THE STORY PAGE

Embracing Ten Interesting Tales

CHARLIE BLANK

THE STORY PAGE

Embracing
Ten Interesting Tales

by
CHARLIE BLANK

Published by
THE O'SULLIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
1933

Designed and Edited with an Introduction
by Colin Heston
2026

Read-Me.Org Inc.
Australia, New York & Philadelphia

Lovingly dedicated to Mother

Designed and Edited with an Introduction
by Colin Heston
2026

ISBN: 9798246565247

A READ-ME.ORG CLASSIC REPRINT

New York-Philadelphia-Australia

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
by Colin Heston

Charlie Blank's 1933 collection, *The Story Page: Embracing Ten Interesting Tales,* serves as a poignant literary time capsule capturing the anxieties and moral complexities of the interwar United States. Published at the height of the Great Depression, the anthology moves beyond simple escapism to explore the precarious nature of human stability and the crushing weight of unintended consequences. Blank utilizes a narrative structure that emphasizes the "staccato clamor" of modern life—as seen in the opening story, "The Unanswered Call"—where the suddenness of tragedy often intersects with personal hubris. The prose is marked by a somber realism that reflects the broader national mood of the early 1930s, portraying characters who are frequently haunted by past transgressions or caught in the relentless machinery of financial and social collapse.

Central to the collection is the recurring motif of the "second chance," a theme that resonated deeply with a public struggling to reconcile the optimism of the previous decade with the harsh realities of the present. In stories like "His Second Chance," Blank examines the psychological toll of disgrace and the desperate search for redemption within a landscape of oil ventures and stock market ruins. The author skillfully balances domestic drama with larger social critiques, juxtaposing intimate moments of heartbreak against broader canvases of crime and civilization. By weaving together elements of the procedural mystery, the nautical adventure, and the character-driven drama, *The Story Page* provides a multifaceted analysis of the human condition, suggesting that while the "page" of life can always be turned, the text written

upon it is often indelible and governed by an unforgiving sense of irony.

While published in 1933, *The Story Page* maintains a striking relevance to the modern world, particularly in how it portrays the intersection of economic desperation and criminal behavior. The "Ten Interesting Tales" serve as a precursor to contemporary noir, focusing on the systemic pressures that drive ordinary people toward illegal acts.

The book's focus on the Great Depression mirrors modern anxieties regarding financial instability and wealth inequality. In "His Second Chance," the protagonist's descent into embezzlement and fugitive life is not born of inherent malice but of a sudden loss of status and the pressure of the Stock Exchange. This parallels modern "white-collar" desperation and the rise in cyber-fraud or "gig-economy" crimes, where individuals under extreme financial duress justify illegal shortcuts to regain a sense of security.

A unique aspect of Blank's work is the role of technology in crime and tragedy. In the 1930s, the "staccato clamor" of the telephone and the "Phantom at the Wheel" represented the cutting edge of modern life. Today, the "Unanswered Call" finds its equivalent in the digital footprints, ignored texts, and GPS data that define modern criminal investigations. Blank's stories illustrate that while tools change—from rotary phones to smartphones—the human element of ignoring warnings or using technology to facilitate a getaway remains a constant in criminal narratives.

The "Crampton Kidnaping" and other tales in the collection touch upon the complexities of the justice system and the societal obsession with sensational crimes. In today's world of "true crime" podcasts and 24-hour news cycles, the public fascination with the mechanics of a kidnapping or a heist remains unchanged. Blank explores the "sordid and bitter" reality behind the headlines, reminding modern readers that behind every crime statistic is a character-driven drama involving family, reputation, and the elusive hope for a fresh start.

The recurring theme of the "Second Chance" is perhaps

more relevant now than ever. In Blank's era, a criminal could potentially disappear into a new city to start over. In today's world of permanent digital records and background checks, the "indelible text" Blank describes is a literal reality. The struggle to move past a "brush with civilization" or a legal transgression is amplified today, making Blank's explorations of redemption and the inescapable nature of one's history feel deeply contemporary.

The main themes of the book may be summed up as follows:

Irony and Fatalism: Many stories explore the tragic consequences of timing and choice, particularly the idea that a single moment of pride or hesitation—such as a refused telephone call—can lead to irreversible loss.

Economic Desperation Reflecting the era of the Great Depression, the narratives frequently center on characters grappling with financial ruin, the volatility of the stock market, and the moral compromises made in the pursuit of stability.

The Quest for Redemption: A recurring focus is placed on the "second chance," examining whether individuals who have fallen into disgrace or criminality can truly outrun their pasts and find spiritual or social atonement.

Human Vulnerability: The collection highlights the fragility of life and relationships, portraying characters who are often at the mercy of sudden twists of fate, technological mishaps, or the cold indifference of modern "civilization."

THE UNANSWERED CALL

ANE MERRICK stared somberly at the telephone, as its staccato clamor filled the pleasant living room.

Of course it was Jerry. He had said last night that he would call at noon today. He had laughed when she had said he need never call or see her again. He had kissed her tight lips and said—"Such a nice, serious little girl."

Couldn't he see—hadn't he ever seen what a joke their love had made of her life?

Eight long years spent in waiting for telephone calls—Jerry's and the hospitals'. She had never been quite sure of the next day's plans; whether it would be a gay time with him, or caring for another difficult patient. Next month she would be thirty three years old.

She shivered.

It had to end. Today was the time to act.

She closed her eyes. The sharp ringing reverberated in her ears. She could see the surprise in his eyes when there was no response. She could hear him say, "Please try again, operator. I am certain that someone is there." And to himself—"Oh, Jane will answer. She was upset last night. Poor kid. She was tired."

Perhaps he would go over last night's conversation—wondering.

They had been sitting in his coupe. He had slumped behind the wheel, unhappy at the serious turn in the conversation. She had sat tensely on her side of the car.

"But, Jane, must you be so dramatic?"

"I'm not. I mean every word I'm saying. All this must end."

"You've been the best ever, Jane. I love you. I don't want to get married and see everything grow color• less—to watch our love die. We can't let that happen to us."

"But it doesn't always happen, Jerry! I know how you feel about your parents. They were so terribly unhappy, but marriage can be clean and beautiful."

She couldn't tell him that she heard voices. They whispered cruel words. She thought of the birthday diamond he had given

her three years ago. She would have been proud to wear it as an engagement ring. She remembered the admiring words uttered about its sparkling beauty. She knew they were calling her a fool.

She had hoped he wouldn't see the tears. But he did, and he put his arms about her and said, contritely—"Kiss me, sweetheart. Everything will be alright soon. Tell me you love me."

She said it and meant it. He cared for her—but not enough. She knew it.

Through her retrospection the realization came to her that the telephone had ceased its ringing. The room seemed very quiet. Its silence overwhelmed tier. Jane walked to the window, opened it, and then watched the passersby through the mist of the curtains. She envied the prosaic appearing women walking to and from the markets.

A butterfly flitted brightly here and there in the golden sunlight. Unhappily she watched it. Its beauty hurt her.

She walked to the mirror. Her eyes stared blankly from her white face. She turned slowly away.

Why need it be so difficult?

But that was a silly question. She still cared. Everywhere she looked was a reminder of a happy occasion.

The ticking of the little French clock took her back to a Christmas five years ago. He had said, "To count the hours until I'm with you," as he gave it to her. She had had the same words engraved on a watch she had given him.

Counting the hours for eight years had done things to her, she thought sadly. She had seen her fresh youthfulness fade slowly. Something sordid and bitter revealed itself in her eyes, in the droop of her mouth.

She must go away. It would be easier. The indifference of strangers would be kinder than the pity of friends.

The jingling of the telephone interrupted her reflections.. A glance at the clock told her twenty minutes had slipped by. She should have gone out, she told herself harshly, but she knew that she had been waiting for another call.

Undoubtedly, it was Jerry, using what he called his gentle

persistency methods. It was a winning system. It sold many cars. It put him over successfully.

A lightness swept over her. Perhaps even now things could be made right.

Dimly, she felt as the actress who reenacts her role each night. It had been played so many times before. Hadn't she actually known last night, that she lacked the strength of character to carry *out* her resolution!

Jane hated herself for being a weak, foolish woman. She answered the telephone and heard the cool, businesslike voice of a woman say, "Is this Miss Jane Merrick?"

"Nez, this is Miss Merrick speaking."

"This is the Lakeside Hospital calling. A young man was struck and fatally injured by an automobile thirty minutes ago. He was brought here. A letter was found on his person addressed to you."

"But who is he?"

"The return name and address on the letter is, Gerald Bigelow, 1 718 Brewster Court. We have been unable to get any response at that number. There is no other identification."

"But—he will live?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Merrick, he died a few minutes ago. We called before but there was no answer."

It couldn't be Jerry. Tom Keene often picked up Jerry's mail at the office. Poor Tom. It wasn't Jerry, it couldn't be. Oh, not that!

But there was the watch. He always carried it. "Was the re a watch? Is there anything engraved on it?" She held her breath until the answer came.

"Yes, I have it here. The words, 'to count the hours until I'm with you,' are engraved on it. Will you call at the hospital at once?"

"Yes, of course."

****

Outside, the shrill cries of playing children mingled with the hum of passing cars. It came faintly to her ears as the room rocked and grew dark.

HIS SECOND CHANCE

A VIVID March sunset was emblazoning the western sky; the top windows of the tall buildings were mirroring its flame and orange hues, as I came out of my hotel and sauntered down Commerce street. I had just completed and posted my reports for the late Air Mail collection. They would be in our Kansas City office *on* the morrow, and I would reach home there myself on the morning following.

Idly reflecting on the eternal necessity of satisfying the inner man by dining every evening—and contemplating where I might partake of that particular repast this evening, I stopped for a moment to look over a window display of golf togs. I was just trying to vision myself in a pair of the new flannel slacks, when I noted a young man approaching me. Instinctively, I knew he was about to ask for money.

The streets abounded with such men everywhere. No city was without a profusion of them. I started to turn away to avoid him, when a husky voice called to me.

"Say fella, would you give a man two cents?"

The appeal in itself was such an unusual one that I stopped and faced him. Any thoughts I might have had as to it being merely a bait or a come-on, vanished immediately as I saw his face coloring up. With an expression akin to shame, he looked down at the ground and added: "Mister, I'm not making my living this way. But I've only got thirteen cents and it takes at least fifteen cents to get supper."

"And where," I queried with great curiosity, "can you get a supper for fifteen cents?"

"Not a meal exactly, but at least a good bowl of soup, and coffee and rolls. It's down yonder on Akard, a block and a half."

Looking him over again and finding him passably presentable, I asked; "Would you eat dinner with me over across the street?"

He looked hungrily toward the restaurant I had designated. "I'd like to, but I can't afford it. The same food in there would

cost about forty cents."

"But the meal's on me; I'm hungry *too,"* I told him, more than a little curious to know what would force a man of his calibre to beg for two cents.

"Then I'll go of course, if you really mean it, and won't be ashamed to be seen sitting with me." He seemed greatly pleased over my invitation and genuinely distressed over his own appearance.

When we entered the brightly lighted cafe and were seated at a little side table facing each other, I got my first square look at his eyes. I felt then that his face was familiar. Certainly I had seen him before, but could not recall when nor where. But a picture clung in my mind of a man with an intense look of agony on his face. It was one of those lasting mental flashes that persists almost indefinitely.

"Do you live here in Houston?" I inquired.

"I do now, sir." Apparently he had no desire to be more explicit nor to explain from whence he came.

"Are you out of work?"

"No, I drive a tank wagon for the Walter Distributing Company here in town."

A waiter came and received our order. On my insistence he took the table d'hotel dinner along with me. I realized full well that as a perfect host I had no business nor right, to ply my guest with questions concerning himself, but that anguished faced picture in my mind made me forget my better manners. So l continued my inquiries.

"Don't they pay you enough to live on?"

"Well, yes, but there's something else besides that. You see, I owe a lot of money—a whole lot more than I can ever hope to save from my wages, so I had to take a chance."

"What kind of a chance?" I am sure my curiosity was getting the better of me.

The story he had to tell was an odd one. However, the taste of good, warm food seemed to freshen him up both physically and mentally and he was anxious, by way of showing his appreciation of it, to give me some of the explanations I had been wishing for.

Four months ago he landed in town on a southbound freight train, not a cent to his name. At once luck favored him, if one would call it that. The train had pulled onto a track passing on the north side of the city right alongside of the bulk station of this Walter Company which operates a string of retail service stations.

The approach of a brakeman made it necessary for him to drop it at this point. He did so, unnoticed, and headed straight through the yards of the oil company. He needed a job, was hungry, was anxious to earn some money, and so directed his steps right into their office to ask for work.

He arrived at one of those psychologically correct moments, for Walter had just fired one of his truck drivers and needed a new one. The girl in the front office called Mr. Walter, when the man had entered to ask for a job.

"What's your name?" "John V. Caruthers." "Ever drive a truck?"

"Know anything about 'em?"

"I'm a mechanic by trade, and figure I can keep the most of 'em going."

"Then, you're just the man I want right now," Walter told him. "The last man I had on this truck has cost me over a hundred dollars in repair bills. How's twenty-five dollars a week, and can you start now?"

The time and the wages were satisfactory. That was on a Friday morning. That night he had to ask for a dollar advance against his pay so he could eat, and he slept in the Union Station. Next evening he drew the seven dollars due as the balance of his two days' wages and found himself a room for three dollars a week.

On the following Monday morning Mr. Walter showed him a letter he was sending out to his service station managers. It outlined a wildcat project in oil he was planning on promoting. He had just leased a forty acre tract of ground southwest of Corsicana and there was oil in two directions and close at hand.

As his proposition ran, there were to be thirty-two equal shares in it of three hundred dollars each. Walter was putting up money for seventeen and was offering his employes the

other fifteen. Drilling would start in ninety days, and his men, if interested, could pay for their share n twenty' weekly payments.

John Caruthers, faced with the task of saving toward debts that bore constantly and heavily on his mind, decided to take a chance. Perhaps there was but one chance in fifty that they would strike oil down there, but he felt that probably this was the only chance he would have under his present circumstances to square himself with the world. Counting fifteen dollars for the weekly payments, and three dollars for his room, it left him just seven dollars a week for food and incidentals. He would try it.

I began to see very clearly why he had had to ask for two cents, and why he was frequenting fifteen cent restaurants. I, the ingrate, had been kicking just this past week because an economy order had cut my daily out-of-town allowance from ten to eight dollars.

Caruthers was watching me as he talked and seemed to guess what was running through my mind. "Lived on less than that this week," he said, "I had to spend three dollars to buy a present for someone away from here."

He was mysterious about some parts of his story, and about the rest, quite frank and open. There was a wistfulness, coupled with an apparent feeling of regret whenever he made any sort of mention of his past. I had never encountered a more earnest man in my life.

"When do they start drilling for your oil well?" 1 asked him.

"Oh, they've started. Two weeks ago. Probably won't be long now before we know whether she comes in with oil or not. In another two weeks too, I'll be all done paying for my share."

"What then? Going home if you strike oil*?"*

"Home?" he whispered, looking greatly startled and apprehensive of me. "Who told you I had a home?"

"Of course you have," I hazarded the guess. "And probably a wife who got a present from you this week." My words almost stunned him. He looked around him nervously and finally choked out, "Then you know me?"

"No, not at all . And if I did, your secret would be safe, whatever it is. Say, why don't you go ahead and unload it all on me anyhow, now that you have talked this much. The things you've got on your chest have just about worried you sick, from the way you look."

"I, if only you knew how true that is, Mister--er—" "Brownlee," I helped him out. "Jimmy Brownlee.

I'm Assistant Comptroller for the Seabrook Petroleum Company, out of Kansas City."

His face was all flushed. He was fighting inwardly between telling me his whole story and leaving me abruptly. My identification had seemingly complicated matters all the more. Finally he settled down in his chair, much *calmer.* A decision to *let* me his story had lessened the tenseness of his face and the very telling of it all took an infinite load off his mind.

In the eyes of the law the man was a thief, a wife deserter, and a fugitive from justice. Manmade laws might even include other crimes, such as soliciting and riding trains without paying. But in spite of it all and under it all, he was a human, fighting desperately for a second chance to make good, living each day in hopes of making proper amends for what he had done, and yet in mortal fear each day, of being caught.

His story went back to late in the fall of 1929. He was earning thirty dollars a week in Kansas City, working in our very building, the Petroleum Mart, as a repair man. He had met in the building, a little girl, and married her. She was a switchboard operator in the office of a stock broker, and making twenty dollars a week. They decided that she was to work a while longer, but no explanation was to be made at the office that she was married.

They set up a budget plan that included ten dollars a week for a savings account, to be used to buy a home some day. She was so anxious for him to get ahead. Two weeks later when she was given a five dollar raise and proudly came *home* to tell him about it, she insisted that he buy a correspondence course in Stationary Engineering with her extra money.

They were so happy together. The engineering study had changed their whole horizon. It was a chance John had always longed for. It would mean many nights of work and study, but would assuredly lead to a better job. Maybe some day he would rise to the position of Chief Engineer of that great building where he was employed.

In fact the present Chief Engineer heard of his studying and told him one evening: “That's fine stuff, John. Keep it up and we’ll have a better job for you. I'll give you a chance to work in our different units so you'll learn how to handle everything.”

He was as good as his word and John got splendid experience in all of their mechanical problems. Three or four months later though, the Chief Engineer's health broke and he was obliged to move to the west coast for permanent residence. His assistant was elevated to his job, and John was given the assistant's duties to handle. He did not rate the title due to his inability to qualify as a licensed engineer, but it was nevertheless a worth while and gratifying move.

John's success was short lived however, for the new Chief Engineer, conscious of his own limited education, and jealous of John's studious habits and ambition, began finding fault continually with £is work. At last a serious breakdown in the water softening plant gave him the chance he was looking for. John got the blame and a discharge the same morning.

It was a severe blow and an unfair one. How he hated to tell Maybell, his wife. He started upstairs to see her, and then decided he would wait until that night. Instead, he went out on the street and bought the early edition of both afternoon papers, turning to the Help Wanted sections. Jobs were scarce and not a thing listed in the trades or mechanical lines. Plenty of jobs open for salesmen, but John could not sell.

A retail furniture company was advertising for an installment collector. A job was a job, so he went around to this concern. Success was his and so was the position. “You'll have to go on bond," they told him, “but we will arrange that with our regular company. The pay is fifteen dollars a week plus commissions of five per cent on all over four hundred dollars a week that you collect. If you work steadily and keep

away from the matinees, you can double that easy."

He did, so it turned out, after the first hard week with its attendant rebuts. Maybell took the news of his discharge like a little Spartan, full of understanding. He continued his studies at night, though he distinctly felt the lack of the accompanying practical application that he had been getting in his former job. Six months or *more* went by and he still sought unsuccessfully for another mechanical opening. The depression was on and big buildings everywhere were doing with fewer men in their maintenance departments than ever before.

Maybell was growing restless. Not dissatisfied in any way with her lot, but she longed for that home; she wanted to be far away from the nerve racking strain of the switchboard, and though she never said so in so many words, John knew she wanted a baby to go along with the home.

Down at her office she heard lots of talk about money being made and lost, plenty of it. Every telephone call talking of selling this or buying that. The market had sagged again. The bears were at work, most all of the staple stocks on the Board were low for the year. While scores of people were losing every cent they had, she knew of three men in their office who had grown rich selling short in the past thirty days.

She talked about it at night to John. Market trans• actions and terms had all been Greek to him, but little by little she explained the way sales were made in the Stock Exchange. She told him of margin accounts, of being long on stocks and of short selling. She had the fever that invades everyone who comes in close contact with the market. John got it too.

"Let's take our savings account and put it in a good stock. We have a little over five hundred dollars now that isn't working very hard for us," he suggested.

"We can't do it, dear. Brokers require at least a thousand dollars to open a margin account and people don't make any money on a straight buy."

The idea continued to prey on his mind. The more he thought of it the more he longed for a chance to play the market. There were tips, a dozen a day or more, that Maybell heard. John watched them in the evening papers and found

many of these tips were surprisingly *accurate.*

"Why, it ought to be a cinch, if only we had that thousand dollars. Let's see, honey—what stock would we buy?"

Maybell pointed out an automobile stock. "Here's one that was 250 last spring, down to 96 at the close today. Mr. Smythe says it is going back to 200 in the next sixty days. He ought to know for he has made forty-five thousand dollars selling it short."

That tip looked like a sure one, for the next day it rose a point and a half, and the day following two and a half. The fever was getting to be almost an obsession with John. If only they could get in on the market now, it would not be long be fore they would have enough to buy that *lithe home,* and permit Maybell *to* give *up* her job. By then, too, he could be finished with his course and located in a good engineering position.

Three days after their conversation, opportunity and temptation walked hand in hand into John's life. He had gone to make the first installment collection from an Italian who owed about six hundred dollars on new furnishings. From the inside came sufficient loud clamor to tell him that a party of some sort was underway.

Correct he was, for the man was a bootlegger and he and his friends were just celebrating his successful importation and sale of a whole car load of liquor. His profits had been well nigh fabulous. He came to the door drunk, leered at John, and cursed him in both Italian and broken English, for bothering him with an installment collection at stich a time.

His wife immediately came to John's defense, berated her husband for his rudeness, and in Italian evidently suggested that he pay off the whole bill and be done with the installment business. This he did. He pulled out an immense roll of currency and counted off thirty-one twenty dollar bills. Then he slammed the door in John's face, saying with a grand, drunken gesture of liberality, "Keep the change!"

The money burned in John's pocket. It scorched him. It led or guided him directly down town and to a stock broker's place where he had often seen men gathered. He entered for the first time and the maze of it all fascinated him as he

watched the letters and figures go by on the illuminated tape. They meant little to him until he spied the letters ZZC. That was the symbol of the stock Maybell had just been talking about. The figure just below it said, 101 at, or up almost another whole point.

Awkwardly, he went to the Cashier's window and said: "What do I do to buy some stock?"

"Have you an account here?"

"No, but I want to start one."

"I'll turn you over to one of our floor men. Go out and ask for Mr. Thompson, at the second desk by the railing there. He'll take care of you."

Mr. Thompson explained to John the necessity of putting up a thousand dollars in cash or securities if he wanted to open an account. John promised to return immediately after a visit to his bank. Drawing out four hundred dollars he still had enough in the savings account *to* continue turning in weekly installments from the Italian to his furniture company for the next six weeks. His company would never be any the wiser. At the end of that time he would have sold out at a huge profit, but he must not tell Maybell about it until later, or until after it was all over.

Following a suggestion that Maybell had once given him, he returned to Mr. Thompson and opened the account under the assumed name of John Campbell. He put in a buying order for twenty shares of ZZC stock and the purchase was made at 1013/4 . John watched it rise to 102 ¼ in the hour and then ease off a little lower at the close. He was highly elated over what he had done and that evening, Maybell, noticing it, asked: "What are you so excited about tonight, John?"

"Oh, just feeling good, I guess. Had a good day collecting, and my commissions *for* the week ought to be the best I've had yet. Let's go to a movie."

It is easy to guess how that market venture played havoc with John's collection work, and perhaps it is just as simple and easy to guess how the market played havoc with his venture. Another sucker had been added to the great list. The first day following the purchase of his stock was noticeably quiet. But

it dropped two points the day following, then three, then five. Down, down, down it tumbled. Through the 90's, then the 80's, and into the 70's it slipped.

John was heartsick and panicky. Maybell little dreamed and never guessed what he was carrying on his mind. She did her best to bolster up those drooping spirits. "You musn't worry so about those old collections, dear. You are bound to have some quiet weeks. It can't be long now before you have an engineering job again, so cheer up."

Four weeks after John made his fatal purchase he saw his stock take another series of sudden crashes, through the 70's and lower. It went to 67 ¼ , then to 64 ¼ , then 62. It seemingly had no stopping point. Fortunately, only he, himself, was involved, and only the one account had ever been tampered with as far as his collections went. To date, not a soul at his office had ever suspected a thing.

Then one November morning John wrote a note for Maybell, explaining this theft and stock transaction in full. He spoke of what a mess he had made of things and begged her forgiveness for what he had done. He felt he was forced to run away from it all, but expected *to* make the *money* to pay it all back somehow. Some day he would be back and would strive the rest of his life to make up for all he had done.

Three days afterward, the freight train had pulled into Houston with him aboard. He had written Maybell only twice in the four months that had now intervened; a letter on Thanksgiving Day, and a letter and gift for Christmas. He had not given her his address nor told her a word of his work or *oi I* well investment. This week he had sent her a package for her birthday. That was all.

As John concluded the account it dawned on me where I had seen him. The same brokerage firm handled my account too; and that last agonizing day when he had walked out of their Customer's Room to go home and write his note of farewell, I had collided with him. Rather, he ran squarely into me, his eyes on the floor. He looked up in silent apology, the horror of what he was going through written all over his face. I had guessed then, what was back of the look, but little

dreamed of what lay ahead.

"I'll be at the Petroleum Mart next Monday," I said, as he paused after the lengthy account was told. "Can I take a message to your wife for you?"

His eyes lighted immediately, but just as quickly a somber, sober expression came over his face. "I don't dare let you."

"Why not? Doesn't she still love you? Isn't she hungry for news of you?"

"Yes, she is. I'll bet she is! Sogo and see her for me. Tell her for me that I'm doing my best to *make* good. Say that I'm living on the square, and perhaps before long I'll have some good news to tell. But let's keep the oil well a secret until we know."

"You'll be coming back to Houston pretty soon, then, Mr. *Brownlee?"*

"Yes, I expect to get back in about ten days." "Maybe I can bring you a message from her then, so tell me where I can locate you."

"Would you lea*ve* word at our office when you get back to town, where you are stopping, and I'll call you soon's I get the message? Maybe the next dinner can be on me"

The way he said it I felt sure he meant to skimp and save out of his meagre money next week so that he would be able to make good that intention. After I had settled the check and we had walked over to the front of my hotel, he thanked me again and again for what I had done, and for the new hope that I had stirred up within him.

"Tell her I love her more than ever," were his parting words, spoken very earnestly. He shook my hand and was gone.

The next Monday morning, a few minutes before noon, I dropped into the brokerage office in the Mart Building, and found a very charming, but sad eyed little girl at the switchboard. "Miss Maybell," I began, not knowing her maiden name and remembering John had said they did not know of her marriage at the office.

"Yes, what is it please?"

"Something very important. Would you take lunch with a stranger?"

"Well, hardly, unless I know what that very important something is." She said it almost wistfully, with an expression that seemed to say she was living in constant hope of getting word from the man she loved.

"I can only tell you at lunch," I told her. "Certainly not here. I just got in yesterday from Houston. You must know what I mean."

"Yes, of course. Can you wait for me about ten minutes? The relief girl will be back then."

My hour with Maybell was one of surprises. I was amazed to find what a lovely wife John had so peremptorily deserted. What a brick she was and how staunchly she had put up with the heartaches of the last four months. Any man in the world would have envied John had he seen the eager ecstasy with which she drank in every word I had to tell of him.

She had plenty to tell, herself. I could just imagine how thrilled John would be to hear it all. I told her of my next trip to Houston. I would be returning on Wednesday of the week following. She made me promise to come in and see her the afternoon before I left on that trip. She would have something she wanted me to take to John.'

1 spent a busy ten days working in our Home Office for our Comptroller was in the east and I had double duties to perform in his absence. I had also promised myself that I would do some missionary work for John, and I somehow managed to accomplish it along with the

I saw Maybell on that Wednesday afternoon before I started for Texas, and might add by way of casual comment, that I had seen her on the Sunday that intervened also. She had a package and a fat letter ready for John, and asked if she might call me up on the Sunday morning of my return. 1 agreed, of course, for Mrs. Brownlee was just as interested in it all, as I.

Down in Houston again, I put in an early call for John at the Walter Distributing Company. It was after work that evening while I was getting cleaned up a bit for dinner, that my telephone rang. "This is Caruthers," John was saying. "I am downstairs in the lobby."

"Come right on up," I told him and in a moment or two he

knocked. I opened the door with a cheery greeting, but his own expression was far from happy. He was tired and man and the look on his face was identical with the one he wore when first I saw him leaving that brokerage office months ago.

He greeted me with downcast eyes and said: “It's no use, Mr. Brownlee. Everything in the world is against me. We just got news today by long distance, that they hit a dry hole. That means I probably never can go back home.”

“Come now, things can't be as bad as all that.”

“Yes, but they are. And it looked two days ago like we had such a sure winner. Why, they ran into salt sands, lime shells, gas sand, brown shale, and even some oil sand, but no oil. Finally they got down to a hard strata they called caprock and they were sure there was oil under it.

“So they shot the well with nitroglycerine this morning but no oil allowed. That's the end. They are starting to pull the castings in the morning. That means she's all done and again I have tossed my money away on a foolish chance.”

I never saw a man more down in the depths than

John appeared. I thought of the letter and the package and got them. “Here's something from Maybell. Look this over and smile a bit.”

He tore the letter open and drank in every word of it. There was a yellow bank note in it too for him. I did not see its denomination. He looked up all eagerness. “Here's transportation home! Maybell says you are to tell me the news. What is it?”

“Plenty, for you hit one oil well that wasn't dry, and in your wife you have the grandest little gold mine anyone ever discovered. You've told all the bad news; now get ready to listen to some good news 1”

His eyes turned on me full of wonder as to what possible good news there might be to tell. I continued on; “Here you were, just a minute ago, thinking yourself the unluckiest man alive because of the dry well in Corsicana. Now let's hear what a fool for luck you have been in other directions. What would you give to know that your old company in Kansas City never found out about the money you **took,** that they never will find

out about it?"

"They couldn't help finding out," he said. "The Surety Company that went on my bond are sure to send me up for from three to five years if I am ever caught."

"Not, if they don't know anything about it. Listen, you are too lucky to be conscious, so you better appreciate it. The week after you left town the body of that Italian was found alongside the state line road south of town, with nine bullets through his head and chest. His home had been burned to the ground and his wife had disappeared completely. Beat that for luck if you can, Mr. Caruthers."

"I can't," he said weakly, overcome by the news. "Well, I can, so listen some more. I got our second

Vice President interested in what happened between you and that Chief Engineer. He took it up with the Mart Superintendent and found that they had had to fire the fellow last month. They are running shorthanded now, and the Superintendent wants you back at two hundred dollars a month. Will you come?"

"Will I come? Why, man, I'd run every mile of the way, if Maybell hadn't sent me this money. I think there's a train around eleven tonight that I can catch."

He was so excitedly happy that he could not sit still nor control his voice. He paced up and down the floor—"Gee, Mr. Brownlee, I don't know what to say. I'm the happiest guy alive. Just think! I get another chance. Why, I never dreamed it would come out this way."

"Well, there's still more news to tell, so sit down and listen to it. Take this all in, and then you will be ready to run all the way home.

