and collared by the gardener and hostler, who had been hastily roused, and whom I could now hear coming with heavy tread down the stairs inside the house?

All the thrashing around of Woglom and his pal had not started the spring guns.

This thought flashed across my brain.

Ha!

Perhaps the gentleman's statement of a whole battery of these masked weapons was a fiction, designed to hold us spellbound with fear.

There was a hope in the thought.

How my heart bounded!

I had often thought I could imagine just how a cornered criminal feels, as he gathers himself, in very desperation, for a dash for liberty.

But my imagination had never drawn so vivid a picture as was painted by my situation and its natural feelings at that moment.

I glanced up.

Out of the window that head still protruded, and the eyes in it were watching me sharply.

The muzzle of the gun was directed at me point-blank.

The gentleman knew that the two others were trapped, and so paid me the compliment of keeping me under surveillance.

I heard the back door of the house opened.

In a minute the gardener and hostler would be upon me.

I had no time to lose if I meant to make my escape.

And escape I must!

Two or three bounds would certainly carry me outside the circle in which the spring-guns were concealed, if concealed they were.

I gathered my muscles.

The watcher seemed to divine my intentions, for he sternly called:

"Stand still there! If you move, or try to escape, I'll shoot you down. I am not talking idly, but am in grim earnest."

I was satisfied of that from his tone.

But I must escape.

I would risk a shot at me.

Catching my breath, I took a big leap, and——

Bang!

He had been as good as his word.

I thought a swarm of bees were flying around my head.

But I had taken a second leap just in the nick of time, and, unharmed, escaped the shower of big buckshot which would have riddled my body, had not I been so quick.

A third and fourth leap, and then I took to my heels.

The fence barred my way.

And the gardener and his companion were close behind me. I made no attempt to go out of the gate. Nor did I waste time in climbing the fence.

I ran toward it for all I was worth, and bounded over it on the fly, alighted safely on the other side, and then went down the road like a streak of greased lightning.

"After him!—after him!—I can attend to these two!" I heard an excited voice

yell, and the two men obeyed the order.

As I ran, I coned the situation.

I found that I could easily outstrip the lumbering workmen. But that was not the thing. In an hour the whole country would be aroused, and it would be impossible to get a train back to the city without being collared.

A thought struck me.

Easing my pace, so as just to keep ahead of my pursuers, I took off and turned my coat inside out (it was made reversible for the purposes of disguise.)

I yanked off my false mustache, with a tiny pair of scissors hastily trimmed down my false beard, and changed its shape.

A few other changes I was able to make without pausing, and I felt sure I could then pass muster.

Suddenly halting short, I uttered a shout and then blazed away with my revolver, and was still shooting when the puffing men reached me.

"Were you after him?" I inquired.

"Yes," was the reply. "Which way did he go?"

"Straight ahead. My!—how he did run! You can never catch him."

"We can try," said they, and I joined with them in the pursuit—of a phantom, now!

Finally giving up the pursuit, we turned our steps backward over the course we had come. They told me what had happened, and I informed them that I was a detective.

We reached the house.

The constable had been summoned, and the two rascals were already in irons.

The display of my badge made me perfectly solid, and I was taken into the confidence of the authorities when I—to their surprise as well as that of Woglom and his pal—told the names of the pair and gave their pedigree.

When in the light, I saw Woglom and his pal glance at me rather hard. But the change in appearance was so great, that, while they might suspect, they could not be sure that Detective Howard was their recent companion.

Should the forgoing chapter be read by the inhabitants of that little Jersey

village, they will for the first time learn who the third person of that burglarious trio really was.

I saw the rascals caged safely, and then returned to the city, as thankful a man as ever stepped in two shoes.

No more such adventures for me.

I was perfectly satisfied with one such experience.

My next move was to try and find Shadow, whom I next saw under very peculiar circumstances.



CHAPTER XXIII.

WEAVING THE NET.

Was the hour of Shadow's vengeance at hand?

It would seem so, from the expression which came into his face as he passed nearer to the man whom he believed he had at last recognized.

An intense but suppressed excitement marked his every movement.

"Thank Heaven!"

He had thus exclaimed a moment before while he was earnestly scrutinizing the face of this person.

