The Cruise of the Jasper B.

Don Marquis

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TO ALL THE COPYREADERS ON ALL THE NEWSPAPERS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER I−A BRIGHT BLADE LEAPS FROM A RUSTY SCABBARD

On an evening in April, 191−, Clement J. Cleggett walked sedately into the news room of the New York Enterprise with a drab−colored walking−stick in his hand. He stood the cane in a corner, changed his sober street coat for a more sober office jacket, adjusted a green eyeshade below his primly brushed grayish hair, unostentatiously sat down at the copy desk, and unobtrusively opened a drawer.

From the drawer he took a can of tobacco, a pipe, a pair of scissors, a paste−pot and brush, a pile of copy paper, a penknife and three half−lengths of lead pencil.

The can of tobacco was not remarkable. The pipe was not picturesque. The scissors were the most ordinary of scissors. The copy paper was quite undistinguished in appearance. The lead pencils had the most untemperamental looking points.

Cleggett himself, as he filled and lighted the pipe, did it in the most matter−of−fact sort of way. Then he remarked to the head of the copy desk, in an average kind of voice:

"H'lo, Jim."

"H'lo, Clegg," said Jim, without looking up. "Might as well begin on this bunch of early copy, I guess."

For more than ten years Cleggett had done the same thing at the same time in the same manner, six nights of the week.

What he did on the seventh night no one ever thought to inquire. If any member of the Enterprise staff had speculated about it at all he would have assumed that Cleggett spent that seventh evening in some way essentially commonplace, sober, unemotional, quiet, colorless, dull and Brooklynitish.

Cleggett lived in Brooklyn. The superficial observer might have said that Cleggett and Brooklyn were made for each other.

The superficial observer! How many there are of him! And how much he misses! He misses, in fact, everything.

At two o'clock in the morning a telegraph operator approached the copy desk and handed Cleggett a sheet of yellow paper, with the remark:

"Cleggett−−personal wire."

It was a night letter, and glancing at the signature Cleggett saw that it was from his brother who lived in Boston. It ran:

Uncle Tom died yesterday. Don't faint now. He splits bulk fortune between you and me. Lawyers figure nearly $500,000 each. Mostly easily negotiable securities. New will made month ago while sore at president temperance outfit. Blood thicker than Apollinaris after all. Poor Uncle Tom.

Edward.

Despite Edward's thoughtful warning, Cleggett did nearly faint. Nothing could have been less expected. Uncle Tom was an irascible prohibitionist, and one of the most deliberately disobliging men on earth. Cleggett and his brother had long ceased to expect anything from him. For twenty years it had been thoroughly understood that Uncle Tom would leave his entire estate to a temperance society. Cleggett had ceased to think of Uncle Tom as a possible factor in his life. He did not doubt that Uncle Tom had changed the will to gain some point with the officials of the temperance society, intending to change it once again after he had been deferred to, cajoled, and flattered enough to placate his vanity. But death had stepped in just in time to disinherit the enemies of the Demon

Rum.

Cleggett read the wire through twice, and then folded it and put it into his pocket. He rose and walked toward the managing editor's room. As he stepped across the floor there was a little dancing light in his eyes, there was a faint smile upon his lips, that were quite foreign to the staid and sober Cleggett that the world knew. He was quiet, but he was almost jaunty, too; he felt a little drunk, and enjoyed the feeling.

He opened the managing editor's door with more assurance than he had ever displayed before. The managing editor, a pompous, tall, thin man with a drooping frosty mustache, and cold gray eyes in a cold gray face that somehow reminded one of the visage of a walrus, was preparing to go home.

"Well?" he said, shortly.

He was a man for whom Cleggett had long felt a secret antipathy. The man was, in short, the petty tyrant of Cleggett's little world.

"Can you spare me a couple of minutes, Mr. Wharton?" said Cleggett. But he did not say it with the air of a person who really sues for a hearing.

"Yes, yes−−go on." Mr. Wharton, who had risen from his chair, sat down again. He was distinctly annoyed. He was ungracious. He was usually ungracious with Cleggett. His face set itself in the expression it always took when he declined to consider raising a man's salary. Cleggett, who had been refused a raise regularly every three months for the past two years, was familiar with the look.

"Go on, go on−−what is it?" asked Mr. Wharton unpleasantly, frowning and stroking the frosty mustache, first one side and then the other.

"I just stepped in to tell you," said Cleggett quietly, "that I don't think much of the way you are running the Enterprise."