"That crazy stock you invested in, did just what Maybell's tip had said it would do. The day you ran out of town it hit its low of 60, and then it started back up. For some unknown reason your broker did not sell you out. I guess they tried to locate you and when they couldn't they let it ride with a stop order at 60.

"Maybell found out about it all by calling them for you when it started to mount and was up to around 80. The tips still

said it would rise so she put through a selling order at 120. Just before it hit that mark, she changed the order to 180 instead, for it was going up by leaps and bounds. She changed instructions a second time as it kept skyrocketing and set the figure at 250.

"Three weeks ago they had a hot tip in a wire from Cleveland that said it was headed for 300. That was almost too much to hope for but Maybell held on, and put through a final selling at 280. One day while I was home it shot up to 298 and then crashed, but her sale went through at 280."

John was overwhelmed, entirely unable to follow such an array of figures. Finally he gasped; "You mean she sold my stock for 280?"

"Yes, your manager sold you out for fifty-eight hundred dollars, cold cash. The money is up there in the account of Mr. John Campbell, whenever he cares to call for it."

"Last Sunday Mrs. Brownlee had Maybell out home for dinner, and then afterwards we got in the car and rode around a bit looking for houses. Maybell found just what she wanted on Seventieth Street; a new, little six room brick bungalow. The agent agreed to hold it one week for her, and I expect she would like to have you home to complete the deal."

John simply could not talk at all by this time. The news had come entirely too fast for him. He sat slumped in his chair in a sort of daze. I asked, "How big was that bill Maybell sent you?"

"Fifty dollars. Why?"

"WHY?" "Why in the devil don't you go home where you belong? The Air Mail planes carry passengers. They leave here in about an hour and you can be home by midnight. You better get going."

"Wherewith, John got going.. I have no doubt from his precipitate departure but that he actually ran every bit of the way out to the airport. Personally, I had a great many dollars worth of satisfaction out of that requested donation of "two cents."

ANN

IT WAS a bright, perfect Easter morning nearly forty years ago, giving no indication of impending tragedy. The scene was Rockville, a thriving county seat in the sheep raising section of the Middle West.

Churchgoers, clad in their Sunday best, had turned out in unusual numbers on this sacred holiday, to attend their respective houses of worship. Beside his pulpit inside one of the churches, as latecomers entered, stood the Rev. Jeremiah Jannan, stern and unyielding in aspect. With an open Bible in his hand, he was about to open the service, but hesitated as he discerned another tardy person entering the church.

Not only was he astonished as he recognized Ann Pearson coming down the aisle, glancing about timidly in search of an inconspicuous seat, but deep in his heart he felt resentment. To him her attendance was both an insult and a challenge of his authority. He had publicly condemned her as an evil example, asking parents to admonish their sons and daughters not to associate with "the Pearson girl" I In fact, due to his censorious activity, nearly every door in the town had been closed to Ann. Therefore, he reasoned to himself, "why should her presence now be tolerated in this house of God?"

Assured that he understood the sentiment of his congregation, the minister perceived in his shrewd mind an opportunity to demonstrate his favorite method of outspoken and untempered discipline.

His darkened countenance assumed a pained expression of righteous indignation. Standing like an avenging angel in the midst of a profusion of sweet-scented Easte r lilies, he cleared his throat, pointed a finger in Ann's direction, and said, "My brethren, before commencing our service, I will ask Deacon Noble to assist that person outside."

Instantly the entire congregation became hushed, and everyone present observed a most embarrassing and ominous silence.

Never before had anyone of that gathering witnessed a

public expulsion. Quite true it was that many shared the minister's abhorrence of the widow Pearson's girl, but even the most severe critics among them were greatly shocked. Women who, only seconds before, had whispered sharp commands to their daughters not to bring disgrace upon them by staring at that "bad" girl, were suddenly held breathless in strained anticipation.

Surely a less brutal punishment, a delayed and private reprimand, would have served the minister's purpose, admitting that Ann's presence transgressed every precept and inflicted grave insult upon those gathered for worship in this holy tabernacle.

****

Only a few weeks previously, Ann had returned to Rockville in utter disgrace.

Before the summer of the past year she had occupied an enviable position in the hearts and esteem of her many friends.

Then one evening a visiting drummer attended the Sunday school box social. Successfully he bid in the box of lunch Ann had painstakingly prepared and decorated with many brightly colored ribbons.

Fascinated with her long**,** beautifu1, blond curls and healthy rosy cheeks, he set about to entertain her with glowing descriptions of the great city in which he resided. Three kerosene lamps suspended from the schoolroom ceiling cast but scant light into a far corner**,** where they occupied a double bench, with the food from Ann's box spread daintily upon a desk.

Although well past seventeen years of age, Ann had never been known *to* have a beau, until this eventful evening. She had always seemed content with the friendship of Rose Noble and a few other girls.

But now', as she observed closely the refined manners of her companion, a strange and hereto fore unknown sensation began to take possession of her. She was speedily becoming enraptured and spellbound at the carefully modulated enunciation of his words. To her the sound of his voice was like the finest music, and when she compared his clothes and

neat personal appearance with those of the boys of Rockville, the contrast easily determined her choice in his favor.

In the ecstasy of her delight and growing excitement, she ate but little, and answered his occasional questions with an eager interest. She found it easy to agree with his suggestions—easier to say "yes" than "no."

Conforming to the Rockville standard of decent hours, the social had broken up promptly at 10 o'clock.

Obtaining Ann's consent to enjoy a "buggy ride," her newfound friend secured a horsedrawn rig at the town livery stable.

They drove out upon a country road for several miles, and soon arrived at the crest of a high cliff overlooking the river and valley, just beyond the long deserted Pearson ranch.

They had become quite confidential, and as they were passing the old homestead, Ann explained to him that this was the ranch her father lost the year before his death.

The government had taken off the tariff on imports of wool. Thereupon the market immediately dropped to a fraction of the former price. Mr. Pearson's sole income was derived from his sale of wool. When he found himself unable to meet his mortgage payments, foreclosure proceedings were instituted, and the sheriff dispossessed the Pearsons of practically everything they owned, to satisfy the mortgage.

There had been no cash available with which to pay the Pearsons lawyer's fee, so he accepted, as was often done in those days, Pearson's team of horses, milch cow, and the new reed organ which was to have been a gift.

After Mr. Pearson's death, Ann's mother had no one to whom she could apply for assistance; so, taking Ann and her meager collection of personal effects, she moved into town, renting two rooms which had been added to a frame building, as a lean-to. Mrs. Pearson sought and found work as a laundress.

Ann cheerfully undertook the task of carrying the bundles of laundry to and from the kindly neighbors whom Mrs. Pearson served.

Ann had a friend, a very dear one, Rose Noble, whose father

owned the greenhouse and florist shop in Rockville. Mr. Noble was also a deacon of the church to which the Pearsons belonged.

Between these two Rose and Ann, there never had been any secrets, but as Ann related to her new and sympathetic male listener in the buggy, the sad story of unfair misfortunes which had befallen Mrs. Pearson and herself, she seemed to sense a welcome relief.

Her companion's kindly expression of interest caused a comforting reaction deep in her heart.

Then he brought the horse to a stop, placed his arms about her, and without warning pressed a long kiss upon her unexpectant and surprised lips.

Often as a child had Ann sat upon this very crest at sunrise, watching the fleecy mists rising from the great winding river below, being taken into the brilliant, warming sunbeams and dissolved into a pure, transparent, sweet atmosphere.

In a similar manner Ann now imagined that the security of the arms clasped firmly about her, and the soothing contact of the lips which met her own, were just another form of friendly sunbeams, causing the hazy mists —her troubles—to vanish; and she could sense distinctly a sweet, satisfying tranquility of mind.

Piercing to the very depths of her soul, this first long, lingering kiss carried a message to her heart, not so much of passion as of a solemn sacrament binding her to him forever. Completely possessed and weeping with joy, she returned kiss for kiss.

The time sped by unheeded, and not before the eastern horizon was faintly tinted with the coming of another dawn did Ann steal silently into her mother's home and waiting bed.

The following day there was much confusion in the little Pearson household. Rose Noble joined Mrs. Pearson in tearful disapproval when Ann told them of her promise to accompany her lover to the city that day, “to meet his mother.”

But their protests and pleas were unavailing, and Ann, happier than she had ever been before in all her life, remained firm in her intention to keep her promise.

Packing her few simple garments, she left Rockville on the afternoon train with the man whom she had known less than twenty-four hours.

For several weeks Rose visited Mrs. Pearson nearly every evening, to peruse the enthusiastic letters which Ann had written daily, and which always contained special messages to her.

Then came a sudden cessation of these interesting accounts. Weeks grew into months, and still there was no news, as Rose faithfully called on Mrs. Pearson, who was becoming worn out with worry. That something strange must have happened to Ann, seemed quite evident to both. Then, to make matters *more* difficult, the news that Ann's whereabouts were unknown spread about among the neighbors, and the stories which were circulated caused both Rose and Mrs. Pearson much embarrassment.

A favorite surmise of Rockville's gossips was that Ann must have drifted into the alluring city ways of drinking and dancing, and realizing her mother's strict religious views regarding such conduct, decided it would be best to break off all communication rather than I ace the inevitable censure.

Such theories were based largely upon memories of another young woman, who had left Rockville some years before, and had never since been heard from.

Consequently it was rather startling to the community in general, but a particularly great joy to Mrs. Pearson and Rose when, one cold February morning, Ann, disillusioned and with a heavy heart, stepped from a train at the Rockville station, and hurried through the snow-covered streets to her mother's home.

It soon transpired that the young man who had induced Ann to leave her mother deserted her after a few weeks. His fond city mother had disapproved of the flaxen haired country lass. In due time she had her son's a hair well in hand and then ended it, to Ann's utter consternation. After a long, unequal struggle to support herself in a strange city, Ann was driven by stern necessity to return to Rockville and accept almost certain condemnation.

Many nights, while in the city, Ann had tossed in sleepless

agony, her pillow wet with many bitter tears of remorse. The mental vision of her dear, patient mother, upon whom she had brought disgrace, was a *most* dreadful thought. The memories would come into her mind of kindnesses extended to her by Rose, her faithful chum, and of the many good times they had enjoyed together at Sunday school and other social gatherings. Compared to such innocent and respectable **asso**ciations, the glamour and hypocritical pretensions of city life now seemed to Ann a most unsatisfactory substitute.

The news of Anti's return speedily spread about Rockville. To the wagging tongues this choice bit of gossip was most welcome.

Colorful versions of what they assumed had happened to Ann while in the city were circulated, to the disparagement of her character. But all that anyone actually knew was that Ann had returned without a husband. The Nobles, however, were one family in that town who were unlike most of the others. Even before Ann's

return, when Rose heard about the defamatory stories in circulation, she faced some of the accusers angrily, telling them they were “all liars”; and she advised them that their time would be spent more profitably in attending to the proper instruction of their own daughters, instead of maligning an innocent girl in her absence.

Mr. Noble, catching a glimpse of Ann hurrying by his shop, rushed home to advise Rose and Mrs. Noble *of* her return. In a panic of excitement, Rose threw a shawl about her shoulders and scampered over to the Pearsons' as rapidly as her feet would permit. With a cry of joy from the lips of both girls, they were locked in each other's arms. Hysterical tears flowed freely from Ann's eyes, in full appreciation of Rose's unwavering loyalty and friendship, thus demonstrated before *so* much zs one word had been spoken.

Throughout the entire day Rose remained with Ann and her mother. Each had so many things which she wanted to tell the other that it seemed they could never hope to say all that was in their minds. Tactfully, Rose refrained from any allusion to Ann's experiences during the period of her absence. Both were

confronted with the immediate task of administering to the needs of Mrs. Pearson, who had completely collapsed from the excitement and joy attendant upon the return of her daughter. The days that followed were most difficult for Ann, and the color which had faded from her cheeks in recent months was slow in returning.

Possessed of a firm belief that her dearest friend was innocent of any intentional wrongdoing, Rose spent much of her time in earnest study as to how she ,might most efficiently assist in restoring Ann to the position she had enjoyed in the community before her hasty and short-lived romance. So intensely was she impressed with the unfairness of it all, that jeopardizing her own high standing among ,her neighbors and friends, she became Ann's self-appointed champion.

Encouraged by the goodwill and moral support of her parents, Rose proceeded to win back to Ann's cause, four or five of the girls whose confidence they had both shared in former days. Thereafter, one or more of this group would visit Ann nearly every evening, cheering and warming her heart with their friendliness.

Easter was close at hand, and Rose had been appointed to supervise the floral decorations within their church for this very important occasion.

She had available for this purpose all the flowers and plants, from her father's greenhouse. Deacon Noble had always gladly loaned his stock for any church requirement. This was by no means the first time Rose had been called upon to perform such a duty; but somehow, on this particular occasion, she seemed to sense an added and unusual significance.

Rose naturally chose for her assistants the little group of loyal girls who, by now, had become most happily intimate in their ended vows *to* help and encourage Ann.

Fired with her own enthusiasm, Rose inspired the others to excel in every respect any former display of floral beauty which had been witnessed within that church. For this undertaking the greater part of the Saturday previous to Easter Sunday was required. Rose and Ann were kept busily occupied, placing the plants as the others carried them over

from the greenhouse. Setting them singly and in groups, selecting colors to blend harmoniously, they left no available spot neglected where still another plant could appropriately find space.

The altar itself, usually so plain and unpretentious, was all but hidden amid a gorgeous mass of tall and stately Easter lilies. These were surrounded by large ferns, then came rows upon rows of jonquils, hyacinths, geraniums, and many other varieties, creating a gloriously radiant spectacle.

The heavy sweet perfume from *the* banks of fragrant blossoms completely filled the edifice.

Having finally completed their work, Rose suggested that they all be seated for a few moments of relaxation, while they could also enjoy an inspection of their decorative chords.

After a few minutes they rose to leave, but Ann, noticing an unruly Easter lily, walked down the aisle to readjust its position. Trailing closely behind were the others, heaping excited words of praise upon Rose for the charming effects accomplished.

Ann was standing directly before the Altar, viewing with approval the palms and flowers adorning the rear entrances across the church. As she paused at Ann's side, Rose clasping one of her chum's small hands within her own. Both were now facing the little group of girls who had drawn into a semicircle about them. Rose was speaking, “It's nice to hear you girls give me so much credit, but I'm not the one who deserves all of it. Everyone here deserves as much as I. The real credit must go to Ann who has been our inspiration. Ann dearest, let me kiss you before this altar, in proof of my love and confidence.”

As Rose kissed her friend, the sun shone suddenly through the altar, presenting a picture of remarkable beauty.

In turn each of the other girls stepped forward to follow Rose's example by kissing Ann, and uttering words of endearment.

This spontaneous and very unusual ceremony being thus completed, the girls disbanded and left for their homes.

Rose and Ann walked arm-in-arm for a distance of several blocks to their homes, which were located in the same vicinity.

Ann spoke but little as they strolled along, preferring to listen to Rose as she commented on the elaborate plans for the Easter celebration.

Just as among the young girls of this day, clothes were one of the chief subjects of their thoughts, although the styles were vastly different from our modern ideas of dress. With the assistance of her friends, Ann had made herself a new dress of fleecy light lawn, with a wide sky-blue ribbon about the waistline, tied into a large bow, and called a sash. The snow white material was trimmed at the neck, cuffs, and base with dainty laces, indispensable on all summer dresses of the time.

"I do hope your mother will be feeling better, so she too may attend the services," Rose was saying.

"Oh, Rose, I'd love for her to see how beautifully the church is decorated; but I wonder if I would care to have her face all the curious ones who have spread malicious reports. As for myself, dear, I have about decided that my dress can wait until another occasion. I just couldn't attend the services under the circumstances. Please, Rose, don't beg of me to change my mind. It seems I'm never able to refuse you anything. To me you have been more like a sister than merely a good friend, but now, Rose, please try to understand how embarrassing this ordeal would be for me."

Since Ann's return Rose had worked tirelessly in her behalf, and cherished above all else the idea of Ann's complete reinstatement among the church members. She was entirely confident that if Ann would attend the Easter services under the inspiring conditions she had arranged, her first appearance at church since her return to Rockville would undoubtedly bring back tender memories of a former Easter, when by general acclaim Ann had been adjudged their leading soprano in the choir and was dearly loved by everyone.

To Rose, therefore, Ann's sudden decision to remain absent from the Easter services threatened to nullify the chief purpose of her plans.

Rose was deeply disappointed, but she was not the type of person to acknowledge defeat. She felt quite certain that Ann's lowered spirits could be attributed mostly to her mother's

condition, and that it would be best to delay further discussion of the subject for the present. Calling a cheery goodbye over her shoulder, she said, “All right, Ann, we'll be over after supper.”

Accordingly, the girls were gathered later in the Pearson living room. Mrs. Pearson was confined to her bed in the only other room, and as they arrived the girls had looked in to otter her their sympathies.

Without unnecessary preliminaries, Rose explained to her friends Ann's point of view regarding her attendance at the Master services. In order to bring back and maintain a perfect harmony of understanding, she admitted discreetly that perhaps, if she were in Ann's position, she too might view the situation differently. Then, turning to Ann, she said: “Ann, of course you know that we will still remain your friends even though you do not attend the services tomorrow, but I wonder if you are realising how much your absence will defeat the chief purpose of our program. We are all expecting to be present, but with you missing it will not be the same.”

Still dissenting, Ann made no reply, but the others were all in agreement with Rose and advanced their various reasons for prevailing upon her to reconsider her decision.

Finally, Ann's mother, who had been overhearing their conversation, spoke from her adjoining room and suggested that in view of the elaborate preparations which the girls had made, she felt that Ann ought to cooperate by burying the situation.

Finally, although Ann yielded with apparent reluctance, the girls left rejoicing, happily assured that Ann would, after all, be at church Easter morning.

Having agreed, Ann set about to reinforce her own courage. Carefully concealing the hysterical beating of her heart, she hurried to her mother's bedside. Placing her arms about her, she kissed her tenderly again and again as she repeated once more, in disconnected sentences, a description of the beautifully decorated interior of the church. Nor did she neglect to thank her mother for supporting the pleadings of her friends.

Determined to please her friends, assured that thereby she would gain for herself the happiness of unqualified reinstatement, she brought herself at length into an exultant belief that her tomorrow was to be the *most* miraculous day of her entire life.

In the morning, Mrs. Pearson's unimproved condition gave ample cause for apprehension. The dainty buttered toast and steaming fresh coffee which Ann prepared and carried to the invalid remained untasted. Greatly perturbed, Ann implored her mother anxiously to let her summon their doctor. Mrs. Pearson, however, assured her there was no occasion for alarm regarding her condition, and when, later, Ann declared she would under no circumstances leave her to attend the church she insisted firmly that Ann proceed with her arrangements, as decided upon the previous evening.

Being an obedient girl, Ann began nervously to dress and prepare for church. This rather simple process completed, she posed before her mother to obtain approval of her appearance.

Delayed again in making last minute provisions for her mother's comfort in her absence, Ann became aware that she must hurry on her way. It was even then the time for opening the morning service, and the church was more than three blocks distant.

Patting her mother's cheek and kissing her fondly, she started to walk briskly toward the church.

Arriving late, Ann paused abruptly. Her heart was beating violently and she was greatly perplexed with indecision.

An overpowering faintness was rapidly depriving her of a waning courage, and she turned to retrace her steps. But as she glanced about, she noticed the approach of two women whom she knew to be considered the most rabid gossips of Rockville. She was now in a most serious dilemma, confused to the degree of distraction; since, having decided that she could not possibly confront those within the church, she was now being practically driven to do so.

In her state of near hysteria, it appeared certain that any contrary course would be accepted by the two women as an admission on her part that recent gossip was after all not far

from the truth.

For her now to retreat, after having been discovered in the act of placing her hand on the church doorknob, was out of the question. Her tortured mind brought her visions of a renewed campaign of slander being directed against her; so, in terrified consternation, Ann chose the only course left open to her, and stepped quickly within the flower perfumed edifice.

Walking down the aisle in a daze, she saw no one, although she felt instinctively that scores of eyes were focused upon her.

Failing to locate any unoccupied seat, she experienced a most awkward and embarrassing sensation of humility. Then, as the fanatical fire-and-brimstone type of minister of forty years ago spat forth his diabolical order for the deacon to eject her, the strain upon a prostrated mind became too great for her to endure.

Terrorized and stricken by the shock, as though she had been stabbed with a dagger, Ann grasped despairingly at the back of the nearest seat for support. Believing her to be on the verge of collapsing, Deacon Noble rushed toward her to offer assistance. Not for any consideration would he have complied with the minister's order. But panic-stricken Ann eluded his outstretched arms. With a piteous cry of anguish, she covered both eyes with her hands and rushed out of the church in frenzied disorder.

As the vindictive minister was calmly announcing the first hymn, Ann raced madly out of town, along the highway leading toward the uninhabited old Pearson ranch; and even before he had finished his service, passing hunters had retrieved her bruised and lifeless body from the base of the selfsame clit, the high crest of which had in other days accorded her so many happy hours. Her precious white lawn dress was torn and bloodstained from the fall over the precipice and, like its little mistress, was scarcely recognizable.

Completely bereft of her reason as the relentless minister crushed Ann's last remaining hope for happiness in this life, she had actually, though unconsciously, carried out a childhood fancy and delivered her grief-stricken and despondent little self into the care and custody of her beloved

sunbeams.

As though inspired to demonstrate how they, too, must keep good faith, they had gathered Ann's innocent soul into the myriads of exhilarating, gleaming rays, and in their perfect harmony with Divine understanding, dispersed forever her clouds of earthly troubles.

The gossips were busier than ever in Rockville that Easter Sunday afternoon. News of Ann's self-destruction spread like wildfire, and the tongues that had wagged over the tale of her frenzied dash from the church seized with avidity upon the new theme. Rose Noble rushed to Mrs. Pearson's bedside, and spent the rest of the day keeping well-meaning neighbors from telling her the sad news; but the mother missed her child, guessed that a tale of tragedy lay behind Rose's averted eyes and ill-concealed tears; and soon after midnight she too gave up the struggle for life and happiness.

But what of the author of the final tragedy—the fanatical, self-constituted judge of human conduct, who had impelled poor, innocent Ann to choose immediate relief in self-destruction rather than the living death of an outcast to which he would have consigned her? What of that hard-shelled, puritanical preacher?

As Rose Noble examined her dead friend's small belongings on Easter Monday, when Ann's body was being prepared for burial, she found among them, carefully wrapped for preservation, the marriage certificate which none knew that she possessed, and pinned to it was a newspaper clipping telling of the annulment of the marriage at the behest of her husband's mother, the callous city person who had refused to accept her son's choice of a country lass. In her disillusionment and despair, Ann had kept the fact of her marriage a secret, pre furring the obloquy of shameful suspicion rathe r than acknowledge herself .and her life a failure.

When the Rev. Jeremiah Jannan learned that the girl he had condemned had been after all a law fully wedded wife, instead of bearing the immoral character he had ascribed to her, he was seized with remorse, though at first inclined to blame Ann for concealing the fact of her marriage. The pangs of remorse ate

deeply into his soul. His health was strangely affected, a “stroke” followed, and within a year the Rev. Jeremiah was a hopeless paralytic.

The gossiping tongues of Rockville then wagged to a different tune. In the persecutor's plight many saw a just retribution, while Ann Pearson's name became a symbol for silent suffering.

THE DESTROYER

HIRAM PETERS sat in the doorway of his little shack, smoking a pipe. From time to time he would glance anxiously at the western sky, then at the prairie beneath. Before him as far as eye could reach, spread acre on acre of vibrant russet brown. It was the wheat crop, fully ripe and ready for harvesting.

To city bred eyes such a panorama appears monotonous, almost unbearable in its unbroken flatness; to the farmer's, it is pure poetry. There lies the child of his brain, the creation of his hand. To it he has given his strength and his devotion; it is his only wealth.

On this day, as Hiram surveyed his fields, the worried pucker between his eyebrows deepened. He did not like the steel gray of the sky, nor the electric crackle in the atmosphere. The animals felt this, too. Zip, the collie, stretched at his master's feet, moaned uneasily in his sleep; and a colt in the barnyard whinnied his fear, then for no apparent reason galloped madly about the enclosure.

But it was to his previous grain that the farmer's attention returned. Here rested his hopes for the coming year—the new reaper that he needed so desperately—the addition of a separate kitchen for the shack, for which his wife had begged so hard, and a year's training at normal school for their daughter Mary. Each red gold stalk pledged its share in making these dreams realities. Not only that, each stalk pledged its share toward feeding a people. This was the bread of a nation! If only—Hiram dared *not* finish the thought. A few days more and the crop would lie neatly trussed up in his granary, safe from mice and bad weather.

He clenched his fists and his jaw set doggedly, as if by sheer force of will, he could move the fields to safety. Then, catlike, he settled back to watch his treasure.

There was not the usual ripple of wind along the crest of the wheat, nor the soft, scraping sound that it makes, as of water scuffing over sand. Overhead the sky was shifting from gray

to a darkish yellow, and a small black cloud in the west was swelling to giant proportions. Now it became cylindrical, like a black caterpillar, now funnel shaped; and gradually the creature was gathering speed.

On it came, and on, as if fleeing from some unknown terror, faster and faster. With it grew the ominous yellow light, casting over the land a weird, phosphorescent glow, while below earth waited, breathless.

But at last the spell was broken. A long sigh of wind reached the man's ears; it deepened to a moan. The farthest fields were paying knee tribute to the monster, salaaming to its shadow like a multitude of conquered subjects; nor did they rise when it had passed. The man looked on, fascinated.

The dumb show had a quality of the inevitable that hypnotized him. Acre after acre of desolation marked the destroyer's path. Nearer and nearer it came. The moaning grew to a roar. The grain before his very dooryard was mowed down relentlessly.

At last the terror struck his barn, tearing it asunder with a horrible, grinding noise. The east wall dropped in one piece, like a sheet of cardboard; in a few seconds it lay buried under a pile of boards and shingles that had been the roof. Wood splinters hurtled five hundred feet in every direction, strewing the ground with wreckage, and above the crash of falling timber sounded the shrieks of the livestock—horses, cattle, and chickens screamed their agony; but the pony that had galloped about the pasture, lay quite still.

Another instant and the shack would have met with the same fate. But with one of those curious freaks of tornadoes, the thing twisted to one side and hurried on its black way. Dazedly Hiram stared after it, watching its flight across his neighbor's land, until it disappeared out of sight. Then he turned back to gaze at his stricken fields in awed silence. The yellow glow had followed the tornado, like the evil companion that it was, and in its place a dull gray brooded over the landscape.

Now russet brown wheat was replaced by grayish stubble and the plain spread itself in infinite flatness, like a petrified

sea. Far to the west, one lonely tree, the mast of an age-old wreck, guarded the solitude. So might it have lain, grim and desolate, in the remote twilight before man came to teach the land its miracle of growth I

Was this waste then, the act of Providence? Everything that happens in the world is a part of a great plan of God running through all time. Every blade of grass in the field is measured; the green cups and the colored crowns of every flower are curiously counted; the stars of the Armament wheel in cunningly calculated orbits; even the storms have their laws.

THE TEETOTAL TAR

PROUD of his sleek, white, three masted schooner, Johan Haagen, a gaunt and rugged descendant of the Vikings, captained his own craft.

Sailing from one port to another along the shores of Lake Michigan, he solicited such cargoes as shippers offered. Lumber was the principal commodity carried, but invariably his last load of every season consisted of spruce and hemlock tree9, cut near his own farm in Wisconsin to bring Christmas cheer to hundreds of Chicago homes.

Of his five oldest sons each had spent one or more seasons of their youth on their father's ship. Then, as their interest in sailing diminished, one after the other had left him, in pursuit of safer and more agreeable occupations on land.

Each fall, after the profitable cargo of Christmas trees had been delivered, the schooner was safely moored in the natural harbor at Bergsjo, only a mile distant from Haagen's farm. Thereafter several of the sailors would live aboard the schooner and make any repairs needed in preparation *for* the following season. Captain Haagen lived with his family on the farm during the winter, but made frequent trips to the ship.

Other shipowners, knowing the safety of the harbor, also wintered their vessels there, and the skeleton crews and caretakers formed a congenial colony.

The village of Bergsjo was a small cluster of cottages and shacks near a rocky beach. The only store was a combination of post office, general store, and saloon. To the sailors the latter was the most vital feature. In the saloon they ate, drank, and made merry during the long winter hours of enforced idleness. Their behavior and habits were a scandal to the more sedate residents of the little *port,* who would shake their heads in silent protest as the sailors reeled along the only street.

Out on the Haagen farm, Ivar, the sixth son of the Captain, was fast approaching manhood. As he grew up his mother had carefully instructed him in her philosophies of life. Cherishing the memory of devout ancestors in Europe, she had always

adhered to the high ideals of her moral training in girlhood.

In the past she had impressed her sons, one by one, with the d*angers* of misusing liquor, and most of them were total abstainers. So now, as her youngest neared the age when Haagen boys sailed the Great Lakes with their father, Mrs. Haagen obtained I var's promise that he would avoid the use of liquor—"teetotally." She knew the temptations of the sailor's life, to which her "baby" would soon be subjected; and she knew too that it would take courage and a strong will to enable him to keep his promise in spite of the jeers and taunts of his fellows. But she was happy in the belief that her boy had both the courage and the will to stand firm in his resolve.

Ivar knew just what he might expect among rough sailormen. Many times, when in the lakeside village, he had seen the antics *of* inebriated men; and he had witnessed more than one fight which might have had serious results if the participants had been sober.

But Ivar was a true son of his father. Nothing that he had seen the sailors do *or say* could change his intense desire to sail aboard his father's ship. As the only son remaining at home, he had been kept busy with the work of the farm during his teens. He had plowed and sown, cultivated and harvested crops, and tended the family's flock of sheep. But he was a sailor at heart and the only work he had really enjoyed was the annual selection and cutting and bundling of the young trees and their transportation to the shore, for the final voyage of the season to Chicago, whither he had more than once accompanied his father.

It was legendary that every Haagen must be a sailor, and I var knew that it was only a question of time when he would have his heart's desire. He had learned to love his father's ship, with its graceful lines and tapering spars; and every year, while the deckhands were loading the Christmas trees on board, he would make himself at home in the deckhouse or grasp the carved wheel, and as his fingers closed about the spokes it was easy for him to imagine that he was steering the ship.

It was thus that his father found him one late fall day, when the deck load of trees was complete, and the "Vendskap" was

about to sail for Chicago; her name being a Scandinavian term for “Friendship.” To Ivar's great delight, the Captain told him to prepare to ship as a member of the crew at the opening of navigation in the following spring. It was what he had always wanted. Slowly the winter months dragged along, but Ivar made the most of them by earnest study of his father's books on navigation and seamanship. Early in the spring, the “Vendskap” sailed, with Ivar the happiest lad on the Lakes and the Captain proud of his son.