The fact that he could be surprised into breaking his long and well-maintained silence spoke very strongly for his belief that he had at last found the man he was in search of.

And that man was McGinnis.

When he left the place Shadow followed him.

Like a sleuth-hound he kept on the track of the evil man, and so carefully did he time his movements, that the suspicions of McGinnis were not aroused.

Light-footed as a cat, noiseless as a very shadow, gliding along like a ghost, a better person than the mysterious little detective could not have been found for the purposes of dogging and pursuit.

Gradually the expression of excitement left his face, and it became very stern and set.

It pictured a grim and unalterable purpose.

And that purpose was—vengeance!

That is, if McGinnis should prove to be the right man.

Shadow had been mistaken before, and there was a possibility of his being so again.

But he was satisfied that this time he had found the right man.

Earnestly he had studied the face of Helen Dilt's abductor, and it exactly corresponded with the mental picture he had formed of the individual he was after.

Such a likeness, he told himself, could hardly be the result of accident.

A description which had been given him, every word of which he had carefully treasured up, suited McGinnis perfectly and in every particular.

And, as Shadow pursued, a grim smile began to play about his lips.

"It is the man!" he muttered, again breaking through the shield of silence with which he had so long kept himself surrounded.

"It is the man!" he muttered again. "My darling, you shall be avenged soon."

Shadow knew that he had broken the self-imposed silence.

Yet he did not appear vexed, as he had when I forced him to speak on a certain occasion.

Why was this?

It seemed to me as if he had vowed solemnly to utter no word to living being until he had found the man he was after.

Satisfied that McGinnis was the person, he considered the vow fulfilled.

This was, indeed, the true reason.

But was McGinnis the man?

As closely as "death hangs to a nigger," Shadow hung to McGinnis, nor ever let him get out of his sight.

More than once the hand of the mysterious detective sought the butt of his revolver, as it had done in the saloon, in the first fever of excitement subsequent to the recognition.

An equal number of times, however, the fingers unclasped from the weapon.

While McGinnis filled the bill as far as the description went, and while Shadow would have staked his life that he was the man, he had sense enough, and was cool enough, to be aware that after all he might be mistaken.

He did not wish to kill the wrong man.

That would be worse than no revenge at all.

No, he must be sure beyond even the smallest doubt, before he fired the fatal shot.

He must follow the same general plan he had followed for so long—keep near the suspected man, waiting until he should convict himself by his own word of mouth.

McGinnis had not the remotest idea that he was under surveillance, and certainly did not dream that he was tracked to his very door.

In the dark hours before the dawn a dark figure glided around and around the shanty, ghost-like in the perfect silence of its movements. It was Shadow surveying the lay of the land.

He was seeking a mode of access to the house of McGinnis.

None was to be found.

It was secure from any but forcible entrance, and eavesdropping from outside would be worse than useless.

Shadow saw this.

It did not stump him, however.

He knew the old saying, that there is more than one way of killing a cat, and failing in one plan, he always was able to invent another without much loss of time.

Just before daybreak Shadow withdrew from the vicinity of McGinnis' house.

While in sight of it he paused, and had any one been near, it would have been to see Shadow raise his hand and shake that slender forefinger in that peculiar way of his.

Then he was gone.

Little dreaming of the mine that was preparing beneath his feet, McGinnis, with plenty of money in his pockets, which meant unlimited rum while it lasted, considered himself in clover.

He did not issue from his house until just after sunset.

On his way up the street his attention was drawn to a rather showy-looking woman—a blonde—coming from the opposite direction.

She was young, not much over twenty, was tolerably well dressed, and wore a derby hat with a decidedly rakish air.

All told, there was a certain jauntiness about her bearing telling so plain a story that most men would have turned aside to let her pass.

Not so McGinnis.

He winked at her.

Without an instant's loss of time she winked back.

"Halloo, Bridget!" said he.

"Halloo, Pat!" was her rather free-and-easy reply, in a jocular tone.

McGinnis paused short.

"Which way?" he asked.

"Any way," was the reply.

"Walk along with me, then."

"Good enough."

McGinnis and the girl walked along side by side, the man eyeing her in silence for a while. Then he asked:

"Who are you?"

"Me? I'm called Daisy, mostly."

"Belong here?"