Wharton stopped stroking his mustache so quickly and so amazedly that one might have thought he had run into a thorn amongst the hirsute growth and pricked a finger. He glared. He opened his mouth. But before he could speak Cleggett went on:

"Three years ago I made a number of suggestions to you. You treated me contemptuously−−very contemptuously!"

Cleggett paused and drew a long breath, and his face became quite red. It was as if the anger in which he could not afford to indulge himself three years before was now working in him with cumulative effect. Wharton, only partially recovered from the shock of Cleggett's sudden arraignment, began to stammer and bluster, using the words nearest his tongue:

"You d−damned im−p−pertinent−−−−−"

"Just a moment," Cleggett interrupted, growing visibly angrier, and seeming to enjoy his anger more and more. "Just a word more.

I had intended to conclude my remarks by telling you that my contempt for YOU, personally, is unbounded. It is boundless, sir! But since you have sworn at me, I am forced to conclude this interview in another fashion."

And with a gesture which was not devoid of dignity Cleggett drew from an upper waistcoat pocket a card and flung it on Wharton's desk. After which he stepped back and made a formal bow.

Wharton looked at the card. Bewilderment almost chased the anger from his face.

"Eh," he said, "what's this?"

"My card, sir! A friend will wait on you tomorrow!"

"Tomorrow? A friend? What for?"

Cleggett folded his arms and regarded the managing editor with a touch of the supercilious in his manner.

"If you were a gentleman," he said, "you would have no difficulty in understanding these things. I have just done you the honor of challenging you to a duel."

Mr. Wharton's mouth opened as if he were about to explode in a roar of incredulous laughter. But meeting Cleggett's eyes, which were, indeed, sparkling with a most remarkable light, his jaw dropped, and he turned slightly pale. He rose from his chair and put the desk between himself and Cleggett, picking up as he did so a long pair of shears.

"Put down the scissors," said Cleggett, with a wave of his hand. "I do not propose to attack you now."

And he turned and left the managing editor's little office, closing the door behind him.

The managing editor tiptoed over to the door and, with the scissors still grasped in one hand, opened it about a

quarter of an inch. Through this crack Wharton saw Cleggett walk jauntily towards the corner where his hat and coat were hanging. Cleggett took off his worn office jacket, rolled it into a ball, and flung it into a waste paper basket. He put on his street coat and hat and picked up the drab−colored cane. Swinging the stick he moved towards the door into the hall. In the doorway he paused, cocked his hat a trifle, turned towards the managing editor's door, raised his hand with his pipe in it with the manner of one who points a dueling pistol, took careful aim at the second button of the managing editor's waistcoat, and clucked. At the cluck the managing editor drew back hastily, as if Cleggett had actually presented a firearm; Cleggett's manner was so rapt and fatal that it carried conviction. Then Cleggett laughed, cocked his hat on the other side of his head and went out into the corridor whistling. Whistling, and, since faults as well as virtues must be told, swaggering just a little.

When the managing editor had heard the elevator come up, pause, and go down again, he went out of his room and said to the city editor:

"Mr. Herbert, don't ever let that man Cleggett into this office again. He is off−−off mentally. He's a dangerous man. He's a homicidal maniac. More'n likely he's been a quiet, steady drinker for years, and now it's begun to show on him."

But nothing was further from Cleggett than the wish ever to go into the Enterprise office again. As he left the elevator on the ground floor he stabbed the astonished elevator boy under the left arm with his cane as a bayonet, cut him harmlessly over the head with his cane as a saber, tossed him a dollar, and left the building humming:

"Oh, the Beau Sabreur of the Grande Armee Was the Captain Tarjeanterre!"

It is thus, with a single twitch of her playful fingers, that Fate will sometimes pluck from a man the mask that has obscured his real identity for many years. It is thus that Destiny will suddenly draw a bright blade from a rusty scabbard!

CHAPTER II−THE ROOM OF ILLUSION

That part of Brooklyn in which Cleggett lived overlooks a wide sweep of water where the East River merges with New York Bay. From his windows he could gaze out upon the bustling harbor craft and see the ships going forth to the great mysterious sea.

He walked home across the Brooklyn Bridge, and as he walked he still hummed tunes. Occasionally, still with the rapt and fatal manner which had daunted the managing editor, he would pause and flex his wrist, and then suddenly deliver a ferocious thrust with his walking−stick.

The fifth of these lunges had an unexpected result. Cleggett directed it toward the door of an unpainted toolhouse, a temporary structure near one of the immense stone pillars from which the bridge is swung. But, as he lunged, the toolhouse door opened, and a policeman, who was coming out wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, received a jab in the pit of a somewhat protuberant stomach.

The officer grunted and stepped backward; then he came on, raising his night−stick.