The young sailor soon learned his duties as a member of the crew, and stood his match with the rest, like a man. He was determined to learn all that he could as fast as possible; and the sturdiness of his young body stood him in good stead when it came to tests of endurance. His earlier studies in navigation proved useful, and he was soon accepted as an equal by men of mature years, some of whom had sailed the Lakes before he was born.

At first, every day aboard ship brought some new miracle to his notice, and he saw for the first time persons and places and things that previously he had only known by reading of them. But before long he was standing his faithful watch in calm or in storm with equal serenity; and like every born sailor, he felt most at home with the heaving deck beneath his feet, upon the “bounding main.”

Captain Haagen, who was getting on in years, had been greatly disappointed when his other sons deserted the sailor's life; and Iva r's devotion to it overjoyed and seemed to rejuvenate him. During the season he spent many hours instructing his boy in the intricacies of navigation on the Lakes, and found him an apt and willing pupil. The father taught the son all that he knew himself.

Another winter season passed, and when spring returned and the “Vendskap” was once more ready to leave port, Captain Haagen was laid up with a severe attack of rheumatism. Unhesitatingly he placed I var in full charge of the schooner and her crew; and the men, knowing the youngster's capacity and knowledge of navigation, accepted him as their captain without question. Their confidence was

fully justified during the season, when the young Captain Ivar demonstrated his cool, sober judgment in every emergency.

When the "Vendskap" returned to its winter haven, after making the usual delivery of Christmas trees in the Chicago River, Ivar modestly handed to his father the proceeds of the season; and after paying off the crew and settling all bills, the season's profits proved to be several hundred dollars greater than Captain Haagen himself had *ever* been able to show.

After such a showing there was no question about the command of the schooner in the following year; and again Ivar had a successful season, until near its close, when calamity overtook the "Vendskap." As Ivar was bringing his ship back from the final trip of the year to Chicago, a storm of almost unprecedented violence arose. The nor'eastern gale cleared Lake Michigan of floating craft from shore to shore; and the "Vendskap" was cast ashore upon the rocky coast of Wisconsin and broken up by the pounding of great seas before the storm subsided. Ivar and his unfortunate crew managed to make their way to land on rafts and pieces of wreckage, and no lives were lost; but the "Vendskap" was gone forever.

Satisfied that their son's life had been spared, the 1laagens decided to abandon further shipping activities. Although the loss of his ship was a great blow to the old Captain, he was content to spend the remainder of his days upon the farm.

Ivar, however, spent a restless winter, planning to obtain employment as a sailor in the spring, so as to continue his chosen vocation on the Lakes. Consequently, before the open season for navigation arrived, he went to Cleveland in quest of a berth, hoping to find a place on some large steamer. He left home with his parents' blessing, and again assured his mother that he would avoid the perils of drink. Never would he forget the smile of pride and happiness that replaced the tears on her face as he gave her his assurance, and he registered a vow to remain steadfast to his pledge and justify her faith and confidence in him.

He found no difficulty in finding a berth, and signed on as first class seaman aboard the steamship "Superior," a large

vessel that plied the Lakes from Duluth to Buffalo. Captain McNair, her commander, soon noted the sailorly ability and alertness of the young man and was well acquainted with his father's reputation and record. It was not long therefore before he made Ivar second mate of the "Superior." This was his first step in advancement and Ivar wrote the news to his parents with pardonable pride and elation.

His letter overflowed with praise of the size and power of the steamship and its independence of winds and currents, so different from the conditions of a sailing ship like the lost "Vendskap." He felt that he was on his way to attain his ambition to reach a command in steam.

Applying himself industriously in every spare hour to study of such textbooks as were accessible, he presented himself during the following winter to the government examiner at Milwaukee. Passing the examination successfully, he was given a certificate ax master, entitling him to operate any power-driven craft anywhere upon the waters of the Great Lakes.

Although thus fully qualified to fill a position of command, he decided to continue sailing as second mate aboard the "Superior."

Captain McNair, when sober, was affably inclined and for a while all went fairly well. He contributed in many ways toward increasing the fund of knowledge with which Ivar was seeking to prepare himself for greater responsibilities. Gradually the captain acquired a great attention for him, and would often joke with him upon Ivar's disposition to direct the labor of the crew, without sharing in the actual work, as was customary for second mates to do in lake craft. But the members of the crew offered no objection, and under Ivar's direction they developed increased efficiency, which the captain was not slow to note, saying that he had never before had a second mate like this one.

As time wore on, Ivar became more and more indispensable to Captain McNair, relieving him of many of his own duties and responsibilities. The first mate was almost a nonentity as a ship's officer, having gradually been relegated to the status of

personal and boon companion to the captain. On many a night of inky darkness, it was Ivar who *took* charge of the ship and navigated her.

Often it happened that the first mate and the captain would be sound asleep in their bunks, "loaded to the gills," as the popular phrase of the day described their condition. The behavior of Captain McNair gradually grew worse. Occasional sprees ashore, while cargo was being discharged or loaded, were followed by complete surrender to his appetite for liquor. Drunkenness became his normal condition, and the affable and competent commander was transformed into an overbearing, morose, and treacherous animal.

To Ivar, who had often brought the steamer through difficulties and dangers, McNair became abusive and unreasonable. But he realized, as did all on board, that the young mate could always be depended upon to manage the ship properly and carry on all necessary duties at sea and in port.

Still thoroughly in love with his life on the water, Ivar paid no heed to the insults frequently hurled at him by his senior officers. He realized that he must disregard all retarding influences and devote himself unswervingly to his duties, in order to reach the height of his ambition. Hence he was patient and long suffering.

One night, when the captain and first mate were reeling about the deck, oblivious both of a raging nor' wester and of the perilous entry about to be made to a difficult harbor, Ivar was struggling through his third successive watch, never daring to leave the wheel for a moment. Steering the heavily laden "Superior" now to starboard, then to port, and at the same time signaling the engine room for varying speeds, forward or reverse, in a narrow channel, he had his hands full.

As the drunken first mate drew• near him and thrust before his face a flask half full of liquor, Ivar was forced to make an instantaneous decision. The safety of the ship and all on board depended upon his being able to give the situation his concentrated and undivided attention. Retaining his hold of the wheel with his right hand, he brought up his Ie ft to land squarely on the mate's chin, and down he went sprawling on

the wheelhouse floor. As he fell, the captain entered behind Ivar, and bawled at the unconscious mate.

"Get up! Get up, you lout, and break that damned kid in two."

Then Ivar realized that he had also the captain to deal with, and that whatever he did must be done in a hurry. Seizing a short length of rope, he lashed the wheel fast to its frame, and charged the uncouth, bloated figure of his captain. By the use of and a sort of football tackle, Ivar forced the helpless giant into a large locker at the rear of the wheelhouse. Just then a sudden squall struck the vessel, and she lurched violently, throwing the captain into a corner of the locker, where his head banged against the call, knocking him out. Ivar had disengaged himself from the falling figure, and then, jumping toward the mate, he grabbed him by the legs and dragged him into the locker beside the captain; after which he slammed the door and locked the pair in.

The steamer meanwhile had turned almost completely about and was floundering in a dangerous manner. Hastily releasing the wheel, Ivar .brought her back on her course, barely seconds before she slipped between an outer breakwater and lighthouse, into the quieter waters of the port. Signaling for reverse to slow his speed, he proceeded smoothly up the harbor to the unloading dock, where the owner's representative was waiting with men on the dock to make fast the mooring lines thrown to them.

Ivar then unlocked the door and released his prisoners, who had regained consciousness and were fast being sobered by the consciousness that they were in port. Their attitude was now changed to one of grumbling submission. When they finally succeeded in standing upon their feet, they slouched away toward their bunks, passing Ivar with heavy muttered oaths, but without any attempt to molest him, as he sat bringing the log up to date.

Many times, while on shore, Ivar had deemed it best to accompany other fellows to places which they suggested, and it was not unusual for him to appear with them at some saloon bar. But he invariably ordered ginger ale or some other "soft"

drink; and he noticed that young sailors especially would taunt him with some such remark as “If he were a man, he would drink like one.”

Some older sailors, on the contrary, would step up to him and say in a friendly way. “Never mind them, Ivar; that's just brainless chatter. I only wish I had your will power, but it's too late for me to quit now.” The ship's cook, Pete, had recognized in Ivar an exceptional personality and was always ready to encourage him; so that a real friendship had been established *between* them. Ivar and the cook had had many long talks, and the cook had told Ivar in confidence that for years the captain had been charging fictitious items in the ship's expense account—making charges, for instance, for provisions that were never received and using the money for the purchase of whiskey.

Although himself a moderate drinking man, Pete was a conscientious Scandinavian, rebled at the captain's practice and had often clashed with him. Ivar, too, whose duty it was to OK all expense items, could recall many such irregularities which the captain had always explained away.

Troublesome competition had developed for the owners of the “Superior,” and the company was urging economy on all its vessels. The elimination of tug service, on entering and leaving harbors, had been ordered; but Captain McNair wanted no change in the old system which would disrupt his personal plans.

From the first time Ivar had handled the wheel to steer the “Superior” into the open lake waters, he had managed to dispense with towing assistance. For this economy, even before the company's order was issued, the captain had been taking undue credit. Then came a time when the “Superior” took on a load of coal for Milwaukee—half being range anthracite and half chestnut. Ivar took the ship out of the loading harbor unaided, and picked up a barge to be towed to a Michigan port, a paying job.

The president of the steamship company came down to the dock to welcome the “Superior” on its arrival in Milwaukee after a record-breaking run, considering the delay of towing.

Accompanying the president, Mr. Sanford, was an agent of the coal company to which the cargo was consigned.

"Well, my boy, where is McNair?" asked the president, slapping Ivar on his broad shoulder. He had approached unseen, as Ivar was engaged with a deckhand in securing one of the cables.

"Why, Mr. San ford, how do you do?" said Ivar, surprised for the moment. "I will send for the captain at once. He'll be he re very soon, 1 am sure. Won't you sit down?" Offering the visitors some ship's stools, he told one of the hands to go in search of Captain McNair and advise him to hurry, as Mr. Sanford was on board.

It was some time before Captain McNair tame slouching along the deck, with his shadow, the first mate, close behind. Both had slept off the effects of the previous night's debauch, without removing their clothes, and they presented an untidy, unkempt appearance.

Without accepting the captain's grimy outstretched hand, Mr. Sanford spoke. "Well, McNair, I see you made a fast trip. Do you think you can get unloaded by tomorrow night?"

"Why, Mr. Sanford, I guess we can, if the Black Run bins have room for the amount of coal we are carrying."

"I've arranged all that. There will be no delay on account of capacity."

"Then I see no reason for any difficulty," said McNair.

"All right then. How are you placed? In which

hold do you carry the range coal, captain?"

McNair turned to his first mate. The range is in the fore hold, ain't it, Bill?"

"Doggone if I know. It is, ain't it?" replied that worthy, taken by surprise. Then he turned and shouted to Ivar, who was standing at a respectful distance; "Oh, Ivar, the range coal is in the fore hold, ain't it?"

"No," replied Ivar. "The fore hold is loaded with chestnut. The Black Run bins use the nearest bin for chestnut. That is why I turned about before tying up to the dock. As we now lie, our holds are placed exactly opposite the same grades of coal stored in the bins, so we can begin

unloading without any further moving about.” “ tell—come, come, McNair, what kind of wild performance is this?” snapped Mr. Sanford in undisguised irritation. “Do you mean to tell me that you didn't know how your load was placed, and even your first mate had to call his second mate to find out. If you ask me, I'd say young Haagen seems to be all the officers I have that know what's going on aboard the ‘Superior’.

“Well, you see—you see, Mr. Sanford—at Bufalo I —er—” stammered McNair, unable to think of any good excuse to offer.

“Oh, never mind, let it pass. But step on the unloading I We will be delayed for boiler repairs on this trip, and I want some quick action.”

Mr. Sanford and the coal company agent then left the ship. McNair was furious after the sharp. rebuke from Mr. Sanford. Big and burly, he turned upon Ivar. “Well, well,” he roared, “so now you're the great ‘Mister’ Haagen 1” In his semi sober state, he thought Mr. Sanford had called Ivar “Mr. Haagen.”

“All right then, Mister Haagen,” he continued, “get the gang into action, and let's see you take a hand too!” Then, retiring in the direction of the cabin, the captain and “Bill” sought consolation in a bottle of gin. Bill beckoned to a young deckhand to join them, and surprised the lad by offering him a drink from the bottle. In a most inexcusable abandonment of their official position, both the sots then poured into the ears of the young deckhand lurid details of their personal grievances against Ivar.

Before the lad left the cabin, they assured him that he could tell the others of the crew that they need not take Ivar's orders seriously. Any older member of the crew would have considered the source of such absurd instructions; but the lad was of a reckless and mischievous nature, and gleefully informed his fellows that they could “take it easy” by the captain's orders.

Being mostly typical wharf loaders, the “Superior's” crew of twenty-eight deckhands did not need to be told more than once that they could do pretty much as they pleased. They

could see that the ambitious young second mate would be the victim of any unforeseen consequences. Knowing winks and coarse remarks were exchanged among the men as Ivar began to direct the work of unloading. Fore and aft gangs were set to work, in order that the cargo of coal could be removed in such a way as to keep the steamer on an even keel. Conveyors brought the coal up to the deck level and loaded the waiting wheelbarrows, which the men wheeled to the chutes and emptied into the bins. Interested spectators watched the process from the shore, and for a time the work went on without serious interruption.

On all the company's vessels, paydays were observed upon arrival in port and the men were paid off after unloading was completed, usually in the evening. Ivar had the payroll of the "Superior" ready, and each man's money carefully counted and sealed in an envelope. The pays envelopes were all in the ship's safe, in the captain's cabin.

When the unloading was well under way, Iva r descended to the engine room to consult with the chief engineer and notify him to be ready to receive the boiler repairmen who would come aboard as soon zs the unloading was finished.

As he returned to the deck he knew instinctively that something had gone wrong with the deck gangs. Reasonable periods for rest were permitted while unloading was in progress, but now the conveyors were idle, and the men were grouped about the deck in an unusual way. The fore and aft gangs were mingled, and as Ivar made his way to the center of a group he saw that two of the men were engaged in a game of "craps," with others betting on the turns of the dice.

"All right, men," he ordered, "now break it up I There'll be no craps while we're unloading. All hands back to their plates, and step lively! Micky! Baldy!" —naming the two gang leaders—"get your crews back to their work. They'll have plenty of time for craps tonight. There's no time for it now."

Although the gamblers teased their throws and gathered up their dice and coins, they and all the others simply stood staring at Ivar as though they had not heard his orders. Micky and Baldy looked away as Ivar gazed at them in astonishment.

"Well, what's the matter, fellows?" exclaimed the young mate. "You had a nice long rest on the trip from Bufalo. The company expects you to unload the boat now. Come on; let's forget the crap game; you can finish it tonight." Ivar spoke in a low tone of friendly good fellowship.

"Well, buddy, spose we finish de craps now." A burly, bewhiskered ruffian spoke up, assuming the leadership of the mutinous mob. "I'm out two bits and a winnin' now 'ud set me square Throw out de dice agin, Swipes. I'm agoin' to bet on you, kid." He addressed a spineless, cringing figure by his side, still kneeling on the deck.

"Never mind the throw, Swipes!" ordered Ivar. "Your game is over. Don't let me have to tell you that again." The ma*ie* spoke with an increasing tone of command, then whirled and faced the bewhiskered leader. "Did you hear what I said? Your wheelbarrow is waiting for you!"

"T'ell wid de 'push'," returned the burly rufian. "I said we'd finish de craps, an' mebbe have anudder t'row." He scowled ferociously, stuck out a great hairy chest, and brought up an enormous fist, clenched and ready for action.

"Very well, my man, you're fired," Ivar shot back. "You can come aboard at six o'clock tonight for your pay."

"Hohoho! Hahaha!" roared the big man. "So I's tired I am? An' I spose so's de rest of de gang, eh?" "Yes," replied Ivar, defiantly. "Any man who doesn't get back on his job instantly will also be fired."

"All right, fellers, let's get ofi'n de old tub!" And with that the burly one led the way to the gangplank. To Ivar's astonishment the others followed, breaking into an uproar of cursing and lewd remarks, advising Ivar with loud laughter that he had much yet to learn about sailing on the Lakes.

Hurrying to the cook's gallery, Ivar spoke to Pete, who was busy with preparations for the noon meal.

"Oh, Pete, I guess I've got myself into a fine jam."

"Is that so, Ivar?" Pete was sympathetic at once. "Is there anything I can do to help you?"

"Yes and no," replied Ivar. "I've fired all the deckhands."

"Why, Ivar, how can you expect to unload our cargo?

And how about the dinner I've got near ready?"

"I don't think they will be back expecting dinner; but in case they come back, just lock everything up. I'm going ashore to hire another crew, and we may have to feed them. After my run-in with McNair this morning, I can't be bothered with asking him for advice; so hold up the feed until I get back, and I'll let you know what's corning next."

"Well, Ivar," returned Pete, "you surely are in a jam, but keep a stiff upper lip, lad. We'll see it through somehow."

"Pete, isn't there an employment agent over on Second Street?"

"Oh yes, there's a card of the agent here in the galley. Here, take it. Maybe he can round up a new gang for you in a hurry."

The men Ivar saw lounging about the wharf, as he left the ship, did not impress him as suitable for his purpose, and he finally applied at the employment agency, explaining his urgent need of a full crew of deckhands. Within an hour he surprised Pete by leading thirty new hands, all likely looking fellows, aboard the "Superior."

"Here we are, Pete," he announced exultantly. "As fine looking a bunch as I ever saw, and I promised them a good feed before they start unloading."

"Well, just leave it to me, Ivar.' I've got dinner all ready for them. Just step up and get it, fellows," replied Pete, calling to the men crowding eagerly behind the excited mate.

As the new crew were eating their meal, the discharged men came aboard, crowding about the galley and demanding of Pete that they be served.

"Why, you fellows are fired," said Pete. "These men having dinner are the new crew, and I can only feed men who belong to this ship."

"Well, we'll see de captain if we don't get no eats," shouted one of the crowd; and they all trailed off to seek McNair in his cabin. They had spent the last hour or so in a round of the nearest saloons, and were inclined to be more ugly than before.

But the captain and "Bill" had gone ashore soon after sowing the seeds of mutiny in the mind of the young deckhand,

and after convincing themselves that both had left the steamer, they trooped ashore, cursing Pete, and Ivar, and everything connected with the "Superior." One man suggested the name of a saloon uptown that the captain *sometimes* visited, and after a hasty *conference on* the wharf, "Micky" and the knowing one were sent as a committee to find the captain and inform him of the actions of his second mate.

At first the men had not realized the seriousness of their conduct, relying on the captain's statement to the young deckhand for support against Ivar. But Pete's refusal to feed them was a stunning blow. Many had no money, but were depending on the pay they expected to receive that evening; and they could get no free lunches in the saloons without purchasing drinks. So they were growing desperate.

When the new crew had finished their dinner, fore and aft gangs were again organized by Ivar, with the most capable looking as leaders; and the unloading was immediately resumed. Ivar wanted to make a few personal purchases, and prepared to go ashore. He had shaved and changed into shore going clothes, and had just stepped out of his cabin when he received the second great surprise of the day.

The deck of the "Superior" was covered with a milling mass of men. It seemed to Ivar that all the laborers in Milwaukee had come aboard the steamer. The discharged crew, with Captain McNair in the lead, had returned aboard. Some of them were attempting to interrupt tile new men in their work. There was much noise and confusion.

Reeling in his walk**,** the captain spied Ivar and called to him loudly: "Haagen, report at my cabin at once." "Aye, aye, captain," replied Ivar, and the stumbling steps of McNair led the way to the cabin.

Unlocking the door of his room, the captain motioned for Ivar to step inside. Then, walking toward his desk, he deposited the door key on top of it, and turning about he demanded with a threatening scowl: "Did it ever occur to you, Haagen, that I am the captain of this steamer?"

"Yes, captain," responded Ivar quietly, fully master of himself and of the situation.

"Well then, how does it come that as soon as I leave the boat you have to discharge the deckhands?"

"They refused to do their work, captain, and I had to let them go."

"Well, now you can go out and send those new men away, and put our old fellows back on their jobs."

"Why, captain, I couldn't do that. I hired the new men in order to unload our cargo of coal as quickly as possible. They are a fine crew of hard workers. Under the law, they are on our payroll and will have to be paid, even if discharged."

"Don't you stand there, Haagen, and tell me what I have to do, or anything else about this crazy expense we have to meet on account of your firing our old men," McNair thundered, his anger rising. "I'm ordering you to do as I say. I want our old men back on their jobs. That's all! Now see that my order is carried out."

"Sorry, captain, but while I'm in charge of your men they stay as I have them now."

"Ohhoo so we're too important to obey orders. Well, that being the case, you can just turn in your time now, and I'll look after the crew myself."

"All right, captain I Here is the paysheet, all ready for the payoff this evening," and Ivar drew a large envelope from his inside coat pocket, and placed it on the captain's desk, where he was now seated. "The timesheet, with all the names and information of the new crew is also in this envelope, so you will have no trouble in keeping up your record of labor expense."

"Damn you, man, I'll not pay those new men one cent. Tell them to get off my boat. They've got a good meal out of me, and that will be pay enough for them. It would be a fine expense account for me to hand to Sanford—showing two crews drawing a full day's pay at the same time." He spat out the words in a fury.

"Well, that won't interest me now," said Ivar. "But captain, now that I'm fired, I'll ask you for my last week's."

"You can come around at six o'clock, like the rest, for your pay."

"Oh-no; an officer gets his money on the spot when he is discharged; and I'll trouble you to pay me out, so I can leave your boat."

McNair knew that Ivar would probably be returning with a police officer unless he paid him; so grumblingly he went to his safe, and after a long time spent in fumbling about he brought out the money due to Ivar. As his capable young mate signed a receipt and pocketed the bills, McNair regarded him closely.

"Now captain," said Ivar, "I'll ask you to repay me the fifty dollars which you borrowed last month."

"Fifty dollars?" The captain was stunned for a moment. "What do you mean by 'fifty dollars'?"

"Oh, just the fifty dollars which you had to produce to settle your fine in Cleveland last month. You don't think I made you a present of it, do you?"

"No, no," stammered McNair. "Now I come to think of it, I guess that's so. I believe I did borrow fifty from you. But just now, Ivar, I haven't any money about me. Come aboard tomorrow and I'll pay you then." His voice had dropped and he was using almost the same smooth, affable tone as in the early days of their acquaintance. But Ivar was not deceived.

"No," he said, "I'm going out of town tonight, and I'll not be returning to Milwaukee for several days. Just pay me the money now."

"But, Ivar, I can't spare it right now"—in a pleading tone. "I'll send it to you next week."

"Listen, captain, there'll be no sending me any money 'next week.' I said now, and I mean now 1"

As he spoke, Ivar picked up the key lying on McNair's desk and before the captain realized what he was doing, he had locked the cabin door and placed the key in his pocket. It was a drastic course for him to adopt, but he knew very well that unless he collected the amount of the loan at once, he might never get it at all.

Calmly removing his coat, he hung it on the doorknob, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and once more faced the astonished captain.

"Now I am going to ask you for that money, for the last time. You have fifty dollars in the safe, which you are supposed to receive tonight as your past week's pay. Just get it out now, and pay me the fifty you owe me, and there'll be no more trouble over that."

"And if I don't," snapped McNair, once more enraged, "I suppose you expect to lick your captain. For shame, Ivar Haagen, taking advantage of a much older man!"

"Never mind any more words. We've had words enough. In just about another minute you and I will settle the matter of my loan to you. Act quick, if you know what is good for you." And Ivar stepped very close to the captain, until he got more than a whiff of the fetid breath and the pungent odor of alcohol, with which McNair was saturated. In spite of the disparity in size and apparent strength, Ivar knew that he could get the better of this besotted beast in any physical encounter; and he knew he would have no remorse if he collected the debt by force.

For a long minute McNair sat staring stupidly at the safe, hesitating dully to part with his week's pay. He had been anticipating revelry ashore during the steamer's stay in port, but such hopes were vanishing now.

Then Ivar made a move as if to help himself from the open and inviting safe, and McNair realized that he must pay, for his discharged mate was in no humor to be cajoled. Breaking into an affectation of jollity, he said: "Well, well, Ivar my boy, you're all right. I always said you had the real stud in you, and it will carry you far in this business of sailing the Lakes; but this is not a time to use your fists. I was only fooling about discharging you, or not paying you. Here's your fifty dollars! I intended to pay you all the time; but an old sailor likes to see what his men are made of. Now run along, get that bunch of tramps off this boat as soon as you can, and put our old men back to work, so this disturbance can be all brushed up and no one need be the riser *or* get into any jam."

But Ivar, without deigning to reply, calmly folded the fifty dollars, placed them in his pocket, unlocked the cabin door, tossed the key onto the desk, and went to his berth, where he packed his belongings, and then left the "Superior."

"Damn that young punk—the swab! I'll get him yet!" Such was the captain's comment as he watched Ivar's departure.

Once off the steamer, Ivar dismissed from his mind all thoughts of worry concerning the problems lie had left for the captain to solve; and he went at once to the farm of an old friend, Axel Erickson, only ten miles from Milwaukee. Axel had been one of his father's sailors aboard the "Vendskap," and had long since retired to his small dairy farm. He welcomed the son of his old captain heartily.

On board the "Superior," while Ivar was closeted with the captain, the discharged crew became tired of waiting for McNair's reappearance. Returning to the waterside saloons, and borrowing among themselves in view of the evening's payoff, they busied themselves with steady drinking. Thus, when McNair returned to the deck, he found there only the new crew, rapidly unloading the coal; and he had sufficient judgment left to let *tit work* proceed. It would be easier, he thought, to explain the payment of wages to two crews for the day's work than to make excuses for failure to unload the cargo, when Mr. Sanford had demanded haste.

Only six of the original crew of twenty-eight were sufficiently sober to present themselves aboard the "Superior" for their pay that evening; and the new crew resumed their work next day. Captain McNair entertained for a while the idea of hiring an entirely fresh crew to replace the men brought aboard by Iva r, and thus satisfy his stubborn resentment of the mate's action. The men Ivar had fired were all too undependable for consideration, and the captain reluctantly came to the conclusion that he had better not attempt to make any further changes.

Four days later, Ivar returned to Milwaukee. It was only natural that he should turn his footsteps first to the wharf where the "Superior" lay, undergoing boiler repairs. He was filled with curiosity to learn how matters were progressing aboard, and when the steamer would leave port.

Passing a saloon, before he had sighted the wharf, he was hailed by a friendly voice. It was Pete, emerging from the barroom with one of his assistants in the ship's galley.

"Hello, Ivar," greeted Pete. "Doggone it, you're just the man I want to see." He spoke emphatically as he grasped Ivar's hand in hearty welcome.

"Well, I'm really very glad to see you, Pete. What's happened? Did Mac fire you too?"

"Oh no, I'm still the old cook on the 'Superior.' But since you left, the rest of us have to keep out of the surly old fellow's way. Boy, when you made him hand you his week's pay, you certainly turned loose a veritable 'buzzard,' determined to take it out on the rest of us."

"Why, Pete, I'm sorry if I have caused so much trouble."

"Oh, don't let it worry you. We'll manage to get along somehow. What I am so glad to see you about is to tell you how the old man is boiling over and spilling things At first he figured that Bill's thirty-five dollars pay would buy all the drinks for both of them until next week; but the same evening Bill got his pay, one of the new men you hired turned out to be a card sharp. Bill sat in a poker game with him, and before midnight the new man had trimmed Bill and *two* other fellows out of everything they had. Then the card sharp left the boat, and we haven't seen anything of him since. Unable to call on Bill for money, McNair has been more sober than we have seen him for many moons; but he is certainly sore at you, and he tells everyone who will listen what you did to him and what he is going to do to you before the score is settled."

"If that's all, Pete, let's forget about McNair. How have you been?"

"I'm all right, but I'm not through telling you about Mac's peeve. He claims he is going to beat held out of you on sight—says he found out that you had been at the company office and told Sanford it was he—Mac—who fired the old gang, and fired you too. He says that Sanford got mad at you, and threw you out of the police."

"Well, Pete, you know me. Do you think I'm likely to run away from McNair or anybody else?"

"Ivar, I know you can handle yourself with him. It isn't that which worries me. But I feel that if he can say anything to injure your chances for another job on the Lakes, he will not

hesitate. A fellow told me that McNair himself was the one who told Sanford he fired both you and the entire deck crew because, as he claims, you were delaying the unloading that day; and he asked Sanford to find him another second mate to take your place."

Pete had some private affairs to attend to, and soon left Ivar, after promising to see him next day and telling him the "Superior" would not sail for another week.

"So that's how the land lies," muttered Ivar, as he walked up and down the wharf after leaving Pete. He was hot under the collar at the thought that it had been reported among his former associates that he had been "thrown out" of the company office, when he had not been near it. He would have liked to meet McNair just then and demand an explanation from him—and his fists were clenched as he had the thought.

The following day he decided to call on Mr. Sanford. As he was about to enter the elevator in the company's building, he almost collided with McNair. The latter, it seemed, was also headed for Sanford's ounce on the tenth floor.

"Hello, captain," said Ivar. "I'd like to talk to you."

"Haven't any time to talk now. Come around to the boat any time, and I can see you there."

"Well, if you haven't time, I'll just go along with you to see Sanford. Perhaps we can all three have a little talk."

"No! No! I'm not going to the office," lied McNair.

"Well, listen, Mac!" Ivar spoke slowly and seriously. "You're not fooling me, now or any other time.

You were going to see Sanford now, but when I proposed to cut in on the conference, you don't dare to see him with me. But don't worry, you will have to see him eventually, and I'm going to camp here in the lobby every day. I'll bring my lunch if necessary, and I'll be right at your heels when you step in to see him. I know all about the lies you have tried to put across about me, and you might as well get ready to prove every one of them, as I'm going to bring matters to a complete showdown."

"Aw forget it, Haagen. You'll cool off soon. There's nothing calling for any showdown."

"Well, I'll have to see the proof of that statement, as well as the rest, before I'm satisfied." And as Ivar finished McNair changed his plans and walked out of the building.

For three days Ivar stood guard at the company's office door. On the third day he was rewarded by seeing the captain approach without noticing Ivar's presence, as the latter had slipped out of view. As soon as McNair had entered the office, Ivar followed and was just in time to see Mac enter Mr. San ford's private office and to hear him greeted by the owner of the "Superior."