"No; just got to New York this morning from London. I say, you old rooster, are you 'crooked?'"

"Yes," assented McGinnis.

"So am I. My pal was nabbed in London, but I managed to escape the bobbies."

"What's your lay?" inquired McGinnis.

"'Whipes' and 'tickers' and such like."

Without following their conversation further, we shall advance the time a few hours, and once again carry the reader to one of those low saloons that are patronized by the "crooked" and "flash."

At either side of a small table sat McGinnis and Daisy.

He was treating her and trying to induce her to join her fortunes with his.

Daisy hung back.

McGinnis continued to argue earnestly—and to order drinks.

A shrewd observer might have noticed that, while McGinnis swallowed all his liquor, the girl each time managed to dump hers out beneath the table.

The liquor began to mount to McGinnis' head, seasoned though it was.

He was becoming intoxicated.

He had been quite taken by the dashing manner of the girl and was now rapidly becoming maudlin and correspondingly affectionate.

He wanted to hug Daisy.

He put his arm around her, but she shook it off with a:

"Here, let's have another drink."

At last, when more than half intoxicated, he became very confidential, and to impress Daisy with the desirability of her taking him as her pal, began recounting his exploits in the past.

Her eyes began to snap and sparkle, and she listened to him with ill-concealed eagerness, while I, disguised, stood at a little distance, looking on.

My eyes had rested on Daisy's face for an instant, as they took in every inmate of the place. Back to her face my eyes had wandered, attracted by a something that was familiar.

The heavy falling of a drunken man caused her to glance around. Her eyes were directed at me for a second or two—and instantly I was staggered.

Those eyes were Shadow's!

Daisy was Shadow.

If Shadow was Mat Morris, then Mat Morris was Daisy.

But could that be?

Could Mat Morris so artfully disguise himself? Could that slender throat, and drooping shoulders, and swelling bust, belong to a man?



CHAPTER XXIV.

"HELP IS HERE!"

Not because she pitied Helen, or wished to save her life as a matter of humanity, but because she had received her orders, Tige sprang to the task of getting her victim out of the convulsions into which she had been thrown by torture.

Tige found it necessary to call for help, and did so.

For some time Helen's life hung as in a balance, and it was a matter of doubt what the result would be.

But hard work carried off the palm of victory, and at last Tige drew back with a satisfied grunt.

She next dismissed the person she had called to assist her.

Now her brow began to cloud with anger, directed at Helen, for having unconsciously caused her some anxiety.

Anxious Tige had been, for she always endeavored to do exactly as her partners wished, since by doing so she held them bound to her by closer ties of interest, and thereby was enabled to demand countenance, protection, and support from them.

It had been Brown's orders to kill Helen only as the extreme alternative, his first wish being that she should be driven mad.

Tige did not blame herself for Helen having gone into convulsions.

Not at all.

In her estimation it was the victim's own fault, and Helen must be made to suffer for having caused her so much trouble.

Wiping the perspiration from her forehead, Tige sat down to await Helen's return to consciousness.

It occurred soon after.

The poor girl opened her eyes, saw Tige beside her, shuddered, cowered down like a timid hare beset by a blood-hound, and closed her eyes, to shut out the sight of her tormentor.

"A pretty girl you are, to give me so much trouble!" growled Tige. "I'm going at you again for doing it."

On hearing these words, Helen began to shake, and a second or two later she went into a fit of hysterics.

A gloating look came into Tige's face.

It was music to her ears, these hysterical sobs and moans of her victim.

"The corner is turned," muttered Tige, as she stood beside the bed, looking down on Helen.

She referred to the corner of Helen's reason. She meant that the edge was entered.

Poor girl!

Never before in her life had she had a hysterical attack.

Her mind had been too healthy and strong for that, and it indicated, as Tige said, that the turning point was reached.

A vigorous following up of the mental impressions left on Helen's mind by the torture she had endured could not fail to result in the dethronement of her reason.

Tige was too well posted in her business, however, to attempt to torture Helen while suffering with hysterics. To have done so must inevitably have resulted in an immediate attack of convulsions again.

Instead, she took herself out of her victim's sight, and sent in one of the attendants to look after her.

When Helen had become somewhat calm, she was offered food, which, as before, she declined.