"Why, it's−−it's McCarthy!" exclaimed Cleggett, who had also sprung back, as the light fell on the other's face.

"Mr. Cleggett, by the powers!" said the officer, pausing and lowering his lifted club. "Are ye soused, man? Or is it your way of sayin' good avenin' to your frinds?"

Cleggett smiled. He had first known McCarthy years before when he was a reporter, and more recently had renewed the acquaintance in his walks across the bridge.

"I didn't know you were there, McCarthy," he said.

"No?" said the officer. "And who were ye jabbin' at, thin?"

"I was just limbering up my wrist," said Cleggett.

"'Tis a quare thing to do," persisted McCarthy, albeit good−humoredly. "And now I mind I've seen ye do the same before, Mr. Cleggett. You're foriver grinnin' to yersilf an' makin' thim funny jabs at nothin' as ye cross the bridge. Are ye subjict to stiffness in the wrists, Mr. Cleggett?"

"Perhaps it's writer's cramp," said Cleggett, indulging the pleasant humor that was on him. He was really thinking that, with $500,000 of his own, he had written his last headline, edited his last piece of copy, sharpened his last pencil.

"Writer's cramp? Is it so?" mused McCarthy. "Newspapers is great things, ain't they now? And so's writin' and readin'. Gr−r−reat things! But if ye'll take my advise, Mr. Cleggett, ye'll kape that writin' and readin' within bounds. Too much av thim rots the brains."

"I'll remember that," said Cleggett. And he playfully jabbed the officer again as he turned away.

"G'wan wid ye!" protested McCarthy. "Ye're soused! The scent av it's in the air. If I'm compilled to run yez in f'r assaultin' an officer ye'll get the cramps out av thim wrists breakin' stone, maybe. Cr−r−r−amps, indade!"

Cramps, indeed! Oh, Clement J. Cleggett, you liar! And yet, who does not lie in order to veil his inmost, sweetest thoughts from an unsympathetic world?

That was not an ordinary jab with an ordinary cane which Cleggett had directed towards the toolhouse door. It was a thrust en carte; the thrust of a brilliant swordsman; the thrust of a master; a terrible thrust. It was meant for as pernicious a bravo as ever infested the pages of romantic fiction. Cleggett had been slaying these gentry a dozen times a day for years. He had pinked four of them on the way across the bridge, before McCarthy, with his stomach and his realism, stopped the lunge intended for the fifth. But this is not exactly the sort of thing one finds it easy to confide to a policeman, be he ever so friendly a policeman.

Cleggett−−Old Clegg, the copyreader−−Clegg, the commonplace−−C. J. Cleggett, the Brooklynite−this person whom young reporters conceived of as the staid, dry prophet of the dusty Fact−−was secretly a mighty reservoir of unwritten, unacted, unlived, unspoken romance. He ate it, he drank it, he breathed it, he dreamed it. The usual copyreader, when he closes his eyes and smiles upon a pleasant inward vision, is thinking of starting a chicken−farm in New Jersey. But Cleggett−−with gray sprinkled in his hair, sober of face and precise of manner, as the world knew him−−lived a hidden life which was one long, wild adventure.

Nobody had ever suspected it. But his room might have given to the discerning a clue to the real man behind the mask which he assumed−−which he had been forced to assume in order to earn a living. When he reached the apartment, a few minutes after his encounter on the bridge, and switched the electric light on, the gleams fell upon an astonishing clutter of books and arms. . . .

Stevenson, cavalry sabers, W. Clark Russell, pistols, and Dumas; Jack London, poignards, bowie knives, Stanley Weyman, Captain Marryat, and Dumas; sword canes, Scottish claymores, Cuban machetes, Conan Doyle, Harrison Ainsworth, dress swords, and Dumas; stilettos, daggers, hunting knives, Fenimore Cooper, G. P. R. James, broadswords, Dumas; Gustave Aimard, Rudyard Kipling, dueling swords, Dumas; F. Du Boisgobey, Malay krises, Walter Scott, stick pistols, scimitars, Anthony Hope, single sticks, foils, Dumas; jungles of arms, jumbles of books; arms of all makes and periods; arms on the walls, in the corners, over the fireplace, leaning against the bookshelves, lying in ambush under the bed, peeping out of the wardrobe, propping the windows open, serving as paper weights; pictures, warlike and romantic prints and engravings, pinned to the walls with daggers; in the wardrobe, coats and hats hanging from poignards and stilettos thrust into the wood instead of from nails or hooks. But of all the weapons it was the rapiers, of all the books it was Dumas, that he loved. There was Dumas in French, Dumas in English, Dumas with pictures, Dumas unillustrated, Dumas in cloth, Dumas in leather, Dumas in boards, Dumas in paper covers. Cleggett had been twenty years getting these arms and books together; often he had gone without a dinner in order to make a payment on some blade he fancied. And each weapon was also a book to him; he sensed their stories as he handled them; he felt the personalities of their former owners stirring in him when he picked them up. It was in that room that he dreamed; which is to say, it was in that room that he lived his real life.