It was a warm day, and the door of the private office had been left open. As Ivar reached the information desk in the outer office, Sanford caught sight of him arid called out: "Oh, I say, Haagen, come on in here. Captain McNair has just come up to see me, and we can have a little three-way conference."

"I'm very glad to see you, Mr. Sanford," said Ivar with a broad smile, as he entered the private office to receive a hearty handshake from the owner. "My business will not require much of your time. I know you have many important matters to discuss with the captain, so I will just state my errand and be on my way."

"Well, Haagen, I hope there is nothing wrong. I was sorry to hear that you have left our company's service. We shall miss you greatly."

"Mr. Sanford, my discharge is another matter. I admit that the captain of the 'Superior has the right to hire and fire, and I make no complaint at my dismissal." "Well, if you haven't any complaint, what may you be objecting to?"

"I'll tell you, Mr. Sanford. Captain McNair has been circulating stories about the wharf, that I was supposed to have been here squawking about the disturbance aboard the 'Superior' while she was unloading. He added in his gossip that you had kicked me out of your office. I've gone to a lot of trouble to be here when the captain called, for the express purpose of saying that both you and McNair together are not capable of kicking me out. And if you have any doubts about that, I am ready to see you try to kick me out right now."

"Oh, I say, Haagen, calm yourself," said Sanford. "Why, you haven't been inside this office since early last spring, be fore the first trip of the season. Certainly there must be some mistake."

Realizing that his position was none too secure, McNair sat dumbfounded. Mr. Sanford looked at him, as if to offer him an opportunity to explain; but the captain still sat mute, and several moments of embarrassing silence ensued. Then the owner spoke:

"Sit down, Haagen. I have just thought of something which you may be in a position to help me in straightening out." Then, addressing the captain, be continued;

"McNair, 1 want the ship's log brought to this office. Go and fetch it to me immediately. Take a taxi both ways, and lose no time." Captain McNair left in a hurry.

"Haagen," said the shipowner, "I wish you would wait in the outer office until McNair returns with the log. I want you here at that time.

"All right, Mr. Sanford, I will wait." And Ivar found a seat in the outer office.

In an incredibly short time, the captain returned and placed the log of the "Superior" on Mr. Sanford's desk**.** Ivar was recalled, and the door of the private office w*as* closed, notwithstanding the heat. Mr. San ford removed his coat and invited Ivar and McNair to do likewise.

Opening the logbook, and scanning several of its pages carefully, the owner seemed to be comparing *some* entries with a lengthy typed report that la *y* open on his desk.

Finally, after about ten minutes' study of the log, Mr. Sanford turned to the captain:

"McNair, what was the name of the tugboat which towed the 'Superior' into the lake when you left Buffalo last Sunday?"

"Why er—why—Mr. Sanford—I—I—it was growing quite dark, and 1 couldn't see the name."

"Very well. What lake steamer lay at anchor on your port side as you were leaving the harbor at Buffalo?"

"I believe it was one of the Great Lakes steamers, but I

didn't see its name either," replied McNair, too worried to think of a fresh excuse for ignorance, or to guess what Sanford was driving at."

"McNair, I see here, on your expense account for June 9, an item of forty bushels of potatoes, bought at Windsor. On the cook's inventory of June 12, are shown two bushels on hand. Did our crew cat the thirty-eight bushels unaccounted for, in three days, or was there a theft of potatoes?"

The captain hung his head in silence. Something had gone wrong in his planning, and he sensed that he was to be the victim.

"Well, if you can't explain it, I'll ask Haagen to enlighten us. I had Pete, the cook, up here a few days ago, and he said he received only five bushels of potatoes on June 9."

"Yes, Mr. Sanford," said Ivar, re erring to a small notebook which he took from his pocket. "The *cook* received only five bushels on that day. There were ten boxes, with rope handles. In the bottom of each box bottles of Canadian whiskey were packed, with half a bushel of potatoes in each box, covering them completely. The boxes *were* placed in the captain's cabin at first. Later they were delivered to the cook—five of them—filled with potatoes, five bushels in all. Forty bushels of potatoes were charged in the expense account, an item of twenty dollar s."

Mr. Sanford turned toward the open window of his private office, and for some time, in dead silence, he gazed out over the green waters of Lake Michigan. Then he faced the discredited captain and said:

"McNair, you can turn in your time here at the office. We cannot retain you in the company's service any longer. My agents have reported your frequent drunkenness,' from every port entered by the 'Superior.' It may interest you to know that the day you left But al and it was 3 p.m. and broad daylight—you and the first mate were both assisted to your cabins, unable to stand on your feet. Young Haagen cleared port without the use of any tugboat, and there was no lake steamer on your port side." McNair, seeming pitiably old, forlorn, and completely beaten, picked up his hat, and wiping the streaming

perspiration from his face and neck, slouched out of the private office without a word.

As the door closed behind the convicted captain, Mr. Sanford turned to Ivar, and using his first name to the young man's surprise, said:

"I var, the government examiner, who is a very good friend of mine, has told me that you hold a captain's license. I want you to prepare to take the 'Superior' out of Milwaukee, as its captain, as soon as the boiler repairs are finished. Your pay begins today, and I want you to go aboard tonight and arrange your plans. Look about for capable first and second mates, but choose your own men and get good ones. I shall expect you to discharge 'Bill' today; and I think we are lucky, young man, in getting a teetotal tar like you to command our ship. Good luck and—get busy!"

THE SEQUEL, UNIQUE.

I FIRST noticed her when the French liner, bound for Cherbourg, was being towed down the Bay. She was conspicuous because, she, of all the passengers on the upper deck, was the only one who seemed to be traveling alone.

I was interested in studying the passengers around me on the ship. There was a naive family group consisting of a father, mother, and two half-grown sons, and they were all enjoying hugely, what was obviously their first sailing. Then, close by, there was an irascible old gentleman, loudly lamenting to a sympathetic though undisturbed valet, that he had forgotten to have an important letter mailed on shore. There was a party of young artists singing lustily, "The Girl I Left Behind Me," with their hats raised to the silent figure who so majestically guards the bay. But to all the happy and cheerful hubbub about her, this woman gave no heed.

She was standing, tightly grasping the rail, and gazing back at the fast receding shoreline. In her eyes was the great grief one sees in those bereaved, as they take one last look at their beloved. I have seen that same expression many times; being a Minister of the Gospel I have witnessed the sorrowing of many hearts.

I looked again, toward this lonely woman on board. She was tall and slender, and was perhaps fifty years of age, although the flushed face under the little toque she wore, was youthful. It was her soft white hair, and a certain quiet poise that gave the impression of middle age. I decided to go over and speak to her. Perhaps she needed friends or assistance. I did not hesitate to approach her, for I felt that my clerical garb would excuse the seeming intrusion.

"A wonderful morning for leaving, is it not?" l began. She gave me a grateful look as though pleased to hear a friendly voice addressed to her, and she replied, in a soft, even voice, "I was not noticing the weather particularly. It was of leaving America that I was thinking, for I do not know when I shall see it again," she hesitated, and then added, "perhaps never."

"Oh, I think everyone feels that way on the first crossing," I answered consolingly. "After a few days out, you will feel differently."

"No," she said. "You do not understand. I am going to France to live." Her voice had sunk almost to a whisper with the last word; suddenly she turned toward me impulsively. "Would you care to listen to my story? Would it bore you I wonder, if I were to tell you just why I am taking this trip?" Her voice quivered with earnestness. "Oh, I *do* want to confide in someone, and I have never felt that I could talk freely with any of the folks back home. I do need advice, and somehow I believe that you could help me," and here she glanced appreciatively at my ministerial garb.

"Of course," I replied. "I will be glad to listen and render you any assistance that I can, but first let us find chairs, and get acquainted, and we can then have our conversation in comfort, for I feel you must be tired." I was beginning to feel a great pity for this stranger who had so guilelessly put her trust in me.

She was gazing out to sea again and as she did not answer immediately, I went in search of the chairs. Apathetically she allowed me to place her in the chair and adjust the rug. Without further preliminary she turned toward me and began;

"When America entered the World War, Alfred Crane, my husband, was forty-seven years old. After my son-in-law had left for a southern training camp, with all the vim and enthusiasm of youth, I noticed that Alfred was growing very restless. It was only after I had gone with him to hear a number of war speeches, that I suddenly realized what was going on in his mind. He wanted to go to war! He, who had lived a staid, prosaic, uneventful life for nearly fifty years, in the town where he was born—was burning with a desire to go to France I Or, at least, so I thought. And I saw that the only obstacle in the way of his going was—his wife. That was what I thought. I was standing in his path, which lead to adventure. So, one night at dinner, I asked him boldly if he would like to go to war? Oh, the light that sprang into his eyes at my question—which was answered even before he spoke. "Oh, my dear," he exclaimed, "if I only could so. But it would leave you so alone. Just think

of the great opportunity I would have, aside from the help I could offer my country 1"

"The opportunity?" I questioned; for this was something I had not thought of before.

" 'Yes, opportunity 1' he repeated. 'I have worked for the railroad for twenty five years, and have not gotten very far even yet. One of these days the boss will say, 'You are getting too old; we need younger men.' You know there is no sentiment in business. Then I will be down and out—through. *Now',* I could go to France in whatever place they choose to put me, and I might get enough experience in some other line of work, so that after the war I could do something else besides railroading.'

"He spoke with the earnestness of a man who had thought long about it, and I saw that the final decision would be up to me. I was silent, and finally—'Would you, so very much mind, my going?' he asked at last. I asked for a little time to think it over.

"In the end he went to war. It was in August, 1917, and I was left in the old home with my only daughter and my mother.

"That first year he was away his letters came to as promptly and as regularly as could be expected, and 1 could tell that though he was busy and enjoying his work, still he missed me, and so I was satisfied. We women can go through so much when we know we are loved and wanted. Then too, my time was completely occupied. I was busy with Red Cross work, and at that time my mother was ailing arid required considerable care and attention.

"Life went on like this until toward the end of the war. Then for three months before the Armistice was signed, and for three months after, I did not have one line from him. I would have worried a great deal, only I knew that the last days of the war, and the first days of peace were hazardous times, and one could not be sure of anything. Perhaps he had written and I did not get the letters, I thought." She ceased speaking for a time and gazed out across the water. Finally she continued her story.

"When I did get a letter, Alfred said that he did not know when he would return home—not for a year anyway. After

that, his letters did not arrive any more.

"The next summer brought my son-in-law home with his D. S. C. and his happy reunion with his wife—my daughter—made me very lonely indeed. I was heartsick. It was during that summer too, that I lost my dear mother, and then I was doubly alone. They were all very kind to me all of my old friends and my daughter and her husband—but I wanted Alfred. I also wondered what people were thinking? Why had he treated me like this?

"After about six months Alfred wrote again to say that it was still impossible for him to come back home—and that his stay abroad would be very indefinite.

"Then I made up my mind to go to him. They tried to dissuade me, but I would not listen, and now I am on the way.

"I sold my home before I le ft and I put my money in the bank, for I did not know but what Alfred would need money, and I have only enough with me for my immediate needs. Oh, Alfred has always sent me money," she said quickly, answering the unspoken question in his eyes. "But a little money is always a handy thing to have ready, and I do not know what Alfred has been through. He may need my help."

She stopped talking and leaned back wearily in her chair. Suddenly she raised her eyes to mine and their depths held the anguish of her tortured soul. "Do you think I am making a mistake in going? Or, do you think I am doing right?" she asked earnestly.

"My daughter," I said compassionately, for I felt this was a sorely tried soul who asked the question. "God looks after our destinies, and surely he is guiding your footsteps aright."

"Thank you *so* much," she said, "for listening, and for your sympathetic understanding. I feel better now that 1 have talked with you."

It had required a much longer time for her to tell this story, than it has for me to repeat it here, for, several times during the recital, she had all but broken down completely.

When she had ceased speaking, we sat in silence for a few moments. How calm the waters all about us—yet that storms lurked within their depths. And I thought of the storms and

strife which had stirred the gentle heart of the *woman* before me, and how bravely she had so far, weathered them.

"Would you like to go to your stateroom?" I asked presently, for 1 knew from her white, drawn face, that she was very weary.

As I asked the question she arose, and gave me a trembling hand in mute thanks, for she could not trust herself to speak further. Yet, a question lurked in her eyes which she did not dare to speak. I too, would have liked to know the answer to the question which she seemed unable to voice, but which I had sensed just the same.

"What was the tie which was holding this middle-aged American in France?"

I spent the afternoon in my steamer chair with a book that I had been very anxious to read, but it remained closed on my knee, for I could not concentrate on any book just then. My thoughts kept straying back to my new acquaintance and her problem. She was so frail; the home woman type, so unused to the ways of the world, and here she was, hundreds of miles away from the little town which was the only home she had ever known, traveling toward—she knew not what. And I decided to sponsor her cause and shield her as much as possible from the other passengers, for I could see that she preferred to be alone.

An hour before dinner I folded up my steamer chair, and with my still unopened book under my arm, I returned to my stateroom. I dressed carefully and then sought the steward. "I want only a moment of your time, Steward," I said to him, for I saw he was very busy, as is usual during the first part of the trip. "1 want to ask if you will be so kind as to place Mrs. Crane next to me at table, all the way across? She is a friend of mine." The latter, I added hastily, as he raised his eyes curiously to mine, at my request. Then noting my garb, he smiled and said: "I will arrange it, Parson."

I had already seated myself at the table when Mrs. Crane came in.

As I rose to seat her, I could hardly recognize in this handsome, well dressed woman, the almost heart broken

creature of the afternoon, so changed was her appearance. As she smiled and spoke to me, there was no trace of the quivering tones of a few short hours before. She seemed to have entirely changed her personality with a fresher gown.

In a few minutes we were chatting gayly, and I was beginning to wonder whether I had not dreamed her tragic story, which had so moved me.

When the waiter brought in the soup she was laughing heartily at some joke of mine, and he, in placing the soup before her, accidentally knocked over a glass of water. "Pardon, Madam," he murmured in flawless French. After wiping up the water he hastily left the room. Several times during the meal, which he served with the perfection of which the French are past masters, I saw his eyes fixed rather intently on the very attractive Mrs. Crane**.**

After dinner I started with my companion for a turn around the deck, but we had not gone far when she excused herself saying she was tired and would go to her state room.

It was a beautiful night. The twinkling stars and the full moon had almost turned the night into day. I continued on my solitary stroll, my thoughts on the hot bustling city which I had just left, and in contrast—the peace and quiet of my present surroundings.

I had gone only a few yards however, when a hand was placed suddenly on my arm, and turning, I recognized my waiter of a half *hour* before. "I would like *to* talk with you," he said, and the tone he used was that of man to man, not that of servant to master. I noted too, that his English was excellent, without one trace of accent. "Certainly," I replied. "I am at your service.

"Just how well do you know Mrs. Crane—er—the lady you were with tonight—I believe you called her Mrs. Crane?" He stopped talking and caught his breath as though he were smothering.

"Yes, that is her name," I returned, wonderingly—"but what do you, a waiter on the Transatlantic Liner, know of her? Or did you know her before you saw her tonight?"

"Yes, I have known her for a long time*,"* he said slowly. And as I looked into his eyes I saw that he did not see me at all. He was gazing past me into another day and place.

Before he spoke again I really looked at the man for the first time. He was a rather distinguished looking man of fifty or

thereabouts. He had heavy, iron grey hair, which came down in burnsides and ended in a trimly cut beard, which gave him a very foreign appearance; so much so in I act that I was quite surprised at his good English.

"Yes," he replied, coming back to the present. "I knew her very well indeed in America, but tell me what she is doing on this boat, or, has she confided in you?"

"Yes," I admitted, "she has confided in me. She is on her way to France to locate her husband, who has not returned from the war."

"She is going to look for her husband?" he spoke as one in a dream. "She is just the sort to do that," he added admiringly.

"You knew her well?" I asked.

"Yes, perhaps better than anyone else ever knew her," he drew himself up to his full height," I am her husband, Alfred Crane."

"You are Alfred Crane?" I exclaimed incredulously,

"What are you doing here?"

"That is a long story, which, with your permission I shall tell, as the opportunity presents itself while we are crossing. But tell me of my wife. How has she been getting along? How has she managed while I have been away?"

"You did not send her any money?" I asked impulsively.

"No," and a deep flush overspread his face, "that is, 1 have not sent her any money now for over a year, nor have I written her one line in all that time."

So I told him his wife's story; that her mother had died; that she had sold the little home and was taking the money to him in France, "because she did not know what Alfred had been through and he might need money." I told him everything, and long before I had finished, the tears were streaming down his face.

"Oh, sir," he said brokenly, when he had heard all; "help me to get back to France—to the little town where she will seek me, for it is there that she has sent all of her letters. How can I get back there before she arrives? I would give my life now to keep her splendid faith in me."

A great pity for the erring man—for such I felt him to be, filled my heart, and I placed my hand upon his head. Just the

touch of a sympathetic hand helps sometimes. “I cannot advise you until I have heard your whole story,” I said, “but when I have heard it I will help you all I can, for your wife's sake at least, for she is a splendid woman.”

So for the second time that day I had been asked for advice from one who, up to a few hours before, I had not known existed. “Strange,” I thought, as I went to my stateroom, “that I should be the instrument of fate to reunite these two, who, no matter what had occurred since, had at one time, been all the world to each other.” At breakfast next morning Mrs. Crane seemed quite rested, and we had a very pleasant time. I noted with thankfulness that our waiter had been changed to a table on the other side of the room. I did not think that Mrs. Crane noticed the change as she did not comment upon it.

We had a fine crossing. The weather was all that we could ask, and nothing unusual happened.

By day, I spent much of the time with Mrs. Crane, and she told me of her little world back home. She had never traveled; had never been a hundred miles from home in all her life, still I found her very interesting, in spite of her lack of worldly experience.

Each night, under the cover of darkness, I met Alfred Crane at the appointed time and place. He told me, bit by bit, all that he had been through, nor did he spare himself anything. He told me of the little French town where he had been stationed throughout the war. He had been censor of the mail and had been very near the front. During the war, he had, of course, been very busy, but shortly before the Armistice was signed, he had met and loved a young French girl. In the heat of passion he had married her. She did not know of the wife in America. Then, eleven months later when their baby was born, she died in his arms and with his name on her lips—this wife a trifle younger than his daughter. “Oh,” he reproached himself vehemently, “why did I do such a horrible thing? They were both good women, and 1 loved them both.”

He almost collapsed when he told me of the French girl's death, and I led him to his bunk, but the following night he had

himself in hand again, and completed his story.

After the death of his French wife, he secured his discharge papers and started for America. But before he reached his native shores he had turned coward. He could not I ace the wife, waiting for him back there in that little midwestern town.

So, as help was needed on the boat, he had taken the position as waiter before he landed in New York. And many were the trips that he had made back and forth across the sea, since then.

Alfred Crane had not risked a landing in New York until he had grown a beard for fear of meeting some old friend. "But," he said, hopefully. "I am safe now, as not even my wife has recognized me." "All I want to do now is to get back to the French town before my wife gets there, and I am relying on you for a plan, my friend, as I seem unable to think one out for myself."

It was our last night at sea however before I was able to suggest any plan which seemed mutually agreeable. Here is what was decided upon. As soon as we landed, Mr. Crane was to resign as waiter. He was not to return to the town where he had resided with his French wife—that would never have done, and "why lose the respect of that little community?" I asked him. Since his baby had died and was sleeping beside its mother in the old churchyard, he had no ties there at all. So, he would go straight to Paris where he would call on the American Consul for information concerning the sailing of the next ship for America. (I had learned in casual conversation with some of the passengers, that several days would elapse between the sailing of the most convenient boat, and his arrival at the Consulate.) It was this knowledge which had helped me in my decision. Mr. Crane would leave his card with the American Consul, and was then to register at a Parisian Hotel, the address of which he was to leave with the Consul on the pretext that should any Americans call for information of him, he was to be notified, inasmuch as he was expecting someone to come to see him on business, and he was anxious about seeing this party in question. Hence his appeal to the Consul.

1 would manage to delay Mrs. Crane in Cherbourg just long enough to give her husband time to get to Paris, and carry out the arranged plans. Then I would set out with her for the little town where Alf red had spent his momentous years. On the way there however, we would stop in Paris for a day. 1 would leave Mrs.

Crane at a hotel while I called on the American Consul (whom, in the interests of my church I was to see anyway.) Once there, I would inquire whether one Alfred Crane had called there and le ft a message for me. He had failed to keep an appointment made with me and so I wondered ii the Consul could tell me where to find him?

Then of course the Consul would produce the card and say that Alfred was in Paris. I would then get the name of his hotel, call him up, and make arrangements to take him to meet his wife. There would then be no necessity for her trip to the village, and they could return to America together. Alfred would explain that the memories of his war time experiences in the little town were so sad that he would never care to go back there. This, in the event that Mrs. Crane expressed a desire to visit the town.

Everything transpired as we planned, and when 1 brought the clean shaven Alfred Crane to his wife, you certainly would never have known that he was the waiter, who in the confusion of being brought face to face with the wife whom he supposed was hundreds and hundreds of miles away, had knocked over a glass of water, at the one and only meal he had ever served her.

They were both very happy in their reunion, and when I put them on the train for the first stage of their journey homeward, I offered up a silent prayer for their future happiness. I also prayed that the little deception, which, in the interest of a woman's faith, I had practiced, would be forgiven me.

It was in the fall of 1920 that the events which I have just recorded, took place, and I wondered many times afterward, just what the aftermath would be, of the renewed romance of that middle-aged couple, who had so curiously crossed my path.

Not a line did I receive however until this letter came just a little while ago, and it now lies before me as I write these concluding words. The letter itself will explain more than 1 can tell you. It was dated *two* day sago from the town where the Cranes have always lived, and reads as follows:

"My dear friend:

"Perhaps you have thought sometimes of the two strangers whom you be friended on the French liner, more than a year ago, and perhaps you would like to know the last chapter of the story I told you that first day on board. There really is not much to tell, except that upon our return home we took up our life here, just where it was interrupted by the war so long ago. Alfred is back with the railroad again and seems quite contented and happy to be home once more with his family and his old friends, who regard him as very much of a hero. He is very modest about the praise he receives, and doesn't seem to care for it at all. He is very kind and considerate of me, and seems glad to be with me, and so I am satisfied.

"I shall never forget your great kindness to me, in my dark hour, my friend, and I thank you again for all you did. There is one thing however I must tell you.

All the way to France, I was well aware of Alfred's presence on that boat. I recognized him as the waiter the first time he entered the room, our first night on board, and when amazed at seeing me, he spilled the glass of water, I was doubly sure that it was him.

"I do not know all of the events of Alfred's life in France. I do not know all that you did for him, but I do know this; my woman's intuition has told me as much, that somewhere in that time abroad, there was another woman in Alf red's life, and that he confided his difficulties to you.

"Alfred does not dream that I suspect his unfaithfulness, and I only ask that you never enlighten him, should you come to see us at some future time, as 1 surely hope you will. At first I was undecided just what *to* do, and no one will ever know just how many long hours of questioning and doubt I spent on the trip across. Many a night I knelt, end bared my soul to God, and asked for his guidance. But I felt that I could never go back on Alfred. He was just a weak little boy who needed kindness—and who was 1—who had never been tempted in all my sheltered life, to turn against him in his hour of need? And so, with God's help, I stayed by him.

"No other person will ever know. Many people have secrets in their lives, the telling of which would bring only unhappiness, so this will never be told, or mentioned again. After you have read this letter, my friend, will you please destroy it? Sometime, I hope to see you again. Until that time, I beg to remain,

"Your sincere friend,

"ELIZABETH CRANE."

I read the letter through twice, although I believe each word was stamped indelibly on my brain with the first reading. Then I leaned over and placed it almost reverently on the embers of my fireplace.

She had fought her fight and had won l And because she had won, a man, all unknowing, walked the streets—not only a respected citizen but a herein the eyes of the town which had grown up with him. Yes, she had saved him for all eternity, by her unselfishness.

All day I had sought for a suitable text for my Sabbath sermon, and until now it had eluded me. But I found it in the letter which 1 had just received and destroyed. I will speak on the one word, "Charity," and I will teI1 the story of Mrs. Crane. The tale you have just read is in substance the sermon to which my people will listen tomorrow.

THE PHANTOM AT THE WHEEL

THEY say a murderer hain't got no conscience," observed Jim Blackdoe, the big good-natured sherif, who sat with his feet upon the desk, hat tilted upon the back of his head rolling the unlighted cigar in his mouth, enjoying what he called a "dry smoke."

I scented a story, and made a subtle attempt to draw him out. "I sometimes think they haven't, Uncle Jim"—we all called him Uncle Jim—"considering the blood thirsty things they do sometimes."

"Well, they is some of course that's mighty hard boiled," he parried, "but then again they's others that's not left in the pot so long. I mean the three minute kind—hard at the shell, but soft when you break 'em open. Take this here Devlin what caused the hemp strctchin' party last year ... "

Devlin I Here was my opportunity to get the facts of that peculiar case upon which the authorities had not given us a mite of information I

"He was that kind," continued Uncle Jim. "Hard shelled, but soft inside as he proved hisself. You remember the day I brought him in—how the look on his face reminded a feller of a poisonous rattler, and how he wouldn't talk none not even to the lawyer or the chaplain—just shake his head, and glare with them staring eyes of his."

I remembered it in every detail. Foster, the pay master of the construction gang, was found slouched against the steering wheel of the pay car, a bullet in his head. A bag containing the week's payroll was missing. The bullet that got poor Foster had ploughed through the crown of his black hat, and had been fired at close range. Not a single clue was left to the murderer's identity.

There were no footprints on the road. The road was one of the more modern concrete attains. Uncle Jim led the posse. I was with them, and remember deploying into a skirmish line—a man about every ten feet. We beat the underbrush ahead of us as we penetrated the woods to the east of the roadway. After

about two hours' search we heard a cry from one end of the line. Some of the posse had run across Jack Devlin, sitting on a stump calmly whittling a stick. As the posse gathered around him he smiled, and bid us a cheery good afternoon—not batting an eyelash.

There were no signs of the money or a weapon of any sort but the jackknife with which he was whittling. Uncle Jim picked him up on suspicion—him being the only human being near the scene of the crime, and brought him over to the jail. Devlin sat is a corner of his cell stolidly refusing to utter a syllable.

When asked if he committed the crime he would shake his head in denial—that was all. I was surprised the day the news leaked out that—well, let Uncle Jimmy tell it.

"Yesser," proceeded the old sheriff, "he'd jest sit there, and glare at us. Of course we had nuthin' on him to begin with. Well, I was sitting here in the office one night after dark, and a pipin' hot night it was too. I had taken my hat and jacket off for coolness, and I'm darned if I could remember for the time being where I'd left 'em. Devlin's cell was right directly across the jail yard, that is, opposite my office. Jes', you look and you kin see it yourself. Number three cell his was.

"About midway between here and his cell was settin' poor Foster's car, racing number three, jes' as we'd left it the day we brought it in. Every once in a while I could catch a glimpse of Devlin pacin' back and forth past his barred window. The air was gettin' close and muggy. I looked at my watch—it was twelve o'clock. I wuz thinkin' about gettin' some sleep when a brisk breeze blew up, and I could smell the damp, clammy, smell that comes before a thunder storm.

"There came a peal of thunder that seemed to rock the jailhouse, and at the same minute a flash of lightning that lit up the whole jail yard. I saw by the flash Devlin's white face at the window. In the split second that the lightning flashed I fancied Devlin's poker face had taken on a half scared look, but I couldn't be too certain. Say, did it rain that night? It came down by the hogshead.

"At every flash of lightning I could see regular brooks of

water runnin' through the jail yard, and once I caught a glimpse of Devlin—an arm across his face as if the wrath of God was upon him.

"Suddenly I heard a familiar sound above the roar of the storm. It was the blast of an automobile horn loud and shrill. Now there are horns, and horns, and all horns sound more or less the same, but when you have heard a certain one a dozen times or so you kinder git to know the sound.

"I had heard poor Foster's often enough, and threw this was his blowing, sure enough, but who in hell would be blowing it. Well, sir, it kept right on blowing without a stop, and I got kinder creepy all over. Another flash of lightning lit up the whole yard again, and what I saw gave me a chill, I tell you. There settin' in the seat slouched over the wheel was a figure with black felt hat pulled away down, and one arm resting across the wheel.

1 felt my knees knockin' together.

"I grabbed at my holster, and once I'd a good grip on my six gun, I felt a little steadier. I summoned up enough courage to walk towards the car. The horn was still screeching. Without a word I pointed the six gun at the thing at the wheel.

"There came another flash of lightnin', and the most awful hair raising peal of thunder. I heard a blood curdlin' scream from number three. "Oh, my God, don't torment me like this—I did it—I did it—I give up. I can't stand it." It was Devlin.

"The screech of the horn was weakenin' now, and finally died away to a low wail. I felt relieved, and not at all alarmed at what was at the wheel of Foster's car. In fact, I had to grin to myself. It was my own hat and coat—the same which I had le ft there, and plum' forgot where. It had its use though. Detlin had been fightin' an awful battle with his conscience. My hat bein' like Foster's he fancied he saw his victim. I had flung the coat in carelessly, and the one sleeve had fallen across the wheel. This led Devlin to believe it was the ghost of Foster blowing the horn. When I went out to investigate, the flash of lightnin' showed up my figger holdin' the gun at what looked like Foster's head. Devlin saw the holdup as it looked that night. The noise of the thunder shook his nerve. That night we got his

confession. The money he'd hid with the gun in the old stump he was sittin' on awhittlin' when we found him." "What caused the horn to blow, Uncle Jim?" I asked. "The rain got down in under the horn button, and caused a short circuit," he replied.

A BRUSH WITH CIVILIZATION

ONE of the troubles with a scientific expedition is that the nights are apt to be cold and long, especially if you are investigating the life, history, and customs of a mountain people. That was the case with our anthropological expedition to the mountain region of New Mexico.

To make the weary and uncomfortable time between sundown and sunup seem shorter, the professors and their scientific assistants made us professional pick and shovel men build a large fire of pine logs. The Indian and Mexican laborers we had with us may know their New Mexico mountains, but when it came to building campfires and gathering wood to keep them going, they were less useful than a burro mule. So I, who had charge of the pick and shovel brigade of this expedition, became an expert campfire builder, because the head professor remembered my experience with football celebration bonfires back on the dear old campus in Chicago.

There is no place where a fellow can dream of bygone days, and of days to come, as he can while looking into a smoking, flaming, sizzling pine log fire; but that was no reason for these professors going crazy and doing things I never approved. In these mountains however, anything can happen.

Dr. Kerson, the big boss of the outfit, got to dreaming one night and, talking to the fire, said musingly: "I wonder what Alla would do and say if he were transferred suddenly to the heart of Chicago." What an idea that was!