But of the really excellent wine she took three glasses.

Having sworn on a Bible, which was brought in, that she would not shriek or cry for help, the attendant removed the gag.

Sometimes gagged, sometimes not, sometimes bound to her bed, and again left unbound, but never permitted to leave her room, some days passed.

Several times each day Tige would pass suddenly into the poor girl's presence, and no matter how composed Helen might have been a minute before, the sight of her torturer at once threw her into an excited state, at the same time inducing a fear that caused her to retreat into a corner, quivering and gasping for breath,

while a cold dew that sprang from every pore would bathe her entire body.

This was what Tige liked to see.

It indicated the state of Helen's mind, and kept her nerves constantly in a state of tension.

Few people have any idea of the frailty of the tenure which the human mind holds on reason, or how easily the mind can be warped or upset.

Helen's appetite was tempted with good food, daintily prepared, and rich wines were kept always at her hand. Of all these she now partook freely, wondering at the kindness manifested for her in this direction, but never once dreaming that it was done to build up her physical strength, so that she might stand a greater amount of torture without fainting, or going into hysterics or convulsions.

So the days passed for a period, the length of which Helen never knew.

She had flung herself on the bed one day, and had fallen asleep.

She was awakened by her wrists and ankles being clutched hold of. Opening her eyes, she saw Tige and two of the attendants there.

The scream that arose to her lips was cut short by the strong grip of the human she-hyena fastening on her throat.

When wrists and ankles had been secured to the four corners of the bed, they proceeded to gag Helen, who was then left alone with Tige.

This time the torture was one of burning with red-hot irons.

Tige had brought in with her a small charcoal furnace with which to heat the implements of torture.

She first touched the irons to the soles of the victim's feet.

Then Tige touched the iron to the palms of Helen's hand.

It was terrible!

Helen had lived so generously that she was stronger in body than when tortured before, and as she writhed and twisted the ropes squeaked and strained.

A throe of anguish caused her to concentrate her strength with one grand effort, and the rope that held her right hand parted.

Quick as a flash she dragged off the gag, and madly shrieked for help.

Tige sprang on her to throttle her, to choke her down; but her hands became

nerveless and her face like that of a corpse, as a ringing voice exclaimed:
"Help is here!"



CHAPTER XXV.

MAN OR WOMAN?

Man or woman?

I looked at the individual who was seated opposite to McGinnis, and asked myself this question.

The glance of those eyes had assured me that Daisy was Shadow.

But was Shadow man or woman?

Man I certainly believed him, and yet—well, I was dumfounded if ever man was.

That swelling bust might be a work of art, but it seemed to me that it arose and fell too naturally to be anything but genuine.

True, I had had ample evidence of Shadow's ability in the art of disguise, yet still I could hardly believe this to be all making up.

Shadow saw that my eyes were upon him (or her), and also that I had recognized him.

McGinnis had been so plied with drink by Shadow, that he was too drunk to notice or understand the significance of a motion of the mysterious detective's hand.

Yet it said to me as plainly as words could have done:

"Be circumspect. Be careful. Do not betray me. Go away, and leave me to alone work out the scheme I have laid."

I obeyed.

I turned on my heel and left the place. As I was about to pass through the door I glanced back.

McGinnis was becoming very affectionate, and was winding his arm about Daisy's waist.

Since Daisy was Shadow we shall not mystify the reader, but simply speak of him by the name to which we are accustomed.

"Say yes, Daisy, won't you?" said McGinnis, with a slobber which he meant for a kiss.

An expression of intense disgust on the other's face was not noticed by the drunken villain.

"I'll think over it," was the reply. "But there's one thing, McGinnis, which I want you to understand, that I won't take up with a slouch."

"I ain't no slouch," protested McGinnis. "Why, I've——" and then started again, he began recounting his exploits in a boastful tone.

Shadow listened, his ears drinking in the other's words with an avidity equal to that of the leech, as it sucks the blood of the victim to which it has fastened.

The detective heard partially what he wished to hear, and his eyes began to gleam with a red and dangerous light.

Deftly, and with a purpose, he now and then interpolated a word to direct McGinnis' mind into other channels, and at last the end toward which he had aimed was gained.

Out of his own mouth McGinnis had convicted himself.