Cleggett walked over to his writing desk and pulled out a bulky manuscript. It was his own work. Is it necessary to hint that it was a tale essentially romantic in character?

He flung it into the grate and set fire to it. It represented the labor of two years, but as he watched it burn, stirring the sheets now and then so the flames would catch them more readily, he smiled, unvisited by even the most shadowy second thought of regret.

For why the deuce should a man with $500,000 in his pocket write romances? Why should anyone write anything who is free to live? For the first time in his existence Cleggett was free.

He picked up a sword. It was one of his favorite rapiers. Sometimes people came out of the books−−sometimes shadowy forms came back to claim the weapons that had been theirs−−and Cleggett fought them. There was not an unscarred piece of furniture in the place. He bent the flexible blade in his hands, tried the point of it, formally saluted, brought the weapon to parade, dallied with his imaginary opponent's sword for an instant. . . .

It seemed as if one of those terrible, but brilliant, duels, with which that room was so familiar, was about to be enacted. . . . But he laid the rapier down. After all, the rapier is scarcely a thing of this century. Cleggett, for the first time, felt a little impatient with the rapier. It is all very well to DREAM with a rapier. But now, he was free; reality was before him; the world of actual adventure called. He had but to choose!

He considered. He tried to look into that bright, adventurous future. Presently he went to the window, and gazed out. Tides of night and mystery, flooding in from the farther, dark, mysterious ocean, all but submerged lower Manhattan; high and beautiful above these waves of shadow, triumphing over them and accentuating them, shone a star from the top of the Woolworth building; flecks of light indicated the noble curve of that great bridge which soars like a song in stone and steel above the shifting waters; the river itself was dotted here and there with moving lights; it was a nocturne waiting for its Whistler; here sea and city met in glamour and beauty and illusion.

But it was not the city which called to Cleggett. It was the sea.

A breeze blew in from the bay and stirred his window curtains; it was salt in his nostrils. . . .And, staring out into the breathing night, he saw a succession of pictures. . . .

Stripped to a pair of cotton trousers, with a dripping cutlass in one hand and a Colt's revolver in the other, an adventurer at the head of a bunch of dogs as desperate as himself fought his way across the reeking decks of a Chinese junk, to close in single combat with a gigantic one−eyed pirate who stood by the helm with a ring of dead men about him and a great two−handed sword upheaved. . . . This adventurer was−−Clement J. Cleggett! . . .

Through the phosphorescent waters of a summer sea, reckless of cruising sharks, a sailor's clasp knife in his teeth, glided noiselessly a strong swimmer; he reached the side of a schooner yacht from which rose the wild cries of beauty in distress, swarmed aboard with a muttered prayer that was half a curse, swept the water from his eyes, and with pale, stern face went about the bloody business of a hero. . . . Again, this adventurer was Clement J. Cleggett!

Cleggett turned from the window.

"I'll do it," he cried. "I'll do it!"

He grasped a cutlass.

"Pirates!" he cried, swinging it about his head. "That's the thing−−pirates and the China Seas!"

And with one frightful sweep of his blade he disemboweled a sofa cushion; the second blow clove his typewriting machine clean to the tattoo marks upon its breast; the third decapitated a sectional bookcase.

But what is a sectional bookcase to a man with $500,000 in his pocket and the Seven Seas before him?

CHAPTER III−A SCHOONER, A SKIPPER, AND A SKULL

It was a few days later, when a goodly number of the late Uncle Tom's easily negotiable securities had been converted into cash, and the cash deposited in the bank, that Cleggett bought the Jasper B.

He discovered her near the town of Fairport, Long Island, one afternoon. The vessel lay in one of the canals which reach inward from the Great South Bay. She looked as if she might have been there for some time. Evidently, at one period, the Jasper B. had played a part in some catch−coin scheme of summer entertainment; a scheme that had failed. Little trace of it remained except a rotting wooden platform, roofless and built close to the canal, and a gangway arrangement from this platform to the deck of the vessel.

The Jasper B. had seen better days; even a landsman could tell that. But from the blunt bows to the weather−scarred stern, on which the name was faintly discernible, the hulk had an air about it, the air of something that has lived; it was eloquent of a varied and interesting past.