Now, I saw at once the way the wind was blowing, but what could I do about it? In the first place, Chicago, would have no heart as far as All a was concerned. He was the oldest of the three Yaqui Indian brothers who were our best guides; their names being Alfa, Balla, and Calla Neverette. These boys, with their father, old Neverette, were the only guides we could depend upon. To transfer Alla from these mountains, with their pure air and wonderful sunshine, to Chicago, just to see what would happen, was a thing beyond my imagination and the idea made me gasp.

The Doctor was still talking to the fire. "Alla is basic; he is

original; civilization, as we see it, has never influenced him. What would happen if he were placed suddenly in the midst of it?" Right then I started to put two and two together, and I soon had the answer. Alfa was to go to Chicago, and I was to go along as his guide and protector, his valet; and after these jobs were done for the day, I was to become a detective and report my findings to the department.

Well, we rattled into Chicago one night, not long after this, and then my troubles started pronto. We got to my quarters on the University campus after midnight. The ride on the elevated had been one long pain for Alls, and fear was registered all over the features of the mountain boy. The buildings on the campus caused him to walk sidewise. He was afraid they would be moving in his direction and run over him.

He would not sleep indoors, so I had to spend the night on a bench in Jackson Park, not daring to close my eyes for there was no telling when Alla would take a notion to wander away. I dozed off early in the morning, and when I awakened I found he had departed. After a hurried search, he was discovered on the sandy beach, at the very water's edge; and as each wave broke at his feet, he would dip up a handful and let it run off the end of his fingers.

"Water," he repeated again and again. "All water." "Yes, Alla, all water; enough to quench the thirst of the entire world, but they do not drink water in this town. After breakfast I got out my old "Model T" and gave him a ride through the parks. That night I escorted him into the downtown district when all the lights were on; but I could tell the whole thing dazed him; the city was so big he did not have the mental capacity to comprehend it. It was a moving picture that passed before his eyes, but did not register. He wanted to get away from it all, and back to his favorite spot in Jackson Park. It was only when he was there, in an open air accustomed spot, that fear entirely left him. That night I tipped a couple of park policemen to watch him, while I got some sleep.

Day by day he became more and more ill at ease, and I could see the end of the Professor's noble experiment. As far as Alla was concerned, the big city was a pile of junk; he

longed for his native mountains; and finally, to keep him in his right mind, we left the city and its horrors, and returned to the boy's native habitat.

If Alla had kept as still a tongue when he got back among his people as the one he had in Chicago, everything would have been all right; but he told his friends, and some who were not so friendly, a tale that knocked them out in the very first round—a story that held them spellbound for three hours. This narrative greatly pleased the Professor, and 1 could see him taking notes for future reference, as the tale progressed.

Alia told of the city whose buildings reached up to the sky; of floating houses on a body of water that disappeared into the sky; how the houses floated and floated upon the water until they *too* drifted *into* the sky and were gone. He told of other houses that people rode in about the city; how they moved without being pushed or pulled.

I could see that this narrative was not making a hit with the simpleminded Indians, who were ever silent while being addressed; but this silence was different—you could feel it. I was much surprised that Alla did not note it, and ease up on his dramatics, but he was so full of his subject that he raved on and on.

I could see that it was impossible for these people to comprehend such wonders; it is strange I had never thought of the impossibility before.

At last, they came to the conclusion that they were being fooled; and if there is one thing these Indians hate and will not stand for, it is to be made the butt of a joke. They gave Alla a chance to retract his story and tell a true tale; but when he insisted that all the things he had told them were true, they decided right then and there that they did not want any more of his talk, and they banished him from the town. He could not again enter his father's dwelling, and soon whenever his name was mentioned, he was called “LIAR.” He built himself a rude hut outside the village, and dwelt there alone and sad.

Now if the Professor's noble experiment had ended there, things would not have been so bad; but Balla, the brother of Alla, brought food to the outcast, and at these times they would

talk of the wonderful city. Thus another wonderful mess was in store for me.

One morning the Professor wanted Balla for a little mountain research. Some ancient looking shells had been discovered, and he wanted to be conducted to them without delay.

A hurry call was sent in for Balla, but Balla could not be found. He had started for the big city, to see if Alla had told the truth. The brothers had decided that in this way only could the disgraceful name of "LIAR" be lifted from the hitherto good name of Alla.

Now the Professor began to realize that he had started something that at the time he did not know how to finish. He called a hasty conference of all the expedition heads. The result of this confab was that I was elected to follow B alla to the big city; which I accordingly did, thinking this and that all the way there.

When I reached Chicago, the question was, where to find that big Yaqui Indian. I figured that there was only one place in that part of the world where this searcher for the truth could get along for a minute, and that would be in the Mexican section *of* the South Side. Sure enough, there I found him, after a three-day search. The people in this section talked a language he could understand, so he had adopted their ways of living; and after working hours, he visited places of which his brother Alla had told him.

He soon came to the conclusion that Alla had not only told the truth, as far as he was able to do so, but that the real truth was beyond the descriptive ability of any Indian. I might add that it is beyond the ability of anyone to describe or picture the city of Chicago to the simple mountain people. Their minds are not prepared to comprehend it. They must see it before they can believe any tale of its wonders. The mind of Balla, however, had been somewhat prepared for the confusion of the city, and perhaps he had something in his makeup that gave him unusual ability to adapt himself. At any rate, he liked the city and made friends in his South Side quarters. His work in the steel mills was hard, but it lasted only eight hours of the

day. He made money, of which he did not know the value, and so he gambled it away in an easy manner. He had no other use for such large sums of money, having never been taught its value.

I had been watching him quietly for six weeks, and had about decided to go back to the mountains and report that Balla was perfectly satisfied with his new environment; but this day was Balla's payday and always the most interesting of the week; because of the amount of money he gambled away. This night I slid into the gambling joint a little late, and I tell you the night was hot for Balla, as the saying goes. It seemed as if he could not lose, and soon all the money in sight was in front of him. The losers had departed, and I was about to advance and give him *some* good advice about the care of so much money, when I heard a female voice say, in that soft language which he understood, "Brother, let me talk to you."

Remember now, I have been connected with colleges and universities all my life. I have seen all kinds of dames on the campus in the last thirty years, and some that were not on the campus; but this darkhaired, dark eyed Spanish looking person, slim and graceful, was the most beautiful doll I have ever gazed upon. I don't mean "doll" either, because I don't class a doll as having character—and this dusky beauty had character written all over her—bad character probably, or she would not have been in this evil place; though that, too, is a matter of opinion.

She seated herself in a chair at the table, and in doing this, she faced Balla. Now Balla had, of course, seen many women since coming to Chicago; but this dark beauty, appearing suddenly in this place, was so far superior to any woman he had ever seen, that it was some time before he could control his wits. He knew at once that the girl before him was the most beautiful creature he had even seen. He knew also that she came from some land of sunshine, probably his own, for her appearance and language proclaimed it. Her eyes were jet black, but her hair was blacker, if that were possible. She seemed unreal in this dingy room, but there she sat—splendid, in a dress simple and plain and dark in color.

"You are lucky at cards," she said quietly. "You must play your luck to the limit. I have some money and I will risk it all

on your luck. Another winning like this one you have just made, and we will go to a place I know on the North Side, where, with our combined capital helped out with your luck, we can win a fortune. I will keep your winnings, and you can play here a week from tonight."

Well, this looked like a row gold-digging act to me, and I was about to put in a protest; but one look at that big Indian and you could see he had fallen for her; and anyway, she would have saved him the trouble of spending his money. As soon as she had packed away his dough, however, he seemed to realize that she had something that belonged to him and that he should get something for it. All at once he realized that he was alone with her, and like a flash he became all savage, a lover wild. The girl was watching him from the chair into which she had again sunk, after disposing of his money. He started to his feet impulsively, not knowing just what he was going to do, but moved and thrilled as he had never been in his life before.

Well, somehow she handled the situation, and Balla did not get any nearer to her than the width of the table. They chatted for a while, she caressing him with soft words, and finally she crossed the room, went out by the door, and drove away in a cab. Balla never got up from the table until she had gone.

Using discretion, I departed without speech, knowing my man was safe for another week; and so I wired the Professor.

From one cause or another, I was late at the Mexican gambling joint the next time Balla gambled and again met the girl. It was just the hour of midnight when I arrived. Balla had repeated his winnings, and the girl was disposing of them. She had a way of making money disappear, leaving no trace, which is quite necessary in the big city. She wore a wonderful evening gown, and seemed out of place entirely, in that joint, reeking with smells of chili and corn sugar whisky. But she did not stay long enough to absorb any of these odors. Having secured Balla's winnings, she departed, and Balla followed her to the street, where she entered a waiting taxi, and by a slight movement of her head, indicated that he should follow her.

It kept me moving fast for the next hour and a half, following that taxi to the North Side. The old "Model T" is not

up to requirements when called upon to match speed with these eight cylinder modern taxis, but I had an idea where they were headed for. Poncho's North Side gambling joint is the sweetest, the best protected, and the most patronized in the city.

The doorman at Poncho's smiled at the couple and opened wide the portal. I passed into Poncho's behind them, for I was well known to the doorman, having rescued football players and sundry athletes from the joint, and sent them to bed so they could get a few winks before an important event.

As we mounted the blue and gold steps the girl caught Balla's arm, to direct and steady him, and chuckled in delight of anticipation.

I passed into the bar. Poncho himself was there and nodded to me. Poncho and Tuffy, the bartender, saw the couple as they passed through the bar to the cardroom. "Wonder who the dusky giant is that Tessalonica has in tow tonight," said Tuffy.

For five solid hours I waited in that joint, smoking and dozing, wandering among the tables, strolling in the hall, and loafing in the barroom. Tessalonica, as Tuffy called the girl, played casually at the tables. She was not allowed to stand near Balla, but she glanced his way a hundred times at least, as play at his table progressed. She watched, fascinated, as the piles of chips grew before Balla. The rake of the croupier before her failed to draw her attention to the table at which she was seated; she placed her chips on the gold numbers without looking at them.

At the end of five hours of play, Walla had all the chips before him. Tessalonica arose suddenly and went over to him. She smiled at him, and shrugged her shoulders at some remark of the banker, then picking up the slips that represented the winnings of Balla, she came over to the bar and presented the slips to Poncho to be cashed.

"A glass of champagne for me," she smiled. "My friend will not have a thing."

Tully already had a shell glass and the glistening gold topped bottle at hand. He poured and the girl drank deep. She set the glass down, smiled again, and lighted a cigarette. Then she opened the bag which hung over her arm, and placed in it

Balla's winnings for the evening, which had been handed her by Poncho.

"You see," she smiled. "The money is safe with me."

Poncho joined the couple immediately, his black eyes alert.

"A lot of bucks, lady," he said.

"Ten grand," she smiled.

"Oh, yeah," Poncho nodded. "Ten grand, eh? Well, that's good. The house will have better luck next time." "Undoubtedly," the lady answered casually. Then she turned abruptly toward Balla. "Perhaps you will take me home now," she said, as she slipped her hand inside Balla's arm; and this beautiful creature led the way out through the gambling room into the hall. In the limousine, riding to her apartment, I saw her suddenly drop her head against the Indian's shoulder. The big limousine rolled on smoothly, and I followed until I got the number of the apartment; and then I went back to make my report to the Professor in the New Mexico mountains. I figured that this tremendously desirable woman had captured this half civilized Indian completely, and that it would be a waste of time for me to stay longer.

Back in the New Mexico mountains, one night, after making my report in detail, I listened to the cracking of the pine logs of the campfire. There was silence, as far as conversation was concerned; and I came to the conclusion that my report had shown enough of what civilization would do to a perfectly good uncivilized Indian; but it seems that Calla, the third brother, had been talking a lot of late with Alla, who by this time was called "Liar" by all the people of the town; so I was detailed to watch him, that he might come to no harm, because old Naverette, father of these boys, had begun to get ugly with the Professor. He did not understand the nature of this experiment, and neither did I; but we all knew that an ugly Indian chief, boss of his tribe, is a bad man to have around.

The minute I got my eyes on Calla, I knew he had stored up in the back of his head a plan to go to Chicago and find Balla and get him to return with him, so that their combined stories might corroborate Alla and surely return him to good standing among his people.

I happened one night to overhear Calla say that he was going hunting and would not be available as a guide for some time. I got the meaning of the Professor's look, and knew I was in for another cross-country marathon.

Calla did not take the usual way out of the town. He took the trail that only an Indian could find, and I had to keep close to him or get lost. This trail crossed a swift flowing creek, in the crossing of which I lost my footing and fell in water so cold that it took my breath away. The trail then followed the creek for a long, hard climb.

At last the path, if path is the proper name for it, opened upon a grove of native trees that had been transplanted and tended with great care. I watched Calla as he passed through this grove and came upon a small lake of pure water, sweet and clear. The trees on the lake shore were willow and cottonwood; *they* had been planted years before and were of great size. Beneath the trees and extending from them to the shore of the lake was green grass. This green grass was a pleasing contrast to the barren waste Calla had led me through. He paused now, and 1 took a good eyeful of the beauty of the scene.

Suddenly, from nowhere apparently, there appeared a young Indian woman of wonderful beauty. She was dressed simply, in a soft brown that blended perfectly with the gray of the cottonwoods and the green of the water. Her face was aglow from exercise and reflected a healthy mountain life. If I had not been sure that the most beautiful woman I had ever seen was in Chicago, I would have taken a solemn oath that this girl was the most beautiful creature alive.

“Motesa!” exclaimed Calla. “You are most wonderful and beautiful!” And then, I suppose for fear that he might change his mind if he waited longer, he said hurriedly. “I am going to Chicago to search out Balla, and to find out the truth about that big city.”

The smile left the girl's face. She threw both arms around his neck, as if to keep him from going away. He kissed her, and led her to a sheltered alcove, where they talked for a long time. Silence fell between them at last, as the warm slanting rays of the afternoon sun filtered through the leaves of the willows.

She was sad and silent as he arose to go. It was evident that she did not like the idea.

"You will be here when 1 return?" he asked.

"When your return footsteps reach the green carpet upon the lake shore," she replied, "I shall hear them and come to you. Goodbye."

As Calla departed, the girl stood with arms out stretched, as if she would hold him there. Right there I changed my mind about beautiful women, concluding that here was real beauty, because it was natural. Made up, grasping beauty of the city must always take second place. I had to leave this wonder spot and follow Calla; but I felt sure that not a person or a thing in Chicago or anywhere else in the world would keep him away long from this garden of the gods and its beautiful princess.

When Calla boarded the train for Chicago, I was only one step behind him. I made up my mind that there would be no lost motion, due to his visiting gambling dens, where almost anything could happen. He should see Chicago under my direction, find Balla in the shortest time possible, and get back to his native town all in one piece and in his right mind. I don't belong to or care much about this generation of haste and hustle, but here was a job that I intended should be done with some speed, for several reasons.

This I explained to Calla several times, as the train traveled through a country that I was weary of looking at, having seen it too often of late. Calla wanted to talk to his brother Balla the first thing when we got to Chicago; and having the address where that gentleman could be found, we lost no time getting there. It was early in the morning when our taxi stopped and let us out in front of that expensive North Side apartment building. A few moments and we were ushered into "Tessalonica's" apartment. I was not leaving this boy to the mercy of that wonderful, beautiful, young woman. Her makeup might dazzle him, and his highspeed brother might exert undue influence.

"This is Calla Naverette, and he wants to see his brother Balla," was my introductory remark to the dark beauty, when she appeared. She smiled, but her eyes had a look hard as tempered steel. I began to feel sorry for Balla, if his luck at cards changed or she tired of him for any other reason.

"Very well," she replied. "If you do not mind, 1 will take you into the breakfast room."

In going to the breakfast room she managed to get close to me, and asked what was my business there. I assured her I was only one connected with the university, and just at present was special guardian to this simple Indian boy; and I further informed her that I was going to do my guardian duty. She said no more, but led us to a cozy little room, furnished in Dutch style, where a wide window overlooked the lake and the Delft tiles of blue were pane led in the walls all about the room, and fishing boats and wooden shod folks were all about.

Calla glanced about at these things with quick appreciative interest. His quality of instantly noting and appreciating details was marked and characteristic.

"I like this room too," she observed. "It is an exact copy of a room in which I once dined in Holland."

Calla took a chair a short distance from the table, and 1 went over and stood by the window that looked over Lake Michigan. As I held the drapes aside, she remarked, "This is such a little table. Balla and 1 often use it. When alone, we like to wait upon ourselves."

"You came to see the great city?" she said, smiling at Calla in a way that chilled him. "Your brother is a great success, because I was lucky enough *to* find him. We have made money, lots of money. Balla is a much improved man—you will scarcely know him. Under my direction he has done very well indeed."

Then Balla entered the room. The change in this Indian had certainly been marvelous and, from a city point of view, very favorable. He now appeared to be a fine looking city man, rather dark in complexion of course, with his straight black hair slicked back like varnish on a table top, and a pair of dark eyes that were alert and full of intelligence. His clothes were in the latest style, but not loud. He wore spats and a red carnation was in his buttonhole. His hands were soft and clean, and this fact, more than any other, seemed to fill Calla with resentment.

He was so stricken by this change in his brother that he

failed to return his greeting. Balla seated himself at the table, and after what seemed to me a long time, Calla finally pulled himself together, so that speech was possible.

"Balla," he said gravely. "Do you not return to Pinos Altos?" He made no attempt to put the question casually, but made it very evident that it was of deep concern to him.

"No, I shall never return to Pinos Altos," replied Balla.

Now there is what I call speed along life's highway—the dark, almost savage Indian of yesterday transformed into a city man today, in appearance at least. The Professor's experiment had worked, but whether for good or evil depends on whether one considers the kind of city life Balla was leading to be good or bad. The girl went to answer the telephone, and when she returned after a while, we were ready to depart.

"I am planning to drive you downtown," she said. "And I'll be ready in a moment. You are not afraid to ride with me?"

Calla smiled in a sad way, and glanced at me. She was apparently very kind, and was doing all in her power to be agreeable. "Oh, we will go with you," said I.

I saw that Calla took his seat in the rear of the car, and I seated myself beside the beautiful siren, who drove. As she pulled into Michigan Avenue, I started my tale about this Indian boy coming all the way from New Mexico to get Balla to return with him to his native town, to use his influence among his people to restore Alla, their older brother, to good standing; and then I told her why Alla had been punished by banishment. She flashed me a smile after I had finished my story, and said she would be in New Mexico with Balla when needed—that they were about to take a vacation anyway. Then we chatted on general subjects, and I almost came to the conclusion that she was true blue; that, at any rate, she had a heart of gold.

That night, with Calla in tow, alter a brief view of the city, I was on the way back to New Mexico. The big city had made an impression on Calla, but had not overwhelmed him. He was, however, in great fear that he would not be able to free his brother Alla, and that he might even be forced to join Alla in exile; for now he knew that, wonderful and impossible as Alla's

story seemed to his fellow countrymen, he had really not begun to tell the wonders of the big city of Chicago. Calla therefore was greatly worried, and as soon as the railway journey ended, he made all haste to reach that dreamland by the lake among the pines. Night had fallen, but sure enough, the lovely Indian girl Motesa was there!

When I sat beside that beauty Tessalonica in her sedan on Michigan Avenue, I had thought she was the most beautiful creature in the world; but now, as I looked upon this girl standing in the starlight in that grassy glade at the lakeside, once again I changed my mind. Here, and no mistake, was the most beautiful girl!

Calla was soon telling her of the wonders of the big city, and said sorrow fully that he did not expect to be able to free Alla; for Alla had been able to tell only a small story of the city and had been made an outcast for it—and if he, Calla, should tell one-hundredth part of the things he had seen, his story would be a thousand times greater than Alla's; and then the people would drive him from the mountains entirely, and so his fate would be worse than his brother's, who was denied the town only.

"Calla," said the girl after a short silence. "This is what you must do. Tell the people that this Chicago is a much larger place than our mountain town; that the buildings are twice as large as their adobe huts; that canoes ride far out on the water, and return with good things to eat; that big wagons are pulled about the streets by horses, and that people ride about in them. Tell them something they can understand."

"I'll do as you say," he answered. "Your wisdom is wonderful."

I thought myself it was quite keen, but I got no chance to say so, for she was promptly surrounded by the long arms of Calla, with her face buried in his breast.

The next day, he returned to the town and told his story, as revised by Motesa. The people liked it and said it was wonderful, and that a feast should be arranged to celebrate and honor the return of Calla. Right then I decided to take a hand and help things along, so I got in touch with that wonderful

young woman who had captivated Balla, and arranged to have her present with Balla when the big event should take place, so that there would be a regular family reunion.

In due course they arrived from Chicago, and Balla's dress and appearance, even more than the beauty of his companion, created a sensation among Indians and Mexicans alike. Somehow or other, Tessa1onica seemed to be at home among these people; she fitted in quite naturally, which confirmed my idea that she was probably of Mexican birth and perhaps with a Yaqui Indian strain in her descent. Anyway her grace and beauty commanded a certain respect; but the people did not take so kindly to the citified dress of Balla; and his father, the old chief Naverette, obviously disapproved of his choice of city life.

Then I heard something that I did not like very well. The people of the town had decided to hold the welcome, home party of the Naverettes at the same time as the annual festivities dedicated to the Sun God. This Sun God festival was a holdover from ages past, and was the big event of the year. The ceremony which was the climax of the festival was held at the ancient temple of the Sun God, located on the outskirts of the town, and so situated that on the appointed day the shadow cast by the temple upon the steps leading to it finally covered the steps completely. As the sun sank lower and lower, the shadow advanced step by step, until it reached the twin altars where the victims were formerly sacrificed before the sun disappeared behind the temple.

I cannot find words to express the intense awe I always feel when I find myself, after some prolonged stay in the mountains, at the foot of these stairs that lead, first to the twin altars, and then *to* the temple back of the altars. I recall the hideous record of the years of gloom, of cruelty, of waste; the record of the long neglect of the temple, and its noble unsightliness. On such nights, I dream of the beautiful victims of the past. I see the still quivering heart which has been torn from a living body and offered to the Sun God, and I am awakened by the dream cries of the victims. Tradition tells us that these victims were seized after they had executed the death dance up the stone steps leading to the twin

altars, and this dance feature survives in the annual Sun God ceremony today.

Imagine, then, my feelings when 1 learned that Motesa and Tessalonica had been selected to perform this dance of death, and that they had been practicing it together at the abode of Motesa for several days. Of course, I consoled myself, this was all Maji believe in these modern times, and a fitting climax to the festivities; but the very thought of it sent a chill through my system.

The great day at last arrived. Nearly the whole day was spent in feasting and games, and then as the sun declined in the West, the hour for the dance of death was at hand. An orchestra of stringed instruments was playing the music of fate, of destiny, of superstition and death, for the ancient tunes had been preserved.

Motesa was standing on the right side of the approach to the steps, as she had once stood by the lake; her hands outstretched, a smile of welcome on her lips, the light of gladness in her eyes. Thus she waited for the shadow to touch the approach before beginning the dance.

Tessalonica stood on the left side, awaiting the shadow. As she stood there, she surpassed all the beauty of this earth as far as my knowledge of such things goes. Her attitude was full of harmony, of youth, of genius, of soul; and I noticed that her hair was braided according to the ancient custom. Then my eyes lingers upon her polished brow, over soft and faintly pink cheeks, over dimpled lip and the swanlike and whitest neck an artist could imagine or a sculptor desire.

When the sun had nearly reached the edge of the approach, there arose weird music in the softest tones I have ever heard. It came like a stream of sound, subduing the senses and filling the whole being with awe.

And then the sun at last reached the edge of the approach, and suddenly the girls began to dance. They hung garlands on each other, and in perfect harmony they approached the first step, their eyes ever on the rays of the departing sun. As they danced, waiting for the shadow to touch the first step before mounting it, their cheeks became flushed, they laughed low

from excitement, and danced lightly as spirits. As the shadow mounted the steps the dancers followed it.

The crowd followed them with their eyes full of wonder. The thought of their surroundings had vanished from them. Their native mountains were no more. They dreamed and suppressed their breath, lest they should wake up too soon.

As the dancers reached the altars at the top of the stone steps, they impulsively held out their arms to the priest invitingly, as though challenging him to take them for the sacrifice.

The gestures were spontaneous and part of the show. But the old Yaqui priest, lured into forgetfulness of everything save wild thoughts of the ancient duty, darted toward Motesa with a knife ready for the kill.

A look of bewildered fear came upon the features of the girl but too startled to control her movements on the instant and as though impelled by some hidden power, she moved toward the threatening figure, blindly, unconsciously—her eyes now wide with a look of questioning fright. The fanatical old Indian had seized her, and his right hand had lifted the knife, when suddenly the spell that held the crowd silent was broken by shouts from the three brothers in whose honor the festival had been held that day. They were rushing up the altar steps, but before they were able to reach the altar Tessalonica had seized the lifted arm of the old priest and stopped the descent of the knife. When Balla reached her and had taken possession of the knife, she was trembling in every limb. Then, with a low cry, she stooped and lifted up the frightened and fainting Motesa.

That ended the celebration of the Sun God's day, and was the sensational climax of Balla's homecoming. Alla was soon induced by his brother to change his story of Chicago wonders, and when it was toned down like Calla's tale, at the wise suggestion of Motesa, his tribal rights were restored and he returned to the society of his friends and kindred. But Balla went back to the big city, to have his urban education completed by Tessalonica in the married state; and as for Calla, he was content to be back in his mountain home, with every prospect of a life of happiness with his sylvan beauty Motesa.

I went back to command of the pick-and-shovel brigade, having had enough excitement to last me until the next football

season. A few days after the scene at the temple of the Sun God, I asked Professor Kerson what conclusions he had reached in regard to his noble experiment in sending Alla to see the city.

"When I sent Alla," he replied, "I did not foresee that Balla and Calla would follow him to 'the heart of Chicago.' The result presents a deeper problem than I had looked for; and I think you will have to draw your own conclusions. How about putting a little more wood on the campfire?"

THE CRAMPTON KIDNAPING

YOUNG Robert Crampton—"Bobbie" to his friends —was not exactly a juvenile prodigy, but he was an eager student. At the age of nineteen he was graduated from the state university with honors, and returned to his home in Salem, ready to face the world of work.

His father, Bernard A. Crampton, presiding genius of the Crampton Manufacturing Company, had written him at length, just before his graduation, with much fatherly advice regarding his future; and had duly impressed upon him the vital importance of making an early start in the factory which he might expect to own some day.

The times were not propitious for business. The whole country was feeling the serious effects of a depression that was worldwide; and the affairs of the Crampton Company demanded constant watch fulness and care, to maintain the prestige and success which it had enjoyed under the management of Bobbie's father.

The elder Crampton was a man of pronounced personality, square-jawed, brusque in manner, and exacting, but just in his relations with his employees. His factory was well organized and systematized. Engineers had done their utmost to plan and schedule every manufacturing operation, with a view to reducing costs and increasing output, while at the same time maintaining the quality of the product which had earned an enviable reputation for the company. But profits had dwindled during the depression almost to the vanishing point; the situation was fast becoming serious, and Bobbie had been warned that he would have to forego his anticipated trip to Europe after graduation, and in lieu thereof must get to work.

Accepting the inevitable, more or less cheerfully, Bobbie reported at the factory early one Monday morning, and was instructed to spend his first week familiarizing himself with the layout or the plant and the methods of manufacturing the company's nationally known product. Thereafter he was detailed to the finishing department, of which he was eventually to take charge.

In his early tours of the plant he was particularly interested

in watching the work of the many women who, with deft and skillful fingers, packed the tubes of finished product into cartons and cases. He learned that efficiency experts had sat for days, with stop watches in their hands, making time studies of these and other operations, in order to perfect methods and set standard for the workers and thus secure the maximum output. He noticed the rapidity with which the women worked, each performing her part with clock-like regularity; and he wondered at their ability to continue steadily at work for hours without noticeable fatigue.

"Very well done, young lady!" Bobbie complimented Barbara Wilson, a busy little brunette who was packing tubes at her table. "Can you keep that up indefinitely, or does the conveyor ever bring the tubes to you faster than you can pack them?"

"Oh yes, sir," replied Barbara. "Sometimes they come too fast and it is so hard *to* catch up after that."

She had stopped only a few seconds to reply to his query, but even in that brief time the tubes began to accumulate on her table at an amazing speed.

"Well," said Bobbie, "they surely come along fast. But it's my fault. I'll have to lend a helping hand." And laughing, he began picking up tubes and depositing them in the case, until Barbara was again quite "caught up" "Oh, thank you so much," said Barbara, smiling in appreciation. "Now I think I can keep up."

The word had been passed about the department that the pleasant young man strolling about was to be the new *Foreman.* Certainly the kindly impartial interest this tall slender youth displayed in every employee would cause no one to suspect that he could be a relative of surly old Bernard Crampton.

At lunch time the girl who worked at the table adjoining Barbara's accosted tier in an envious tone. "Gee, kid, you seem to be out to make a hit with the new boss." "Why, Nellie, just because he helped me when I fell behind in my packing, I wouldn't say that meant I was making a hit with him. But he is nice, isn't he?" "Yes, and quite stuck on himself. He ought to

get a haircut to keep it from getting into his eyes."

Bobbie's blond hair did have a habit of dropping over his eyes, and he frequently jerked his head to throw his hair in place.

A healthy glow of pink showed on his cheeks, which together with an especially well modeled nose, made his personal appearance decidedly attractive.

Of course a busy, noisy factory might be a discouraging setting for a young man's first surprised view of his perfect ideal of one of the fair sex, but in that first instant their eyes had met, Barbara and Bobbie had each recognized a mutual admiration. Barbara was glad he had walked away at once, or she feared she might betray her rapidly beating heart.

At the university Bobbie had met and frequently dated splendid young women, but it had remained for him to discover a girl more lovely than all others combined, patiently slaving away at miserable wages in his own father's factory.

Barbara was of slight build, and her soft blue eyes were a radiant contrast with her rosy cheeks. An orphan whose life had been almost one round of adversity, she still carried on in approved "Pollyanna" style, always "glad about everything."

Day after day there after Bobbie never failed to visit the place where she faithfully worked. He had looked up her name on the payroll and surprised her one day when, in his musical voice, he addressed her as "Barbara." But though it made her heart beat with a new joy, she only smiled in acknowledgment and kept her hands flying back and forth from the conveyor belt to the packing case.

It was not altogether interest in an increased output for the Crampton factory which turned his footsteps frequently in Barbara's particular direction. Whenever he was close and observing her devoted application to the onrushing flow of tubes, there seemed to come into his soul a peculiarly pleasant thrill.

It was Nellie who first learned the identity of the new boss**.**

"Barb, now I know something that'll surprise you," she sang out excitedly, as she overtook Barbara after work. And I'll give you just one guess."