Distinctly, unequivocally, he had fastened on himself a terrible crime—a crime which it was Shadow's sworn purpose to avenge.

"Thank Heaven!"

So earnestly did Shadow utter this exclamation that it fixed the attention of McGinnis, stupid with drink as he was.

Shadow saw it, and hastened to remove the impression made on the mind of the villain.

"Let's have another drink," said McGinnis, as soon as his mind was again at ease.

"You've had enough," said Shadow.

"I want another drink," growled McGinnis, now in his ugly state of intoxication.

"No," was the decided rejoinder.

McGinnis clenched his fist and brought it forcibly down on the table.

He swore that he was not going to be dictated to by a woman.

"Very well," said Shadow, coolly. "You were the one who was anxious for a

partnership. It wasn't me. If you drink another drop I'll bust up the whole arrangement."

Muttering under his breath that he would tame her when the time came, he nevertheless did not order the drink.

For Shadow's purpose McGinnis was now drunk enough.

"Come, let's get out of this," at last remarked Shadow.

"All right, Daisy," hiccupped McGinnis. "Goin' home with me, ain't ye?" with a leer.

"Yes."

"Bully for you. You're a gal of the right stripe. Sail ahead—give us a wing, though, for I'm kind o' unstiddy on my pins. An' I say, you must be well seasoned, 'cause you don't show the effects of this bout's much as I do."

"I've drank many a stout lad under the table," was the laughing reply, and McGinnis looked at his Daisy more admiringly than before.

Too drunk to know even where he was going, Shadow found no trouble in leading the villain whither he wished, since McGinnis now trusted him completely.

"What a mash!" McGinnis kept muttering to himself, and every time they passed under a street-lamp he insisted on having another look at his darling Daisy's face.

"What's zish?" he finally asked, reeling unsteadily and glancing around. "What's zish? Where'sh the house? Zish is a dock!"

Shadow had led him to a lonely and deserted pier on the east side of town.

Click!

Click!

It was a pair of handcuffs that produced this clicking, as they were snapped on McGinnis' wrists.

Realizing what had been done, and nearly sobered by the shock of surprise, McGinnis started back, and, raising his hands quickly, tried to bring the handcuffs down on Shadow's head.

Shadow started back in time to save himself.

Then McGinnis made an attempt to fly.

Shadow was too quick for him.

In less than a second he had drawn and cocked a revolver, and with one spring reaching McGinnis' side, he planted the muzzle against the villain's temple.

"Be quiet, unless you wish to die instantly!" Shadow sternly said, and the villain paused and stood trembling like a leaf.

McGinnis' head was more sobered than his body, and when Shadow suddenly tripped him, his feet flew out from under him, and down he heavily went.

Shadow seemed working in a systematic way, seemed to have planned everything exactly as it happened, for when he sprang on the fallen villain he held a gag in his hand.

At the revolver's muzzle McGinnis yielded, and permitted the gag to be placed in his mouth.

Shadow next fastened his feet, and when the villain was perfectly helpless the detective coolly sat down on the string-piece, to wait until the liquor's effect had passed more away.

McGinnis' fear tended to sobering him quickly, and just as a distant church-clock was striking ten, Shadow arose and then knelt beside the villain, at whom he gazed with a fixed look that indicated unalterable purpose.

"McGinnis, your time is short," the mysterious detective sternly said. "Make your peace with Heaven if you can. In three minutes you die!"

There was no mistaking the tone in which these words were said.

McGinnis was by this time sober enough to understand the full import of the words, and he began to writhe, and strain, and try to burst his bonds.

The wisdom of Shadow's gagging him was now apparent, for had he been free to do so, the villain would have bawled and shrieked like a madman.

"I abhor a murderer, and I shudder at thoughts of murder," Shadow went coldly on. "But I stifle all such feelings for the sake of avenging in a fitting manner the death of one who was more than all the world to me, whom you robbed of life. Now you know why this terrible fate has overtaken you."

It was a fearful sight, that of this man struggling with such fierce intensity to burst his bonds, to free his hands, to save his life.

Like the Nemesis he was, Shadow remained kneeling beside McGinnis, and in

calm, cold voice, counted the expiring seconds.