And, to complete the picture, there sat on her deck a gnarled and brown old man. He smoked a short pipe which was partially hidden in a tangle of beard that had once been yellowish red but was now streaked with dirty white; he fished earnestly without apparent result, and from time to time he spat into the water. Cleggett's nimble fancy at once put rings into his ears and dowered him with a history.

Cleggett noticed, as he walked aboard the vessel, that she seemed to be jammed not merely against, but into the bank of the canal. She was nearer the shore than he had ever seen a vessel of any sort. Some weeds grew in soil that had lodged upon the deck; in a couple of places they sprang as high as the rail. Weeds grew on shore; in

fact, it would have taken a better nautical authority than Cleggett to tell offhand just exactly where the land ended and the Jasper B. began. She seemed to be possessed of an odd stability; although the tide was receding the Jasper B. was not perceptibly agitated by the motion of the water. Of anchor, or mooring chains or cables of any sort, there was no sign.

The brown old man−−he was brown not only as to the portions of his skin visible through his hair and whiskers, but also as to coat and trousers and worn boots and cap and pipe and flannel shirt−−turned around as Cleggett stepped aboard, and stared at the invader with a shaggy−browed intensity that was embarrassing.

It occurred to Cleggett that the old man might own the vessel and make a home of her.

"I beg your pardon if I am intruding," ventured Cleggett, politely, "but do you live here?"

The brown old man made an indeterminate motion of his head, without otherwise replying at once. Then he took a cake of dark, hard−looking tobacco from the starboard pocket of his trousers and a clasp knife from the port side. He shaved off a fresh pipeful, rolled it in his palms, knocked the old ash from his pipe, refilled and relighted it, all with the utmost deliberation. Then he cut another small piece of tobacco from the "plug" and popped it into his mouth. Cleggett perceived with surprise that he smoked and chewed tobacco at the same time. As he thus refreshed himself he glanced from time to time at Cleggett as if unfavorably impressed. Finally he closed his knife with a click and suddenly piped out in a high, shrill voice:

"No! Do you?"

"I−−er−−do I what?" It had taken the old man so long to answer that Cleggett had forgotten his own question, and the shrill fierceness of the voice was disconcerting.

He regarded Cleggett contemptuously, spat on the deck, and then demanded truculently:

"D'ye want to buy any seed potatoes?"

"Why−−er, no," said Cleggett.

"Humph!" said the brown one, with the air of meaning that it was only to be expected of an idiot like Cleggett that he would NOT want to buy any seed potatoes. But after a further embarrassing silence he relented enough to give Cleggett another chance.

"You want some seed corn!" he announced rather than asked.

"No. I−−−−−−"

"Tomato plants!" shrilled the brown one, as if daring him to deny it.

"No."

He turned his back on Cleggett, as if he had lost interest, and began to wind up his fishing line on a squeaky reel.

"Who owns this boat?" Cleggett touched him on the elbow.

"Thinkin' of buyin' her?"

"Perhaps. Who owns her?"

"What would you do with her?"

"I might fix her up and sail her. Who owns her?"

"She'll take a sight o' fixin'."

"No doubt. Who did you say owned her?"

The old man, who had finished with the rusty reel, deigned to look at Cleggett again.

"Dunno as I said."

"But who DOES own her?"

"She's stuck fast in the mud and her rudder's gone."

"I see you know a lot about ships," said Cleggett, deferentially, giving up the attempt to find out who owned her. "I picked you out for an old sailor the minute I saw you." He thought he detected a kindlier gleam in the old man's eye as that person listened to these words.

"The' ain't a stick in her," said the ancient fisherman. "She's got no wheel and she's got no nothin'. She used to be used as a kind of a barroom and dancin' platform till the fellow that used her for such went out o' business."

He paused, and then added:

"What might your name be?"

"Cleggett."

He appeared to reflect on the name. But he said:

"If you was to ask me, I'd say her timbers is sound."

"Tell me," said Cleggett, "was she a deep−water ship? Could a ship like her sail around the world, for instance? I can tell that you know all about ships."

Something like a grin of gratified vanity began to show on the brown one's features. He leaned back against the rail and looked at Cleggett with the dawn of approval in his eyes.

"My name's Abernethy," he suddenly volunteered. "Isaiah Abernethy. The fellow that owns her is Goldberg. Abraham Goldberg. Real estate man."

"Cleggett began to get an insight into Mr. Abernethy's peculiar ideas concerning conversation. A native spirit of independence prevented Mr. Abernethy from dealing with an interlocutor's remarks in the sequence that seemed to be desired by the interlocutor. He took a selection of utterances into his mind, rolled them over together, and replied in accordance with some esoteric system of his own.