"Then I'll guess that you'd better tell me, as I'm no good at guessing*,"* replied Barbara calmly.

"Oh, you never in the world could guess, so I might as well tell you. Our new boss is Crampton's son, Bobbie Crampton."

"Oh no, Nellie, someone's been kidding you."

"Well, you just ask Jameson. He'll tell you it's true. Honest!"

So despite Barbara's doubts, she learned the following morning, when she consulted Jameson, the shipping clerk, that the young boss was really the owner's son.

She tried desperately to maintain her usual composure as he came to make his daily call, but the knowledge of his identity caused her heart to beat more wildly than ever. Becoming confused as he stood nearby, not comprehending she "lost out" hopelessly in her race to pack the arriving tubes.

In her embarrassment her face became flushed, and if she had seemed lovely before, she was now divinely beautiful.

"Oh—oh—Mister—Mist—I don't know what's the matter," she stammered.

She was making frantic e Ports to overcome the handicap of an increasing pile of the tubes, and realizing the futility of her position, she looked up into Bobbie's amused and smiling face, with a piteous, pleading expression Chat conveyed to the solicitous Bobbie most clearly an appeal for immediate assistance. In the blushing face were also indisputable signs of weariness.

Bobbie's heart was touched with sympathy. He had never in his life felt anything akin to this experience, and could he at that moment have laid all he possessed at her feet, he would have considered himself happy to have the opportunity.

"Well, I see I'm the cause of you falling behind again, Barbara, but I'll begin packing on this side and it won't be long until we get caught up," said Bobbie.

"Yes—no--yes, perhaps—" Excited and confused, she could say no more.

"That's fine, little girl." Bobbie complimented her as he saw her again skillfully manipulate tubes at double his own speed. "Now we're making fine headway. Oh, I say, what now? Surely you're not sorry they are all packed? Please tell me what's the trouble now." Bobbie had glanced down at the

weary face, to behold tears dropping from her eyes onto her arms.

When she realized her tears had been discovered, she broke into violent sobbing, as though her heart was breaking; and unable to see her work clearly the tubes again began to pile up, as Bobbie's inexperienced hands were unable to keep up the necessary pace.

Thereupon Bobbie hastened across the room, pulled a switch, and the unit supplying Barbara's conveying belt came to a slow stop.

Meantime Barbara again began rapidly packing the accumulated tubes into the cases, crying and dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief. She felt that after Bobbie had stopped the machine, he would return. She sensed it in every fiber of her body, and she must not be found disrupted and crying like a silly schoolgirl.

She was packing the last tubes when he came back, and in her attempt to straighten up quickly before this young man, who represented her utmost ideal, she managed to smile wanly through the tears.

"Well, well, just like the bright sun coming out after a long cloudy spell," he said, and gently added: *"No*w I'll ask someone to tell me why all this sadness?"

"Why—Mister—oh, I don't *know!* I don't know! I'm so afraid, but I won't tell; oh no—I—would never tell *anyone.* No!" In her excitement and consternation, she could not meet his gaze.

Again her head dropped onto her arms, resting on the cleared table, and she was shaken anew by another spell of sobbing.

Bobbie was completely baked. He had often seen his spoiled young half-sister (his father had married again after Bobbie's own mother had died) gain her way by means of crying, but seeing Barbara cry was altogether different and distressing.

Disregarding the fact that other employees might be spying, and that their conclusions might be seriously injurious to his prestige, Bobbie placed his hands on Barbara's trembling

shoulders and gently assisted her to her feet.

Firmly he led her down the aisle out of the great noisy factory room, into an anteroom where the employees left their wraps during the day's work.

Here they would at least he protected from the observation of prying eyes, and Bobbie stopped, as if in doubts of the next step. Barbara was still keeping her downcast face covered with her handkerchief very much ashamed of the spectacle she had presented to the one living person whom she most wished to impress; but now her sobbing was eased and Bobbie spoke close to her ear:

“That's all the work for you today. I'll see that it's all 0. K. with the timekeeper.”

“Oh, how can I ever thank you, Mister—er—” “just call me Bobbie, Barbara.”

“Oh—no—nano! Why, you're Mr. Crampton. I mustn't ever call you that,” she protested.

“Well, I call you Barbara. Would you wish me to call you Miss Wilson?”

“Oh, no, please call me Barbara always. You know that's different.”

“Well, Barbara, then if yoti will get your coat and hat and meet me here in five minutes, I will drive you home. It's still raining and you mustn't get wet in your nervous condition. I always leave about this time every day, so don't think you are putting me out.”

“Oh no, Mr. Crampton. No! Thank you, oh, so much, but I always walk over to Clairmont and catch a street car.”

But Bobbie again grasped the girl by her shoulders and this time he held her upturned face close to his own. Looking into her blue eyes and speaking with an affected, good-natured sternness he said; “Now see here, young lady, I'm the doctor and I'll prescribe for one little lady. She must put on her coat and hat, then stand on this spot.” Bobbie took a pencil from his pocket and drew a circle upon the concrete floor, about ten inches in diameter.

Then he continued his instructions; “Upon this spot the patient must stand for five minutes, until the doctor returns with the next

prescription." And without waiting for her to remonstrate further, Bobbie rushed out to the garage, around the corner of the factory.

But when he returned in even less than the time he had specified, he gazed at the spot he had drawn on the floor in dismay. The small anteroom was deserted. Believing she had le ft, he returned to his coupe and started driving toward Clairmont Street. It was more than three blocks and if Barbara hurried she might have time to reach and board a street car, thus defeating his wish to deliver her to her home personally.

Through the drizzling rain he could see but a short distance ahead. As he neared the second block he spied Barbara hurrying along the sloppy slippery walk.

Bobbie pulled up to the curb only a few feet ahead of her, then jumped out of the coupe and caught the fleeing young lady in his long a rms. Disregarding her pleading and protests, he placed her in his coupe.

"Well, the doctor caught his patient again," he said, good-naturedly. "She wouldn't take the first prescription, so 1 guess there's no use giving her another. But if it's a fair question, I'd be interested to learn why the little girl objects to being delivered at her home all dry and warm, in preference to being cold and wet, and then really needing a doctor."

Barbara had been staring out of the car window, speechless, since Bobbie had captured her, but finally she said; "Mr. Crampton—please—oh, it was because—yes—oh yes—just because----"

Her words came with an extreme weariness, as if she was too exhausted to speak at any length.

"Now just you take it easy, Barbara. 1 think I begin to realize. If you had said 'Bobbie' instead of 'Mr. Crampton,' you would be surprised how much easier it is to pronounce the 9horter name. You know it's such an effort to say 'Mr. Crampton,' and in the interest of practicing efficiency, I recommend that you should begin without delay to practice the shorter words."

"Oh, but—well—who is an insignificant factory girl, to say what she should do? But that's why I was afraid to ride with you. Because I knew that if I did, I might forget and call you 'Bobbie' and even I understand that no employee in your

factory should take the liberty to speak familiarly to you. Now, can't you see that I'm right? Suppose you heard one of us girls call your father 'Bernard' or ‘Bernie’? Just how would you like that?”

“0. K. You win, little girl, I see your point. It may be true that I could scarcely permit all of the employees to use my first name and expect to retain any prestige. But if I surrender to your sane and very proper idea, will you listen to a counter proposition?”

“Well, since I'm here, reserving the right to say no, I'll listen.”

“Oh, I don't know how to say it. Please don't think I'm stubborn, but I still do want you to call me ‘Bobbie’ at least sometimes. Then, when in the factory or in public, you can call me 'Mr. Crampton’. You see we have known each other nearly three weeks now.” Bobbie had turned the coupe down the avenue, away from the direction of Barbara's home, and now stopped the car in a sheltered spot.

Barbara remained thoughtfully silent. Bobbie took one of her little tired hands in his own. Thousands of tiny little riplets seemed to course pleasantly through her whole body, as she experienced the gentle touch of his hands. She was being thrilled as she had never dreamed could be possible. Then he continued: “I just can't realize why I'm so different from a regular Crampton, but I guess I am. 1 wish I could hope to get you to agree to a little plan like this that as you learn to know me better, you will try—yes, Barbara, please—only just try to like me a little bit more."

In speechless astonishment, she turned her face upward and gazed searchingly into the handsome young face, on which was written an anxious sincerity. Inwardly many questions were rapidly bombarding her conscience. What trick of fate could this be? How soon was she to awake only to find herself again rushing to her worktable, with its endless supply of tubes to be packed? But a more acceptable and pleasing final question was: “Is it, and can it be really true that Bobbie Crampton is holding my hand and asking me to try to like him? Ah, of all the absurd questions—as if I haven't been thinking

of and liking him all these three wonderful weeks more and more every day l Yes, and right now liking him more than ever. Can I learn to like him?—Oh, boy, I'll say I can.

Her expression of astonishment gradually disappeared, and in its stead she was transfigured with radiant happiness. From the depths of her soul she replied to him in total surrender: "All right then, Bobbie, I will."

"That sounds very much nicer," said the young man, "and I am certain we'll get along much better now."

"Oh, yes, Bobbie, I'll like that."

"Now, Barbara, if you won't consider me too inquisitive, I would like to have you tell me frankly what caused your little breakdown at your table this afternoon. I feel that if you tell me, I may be able to do something helpful about it."

"Well, Bobbie, I don't know if you can understand, but when you noticed me and helped me pack tubes the first day we met, it was my first experience of being helped in a difficulty. Never before had anyone ever bothered or stepped out of their way to assist me. And to be helped by the boss, as former bosses never seemed to even notice any of us girls, was a strange and wonderful event. Then I became used to your visits at my table, and it seemed such an honor to me for you to stop and talk each day, as you came through. I began to look forward to your visits. But when I learned that you were Bobbie Crampton, I became frightened at my boldness. I felt I had no right to wish to become a friend of yours. There seemed to be a great gulf between us; the difference was too great. I decided after I learned who you were not to allow you to be nice and talk to me any more; at least I thought I would pay no attention, and discourage you that way. But when you walked up to my table this afternoon, I just didn't know what to do. Everything seemed to become blurred before my eyes, and I suddenly became utterly helpless. Oh, Bobbie, I hope you understand. Then, when my hands became all mixed up and you just laughed about it and started helping me, as you did on the first day, my tears just would not keep back. Oh, Bobbie, I'm so sorry I made such a silly scene. Can you ever forgive me?"

"That will be easy, Barbara, for there's nothing to forgive. But

now, since that's cleared up, let's look into another matter. I'm supposed to be making an intensive and searching study of my father's factory. I wonder if I haven't accidentally come across one of the most interested employees we have, with whom to discuss fundamental causes of our present difficulties."

"Oh, Bobbie, I wish I could help. But whatever could a girl do?"

"Barbara, I believe you can help a lot, since it is the work you girls do that enters more importantly into our costs than any other item. And since I feel you will be more impartial and honest in telling me all about the situation as it affects the girls we employ, let us talk a few things over. It may aid my position to explain in conference tomorrow certain changes we might make."

"Yes, Bobbie, but I'm perfectly satisfied, you know." "Like the good sport you are, you would say that, but that's not guaranteeing that all the others feel the same way," he said admiringly. "Barbara, are you willing to tell me what seems to be the principal complaints our girls find in their jobs?"

"Oh, that's easy. Of course I'm willing, but I'm afraid there is nothing much that can be done. The girls find three reasons for complaint—first, the work is altogether too hard; second, the ten-hour days are too long; third, the pay of $6.50 per week when there are others in their families to support, is not sufficient for even necessities."

"Well, Barbara, that about confirms my own analysis. When I was instructed to study ways and means of rescuing the factory, it was assumed that all except the Crampton interests were to make some sacrifices with a view to maintaining operation and jobs for all. Tomorrow I am expected to report a recommendation khat our women workers be given another cut of 10 per cent, while others take only a 5 per cent reduction. The chief argument seems to be that it is reported that the Laurence Company, our only competitor in Salem, who employ as many women as we do, have already placed this reduced scale in effect."

"But, Bobbie, that would be nearly a dollar less per week. I am sure many of the families who depend on their Crampton pay envelopes will have to suffer hardships if they are reduced again."

"Yes, Barbara, I realize that you are right. I wonder if you know anyone working at the Laurence plant."

"Yes, Bobbie, one of the girls who was discharged last month was put on over there."

"I would just like to obtain absolute proof that the reduction was not merely a rumor used as bait, on the theory that we would also reduce wages and precipitate trouble for ourselves. You know we are not friendly with the Lawrences, and have to accept any reports with suspicion."

"Well, Bobbie, I met Marion, the girl I mentioned, only yesterday, and she was in tears about the reduction. She showed me her pay envelope and it was marked $5.33 for her week's work. You know, Bobbie, that's terrible. There are five in her family and only she working. They will never be able to exist on what she is making."

"Well, well, so it's a fact they did cut the wages. I had been hoping it was a false report."

"Yes, Bobbie, and Marion is a very nice girl. She has a sick baby sister too, and it must have fresh milk daily. I told Marion I would give her a dollar out of my envelope this week, for the baby's milk. Oh, I hope we do not get any pay cut, because in that case I wouldn't be able to help Marion any more."

"Well, don't worry about it, Barbara. I think I have a new idea. We'll see."

"Oh, I do hope you will be able at least to keep our Crampton scale from any reduction."

"Yes, that's exactly what we must avoid. Barbara, wait for me at Claremount Street tomorrow afternoon after work, and I will pick you up. It is getting late now, and we mustn't cause your folks to worry. We'll see if we can't surprise everybody by a plan no one has been expecting, and it'll be your plan as much as mine." Bobbie then drove Barbara to the humble home of her aunt and uncle, with whom she lived in the least desirable part of Salem.

After his dinner Bobbie excused himself from a social function which he had been expected to attend. Instead he retired to his private office at the factory. All night long he struggled with reports, statistics and graphs giving

comparative data on their own plant as well as all other competing concerns in the country.

Important decisions affecting the future policy of the Crampton Manufacturing Company were to be made at the monthly conference next day. Hitherto Bobbie had merely been a silent spectator of conditions, but now his forehead was knotted into many serious wrinkles, denoting his determination to sell every department head, sell his father, sell them all, on an idea quite new and radically different from any present policy. Carefully he prepared the necessary references and notes which he would require to support his new plan.

There was much excitement in the conference room the following day. With the company's stock holding representatives from Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco present as guests, the meeting, before its close became almost a riot. Mr. Crampton had called upon his older advisers, one by one, for suggestions to improve sales or reduce the factory expenses.

He had turned to his visiting representatives. From none was there a single constructive suggestion of any optimistic remark. To a man they all shared the president's inner feeling, that the country had simply ‘gone to the dogs,’ and it would be only a matter of time until the Crampton Manufacturing Company would find its hundreds of expensive machines silent.

An array of expensive artists had drawn designs from which they were to select those which would be featured in the company's advertising contracts, and the sketches were displayed on one of the office walls. Having already cost hundreds of dollars in preliminary preparation the advertising appropriation of the company would amount to many thousands during the next season. The call for constructive suggestions had been closed, and men of talent and experience were literally hanging their heads in helplessness. Mr. Crampton, as presiding officer, saw no reason for turning to his young son after the fruitless elf ort to elicit assistance from the others.

At some time in the recent past, each individual present had volunteered his guaranteed remedy for the ailments of their business, some of them very costly experiments. All had invariably been doomed to failure. Silence reigned for awhile, until Mr. Crampton said: “Well, then, gentlemen, if there is nothing we can do to improve our business, it will be in order to

consider appropriations. All departments will have to continue as before, crowding the output and trimming still farther the scale of pay. Now that the Laurence Company have made their cut, it will at least be simple to follow their lead. It will appear reasonable that our plant must protect its future just as carefully as any other factory during these troublous times."

Then the president paused, looked about solemnly, and was about to continue speaking, when Bobbie rose to his feet and asked to be recognized.

"Well, my boy, you say you wish to speak to the conference? Certainly you can. Why not?"

"Gentlemen," began Bobbie in deliberate tones: "There seems to be a rather unanimous belief that everything possible has been tried and that now it is merely a matter of calmly sitting around, awaiting the end."

He paused as if to permit a reply, should anyone disagree with his statement. Then he went on;

"As you all probably know, I have been here giving undivided attention to observation within our factory for less than two months, whereas some of you gentlemen hold service records dating back before my birth. I therefore hope you will bear with me and not feel that I am either disrespectful or attempting to last reflections on your past efforts. I'll not take up your valuable time with any lengthy analysis or review of unsuccessful attempts to stabilize our business. I want, however, to as it that *yo*u listen to my plan for turning right about face in our policy, an untried plan so far as our plant is concerned. Our factory has admittedly gone into a tailspin. Now when I was learning to fly last year, my instructor one day deliberately nosed our plane into a tailspin, then yelled for me to bring my controls into their neutral positions, and though for a moment it seemed we were certain to crash, the plane with all controls adjusted to neutral, as if by magic righted itself, and our stable level flight was resumed.

"Gentlemen, I believe we have unwittingly gone into a figurative tailspin. We should set all controls back to neutral at once, and proceed to certain stability. We should commence today a new policy of give and receive; observe in full measure the 'Golden Rule'; take into our confidence qualified

spokesmen, chosen by and from among our lowliest and most deeply affected employees, and give merited consideration to their problems and even look into their living conditions.

"Now we have a golden opportunity. Our most out-standing competitors have ground their employees further under their heels, by imposing another reduction upon them. They have adopted a most unpopular attitude. I say we should, on the contrary, create an unheard-of precedent and build us an everlasting bulwark of goodwill by making elective immediately a 15 per cent increase in our employees' pay and ask the employees to vote among themselves the length of the working day. I further suggest, with the approval of present members of our company, that mention of our action and change in policy be inserted in all our forthcoming advertising copy. May we not hope thereby to inspire other business institutions to follow our lead and eventually strengthen substantially the entire buying power of our country?

"I therefore move that this resolution, of which I had you type copies, be adopted by this conference and be made effective immediately." Passing the copies to the secretary for distribution, Bobbie seated himself, with an inward prayer that divine understanding would guide these astonished men in their decision.

With a most surprised look at his son, Bernard Crampton shook his head in undisguised disappointment. Taking a firm hold of the heavy table before him, he rose slowly and unsteadily. Then he began speaking:

"My boy, we are in no mood for idle fancies or impractical theories. I trust that you gentlemen will take into consideration and understand that my son has recently attended a university where radical social standards are being accorded unreasonable and undue consideration. I regret that my own son, of all persons, should make a jest of our most serious plight. No, I cannot entertain any second to a motion so absurd. Again I announce that we are now ready to hear the secretary's report on the coming year's appropriations."

"But, Mr. President, I second your son's motion."

It was Jameson, the shipping clerk, who had been listening

eagerly, with intense admiration, to the words of the younger Crampton.

"Never mind, Jameson; you're out of order. **I've** already called for reading of reports of appropriations. But I'll ask that you, Jameson, report at my office at 2 o'clock this afternoon." There was a scowl upon the elder man's face which promised no pleasant result for the shipping clerk.

Including the three guests there were twelve men present, and it was an old rule that stockholding guests attending the conferences were entitled to vote. As if in some doubt of Crampton's method of overriding his son's motion, the California representative now rose.

"Mr. President," he said, "may I have the floor?"

"Proceed, Mr. Atkinson," replied Crampton.

"I also wish to second your son's motion," said Atkinson. "Although I feel much as the rest, that his treatment of our difficulty lacks the ordinary essentials of a practical solution, yet his unmistakable sincerity raises in my mind the point that he may have given this issue a deeper study than we realize. For one I should like the motion to be discussed and to hear in just that manner he would suggest the financing of a plan so radically new in manufacturing practice. Let's be fair and allow him to explain his ideas in this respect."

Crampton could not treat the "second" offered by their valuable representative from the west coast lightly. After some interruption and hasty consultation with his secretary, he grudgingly placed the motion in order, and called for discussion.

Bobbie's plan for financing was simple. He would ask his father and the three other wealthier stockholders present to loan the company from their private resources $200,000, or $100,000 each for a term of two years. His figures proved conclusively that the sum he suggested would be ample for the execution of the proposed program.

Two of the men in a position to advance their share of such a loan were found to be willing if Crampton and the fourth would agree. But five of those present stubbornly refused to entertain the thought of a new deal and aligned themselves with

Mr. Crampton. The whole matter then went into a bitter deadlock of six against six. It was Crampton *himself* who engaged his nearest associate in a withering denunciation of any plan leading out of the old, well-worn rut.

The hour for lunch passed by disregarded, as each faction argued more or less heatedly to win the necessary deciding vote to their side of the question. Two o'clock passed, and Jameson wondered if Crampton's order for him to report at his office was still effective; but believing that success of Bobbie's motion meant many brighter days for everyone, he brought up several human interest arguments in support of the new deal, some of which Bobbie himself had overlooked.

Rules of order had been suspended by common consent. The discussion rose and subsided time and again, as the opposing groups continued to argue; but each side only succeeded in entrenching themselves still more stubbornly for or against the new plan.

At 4:30 Mr. Crampton rapped for order. After another plea for the rejection of Bobbie's plan, he called for a final vote. There was no change in the result. A motion to continue the meeting at 10:00 o'clock the following morning carried, and the conference then adjourned for the day.

When a Crampton had once made up his mind there was seldom a chance of his changing it. In a sharp voice the President reminded Jameson that he would see him at once in its private office.

As the shipping clerk entered and closed the door, Crampton swung about in his chair, and fairly shouted: “Jameson, you've worked in my factory too long. Now you can turn in your time and get out. I mean today. Now 1” he snapped.

“All right, Mr. Crampton, I'm very sorry I can't see this thing as you do.”

But Crampton had turned away and was ordering his secretary to call another employee to the office. Within a few minutes a new shipping clerk had assumed the duties handled faithfully for many years by Jameson.

Thus, when the conference met again the following day,

Bobbie's motion was promptly beaten by the narrow margin of six to five, the new shipping clerk being excluded from the conference.

One week passed by and then another, Bobbie had met Barbara on the day he had asked her to wait for him at Clairmount Street after work, and in mutual disappointment they acquired a feeling of common interest. They still hoped to arrange some ways of alleviating the widespread muttering.

Every evening Barbara and Bobbie met as privately as possible. So absorbed had they become in this problem of general poverty and suffering, arising all about them, owing to the consistent reduction of wages in every line of industry, that the subject of their growing regard for each other was automatically relegated into a mutually satisfactory background.

To Crampton the entire matter had been a vast double disappointment. The son of whom he had expected great things, had failed him completely. Only because he desired to let this issue be dropped with the least possible further agitation did he permit Bobbie to continue as foreman of the finishing department. But he refused to meet or speak to Bobbie on any occasion, ordering his meals to be served to him in a private dining room at Crampton Place. Untimely years seemed suddenly to have been thrust upon the middle-aged man.

Bobbie could still look with satisfaction upon a tidy bank balance, which he had accumulated by inherent thriftiness from the lavish allowances sent him while at the university . Barbara and he found a profound satisfaction in visiting many distressed families. Carefully concealing their identity, they administered, to the best of their ability, timely aid to those most in need of assistance.

Although Barbara still occupied her position packing tubes, Bobbie now passed her table with merely a pleasant “How do you do?” Their plans, they believed, would progress better if any gossip about a personal interest in each other were discouraged. Even Nellie was quite convinced that the boss had lost his early interest in Barbara, and she immediately began coming to work in clothes designed to make her more

attractive. On every occasion of Bobbie's appearance, she cast longing glances and winning smiles in his direction, but without effect.

Badly frightened by the unpopularity which had been brought upon the name of Crampton by the wage reductions, Mrs. Crampton had quietly arranged to send Elaine, her daughter, a delicate brunette about a year younger than Barbara, to the home of a friend in Denver. When her daughter entrained for the healthy higher altitudes of the west, the mother planned to devote more personal attention to her husband.

With the exception of one personal maid, who was sent west with Elaine, all other servants were maintained as usual at Crampton Place. Seldom were two of the members of the family at home at the same time. *Each* had his or her own interests.

Every evening about dusk, Bobbie met Barbara at a point near her uncle's home. Then they often drove many miles out of the city, where the delightful fresh air and scenery of New England farms added that charm to their companionship which neither would ever forget.

Sometimes, if Bobbie remembered any papers at home on which he wished to gain Barbara's advice, he would drive up before the Crampton Place mansion. Barbara would slide down comfortably within the car seat, quite invisible from the outside. Thus she kept herself concealed for two or three blocks before arriving at Bobbie's home, and continued entirely hidden while near the house. Both looked upon this strategy as an innocent, confidential matter, harming no one, and intended only to protect them from gossipers.

The summer was advancing and the days were becoming shorter. Bobbie met Barbara, as agreed, on a Monday evening, and remembering that he had a few clippings from a local paper in his room, he decided to drive by Crampton Place and secure them.

Barbara knew exactly the street at which she was accustomed to slide down out of sight, and from all outward appearances Bobbie w as driving toward his home quite alone.

About a block before he arrived at his own home, he noticed a parked car—a large, powerful looking sedan, containing several men. But to Bobbie, happy in anticipation of soon being out of the dusty city and alone with his congenial little companion, the parked ca r had no particular meaning.

Having obtained the clippings in the house, Bobbie slipped his bright little coupe into gear, and they were soon humming merrily out of Salem, west on Grant Street.

Allowing the coupe to gain a considerable start, the big sedan began to follow it into the country.

At the end of Grant Street, a long straight concrete road led directly west out of Salem, across about twelve miles of waste land. It offered a delightful opportunity for unobstructed speeding, and Bobbie tonight, as often before, chose this for the route of the evening's ride.

It was now' quite dark, and after driving a mile or two, Bobbie saw in his mirror that another set of headlights was following and gaining on him. Not wishing to contest the right of way with the oncoming car, Bobbie reduced his speed and kept very close to the right side of the road, to permit the speeding car behind to pass him.

Meanwhile two or three more miles were added to the distance from Salem, and they were about halfway across the deserted waste land. When the large gray sedan passed, it rapidly came to a stop, obstructing the road and causing Bobbie also to apply his brakes very quickly.

“Bobbie, oh Bobbie, why are they stopping us?” inquired Barbara in undisguised alarm.

“Don't be afraid, Barbara, it's probably the police, looking for somebody's stolen car. We'll soon know.”

Four burly, rough looking characters, not at all like police officers, had stepped from the sedan and were coming clumsily toward Bobbie's coupe.

Stepping close to the open window on Bobbie's side, one of them flashed a strong light into Bobbie's face. “Is that him, Red?” he asked one of the others. “Yes, Doc, there's no mistake,” Red replied.

“Well, say—here—what’s this?” The first speaker exclaimed in surprise, as he flashed his light on the frightened

face of Barbara. “Now just who is our company? Red, what do you make of that?”

“Red” gazed in astonishment. It was hard for him to believe that Bobbie was driving with a companion. Many nights it had been his assignment to spy on Bobbie and his habits, and he had reported, on seeing Bobbie make these quick calls at his home that he was always unaccompanied. Barbara always had kept out of view. Therefore it was a mystery to him. Fearing the boss's anger for incomplete information, Red, remembering that the Cramptons also possessed a daughter, made a quick guess.

“Why that's the fellow's sister. Gee, boss, I never saw that he had her along. He always drove away from the house alone before.”

“I'll be doggoned. Seems to be our lucky day, Red. So we got both of Crampton's kids when we only figured on getting the one. All right, you kids, get over in the other car. The leader seemed to be greatly amused at the capture of the two Cramptons.

“Well, what do you want with us?” now asked Bobbie. “Are you police?”

“Never mind who we are, kid, you'll know soon enough. Now get a move on yourselves, and get in the back seat of our wagon, and be quick about it.”

But Bobbie and Barbara remained seated, dazed by the sudden turn of events.

“Well, what you waiting for? Want us to carry you over? It'd be a pleasure, if you don't get out mighty quick. We'll take care of your flivver.”

“Come, Barbara,” Bobbie spoke in a low tone into her ear. “Whatever they want we haven't a chance to do anything else now. Probably if we do what they say, we'll be safer and learn what this is all about, perhaps get away.”

“All right, Bobbie; let's do that.” Barbara's voice was near crying now, as they stepped out of the coupe and began walking toward the other car.

“Get in 1” ordered the leader—and they did.

After they were in the back seat, in an atmosphere fairly

stifling with the odor of stale tobacco smoke, two of the men crowded in with them. The leader climbed into the front seat with the driver, a fifth man who had not left his seat since they stopped Bobbie's car.

The fourth man of those who had approached Bobbie when he stopped had evidently taken charge of the coupe, but neither one of the kidnaped pair could discern what was taking place outside the sedan.

As the car started with a jump, the two men seated with Bobbie and Barbara busied themselves. First they tied the victims' hands securely, then placed very firmly fitting bandages over their eyes. Both youngsters were badly frightened at this treatment, being thus deprived of any possible means of observation or communication.

After what seemed an eternity to the prisoners, the sedan came to a halt and one man held Bobbie tightly, and placed a filthy hand over his mouth, ready to stifle any attempt at crying out for help. They were evidently stopping to fil1 up with gasoline, thought Bobbie. The other man had taken a similar precaution with Barbara, lest she should give a verbal warning to the oil station attendant.

After more hours of speeding over roads that were becoming increasingly rough, they again stopped. This time the victims were ordered to get out of the sedan, and since they were blindfolded, they were led a long distance. They felt soft earth and frequent twigs and stones, as though a forest was about them.

Then their attendants picked them up bodily, and carried them a short distance, finally setting them down on low, cushioned seats.

Now, as in the sedan, the attendants had permitted Bobbie to hold Barbara’s trembling and bound hands as well as he could, considering the hindering ropes.

Suddenly the prisoners felt a regular vibration, as of a high powered gasoline motor, and gliding along to the swishing of rushing waters, they knew they were being transported aboard a launch.

After another lengthy trip, the monotonous drone of the

motor stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and the craft came to a crunching stop upon a graveled beach. Attempting to organize his estimate of the length of time they had been in captivity, Bobbie was certain it must be near noon of the next day. Another long walk was in order and the steep grades alternately up and down proved that they were traversing a hilly country.

Barbara was now clutching at Bobbie's sleeve for support, as her endurance was deserting her; and Bobbie was more than glad for her sake when they began to walk upon a board floor, and heard a door slammed behind them. Then their attendants proceeded leisurely to remove the bandages and ropes.

When they regained their vision after the long period of blindness, they could see by the faulty light of kerosene lamps the rough board walls of a most primitive shack. The two small windows were far too high for even the tallest man there to reach. In the middle of the wall opposite the entrance door was a crude fireplace, and on each side of it were doors to what appeared to be inner rooms.