"The three minutes are gone," he finally said, in a tone that was harsh but unwavering, and then——

"Avenged!" muttered Shadow, as he glided away from the spot a few minutes later. "Tom, I have kept my oath! Darling Tom, the same fate that was meted out to you, I have meted out to your murderer!"

Just as the clock struck eleven, and I was preparing for bed, a note was brought to me.

"Waiting for you. Important!

SHADOW."



CHAPTER XXVI.

CORNERED CRIMINALS.

"Are you ready for some sharp work?"

So I was greeted when I, as is almost needless to say, hurried down-stairs in response to Shadow's note.

"Oh, you can talk, can you?" I said. "Yes, I am ready for some sharp work. What have you on hand?" as I glanced at him from head to foot.

The skirts were gone.

He was again the slenderly-built youth that I had seen on first making his acquaintance.

"I'll tell you at the proper time," was the cool reply. "For the present do as I say. Get a dozen men as quickly as possible."

It did not take me long to do this.

Then, under Shadow's guidance, we were conducted to the vicinity of the private insane asylum in which Helen Dilt was held a prisoner.

Stationing the men so that they would not be seen, Shadow and I ascended the steps, and he rang the bell.

Soon the door opened a couple of inches, being prevented from opening further by a stout chain attached to it. But for this we should have thrown ourselves against it and forced our way in.

"Who are you? What do you want?" was asked from within.

"I came from Mr. Brown," Shadow promptly replied.

"What of him?" asked the cautious individual inside.

"He has sent me with a message to Tige concerning his patient, whom I am also commanded to see with my own eyes."

Satisfied by this display of knowledge, the fellow unfastened the chain and Shadow glided in. I sprang out from behind the pillar which had concealed me, and forced my way in just as Shadow clapped a revolver to the villain's head.

"Give an alarm at your peril!" hissed Shadow, and dragged him away from the door, which I at once swung open and admitted the men.

Handcuffs had been brought in plenty, and the keeper who had opened the door for us soon had a pair of them on his wrists.

Over the building the men scattered with as little noise as possible.

Tige was so wrapped up in her devilish work as to have heard none of the noise that could not be entirely avoided, and she knew not that her sins had found her out, until, in a ringing voice, Shadow cried out:

"Help is here!"

Helen Dilt uttered one sob, and then became very silent.

She was not dead, however.

Shadow sprang to her side even as I secured the tigerish woman, and he said that she had only fainted.

The tenderness of his manner, the way in which he commenced to bathe Helen's face, led me to inquire:

"Do you know her?"

"It is Helen Dilt!" he returned.

Helen Dilt!

I remembered the name. It was the foster-sister, the intended wife of Mat Morris.

Curiously I awaited Helen's return to consciousness, after having ironed Tige and turned her over to the custody of one of the men.

She opened her eyes at last.

She did not fling her arms about Shadow's neck, did not call him Mat, did not seem to recognize him.

Then Shadow was not Mat Morris!

This much was clear.

Who, then, was Shadow?

The mystery fretted me not a little.

"Are you ready for further work?" coolly asked Shadow, turning to me a minute later.

"Yes. Will we need as many men?"

"All but one. You can spare one to remain in charge here. Let the others march the prisoners to the station-house, and then follow me."

"Are we going to bag more game to-night?" inquired one of the men.

Shadow heard the question.

"Yes," he promptly returned. "There are plenty more to bag; but in bagging the next lot I'd advise you to keep your pops ready."

Our prisoners once safely in custody, Shadow led us by the shortest route toward the East River.

I guessed his destination this time.

"The old sugar-house?" I inquiringly said.

"Yes," was the brief reply.

"How do you expect to gain entrance?"

"Leave that to me."

I did leave it to him.

Great was my surprise when he led us by his secret entrance into the vaults beneath the old sugar-house.

I now began to understand how he had escaped—that is, if Shadow it was who had been confined in the Black Hole.

This latter I was now beginning to doubt.

Carefully we crossed the last of the series of vaults, and paused at the foot of the stairs leading up to the store-room, where I had once had a most exciting adventure.

Shadow softly mounted first.

I followed.

In the office, at the further end, Cap and some of the men were gathered, earnestly consulting about something.

The men were called up.

One was instructed to look after the door-keeper.

"Now!"