"Where is Mr. Goldberg's office?" asked Cleggett.

"You've come to the proper party to get set right about ships," said Mr. Abernethy, complacently. "Either you was sent to me by someone that knows I'm the proper party to set you right about ships, or else you got an eye in your own head that can recognize a man that comes of a seafarin' fambly."

"You ARE an old sailor, then? Maybe you are an old skipper? Perhaps you're one of the retired Long Island sea captains we're always hearing so much about?"

"So fur as sailin' her around the world is concerned," said Mr. Abernethy, glancing over the hulk, "if she was fixed up she could be sailed anywheres−−anywheres!"

"What would you call her−−a schooner?"

"This here Goldberg," said Mr. Abernethy, "has his office over town right accost from the railroad depot."

And with that he put his fishing pole over his shoulder and prepared to leave−−a tall, strong−looking old man with long legs and knotty wrists, who moved across the deck with surprising spryness. At the gangplank he sang out without turning his head:

"As far as my bein' a skipper's concerned, they's no law agin' callin' me Cap'n Abernethy if you want to. I come of a seafarin' fambly."

He crossed the platform; when he had gone thirty yards further he stopped, turned around, and shouted:

"Is she a schooner, hey? You want to know is she a schooner? If you was askin' me, she ain't NOTHIN' now. But if you was to ask me again I might say she COULD be schooner−rigged. Lots of boats IS schooner−rigged."

There are affinities between atom and atom, between man and woman, between man and man. There are also affinities between men and things−if you choose to call a ship, which has a spirit of its own, merely a thing. There must have been this affinity between Cleggett and the Jasper B. Only an unusual person would have thought of buying her. But Cleggett loved her at first sight.

Within an hour after he had first seen her he was in Mr. Abraham Goldberg's office.

As he was concluding his purchase−−Mr. Goldberg having phoned Cleggett's bankers−−he was surprised to discover that he was buying about half an acre of Long Island real estate along with her. For that matter he had thought it a little odd in the first place when he had been directed to a real estate agent as the owner of the craft. But as he knew very little about business, and nothing at all about ships, he assumed that perhaps it was quite the usual thing for real estate dealers to buy and sell ships abutting on the coast of Long Island.

"I had only intended to buy the vessel," said Cleggett. "I don't know that I'll be able to use the land."

Mr. Goldberg looked at Cleggett with a slight start, as if he were not sure that he had heard aright, and opened his mouth as if to say something. But nothing came of it−−not just then, at least. When the last signature had been written, and Clegget's check had been folded by Mr. Goldberg's plump, bejeweled fingers and put into Mr. Goldberg's pocketbook, Mr. Goldberg remarked:

"You say you can't use the ship?"

"No; the land. I'm surprised to find that the land goes with the ship."

"Why, it doesn't," said Mr. Goldberg. "It's the ship that goes with the land. She was on the land when I bought the plot, and I just left her there. Nobody's paid any attention to her for years."

The words "on the land" grated on Cleggett.

"You mean on the water, don't you?"

"In the mud, then," suggested Mr. Goldberg.

"But she'll sail all right," said Cleggett.

"I suppose if she was decorated up with sails and things she'd sail. Figuring on sailing her anywhere in particular?"

"Subtly irritated, Cleggett answered: "Oh, no, no! Not anywhere in particular!"

"Going to live on her this summer?−−Outdoor sleeping room, and all that?"

"I'm thinking of it."

"You could turn her into a house boat easy enough. I had a friend who turned an old barge like that into a house boat and had a lot of fun with her."

"Barge?" Cleggett rose and buttoned his coat; the conversation was somehow growing more and more distasteful to him. "You wouldn't call the Jasper B. a BARGE, would you?"

"Well, you wouldn't call her a YACHT, would you?" said Mr. Goldberg.

"Perhaps not," admitted Cleggett, "perhaps not. She's more like a bark than a yacht."

"A bark? I dunno. Always thought a bark was bigger. A scow's more her size, ain't it?"

"Scow?" Cleggett frowned. The Jasper B. a scow! "You mean a schooner, don't you?"

"Schooner?" Mr. Goldberg grinned good−naturedly at his departing customer. "A kind of a schooner−scow, huh?"

"No, sir, a schooner!" said Cleggett, reddening, and turning in the doorway. "Understand me, Mr. Goldberg, a schooner, sir! A schooner!"

And standing with a frown on his face until every vestige of the smile had died from Mr. Goldberg's lips, Cleggett repeated once more: "A schooner, Mr. Goldberg!"