Below the windows on the end walls were double deck bunks, one set on each end of the large room, making sleeping capacity for four persons. A large homemade board table was placed in the center of the room, about which was an assortment of homemade stools. A common four hole, cast-iron stove was set up in one corner, and shelves with pots and pans showed that corner to be the kitchen of the establishment.

“All right, Red, lock the kids up,” spat the leader.

“0. K., Doc,” he replied, and beckoning to Bobbie to follow, he seized a lamp and led the way through the righthand door into an inner room. Seizing Barbara's hand, Bobbie followed as directed.

“Well, here you are,” Red explained, holding the lamp aloft so they could see for the moment the position of a cheap iron bed on one side, and a table, with a bucket of water and a cup beside it. Then, before the prisoners could make any inquiry, he stepped out, taking his lamp and leaving them in total darkness.

As the door closed, a coarse laugh resounded in the other room. Barbara threw herself into Bobbie's waiting arms, and burst into heart rending sobs. For a long time she was unable to reply

to Bobbie's entreaties that she calm herself.

"Oh, Bobbie, Bobbie, what in the world can these terrible men ever want with us *" she sobbed brokenly in the darkness.

"That's very plain to me now, Barbara. We've been kidnaped, and will have to wait and see. From the remarks of the leader when they captured us, it is clear that they have by some mistake assumed that you are my half-sister, Elaine. He seemed to think it a great joke that they had planned to kidnap me alone and then added to their capture, quite unintentionally, by taking what they believe is both the Crampton children."

"Well, Bobbie, it'll serve them right to tell them how badly fooled they are."

"Oh, no! no! Barbara, that's the very thing which is my greatest worry—your safety. I am convinced that you will be treated better and more respectfully if they think you are Elaine. They are not likely to ask us to correct their belief, and cannot therefore hold it against us for not enlightening them. Make no mistake; if they separate us for questioning, let's have it understood now that if they do ask us, we both shall agree that they are right—that you are really Elaine."

"Perhaps you are right, and you'd better begin to call me Elaine now, so in case we have to speak to each other in their presence, you will not forget to call me by your sister's name."

"All right then, 'Elaine'. How do you like your new name?"

Their speech had been carried on in an undertone, scarcely louder than a whisper, with their faces so close in this pitch-dark room that Bobbie felt her soft breath on his cheek every time she pronounced a word.

"The name's all right. It doesn't matter, Bobbie. Oh, but I'm so glad you are here with me. I'd be scared to death if I were alone with such men."

"Well, remember one thing, and that is, don't let them see that you are afraid. Ruffians are always known to respect a bold front more than one they believe they can terrify. In language such as I imagine 'Red' would rust, I'm advising you, as well as myself, that we must at all times 'keep a stiff upper lip'."

"Bobbie, I'm so dead tired, I can scarcely stand. Couldn't 1 lie down and rest just for a minute?—But, Bobbie, you must

sit right by my side and keep hold of my hand all the time."

"I'll keep hold of your hand all right. Poor little girl, I guess I've dragged you into plenty of trouble. But you know I never meant to. Yes, you lie down and take a little nap, while I keep watch; for although it's so dark I wouldn't take any chances of what they might do next."

"Oh, Bobbie, I'm so sorry; you must be very tired too."

"Well, Barbara," he said, forgetting the agreement to call her Elaine, "I am tired, but also both hungry and thirsty. Let me lead you to the corner where we saw the cup and pail. Perhaps it contains a supply of drinking water."

There was indeed a bountiful supply of fresh tasting spring water, but both drank sparingly. Again they felt their way carefully back across the room to the bed, and Bobbie examined the quality of the bedding by passing his hands over it; and noting that the linens smelled sweet and fresh, he said; "All right! It seems all O.K. to me. After you have slept a while, until I feel I can't keep awake any longer, I'll awaken you to keep watch while I take a few winks."

But just then they heard a key turn in the door. Presently Red and another entered. They brought a table and two stools, set them near the bed, and placed the lamp in the middle. Then Red produced two large ham sandwiches on plates which he set on the table. The other went to the bucket, where Bobbie had already found water, filled two tumblers, and set them near the two plates.

"There you are kids, you must be hungry. Just turn down the light low when you are through. Don't try any monkeyshines, and you'll have no trouble."

Then the two bandits retired, this time seemingly more impressed, or in a way more satisfied, with the youngsters' attitude of maintaining an obedient silence.

"Gee, Barbara, those look good enough to eat. Let's try one," said Bobbie as he carried one of the plates over to the bed, where Barbara had dropped over from fatigue. "Can you take just one little bite? I don't like you to go to sleep on an empty stomach, now that we have food."

"Sure, Bobbie, I'll taste your sandwich," she said, biting

into the slices healthily. “Oh—oh, they're good, Bobbie; take a bite yourself”—as she saw he was going politely to feed her first. “Please take every other bite,” and she smiled up, a tired little smile, a gesture of bravery.

“Very well, ‘Elaine’, but you'll have to bite man's size mouthfuls if you are to get your share,” he said, attempting to be humorous.

But before the second sandwich was finished, she dropped her head on the pillow and still clasping Bobbie's hand was breathing regularly in a deep, refreshing sleep.

Without losing her hold on his right hand, Bobbie was able to reach to an edge of the table with his left and draw it closer. Then he could turn down the light of the kerosene lamp. Seated on the bed near its head, he then prepared to maintain his watch while his little companion gained much needed rest.

Although rather puzzled when the servants informed her that Master Bob had not appeared to eat his breakfast, on the first morning of his enforced absence, Mrs. Crampton permitted the incident to pass without any investigation. True, Bobbie had several times driven to a neighboring town and been prevailed on to remain as his friend's guest until the following day.

At the factory, the timekeeper, who first discovered that Bobbie had for the first time failed to take charge of the finishing department, hesitated in reporting his absence to Mr. Crampton. He knew very well of the bitter, though unnatural, controversy between the father and son, and was not any too keen for having the elder Crampton order him out of his office, or tell him to mind his own business. For far less reason others had lost their jobs.

Barbara's absence meant little or nothing where it was a daily occurrence for girls to drop their jobs without even returning for the few pennies due them. Others were waiting at the gate to be employed; another girl was immediately assigned to Barbara’s table, and her name was unceremoniously stricken from the company's list of employees.

When, on the following morning, the servants again told

Mrs. Crampton that Bobbie was not there for breakfast, she decided to call her husband and ask if he knew any reason for Bobbie's continued absence. But before she could carry out her intention, Mr. Crampton burst into her room breathless, pale, and in a combination of visible fright and terror.

"Elinor! Elinor!—they've kidnaped Bobbie and Elaine! Look here at the demand for ransom which I found on my desk this morning."

Shaking like a leaf, Mr. Crampton brought out from his inner coat pocket an envelope with a black border, such as may be purchased for death announcements. Then he handed his wife the opened contents. He plumped himself down on a davenport, exhausted, and stared at his wife in dismay. She, however, seated herself in a comfortable chair, where the light was favorable, and commenced reading the missive aloud;

"Mr. Crampton; You will—

"1st. Obtain $50,000.00---1,500 $20 bills, 2,000 $10 bills. Must be unmarked. Wrap all into tight package. Use newspaper for wrapper. Tie well with common strong cord.

"2nd. Walk unaccompanied out of Salem on Grant Street west. Continue out upon the twelve mile Macadam road. Lay above package of money on pavement along side the concrete railing of culvert three miles out of town. Turn about immediately and walk back to Salem.

"3rd. Leave your home at 1:30 A M. sharp, Thursday, September 20th.

"4th. Divulge nothing to the police. Your children safe if instructions are carried out promptly. Any failure of our plans or interference by police or others and they will he killed.

"5th. All completed, children will arrive your home safely the following day."

The threatening letter was unsigned.

"Why, Bernard, this can't be true. I had Mrs. Pierce's letter from Denver yesterday, saying that Elaine got there in the morning. Oh, Bernard, maybe there's a mistake. I'll call Denver right away and ask to talk to Elaine."

"Oh, yes, by all means, do so. But don't give any hint of why you are calling; just ask Elaine calmly if she don't want

you to forward some other garments you think she might be wanting for mountain climbing. We must be very carefu1. Elinor, when did you last see Bobbie?"

"Bernard, I was going to call you up at the factory and tell you that he wasn't home all day yesterday or for breakfast this morning. Nor has he slept in his bed for the past two nights."

"And this is the 19th. Well, Elinor, I must rush back to the factory. Don't use the telephone to call me. I want to know if Bobbie has been on the job at the plant, and when. I'll return then, and by the time you have talked to Denver we should know if there is any basis for this demand."

Mrs. Crampton began to place her long distance call, trying to conceal her fear that her daughter might be kidnaped, while Mr. Crampton nervously seized his hat and rushed down to his car, ordering his chauffeur to drive back to the factory.

Immediately on his arrival at the plant, he summoned the timekeeper to his office. Knowing that he must appear calm, he kept the timekeeper waiting a few minutes, as if engrossed in certain letters. Then, turning about and as if just casually remembering that he had sent for this man, he said:

"Oh yes, Matson, how are things about the plant today?"

"Well, since Mr. Robert is away, the finishing end has gone along the best it can, but I guess it'll be all right."

Wincing slightly as his fears were thus confirmed, he said:

"Yes, yes, Matson, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. You know Bobbie was asked suddenly to attend a convention at Hartford." (Crampton lied, maintaining his composure with an effort.) "He asked me to arrange for someone to look after his *work,* but I completely forgot about it, and it just occurred to me now. He may be absent a few days longer, so you send O'Hara in to see me and I'll arrange for him to look after the finishing end temporarily,"

Waving Matson out he dropped his head on his desk, in an exhaustion of fear, as soon as the door had closed. He was alone, and could allow his overtaxed body a few minutes' relaxation. But, waiting only long enough to instruct O'Hara to attend to Bobbie's work, he again drove hurriedly back to Crampton Place. He found Mrs. Crampton distracted and

almost beside herself with worry. She had been connected by phone with the residence of Mrs. Pierce in Denver, but only the servants were there at the time, and would give her no information.

"Bernard, I just know my girl has been kidnaped," she raved. "Perhaps they followed her on the train and possibly the letter I received from Mrs. Pierce is a forgery. But no, why should kidnapers bother to practice such methods? Oh, Bernard, it's all a frightful mess, and you must do something. I must have my girl safely returned to me. Then hereafter I'll see that I go with her everywhere she goes."

"Elinor, I'd be glad if I could tell you our fears are groundless, but I just learned that Bobbie hasn't been at the plant yesterday or today. If it hadn't been for our disagreement at the conference, I would have noticed his absence. How they have managed to take both our children I can't comprehend, but we cannot afford to oppose the desperadoes who sent us the note."

"No, no!" wailed Mrs. Crampton. "Give them anything they want. Just so Elaine will be safe of course, 8obbie too," she added in afterthought.

Although like any executive, Crampton had always trained himself to remain calm and composed, regardless of the nature of any emergency, he was now becoming quite unequal to this ordeal of an unusual strain. At heart he loved his son far above any other consideration. The difference which had arisen in the conference pained him now; chiefly because he had opposed him so bitterly on that occasion.

"What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" he repeated over and over again, pacing the floor and waving the ransom note in his hand.

"Why, you must of course hurry to the bank at once. Get the money here to the house, and try to pull yourself together. You have a difficult job ahead of you this night, and must prepare for it."

"Yes, yes, Elinor, that's right!" I'll go at once for it."

When he presented himself at the bank twenty minutes later and asked to see the president, he was shown immediately to

the private office.

"Well, well, Mr. Crampton, this is indeed a pleasant surprise. Here, have a cigar," said the banker, pushing a box of imported cigars toward Crampton.

"Thank you, Mr. Morrison." Taking a cigar he bit the end of it and accepted the light Morrison offered.

"How is business with you, Crampton? Can you note any change? Seems all we do here is cash checks. Deposits are the lowest we have had in years."

"Business? Oh yes—that's it—business" Crampton muttered, as he now tried to think how he could best word his request for money.

"It's bad, Morrison, very bad, and no improvement in sight." This he had stated on so many occasions that Morrison could think of nothing consoling to reply.

"Morrison," said Crampton finally, taking a new hold of himself. "I'm needing some currency for an emergency deal. I want you to cash my check for $30,000, and of course you will treat the matter confidentially."

"Well—yes—Ah—hem—Oh—by the way—Now, Mr. Crampton, really, you can't be afraid our bank will close up? I'll be glad to bring in a copy of the bank examiner's report. He was here last Monday. I assure you our condition is 100 per cent liquid." Plainly, Morrison did not relish the thought that perhaps his most highly valued and largest depositor was planning to begin drawing out blocks of $50,000 at a time, in fear that the bank was unsound. Well he knew that if Crampton withdrew all his deposits, he (Morrison) would be hopelessly ruined.

"No, Morrison, you've got me all wrong," said Crampton. "I'm only wanting this $50,000 for a specific deal. I want 1,100 twenty dollar bills and 2,000 ten dollar bills. I'll make out my check and you have it brought here, so we can wrap it."

"Very well, Mr. Crampton. I'll have my messenger bring it here."

Arriving back at his home soon after, Crampton carried the package into his wife's room. Together they secreted the money on a high shelf of a clothes closet.

Then the door bell rang and a Western Union message was delivered to Mrs. Crampton. Opening the envelope she read aloud the following message;

> "Dear Elinor, spending a few days at our mountain camp stop will write later love.— (Signed) Robina Pierce."

"And not a word about Elaine. Oh, Bernard, now I know Elaine never reached Denver." With a loud scream, she fell headlong on the floor, swooning.

Holden, the butler, and a maid rushed into the room and gazed at the prostrate, helpless figure.

"Bring Mrs. Crampton some water! And, Holden, you telephone for Dr. Wilkins. Tell him to drop everything and rush here."

He had sat down beside his wife and called her name ax he stroked her pale forehead.

Although Dr. Wilkins came quickly, Mrs. Crampton had recovered and was quite able to walk about when he arrived. However, Dr. Wilkins saw at once that his services were more needed for the head of the house. His experienced eye noted the trembling hands usually so steady. After he was satisfied that the wife was in no danger, he bluntly said: "Well, well, Mr. Crampton, you appear tired to me. Here, let me feel your pulse; you won't have to worry now about Mrs. Crampton's fainting."

"All right, Doc, look me over if you like," and he sat down in a chair.

"Too fast, too fast!" The doctor shook his head in a few moments. Then deliberately he brought out his thermometer and placed it in Crampton's mouth.

"An even 100," he announced directly. "Sorry, Mr. Crampton, but you're a sick man. You'll have to go to bed immediately, and I'll send a nurse to take charge of you at once."

"Oh, nonsense, Doc! I'm all O.K. Why should I go to bed!"

"We can't argue about it. Your face and forehead are dry and parched, with your pulse racing and fever mounting. There's nothing else to do."

Trembling now more than ever, in fear of failure of the trip which he realized he must make in the early morning hours, the man appeared on the point of collapsing completely.

The nurse arrived very soon, and Mr. Crampton was placed under her care.

Mrs. Crampton now proved very troublesome, as she constantly came and went from his room, wringing her hands. With the nurse present, Crampton could only remain silent, as through it all he realized that no one must know about this kidnaping of his children.

After a while, thinking all was quite as it should be, the nurse stepped from the room, saying she would be back in ten minutes.

Crampton had been concentrating his mental forces on possible ways of escaping from the room at 1;30 A.M. and delivering the money at the lonely bridge designated by the kidnapers.

"Elinor," he called, as soon as the nurse had disappeared, "you must calm yourself before this nurse, so she will not suspect anything. We must make sure that she does not stay on watch tonight. I will tell her I am feeling much better, and you suggest that she can retire—that you will remain with me. Then I will dress and take the walk."

"OK, no, no, Bernard, that will not work. You wouldn't get beyond our own yard. Bernard, I'll go insane if you don't think of a practical plan to save the children's lives."

"Hum, yes, oh yes, Elinor, we'll have to think of some plan." Then the nurse returned and Mrs. Crampton assumed an air of affected indifference.

"Elinor," he called again, when next they were alone. "I've hit upon a plan, and you must follow my instructions carefully. There is one man who would give his very life to help Bobbie. I treated him rotten when he took Bobbie's view at the conference, and then discharged him. You must drive to Jameson's home, and bring him here. Tell him it is vitally important. We will then have to take him into our confidence, and ask him to carry the package of money to the culvert."

In a short while Jameson returned with Mrs. Crampton.

Then the nurse was asked to permit Crampton to hold a private conversation with his former shipping

Although Crampton had prided himself that he never was apologetic to others, he now broke down completely before Jameson.

He had told Mrs. Crampton before she went after Jameson that he was going to offer him $100 for executing the hazardous mission for him, and in addition would reinstate him to his position of shipping clerk at the factory. But when he was giving Jameson his instructions, Crampton in the excitement quite unintentionally neglected to say one word about any reward for the service.

It would not have made the slightest difference to Jameson, however. He needed no other incentive but the fact that the life of a young man dear to him was in danger, and he was really thankful that he had an opportunity to assist in his rescue.

Fearing that if the bank had enclosed less than the $10,000 the kidnapers had asked, her daughter's life would be further jeopardized, Mrs. Crampton insisted that they unwrap and count carefully the contents of the package. They found the amount to be correct.

So without being .promised compensation of any kind whatsoever, Jameson set out promptly at 1;30 A.M. with the package under his arm. His heavy overcoat felt comfortable in the coolness of the night, and also served as an added protection, Jameson being a smaller man than Crampton. He would have to walk about four miles, and he stepped along briskly. Often had he been out upon this road, and he knew well the location of the culvert mentioned by the abductors.

Only one car had whizzed by as he tramped along in the darkness. At the culvert all was calm and apparently no one was thereabout. But Jameson, shutting his feet noisily about on the culvert to make his presence known, laid the package at the base of the concrete railing and commenced his long jaunt back to the city.

After walking about ten minutes, Jameson heard, from the level space of the waste land and back near the culvert, the roar of a powerful gasoline engine. Looking about, he was able to

discern in the starlight, the shadowy form and outline of a dark winged airplane. Without wasting time to spiral for altitude, it seemed to bear directly toward the north, and as its distance increased the sound of the motor died out completely.

"They certainly used a most modern method of collecting the ransom," mused Jameson as he trudged on toward town. His deduction was that the successful delivery of the ransom ought to forecast a speedy and safe return of the young Cramptons.

As he had agreed, Jameson went directly back to Crampton place, to report the apparent success of his mission.

Before the smuggling of whiskey into the States from Canada had become an unprofitable business, "Doc" Tracy had always been able to hold an almost despotic control over his four companions. Their equipment consisted of a speed boat, a high-powered sedan, and a peculiarly isolated island base in the St. Lawrence River. On the upper end of this island were two hills, covered with a thick growth of trees. Among these trees "Doc" and his gang had built two shacks and there three of the number attended to the purchase and storing of quantities of the Canadian whiskies, to be later delivered in the 5tates. On the lower or east end of the island was a level tract of gravel bed, more than a hundred acres in extent and with scarcely any perceptible obstacle. Often, as they were lying about between jobs, "Doc" would look out upon the floor-like expanse and say boastingly: "Boys, one of these days I'll buy an airplane and we'll deliver the stu9 anywhere they want in two or three hours. Safer and better and a heap less work. A more perfect landing field no one could find in the whole world."

However, "Doc" did all of the thinking of his outfit, and sensed long before telling any of the others that their days of whiskey smuggling were soon to be a thing of the past. After supplying his men liberally with food, clothes, tobacco, and other requirements, "Doc" secreted the profits which amounted to well over twenty-five thousand dollars. The money was hidden in an unknown cave, an arrangement entirely satisfactory to the others, who owned a share in the profits.

Then came one whole long summer during which not one delivery was made. In the cellar below one of the shacks were stored whiskies that had cost them $6,000. But the crews of Prohibition Enforcement officers had been increased four fold, and plan as "Doc" would, there was not a chance of breaking through their lines successfully. Not only did the idleness wear out the patience of his men, but each began to think about other and safer plans of ventures, and more and more frequently they hinted that perhaps they had better disband, each to receive his share, and give up forever this dangerous illegal business.

"All right, fellows," said "Doc" one night, as "bed," speaking for the other illiterate comrades, had again broached the subject. "There's only one thing, and if you'll stick, we'll clean up so everyone can leave with

$10,000. Right now there is less than $4,000 for each, But we'll deliver what we have on hand and enough more to net each one $10,000; then it'll be quit for good."

"But, Doc, they'll mow us down the minute we set foot across the river," objected Red. "Shooting it out with the bulls don't get us nothing. We got to figure out some other way into the states."

"Never mind, you fellows. I know how we'll do it. I'm going away for a week or ten days. You fellows just lay low, and when I get back I'll tell you how we'll deliver the next lot, and it won't be long either."

True to his word "Doc" landed on the island only ten days later with a beautiful job of an airplane purchased in Detroit.

At the controls was young "Hal" Wilson, reputed on the west coast to be the outstanding dare-devil stunt flyer of them all. Paging $9,000 in cash for the plane, "Doc" had lured this unemployed pilot to accept the job of handling it. He told "Hal" that he was to fly with loads of express in three and four-hour hauls.

There was a long argument between him and "Doc" when they had landed and "Doc" admitted the nature of his business. But "Doc" was a persuasive talker and eventually convinced Hal that he would in no sense be connected with the actual

smuggling. He was merely flying the plane according to "Doc's" orders and could at no time be held responsible. Besides Hal had recently spent all he had while working his way through a university in the east. Being completely broke and with no chance for a job, he decided that this $â 00 per month was too good to pass up. A few months of it and he could manage to switch to some more agree able occupation.

A hangar was built on the protected end of the expanse of hard gravel bed. Hal painted the wings of the huge plane a dark gray, and with goodly supplies of high-test gasoline stored in separate fuel houses, the new equipment was in every respect complete and ideal for their purpose.

Thereafter "Doc" spent a week, driving about in the States with Hal at the wheel of the sedan, making notes of obscure meadowlands on the spots "Doc" considered most logically situated for his purpose.

The one which excelled all others was a Bat, grassy stretch, nearly as large as the gravel beds on their island and located along the lonely paved roadway across the twelve miles of waste land west of Salem. When Hal told him he could land just as well at night, with the aid of special searchlights, "Doc" was delighted, and he instructed Hal to make immediate arrangements to equip the plane with such lights.

"Doc's" mind was working fast. To him there were new possibilities, compared with which the profit in whiskey smuggling was mere pin money.

For the execution of his new ideas he felt certain he could rely on his original crew, but anything he did must be unknown to the young pilot. Consequently at 2:30 in the morning of September 20th, when Hal nosed the plane into the northward sky without worrying about a spiral for altitude, he did not know that the case in which "Doc" was supposed to have the payment of the load of whiskey unloaded and left behind contained instead $50,000 of ransom money.

Immediately before boarding the plane, "Doc" had picked up the package which Jameson had laid down, and hastily tearing it open noted that its contents were the required number of bank wrapped packages of bills of the specified

denominations. Hal thought "Doc" had met the buyer of the load which was left, and which wax afterward loaded by two of "Doc's" own crew into the sedan, which was driven there from the west after the plane had departed.

"Red" had been another passenger as they flew to the Salem waste lands, but "Doc" ordered Red to join the others and drive back in the sedan after their short delivery of the whiskey was accomplished. "Doc" explained briefly to Hal that he was glad to be flying back to the island without "Red."

"You know, Hal, less than a month ago that lousy bunch were ready to walk out on me and leave me on the island. Of course they're ignorant bums, but they ought to have a little gratitude and appreciate all that I've done for them the past five years. Hal, you know it's only three weeks you've been with me, but I'd rather do you a good turn than that whole gang. You've got more guts and appreciation in a minute than they could have in a lifetime."

"Well, 'Doc,' I don't suppose they have had any chance in life at that. I don't think they are so bad.

"You don't know them like I do, Hal. Do you know, Hal, I feel like I'm just about ready to cut out this life. I remember you didn't like to be in this racket at first, until I talked you into it. Well, Hal, I'm human too. I feel like I had about enough of it. Let's split the stake we've got now and fly away. We'll sell the plane and get about $5,000 more for it, or I'll put the plane in with your share and you can go into barnstorming with it and make a lot of money that way.

"Well, 'Doc' not for me! It wouldn't be right to beat the rest out of their share. All I'll want is a month's pay. They've worked a long time and took some long chances with you. I wouldn't want any of their share." Hal kept on watching the larger or smaller clusters of lights, indicating the cities he was passing over at an altitude of 4,000 feet, and checking his progress with his instruments. He should soon see the first waters of the St. Lawrence.

"Doc" was quite taken back. He had thought Hal would

jump at a chance to accept a sizable amount of cash and get out without any risk. He knew Hal was ignorant of the kidnaping and figured that if they quit, Hal need never be any wiser.

After a long period of thought, he resumed: "Oh, I guess you're right, Hal, and to show you I'm a square guy I'll give you two months' pay and we'll get out right tonight."

"O.K., 'Doc,' if I get a thousand berries I'll be on m*y* way, and I know a lot of things I can do with the money."

"I'll leave the gang's share of what's coming to them at the shack with Burke. After that I'll ask you to fly me to San Antonio, where I'll pay you off for two months."

Burke had been Ie ft alone to guard the prisoners on the island, and this otter by "Doc" to entrust the money due the others seemed satisfactory to Hal. He figured it wasn't any of his business if "Doc" wanted to break away and go straight. Making a beautiful landing on the island with the aid of his searchlights, Hal taxied up to the hangar.

"All right, Hal; you hurry up and get her filled up with gas and oil. Better stack in all the five gallon cans of gas you can carry in the express compartment. I'll go and fix things up with Burke and get back as fast as I can. So be all set to take the air when I get back."

"All right, 'Doc,' I'll be all ready."

A cloud passing over the island had intensified the darkness and Hal was groping about in the darkness. He had emptied one can of gas into the plane's tank when he happened to glance in the direction of the shack, some two blocks away.

There was a light in one of the small, high windows. Hal had never before. noticed any and it excited his curiosity. Then it darkened and lit up again. A short flash, then a long exposure. "Looks like a code to me," Hal mused to himself. "By gosh, it is," he said out loud. "Again HELP SOS HELP SOS in the Morse code," his study of this telegraphic dot-and-dash system, coming clearly into his mind, from his days at the university.

"I wonder what can be the matter with Burke. He's all alone at the shack," though Hal. Then the conversation with "hoc" about beating the others out of their rightful shares of money

occurred to him, and he wondered if there was any trouble in consequence. He could hardly imagine the calm acting Burke giving "Doc" trouble. Yet someone was calling for help and Hal determined to investigate the matter. The flashes were still continuing and without thinking to drop the wrench he was holding, he started to run toward the shack.

Stealing up to the front of the shack quietly, Hal tiptoed into the main room. There was no sound and he cast his flash light about and was surprised to *see* no one in the room. Then he opened the door to the le ft. It was unlocked, but like the other was also deserted. "The signals must have come from the room on the right," he mused, and seeing a key, unlocked and opened the door.

Bobbie had jumped down from the improvised scaffold, made from the bed, which he had completely unassembled for that purpose. Barbara was hidden behind him, and he held her there with both hands, very curious to know who had opened the door. He had set the lamp in its place on the table.

"Why, Bobbie Crampton, what are you doing in this place?" Hal exclaimed in astonishment. "Was it you calling for help from the window?"

"Hal Wilson! My old classmate! Sure it was I signaling you. But how come that you could find us in this Godforsaken country?"

"Why, Bobbie, I don't get your meaning. I wasn't looking for you."

"Well, wasn't it you who just made a landing out on the gravel beds?"

"Yes, it was, but—but—say, Bobbie and say—say—you—you—what's Bar—Barbara here for?"

"Oh, Hal;" screamed the happy girl. "God must have sent you. Hurry, Hal, take us away I Bobbie and I can't stay here another minute." She had run to the arms of her brother, whom she had not seen since childhood.

Hal was puzzled, and looked from one to the other in scorn. "My sister," he said, "here with my old classmate! I can't get it through my head."

"Nev er mind about that, Hal, we were both kidnaped and

have been held in this room now for over two days. I f you are alone, we are in no hurry; but really, Hal, didn't you come searching for us?"

"No, but I think I've got this thing figured out now. So 'Doc' is really a kidnaper 1 No wonder he wants me to fly him straight to San Antonio. Well, we'll see about that too. But now you two will have to hurry. Perhaps if we work fast I can get you out of this and do more than that at the same time. 'Doc' will be back at the plane any time now."

Closing and locking the room, 1lal also took the key, so that in case 'Doc' came in there would be less chance of his discovering the escape of his prisoners.

Each of the boys taking one of Barbara's hands, they ran to the plane. Hal helped them into the express compartment and handed Bobbie a shining blue steel .38 automatic pistol.

"Now, you two, keep back there all quiet till we land. After we take off I'll spiral a few times and 'Doc' won't know in what direction we are going, or where we are. Then I'll land on the municipal air field of Salem. I'll tell 'Doc' our engine needs an adjustment. I'll just choke our motor a few times, and he'll be glad to land to be safe. If I think he needs it to make him behave, I'll give him a nice tailspin. So be on the lookout, expecting any kind of bouncing about as I might even fly upside down and throw in a few loops for good measure. As I think of it, I believe I can make him pretty sick and a very helpless man before I land, and consequently in no condition to put up any fight. We'll spiral about the field a lot of times to attract as great a crowd *to* our landing as possible. It will be daylight long before we get to Salem, and people will be getting up, and I only hope there will be a policeman or two there. Bobbie, you will have to keep him covered from the time we land."

"Hey there, Hal, who are you talking to?" came in the grub voice of "Doc," as he emerged on the run out of the darkness and all out of breath.

"Me talking?" Hal hesitated as he turned about.

"Oh yes, 'Doc,' I guess I'm a pretty happy boy to think of starting life back in the States all on the level, and with a

thousand dollars. You know, 'Doc,' you're a real sport to treat me so white, paying me for two months. Yes, 'Doc,' I've been singing about it, and telling myself what I'll do, ever since you left. Hurry, 'Doc,' let's get going," he concluded; and "Doc" took the young man's enthusiasm as being serious.

The motor roared as Hal watched it gradually come up to the required number of revolutions. The engine was still hot from the incoming flight, and needed no lengthy wait to warm up. Then they took off to the south.

"Doc" was satisfied that his plan was succeeding to perfection, and that before the others of his gang would know that he had deserted them without leaving them a dollar, he would be safely on the Mexican border. Hal carried on iris light chatter, occasionally whistling for a change, and directly the older man dropped back in his seat beside Hal, sound asleep.

"This is fine," thought Hal, knowing that asleep "Doc" would cause no trouble. Daylight had come when Hal turned his course directly toward Salem and began to spiral over the city in long sweeps, so as not to disturb his companion, who still slept.