Shadow gave the word.

We rushed forward, every man with a brace of revolvers in his hands, and when I called on the rascals to throw up their hands, they cast one glance at the gleaming array of "barkers" and raised their hands.

Happily, Shadow's augury was forestalled.

We bagged as dangerous a lot of men as ever were banded together, and without firing a single shot. Unexpectedly taken as they were, they had no time to prepare for defense.

"Now for the Black Hole," said Shadow, when all the captives were in irons.

I followed him.

In the vaults he called loudly:

"What!—ho!—where are you?"

Soon came back a smothered reply, and we finally were led to a heavy wooden door secured by stout locks. As we could not open the latter, we proceeded to batter down the door, and released, in a half-starved condition—Mat Morris!

Shadow gave me no opportunity to indulge in feelings of surprise, or to obtain any information whatever concerning the mystery.

"Waste no time!" he said, coldly. "We have more work yet to-night."

Five of the men were left in the sugar-house to bag any members of the gang who might come straggling along. The others, with Shadow and myself, went to the station-house with the captives.

Between us walked poor Mat Morris, so weak that he could hardly stand.

"Take only two men this time," said Shadow, after we had reached the station; and so with two men we departed—to be surprised, I felt, as well as to surprise somebody else.

I was not wrong.

Mr. Joseph Brown was awakened by the ringing of his doorbell, and when he demanded what was the matter, was told that an intimate friend was dying and had sent for him.

When he came out we nabbed him, and within half an hour later, despite his

protestations, he was behind the bars of a cell.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

During the next afternoon all of the most active parties in this written drama were congregated in the parlor belonging to a suite of rooms at one of our second-class hotels.

Here Mat Morris had been taken, as he could be more comfortable here than at any other place, not knowing where to find his mother.

Here also had Helen Dilt been conveyed in a carriage.

Shadow was there.

And lastly, I had just put in an appearance.

Both Mat and Helen understood that to Shadow they owed their deliverance, and both were deeply grateful and could not thank him enough.

After a while I said plainly that there was a mystery underlying all this which I should like to have explained.

"You shall hear the explanation," said Shadow. "I am not what I seem; I am not a man; I am Nellie Millbank, to whom you were kind enough—although a stranger—to lend the money with which to decently inter the body of her murdered lover."

"I sometimes suspected as much," I said, while Mat and Helen both opened their eyes with surprise at learning that Shadow was a woman.

"Now," said I to Shadow, "it was to you whom I paid five hundred dollars?"

"Yes."

"Then"—to Mat—"how was it possible for you to send that same five hundred dollars to your mother?"

"I found the money," said Mat.

"I lost it," said Shadow.

Here was one of those little things which had so deeply puzzled me made light as day.

By questioning, by listening when all the parties talked freely, I finally understood all the ins and outs of the thrilling drama in real life.

In his search after Helen, and in his endeavor to find her abductor, Mat had been engaged only a short while when he rendered himself suspected by the sugar-house gang, had been arrested and clapped into the Black Hole, where he had been kept a close prisoner ever since.

So it turned out that Mat Morris, whom I had believed the most active character in the drama, was for the greater part of the time kept in a condition of forced inactivity.

Nellie Millbank told me how, after having seen her lover laid away in his resting-place, she had taken an oath to avenge his death.

Knowing how slight a clue she had on which to work—the most vague description of the murderer—she had adopted a male attire, and started out with the plan of insinuating herself into the confidence of such a man as she might suspect, and lead him to convicting himself.

Starting out on this plan, she had just caught sight of an individual whom she thought answered the description of the murderer, and was shaking her finger after him when I saw her shadow.

She heard the remark I dropped at the time, and, when she afterward wrote to me, she adopted the name my remark had suggested.

The five hundred dollars I gave to her she had lost, and Mat Morris had found, which explained the complications arising from finding bills which I recognized in the hands of Mrs. Morris.

I also then learned how it was that Shadow had come to be in the sugar-house at the time of handing me that note, although that is something concerning which the reader needs no explanation, the detective's purpose being made evident at the time.

And this is so as regards many other incidents in connection with Shadow, mysteries to me at the time of their occurrence, but made plain to the reader in various places.

And this is so also as regards Helen Dilt.