"Yes, sir−−there's no doubt of it−−a schooner, Mr. Cleggett," said Mr. Goldberg, turning pale and backing away from the door.

The ordinary man inspects a house or a horse first and buys it, or fails to buy it, afterward; but genius scorns conventions; Cleggett was not an ordinary man; he often moved straight towards his object by inspiration; great poets and great adventurers share this faculty; Cleggett paid for the Jasper B. first and went back to inspect his purchase later.

The vessel lay about two miles from the center of Fairport. He could get within half a mile of it by trolley. Nevertheless, when he reached the Jasper B. again after leaving Mr. Goldberg it was getting along towards dusk.

He first entered the cabin. It was of a good size and divided into several compartments. But it was in a state of dilapidation and littered with a jumble of odds and ends which looked like the ruins of a barroom. As he turned to ascend to the deck again, after possibly five minutes, intending to take a look at the forecastle next, he heard the sound of a motor.

Looking out of the cabin he saw a taxicab approaching the boat from the direction of Fairport. It was a large machine, but it was overloaded with seven or eight men. It stopped within twenty yards of the vessel, and two men got out, one of them evidently a person who imposed some sort of leadership on the rest of the party. This was a tall fellow, with a slouching gait and round shoulders. And yet, to judge from his movements, he was both quick and powerful. The other was a short, stout man with a commonplace, broad red face and flaxen hair. The two stood for a moment in colloquy in the road that led from Fairport proper to the bayside, passing near the Jasper B., and Cleggett heard the shorter of the two men say:

"I'm sure I saw somebody aboard of her."

"How long ago, Heinrich?" asked the tall man.

"An hour or so," said Heinrich.

"It was old man Abernethy; he's harmless," said the tall fellow. "He's the only person that's been aboard her in years."

"There was someone else," persisted Heinrich. "Someone who was talking to Abernethy."

The tall man mumbled something about having been a fool not to buy her before this; Cleggett did not catch all of the remark. Then the tall fellow said:

"We'll go aboard, Heinrich, and take a look around."

With that they advanced towards the vessel. Cleggett stepped on deck from the cabin companionway, and both men stopped short at the sight of him, Heinrich obviously a trifle confused, but the other one in no wise abashed. He made no attempt, this tall fellow, to give the situation a casual turn. What he did was to stand and stare at

Cleggett, candidly, and with more than a touch of insolence, as if trying to beat down Cleggett's gaze.

Cleggett, staring in his turn, perceived that the tall man, ungainly as he was, affected a bizarre individualism in the matter of dress. His clothing cried out, rather than suggested, that it was expensive. His feet were cased in button shoes with fancy tops; his waistcoat, cut in the extreme of style, revealed that little strip of white which falsely advertises a second waistcoat beneath, but in his case the strip was too broad. There were diamonds on the fingers of both powerful hands. But the thing that grated particularly upon Cleggett was the character of the man's scarfpin. It was by far the largest ornament of the sort that Cleggett had ever seen; he was near enough to the fellow to make out that it had been carved from a piece of solid ivory in the likeness of a skull. In the eyeholes of the skull two opals flamed with an evil levin. The man suggested to Cleggett, at first glance, a bartender who had come into money, or a drayman who had been promoted to an important office in a labor union and was spending the most of a considerable salary on his person. And yet his face, more closely observed, somehow gave the lie to his clothes, for it was not lacking in the signs of intelligence. In spite of his taste, or rather lack of taste, there was no hint of weakness in his physiognomy. His features were harsh, bold, predatory; a slightly yellowish tinge about the temples and cheek bones, suggestive of the ivory ornament, proclaimed a bilious temperament.

Cleggett, both puzzled and nettled by the man's persistent gaze, advanced towards him across the deck of the Jasper B. and down the gangplank, hand on hip, and called out sharply:

"Well, my friend, you will know me the next time you see me!"

The tall man turned without a word and walked back to the taxicab, the occupants of which had watched this singular duel of looks in silence. In the act of getting into the machine he face about again and said, with a lift of the lip that showed two long, protruding canine teeth of an almost saffron hue:

"I WILL know you again."

He spoke with a kind of cold hostility that gave his words all the effect of a threat. Cleggett felt the blood leap faster through his veins; he tingled with a fierce, illogical desire to strike the fellow on the mouth; his soul stirred with a premonition of conflict, and the desire for it. And yet, on the surface of things at least, the man had been nothing more than rude; as Cleggett watched the machine make off towards an isolated road house on the bayside he wondered at the quick intensity of his own antipathy. Unconsciously he flexed his wrist in his characteristic gesture. Scarcely knowing that he spoke, he murmured:

"That man gets on my nerves."