At the landing field he dipped, and saw a few persons about, but not the number he wished to have present. Then a new thought struck him. Quickly he wrote s note on the paper intended to trace his route. Then he tore it from its frame, opened his emergency tool kit, left only a pair of pliers and a wrench for weight, and with the note stuffed inside, dropped it over the side as he was above the field.

He was rewarded after flying around the town once more, in seeing below an attendant waving a quickly made white flag.

On the paper Hal had written: "Call police squad to the air field at once. Landing with the Crampton kidnaper Desperate character. Be prepared. Wave white signal if O.K." He had signed it "Bobbie Crampton," to assure action.

Soon "Doc" awakened and rubbed his eyes: "Oh, I say, Hal, it's a nice bright day. How far are we on our way?"

"Whoope e," shouted Hal, "what's that?" as his motor spattered. "Doc" did not see that Hal had cut down the throttle, choking the motor. At the same time Hal nosed the plane

almost straight down upon the millsite below. “Well, what do you know about that?” shouted Hal. “Our timer must be old and we’ll have to land and set it right again.”

“All right, but how about a field? You can't land on the house tops,” said “Doc.”

“There must be a field here somewhere,” Hal said, as if searching about, but in reality keeping purposely away from it, wanting to give time for the police to arrive before he landed.

Then he began climbing higher and higher in slow circles so great that the inexperienced man could not realize they were getting farther and farther away from the ground below. When Hal saw the altimeter register 8,000 feet, he suddenly pushed his stick all the way ahead to the left, and the plane went into a series of tailspins. Hal acted as if he were trying desperately to right her. He would not have needed to act for “Doc's” benefit, as his companion had already grabbed his seat with a deathlike grip and before his eyes was nothing but a mass of black, fleeting objects as the sensation of blood rushing into his head caused a fainting, giddy, almost unconscious condition. Hal knew what had happened, but as he righted the ship and saw the burly fellow shake his head in returning consciousness, he put the ship into a loop, and again “Doc” went out mentally, so Hal added a few more loops for good measure. “Boy,” thought Hal, “if I could only depend on him staying like that for a while, I might hand him over to the police before he ever comes to.”

Hal then flew over the field again and could see that several cars had driven up on the ground and men were running about in excitement.

“Doc” was too shaken to remonstrate about the roughness of their flight and Hal proceeded with other feats, always shouting: “ ‘Doc,’ look out! we've got to land. I can't hold her," or “Hang on! here we go again,” as they went into another tailspin. They were near the ground and the groups of spectators below were holding their breath at the unheard-of gyrations and antics none of them at Salem had ever seen executed before.

Convinced that he had bounced the unconscious “Doc”

sufficiently to make him submissive and easy to handle, Hal prepared to land.

Several hundred persons were now on the field, and Hal maneuvered so as not to endanger anyone on the ground. From the lower end of the field, he came, intending to taxi to the hangars and, he hoped, into the arms of waiting police. As he touched the ground, some broken bottle or other sharp object must have punctured one of his tires; and as the ship slipped over to one side, the wing caught the ground, flopping the plane completely upon its back and demolishing its propeller. Before any of the occupants of the plane had time to emerge, as fortunately none were seriously injured, the police arrived. By the time "Doc" had regained consciousness from this last unlooked-for stunt on level ground, he was safely handcuffed and in the Salem patrol wagon. The police also assumed charge of the suit case containing the ransom money and other currency, which "Doc" had taken from the cave.

Bobbie, Barbara, and Hal then, though a sorry sight with torn clothes and disheveled hair, soiled hands and faces, engaged a taxi and drove to Crampton Place.

The police up to the time of receiving Hal's invitation to come to the air field had not known there had been a kidnaping in the Crampton family. They immediately phoned Mrs. Crampton to ask if she could verify the information in the note signed "Bobbie." She admitted the truth, then hastened at once to advise Mr. Crampton, who was still sick and in bed. The police had then hastened to the air £cld.

When the three young people arrived at his home, as Bobbie would not hear of their going elsewhere, there was a scene of excusable joy.

With his son safely returned to him, Mr. Crampton visibly older, wept in his gladness. When Bobbie announced that the young lady, "Miss Barbara Wilson," sister of his old classmate at the university who had rescued them, was to be announced as engaged to be married to him, the father who, at any other time, would have thrown up his hands in horror at such a thing, now gladly acquiesced and the wedding was set, according to Bobbie's wishes to take

place the same day.

Attending the ceremony with a neatly uniformed nurse on each side of his wheel chair, Mr. Crampton presented to his son and the bride, in addition to the ransom money which had been returned to him by the police, a letter stipulating that the presidency of the Crampton Manufacturing Company should be transferred to Bobbie upon his, Mr. Crampton's, immediate resignation.

Before the end of that day the newspapers of Salem carried the joy of the occasion into the homes of everyone connected with the plant, by announcing Bobbie's first order as one increasing the wage scale 20 per cent. The resolution which had been submitted by Bobbie on the occasion of the stormy session at which his father took such violent issue with him, was made effective the next day.

Hal who, since he was ten, had not seen or again heard of the little eight year old sister who had been separated from him on the accidental death of their parents, now was brought into the plant to assume the position of foreman of the finishing department.

It had been very puzzling and embarrassing to Mrs. Crampton to discover her mistake when she started to embrace Barbara ax her own daughter but she was amply compensated by the knowledge that her girl had after all been spared the terrible experience at the island back.

No one was more modestly happy than Jameson, who in addition to being reinstated to his job as shipping clerk, was practically forced, against his most determined protests, to accept Crampton's check for $500.

The favorable advertising which accrued as a result of the coast-to-coast publicity of the thrilling Crampton kidnaping, so stimulated rind increased the demand for every Crampton product that the factory was literally swamped with heavy orders. Bobbie, making a favorable deal with his competitors, the Laurence Company, took over their entire business, and placed that on his own basis of increased wages and shorter, easier working conditions for everyone.

At Bobbie's own request, no attempt was made to

apprehend the other kidnapers, who could very likely have been easily located from the knowledge held by Hal. With "Doc" Tracy securely housed in the Federal prison at Atlanta for the balance of his life, there was indeed nothing further to fear.

A PEEP INTO THE HEREAFTER

THE singular story of a peep into the next world, which I am about to relate, came to my attention just after I had returned from the funeral of a very dear friend. Having been childhood playmates, I do not recall when we first met, for it seemed as though we had known each other always. Therefore his death, coming suddenly, gave me a severe shock.

The night before the funeral I visited the place where he lay, to look once more into the face that had been so dear to me. The funeral parlor was deserted at that hour of the night, much to my relief, and I was able to remain as long as I desired, alone with him, He looked very much the same as I had seen him some two weeks before, save that his lips were slightly drawn together. With that exception, he looked almost as if asleep.

Finally, becoming tired of standing, I moved away from the casket, and took a seat in the first row of chairs, which were arranged in rows, as in a chapel. This was the first thought that struck me: Here was my oldest and dearest friend stretched out completely helpless in the long black box that served as an altar to the chapel. A human sacrifice 1 To what?

Never again would I see his friendly face, his pleasant smile. Never again—except in my memory. What was the meaning of it all?

I must have sat there for about three quarters of an hour, asking myself questions like that—and answering

"It all leads to one fact," I murmured, "Though his soul may live on, the part of him that I had learned to love was destroyed when his heart stood still. Never again will I feel his warm handclasp, see his sunny smile, or hear his mellow voice. This human frame will soon again be dust. 'Dust thou art; to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul.' No! But I miss him. Not his soul."

No sooner had I muttered these words than a firm hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned around, ashamed, as one usually is when caught in the act of talking to himself. There was no one there I Except for myself, the room was empty! I still felt

the weight and looked at my shoulder. I saw nothing but the wrinkles in my coat caused by the pressure!

It ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and I felt nothing more. Let anyone explain it as he will, that is one experience I shall never forget.

The next day, after the funeral, I dined with Doctor X., a well known New York physician, and told him of my experience and my thoughts on the matter—my reflections on death and the curious incident of the invisible hand.

Dr. X. seemed quite impressed. We talked for a while on reincarnation, on the seven cycles and the length of time required between lives, on the various visits souls have been reported to pay at the time their mortal bodies breathed their last, and how the subject of death is no longer shunned as a topic of conversation.

"I believe that people as a whole have less fear of death nowadays," said the doctor, "and the reason for that is this: The depression taught the American people a good lesson. They have learned not to devote their entire lives to the chase of the 'almighty dollar.' They are devoting part of their time now to attempts to solve the scheme of the reef Almighty. We're all beginning to wonder why we're here and where we're going."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," l said musingly, "if we knew where we are going? And what kind of a reception we'll get when we pass through the door?"

The doctor sat staring into space through the front window of the dining room. We were having our after dinner smoke. Sternly, he half-closed his eyes and began talking.

"I know one case, one in a million, when a person passed through that mysterious door into the next world, met his reception committee, and was glad enough to come back to this world and start over. The strange part of the story is that he came back, immediately. He was a patient of mine and a well-known man, a millionaire, so I'll name him Brown. Harris W. Brown. I was, and still am, his family physician.

"In the summer of '29 I went upstate on a fishing trip with him. We spent an enjoyable fortnight, and on our way back to Gotham he decided to visit one of his factories in that part of

the state. If I remember rightly, a man named Carr was the factory manager who showed us around. It would be difficult for me to forget the conversation that took place between the two. Almost word for word, Carr, started like this as he led us through the factory:

" 'You see, Mr. Brown, this is all piecework here. Each factory hand gets paid according to the amount of work she turns out. Now in this department we find that women do better work than men and are satisfied with smaller wages. We have men in the mating department though. I'll show you through there next. It's on the floor below. We might stop at the factory nursery on our way down.'

"Brown wheeled around as if the man had suddenly struck him. 'The what?' he demanded.

" 'Oh, I forgot to tell you that I had a nursery added last spring,' the manager hastened to explain, 'You see, a good many of these women have two or three children, many under two years old. Now you can readily see that by providing proper nourishment and medical aid for these babies, we perform an act of charity as well as sustain the morale of—'

" 'To hell with an act of charity!' Brown harshly shouted. 'I'm not going to let the profits of this factory leak out on a nursery for the community brats 1'

" 'If you'll just look in here, sir, you'll see the necessity of the nursery. See that little redheaded fellow there? Blind! Born blind. And this little tot here—infantile paralysis—but getting better I'---

" 'See here, Carr, I'm not running a hospital for—'

" 'And this little undernourished girl—the nurse tells me that she has gained seven pounds since she came under your care.'

" 'Off care l I repeat, Carr, I am not running any—'

" 'And see this tiny chap, Mr. Brown,' Carr suavely continued. 'He was born a hunchback, poor little fellow. He loves this nursery.'

" 'Nursery be damned 1' Brown exploded, 'Why should I turn one of my best factories into a breeding place for the scum of the earth?'

"The factory manager opened his eyes in amazement; his jaw fell. He was speechless.

" 'Not another word, Carr,' Brown snapped, 'I want this room turned into a repair shop immediately. Understand?'

"Carr tactfully nodded.

" 'And no brats allowed on factory property.' Brown looked at his watch. 'Umm! Here it's eleven thirty. I must get back to New York. My boy gets in from Paris today'.'

" 'That's nice,' Carr weakly returned. 'We can go out this door, sir. Here's the parking lot.'

" 'By the way, Carr, I'll want to see you in New Tork the latter part of this month. I want you to meet my boy and break him in here soon. He's played long enough since he finished college. Been over in Paris painting, but I'll take that rot out of his head.'

" 'I'll be delighted to meet your son, Mr. Brown. Here's your car now.'

" 'Yep I Well, follow out all those notes I gave you, Carr. And don't forget to make a repair shop out of that nursery.'

"As Brown sank deep into the seat of the limousine, Carr leaned on the door and in one last plea said: 'Mr. Brown, it is a repair shop. A super repair shop, repairing little temples of the Master—each tiny temple containing a human soul!'

" 'Bosh!' Brown roughly exclaimed. The limousine lunged forward and soon Carr and his nursery of little souls were lost in the distance, and forgotten."

****

The doctor lighted a fresh cigar and proceeded: "Brown and I drove right to the dock, and none too soon. The passengers were crowding down the gangplank. I saw his son first. By his side, with her arm in his, walked a little French girl, beautiful. Father and son greeted each other and then came the revelation. Susanna had modeled for his canvas in Paris; they had fallen in love; they had postponed the marriage ceremony until they could get his father's sanction.

"For the second time that day, Brown exploded. I began to fear for his weak heart, but it stood up under the strain. In the fewest words possible, he bade the boy to get rid of 'this

French hussy' before he ever set foot in the family mansion again. Although the boy's face flamed, he said nothing. Brown turned on his heel and asked me to accompany him home, leaving the young couple standing there.

"On arriving at the house we found they had taken s cab and had beaten us there. Mrs. Brown tried to act aa mediator, but it wee quite useless. Brown was ax firm as he was cruel. He maintained that he would not allow Harris, Jr., to give the family name to 'an artist's model from the streets of Paris.'

"The girl spoke a little English, and tried to make him understand that she came of good lineage; tire mother pleaded; the son lost his temper and threatened, but all to no avail. Brown, in his turn, threatened to disown the boy if the marriage took place. The scene was ended by Brown declaring he would pay the girl's passage back to France, and he ordered her to meet him at the dock on the morrow.

"Well, the following day the girl's passage was booked, but she did not show up. Young Brown packed his clothes and, against his mother's pleading, left home. It was soon rumored among the younger set that the couple were living in Greenwich Village.

"So everyone's plans were shattered. The boy stuck to his painting, rather than follow in his father's footsteps. The mother, thinking that she could finally prevail upon her husband to change his mind, asked her son not to marry the girl until he did so. The boy promised, but would not live under the same roof with the elder Brown until his father apologized to Suzanne for the insulting remarks made on the day they landed. He proposed to show his father that he could not remain the 'mighty molder of destiny.' 'Can Dad possibly think that, because he has millions, we must suffer in silence while he decides which road of fate our lives shell take?' the son asked. 'Who gives him the power to ruin the lives of all around him?'

"And no one knew the answer." The doctor smiled, and went on:

"Brown was a power in the textile industry. He ruled his factories and associates with an 'iron fist. Mott mcii hated him. The best that any man could have for him was admiration; he

was loved by none. I believe that I was his closest friend. Being the family physician, I was even closer to him than his lawyers. But not once did he ever give me an opportunity to see behind his cold exterior, and never did I hear him say one kind word about a living human being. I felt sorry for the man, I really did. With all his money, he had never discovered the joy of living. Although he never spoke of it, I imagine he was lonely, because of the shell that he had built around himself. Perhaps he didn't know what it was that made him forever discontented. He evidently thought that, whatever it was, the possession of more material wealth would cure it. He was doubtless in love with power, for, as his son said, he liked to have a hand in the destiny of all about him.

Brown was, in fact, a twentieth century feudal lord, a demoniacal despot who imagined himself a demigod. He certainly was a financial wizard. When the bottom fell out of Wall Street on October 31, 1929, he cleaned up twenty-one millions! He had sold all of his various stocks before the crash! Most of his associates were ruined, but not Harris W. Brown. He could have saved their investment too, if he had warned them, but he didn't. Brown was afraid they might start a selling drive before his stocks were all sold, and thus lower his profits. Next, he caused the textile mills to be closed, xo that he might force their stock much lower and buy again. The stock fell to a few cents a share, causing his fellow stockholders more loss, and putting thousands of factory employees out of *wo*rk. at such a desperate time.

"About a week after the Wall Street upset, I was called to Brown's office at two in the afternoon. It seemed that Susanne, the little artist's model had called in a final attempt to persuade Brown to sanction her marriage to his son. The same argument had arisen, resulting in the same threats. Finally, in tears, the French girl informed Brown that she was going to have a baby. She produced a doctor's certificate to prove it. Brown's weak heart almost stopped beating, so I was called. Before the girl left, he made a check out to her for ten thousand dollars. Susanne tore it up before his eyes and threw it in his face. He cursed her and she left.

"I found his condition alarming and advised a month's rest, which he said was impossible at that time. We were interrupted by his secretary advising him that there was a Mrs. Ray in the outer office, asking for an interview. Brown didn't recall the name.

" 'The mother of Gerald Ray,' the girl reminded him, 'your former bookkeeper.'

"Brown frowned, 'Is she coming to me again to have her son released? Well, tell her I will not do anything for him. He's a crook and a thief, and he deserves to serve every day of that five year sentence!'

" 'Oh, Mr. Brown,' the girl pleaded, 'please don't make me tell her that.'

" 'All right. Then send her in here; I will tell her!' Then to me, 'Have a rest in the anteroom, Doc.'

"I would have preferred leaving, for I knew that I would hear something that would be very unpleasant; but Brown insisted that I stay. No sooner had I taken a seat in the next room, which was separated only by a partition that failed to reach the ceiling, than I heard his door open and a women with an aged but kindly voice bid him good afternoon.

" 'I don't want to take much of your time, Mr. Brown, but I just had to see you. They are taking Gerald up to Sing Sing tomorrow, and I came to you once more to see if you'd—'

"No, I'm not going to do a thing, madam. There's nothing for me to do. He stole my money by forgery, and the law convicted him. Five years in the pen will teach him to let other people's money alone.'

" 'But, Mr. Brown, you don't understand,' she protested. 'He's my baby. He's still my little boy. He's all I've got. I need him. Have mercy on him—have pity on me!'

"The old lady broke down in hysterical sobs.

" 'See here, Mrs. Ray, you can't create a scene here,' I heard Brown say. 'It's useless. Young Ray stole money from me. He's a thief and a liar! He's a disgrace to you and all mankind!'

" 'He ain't! HE AIN'T! He's my little boy! He was in bad company. He was gambling, but he ain't bad at heart. Honest he ain't I— Please say you'll help him. Oh, don't say no! If

he has to go to Sing Sing, Mr. Brown, it'll kill me—that's what it'll do!'

" 'Enough of that! There's nothing I'll do. That's fina1. Now get out!'

"I awoke to the realization that both of my fists were tightly clenched. I thought of the futility of any action on my part, and relaxed them.

"Next I heard the secretary's voice. 'Did you ring, Mr. Brown?'

" 'Yes. Show this woman out and tell Mr. Carr to come in.'

" 'Yes, sir. Here, I'll help you, Mrs. Ray.'

" 'Leave her alone 1—Oh, get her out of here before I lose my temper.'

" 'Your temper is about the only thing you ever lost, isn't it, Mr. Brown?' I recognized the voice of Carr, the factory manager of the nursery episode. His voice sounded frigid.

" 'Why, hello, Carr. Have a seat,' Brown invited. 'You want to know why I closed the factories, I suppose. Well, I'll tell you. I got a good price for my American Fabric preferred, so I decided to run it down as low as possible, and buy again. Closing the factories is the quickest and surest way of running it down.'

" 'Yes, but good Lord, man, do you realize how many people you are putting out of work, just to make a little profit for yourself? To say nothing of the people who lose money on the stock when you run it down like that. I lost over twenty thousand myself. Paper margin. I want to talk to you about that while I'm here. Can you give me a little support?'

" 'Well, frankly, Carr, I don't know of any reason why I should. I pay you a good salary and you've got property.'

" 'That's true, Mr. Brown, but I had to mortgage my home to buy this stock. You know you insisted on my doing so.'

" 'I didn't insist on you mortgaging your home. I wouldn't advise anyone to do that.' Here there was a pause of almost a minute, then Brown continued: 'If I had the cash, Carr, I might let you have it, but you know everything of mine is tied up. 1 keep all my money working. I'll let you know the next time I look for the market to take a drop, so you can sell on top.'

" 'The next time will be too late. I'm ruined now. But the main thing that I came to see you about is this, Mr. Brown—those poor people who were working in your factories are really hard up. They can't afford to lose their jobs in times like these. Many of the women are widows with three or four kids to feed and clothe. Now I thought if you could just help them through the winter—'

" 'Cut out that bunk, Carr,' Brown protested. 'Have you gone crazy? I always thought you were just chickenhearted, , but now I think you're insane! Help them through the winter! Carr, allow me to help you through the *door!'* And Brown laughed, mirthlessly.

***

"Two months later," the doctor continued, "Louis Carr committed suicide. He was the last person in the world I thought would do it. Left a wife and three children. I guess he was so pressed for money that the worry drove him mad. The factory people made up a pot for his widow, though Lord knows they couldn't spare anything. It was the dead of winter, and the factories were still closed. Most of the families were destitute. "One morning, early in February, I picked up my paper on the front porch and read these lines: 'Girl's Body Found In Hudson River—Identified as Susanne DuPree, former artist's model. At 12:3i this morning the body of a young girl, approximately 23 years of age, was rescued from the frigid waters of the Hudson River by a ferryman. Upon inspection of the contents of her handbag, which was still on her wrist, she was identified as Susanne DuPree, a Parisian artist's model. Close inspection of the body revealed her to be an expectant mother. It is reported that she was the secret fiancée of the scion of a well known New York capitalist.'

"I turned to go inside as I was chilled to the bone, when a taxicab came to a sudden stop in front *of* my house with a shrill screeching of brakes, and Harris Brown, Jr., jumped out. As the boy ran up the steps a thousand thoughts ran through my mind. He bade me go into the house before he would relieve my anxiety. More time to wonder, and yet I was quite unprepared for the real cause of this excitable visit.

" 'I—I have just—killed Father,' he stammered. 'I didn't mean to. He—he struck at me first, and I—hit him—not very hard—but —he—fell—dead.'

"I thought of his father's weak heart—a stroke. And men have gone to the electric chair for less, I also thought. Donning my topcoat, and securing my medical kit, I asked the young man if he knew for certain that his father was dead. The boy looked at me significantly.

" 'I'm sure of it, Doc,' he declared softly, 'I couldn't feel his pulse nor his heartbeat, and he stopped breathing. Mother held a mirror to his lips. I even felt him growing cold when I left. I couldn't 'phone. The wires might have been crossed. Then, too, I had to get out. I'm not going back. You take the cab. I want to walk, and be in a crowd. 1 don't want to be alone.'

"1 tried to reason with the boy, but it was useless. I guess I pleaded halfheartedly; my heart was with him, and not in my duty. Duty! I often think of the brutal blunders and cruel outrages that are covered by that word. The church and the law each teach us different ways of performing our duty, and they ofttimes conflict.

"Well, I took the taxicab and we parted.

"When I arrived at Brown's house, I was greeted at the door by his wife, who seemed in better spirits than I had expected of her. Mrs. Brown announced that the capitalist had just started breathing again! AGAIN! Hurrying into the bedroom where he lay, I found his heart beating, although feebly. All the symptoms showed him to be the victim of a paralytic stroke, which afterward proved to be the case. I did what I could, but I could see very little hope for the man. For five weeks he lay unconscious, and I finally gave up all hope.

"During those five harrowing weeks that Brown lay at death's door, not a word was heard from his son. We received indirect information that the boy had been drinking heavily ever since the morning he had had the fight with his father. It seemed that after the boy was notified of his fiancée's suicide he had rushed home, charging his father with her murder. He also held the capitalist responsible for Carr's death, and believed that his attitude with Mrs. Ray had been instrumental

in driving her to an early grave, for soon after her boy had been sent to Sing Sing, she had died of a broken heart. Harris, Jr., reminded his father of all these incidents, and told him that if he weren't his father, he would kill him; but that killing was too good for the man whose name he bore. He called the older man the most fiendish murderer that human flesh had ever produced, the devil incarnate, who bred corruption and pestilence, and left in his path misery and suffering and famine and MURDER! "Brown cursed the boy and said that no son of his could talk that way to him; and in the fight that followed, Brown fell. His wife bore out the statement of his son, that Brown's heart stopped beating and his longs ceased to function.

"When I told Mrs. Brown, after the struggle of five weeks, that I could see no more hope for her husband, she pleaded with me not to give up trying to help him anyway.

" 'If he dies,' she declared, 'that will be the end of me. It will make a murderer of my son. Aside from all this worry, you know I haven't seen Harris since that night. He was drinking then and I'm afraid the boy has been drinking ever since. You can just imagine the agony I've gone through.'

" 'Yes, I know, Mrs. Brown,' I replied, 'and you need a rest, too, or you'll have a nervous breakdown. How about visiting some friends for a few days and letting the nurse take charge of things here?'

" 'I can't, Doctor, I'm not tired—really I'm not.' "Suddenly we heard a sound from Brown ! Not a muscle moved, but he started muttering—mumbling in on incoherent monotone. Then the words became plainer. " 'Don't turn off the light,' we heard him plead, 'I can't see where I'm going. That's funny, my head doesn't hurt any more. Ah, it's getting lighter. Yes, there's the sun shining through the door. Why, it's swinging open! By Jove! That's a bright light's dazzling l Now I can't see on account of the light. Can you hear the chimes? They sound like the chimes of the organ—the organ of the church that I went to when I was a little boy. Funny that I should remember that after all these years. Why, I haven't seen the inside of a church in twenty years or *more.* Yes, I feel just like a little boy, slipping into the back pew of the church

on Sunday morning—late again. Yes, the Lord's given me back my life—I'm a little boy again!'

"The rest of the story," said the Doctor, "we had from the lips of Brown himself. It happened in a few brief minutes, during which he lay as one dead. It made such an impression on him that it was still fresh in his memory after lying unconscious for five weeks. Brown will never forget it, nor shall I.

"As Brown struck at his son that morning early in February, he felt something snap inside of him. His heart stopped and he sank to the floor. Then the circulation stopped. He heard a loud explosion. As his body began to grow cold, he arose. It felt good to get away from his cold body. He felt people, on either side of him, take him by the arms and help him up. The room faded away. Then through darkness into light. He was approaching a fountain, a beautiful bubbling fountain, filled with water of many colors. He was deposited there and commanded to bathe himself. Docilely he obeyed—he felt dirty. Into the flaky water he stepped, naked and dirty. After bathing, he was assisted out by two attendants, clothed in white raiment, and was immediately surprised to find that his nakedness was no longer visible.

He seemed clothed—in what he did not know. Neither of the attendants said a word, but they pointed to a road which led up from the fountain and faded away in the distance.

"On taking this road alone, he found he traveled at great speed without any apparent effort. He walked with the buoyant step of youth. Soon he saw a figure coming toward him in the distance, followed by a crowd of people, among whom were many children. As he approached, the figure stopped him and said in a voice strangely familiar, 'Hello, Brown, have you decided to join us?'

" 'Join you?' Brown asked. 'Who are you?'

" 'Why, I'm Louis Carr,' the person replied. 'Don't say you don't remember me.'

"Brown took a step backward in surprise. 'Remember you? Why, man, you're dead!'

" 'So are you,' Carr laughed.

"Then Brown realized the fact. Yes, he was dead. " 'I'm the

chairman of your reception committee, Brown,' Carr resumed. 'Allow me to introduce each member of the committee. They will have a lot to do in regard to your fate.'

" 'My fate?' Brown inquired, 'What do you mean?' " 'Well, yours is a peculiar case, Brown. You've done much more harm on earth during your lifetime than you have good. First, meet Mrs. Ray, the mother of Gerald Ray, whom you sent to Sing Sing. She died of a broken heart.'

" ' Oh, Lord,' Brown screamed, 'don't blame me. I wasn't guilty!'

"Then came the strange part. From above a strong light descended upon Brown, and a voice, powerful and clear, rang out:

" 'Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness than he who is perverse in his ways, though he be rich!'

" 'Oh, God,' Brown moaned, 'what was that?' "

Carr smiled. 'You guessed it.'

" 'Let me go! I can't stand this!' Brown shouted.

'You're all driving me mad! Let me go, I tell you!'

. " 'The wicked flee when no man Runneth; but the righteous are bold as the lion.'

" 'Ah, Mr. Brown—you're frightened 1' He recognized the voice of the little artist's model. 'You tremble like a little child. You know me—yes?—no? I'm Susanne DuPree. Yes I Now why don't you make out a big check to get yourself out of this?—You thought I did not love your son, didn't you? You thought I was a gold-digger and you cursed me. You wouldn't understand.' "Brown was hysterical. 'Take her away! Take her away!

" 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, but whose *walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.'* The Voice sounded closer.

"Brown fell to his knees. 'O Lord, have mercy! have mercy on me!'

" 'You're rather late thinking of that now, Brown,' Carr reminded him. 'Did you have mercy on these? See, here are some of the children who were in your nursery. The little undernourished tots you refused to help. See, th*ere's* the little

hunch back, and this tot was the victim of infantile paralysis, merely because you forced us to discontinue the treatment. Some of these little children starved to death after you had your factories closed. Their parents were thrown out of work, so that you might make even more profit. You closed your eyes to the suffering you caused.'

"Then came the Voice, closer and clearer still: '*He that divert unto the poor shall not lack; but he that ,hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.'*

" 'O Lord, have mercy upon me l' Brown pleaded, with tears in his eyes. 'God forgive me l I've been a wicked fool!'

" When the wicked rise, men hide themselves, but when they perish, the righteous increase.'

" 'O Lord, if I had just another chance!' Brown sobbed. 'If I could go back to earth and make amends for all the wrongs I've done!'

" 'You're still doing wrong,' Carr reminded him. 'Your factories are still closed, and you are making thousands of people suffer, including your own family. At this moment, your son is a drunkard, rolling in the gutter, and all on your account.'

"Brown raised his eyes to Heaven and, as he looked up into the bright light, he prayed. 'O God, if I never believed in You before, I believe in You now. I've been a fool; I've been wicked; I realize it all now. If I could just go back to Earth and set things right once more, I swear that I would devote my entire life and fortune to Your cause. And then, too, my boy needs me. Please do, Lord, have mercy!'

" *'Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give unto thy soul'*

" 'Take heed, Brown,' Carr advised him. 'God is merciful to you.'

"The light grew brighter. Brown could hear music in the distance. He took courage and stood upon his feet. Then from immediately above, he heard this command:

" Go forth, open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause o f the poor and need y.'

***

" 'And that's all I can remember,' Brown said when telling

us about it later.

"Both his wife and I were deeply impressed.

" 'There is no doubt about the fact—I was dead,' Brown concluded. 'I even walked through the doorway and stood in the next world. God was merciful with me. He sent me back to earth to try to make amends for all the misery that I've caused. Will you help me to do that, Martha? I made God a solemn promise.'

"Silently his wife *took* his hand and pressed it.

" 'Certainly I will, dear,' she promised. 'You are very fortunate. Do you realize that not one out of a million men get the opportunity to come back and rectify their wrongs done on earth?'

" 'I do realize it, dear,' the man agreed. 'I must get right to work. Please have my secretary come here. I'm going to send telegrams immediately to have those factories reopened at once. I want to start a search for Harris, and then I want you to pick out an appropriate spot for an orphanage and another for a free clinic. And then I'm going to'

"Well, he did all of this and more. Brown was thankful for the opportunity to do it. And wouldn't we all, if we could just look ahead and see who's been appointed to serve on our reception committee?"