We had all her adventures and experiences to listen to, which have been recorded in their proper places.

Late in the afternoon Mrs. Morris, who had been sent for, put in an appearance, having been found and sent here.

A happier woman never drew the breath of life than she was when she was enabled to clasp both her loved ones to her heart.

Nellie Millbank and I drew a little apart, that the others might have the first few minutes of meeting to themselves.

In response to a question of mine as to how she had gathered up all the threads of the tangled skein, she replied:

"It was through McGinnis. He was the tool of Brown, the abductor of Helen, as well as the murderer of my lost one. I suspected him rightly, after many previous failures, threw myself in his way in the character of a thing which I care not to name, and when he was in liquor he told me all. He convicted himself out of his own mouth."

"Where is McGinnis?"

Shadow turned away. He pretended not to have heard my question, and I did not press it.

Together we five had supped, and a right merry party it was—although I thought that the merriment of Nellie Millbank was rather forced.

This I thought might be because of a natural embarrassment at being in men's clothing after having revealed her true sex.

Early in the afternoon I had heard of the discovery of a dead body on an East River pier. The man was handcuffed and gagged, and had been repeatedly stabbed. Already it was becoming spoken of as the most brutal murder on record.

That evening I was sent to look at the body and to give any assistance I could toward working up the case.

The moment I reached the Morgue and the sheet was drawn down, I understood the reason why Shadow had pretended not to hear my question.

The body was that of McGinnis.

On his breast had been found pinned a bit of paper, bearing these words:

"This man died a righteous death. He was a murderer, and meets the same fate he dealt to another. His victim is avenged.

"Search for the person who inflicted this punishment will be in vain."

This last sentence several shrewd detectives thought implied that the writer intended self-destruction.

This view I bolstered up to the best of my ability.

Needless to say, the murderer of McGinnis was never discovered.

In fact, none of us who knew Shadow—confound it! Nellie Millbank—ever saw her afterward, unless—— Well, one day long afterward I entered a horse-car; opposite to me sat two black-garbed sisters of mercy. For just one fleeting second the eyes of one of them encountered mine.

It may not have been Nellie Millbank, but I have always thought it was, and hope that I was right.

Dick Stanton, the false detective, was brought from the private cell in which I had placed him, and was convicted and "sent up" with the rest of the sugar-house gang.

Tige and her companion hyenas were roughly dealt with.

Murder was charged to their account, and was so well sustained that they all received life sentences.

Brown was sent to prison for twenty years, a sentence long enough to insure his never leaving the prison alive.

Helen Dilt was not long kept out of the money which her rascally uncle had so long deprived her of, and the first thing she did was to buy and present to her kind benefactress, Mrs. Morris, a completely furnished home.

Not so very long since I met a gentleman in the street, who clasped me warmly by the hand, as he said:

"Howard, it's a boy, and we think of naming it after you."

The speaker was Mat Morris.

He and Helen have been married some years now, and this boy he spoke of is not the first baby by—well, a few.

And thus we draw to a close, and with genuine regret bid adieu to the history of the strange being who was so long a mystery to me under the indefinite title of SHADOW.

[THE END.]



Transcriber's notes:

Added table of contents.

The original contained some publisher's advertisements that are not reproduced here.

Changed "Her knowlege of herself" to "Her knowledge of herself."

Changed "name of her benefactor's" to "name of her benefactors."

Changed "speeech" to "speech."

Added missing quote after "And now, who are you?"

Changed "quick-witedness" to "quick-wittedness."

Changed "less that two hours" to "less than two hours."

Changed "capn's orders" to "cap'n's orders."

Changed "Helen'e uncle" to "Helen's uncle."

Removed unnecessary quote after "how he did eat."

Changed "ead not denied it" to "had not denied it."

Changed "credted" to "credited."

Changed "it" to "I" in "I would not put my knowledge into use."

Changed "that had not really done so" to "they had not really done so."

Changed "I was because" to "It was because."

Changed "unclapsed" to "unclasped."

Changed "prespiration" to "perspiration."

Changed ? to ! after "meted out to your murderer!"

Added missing "not" to "They were puzzled, and knew not what to do." This word was present in the original *Boys of New York* appearance but was missing from the *New York Detective Library* reprint.

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