That man was destined to do something more than get on Cleggett's nerves before the adventures of the Jasper B. were ended.

CHAPTER IV−A BAD MAN TO CROSS

The isolated road house on the bay was a nondescript, jumbled, dilapidated−looking assemblage of structures, rather than one house. It was known simply as Morris's. It stood a few hundred yards west of the end of the canal which opened into the bay and was about a quarter of a mile from the Jasper B.

The canal itself was broad, straight, low−banked, and about three−quarters of a mile in length. The town had thrown out a few ranks of cottages in the direction of the canal. But these were all summer bungalows, occupied only from June until the middle of September. The solider and more permanent part of Fairport was well withdrawn from the sandy, sedgy stretches that bordered on tidewater.

At the north and inland terminus of the quiet strip of water in which the Jasper B. reposed was a collection of buildings including bathhouses, a boathouse, and a sort of shed where "soft drinks" and sea food were served during the bathing season. This place was known as Parker's Beach and was open only during the summer.

Morris's was of quite a different character from Parker's Beach. One could bathe at Morris's, but the beach near by was not particularly good. One could hire boats there and buy bait for a fishing trip. In one of its phases it made some pretensions to being a summer hotel. It had an extensive barroom. There was a dancing floor, none too smooth. There were long verandahs on three sides. That on the south side was built on piles' people ate and drank there in the summer; beneath it the water swished and gurgled when the tide was in.

The townspeople of Fairport, or the more respectable ones, kept away from Morris's, summer and winter.

Summer transients, inhabitants of the bungalows during the bathing season, patronized the place. But most of the patronage at all seasons seemed to consist of automobile parties from the city; people apparently drawn from all classes, or eluding definite classification entirely. In the bleakest season there was always a little stir of dubious activity about Morris's. In the summer it impressed you with its look of cheapness. In the winter, squatted by the cold water amidst its huddle of unpainted outhouses, at the end of a stretch of desolate beach, the fancy gave Morris's a touch of the sinister.

Cleggett was anxious to get the Jasper B. into seaworthy condition as soon as possible. It occurred to him that the employment of expert advice should be his first step, and early the next morning he hired Captain Abernethy. That descendant of a seafaring family, though he felt it incumbent upon him to offer objections that had to be overcome with a great show of respect, was really overjoyed at the commission. He left his own cottage a mile or so away and took up his abode in the forecastle at once. By nine o'clock that morning Cleggett had a force of workmen renovating both cabin and forecastle, putting the cook's galley into working order, and cleansing the decks of soil and sand. That night Cleggett spent on the vessel, with Captain Abernethy.

By Saturday of the same week−−Cleggett had bought the vessel on Wednesday−−he was able to take up his abode in the cabin with his books and arms about him. To his library he had added a treatise on navigation. And, reflecting that his firearms were worthless, considered as modern weapons, he also purchased a score of .44 caliber Colt's revolvers and automatic pistols of the latest pattern, and a dozen magazine rifles.

He brought on board at the same time, for cook and cabin boy, a Japanese lad, who said he was a sailor, and who called himself Yoshahira Kuroki, and a Greek, George Stefanopolous.

The latter was a handsome, rather burly fellow of about thirty, a man with a kindling eye and a habit of boasting of his ancestors.

Among them, he declared, was Leonidas, the hero of Thermopylae. George admitted he was not a sailor, but professed a willingness to learn, and looked so capable, as he squared his bulky shoulders and twisted his fine black mustache, that Cleggett engaged him, taking him immediately from the dairy lunch room in which he had been employed. George's idea was to work his way back to Greece, he said, on the Jasper B. If she did not sail for Greece for some time, George was willing to wait; he was patient; sometime, no doubt, she would touch the shores of Greece.

The hold of the Jasper B. Cleggett and Captain Abernethy found to be in a chaotic state. Casks, barrels, empty bottles by the hundred, ruins of benches, tables, chairs, old nondescript pieces of planking, broken crates and boxes, were flung together there in moldering confusion. It was evident that after the scheme of using the Jasper B.'s hulk as one of the attractions of a pleasure resort had failed, all the debris of the failure had simply been thrown pell−mell into the hold. Cleggett and Captain Abernethy decided that the vessel, which was stepped for two masts, should be rigged as a schooner. The Captain was soon busy securing estimates on the amount of work that would have to be done, and the cost of it. The pile of rubbish in the hold, which filled it to such an extent that Cleggett gave up the attempt to examine it, was to be removed by the same contractor who put in the sticks.

All the activity on board and about the Jasper B. had not gone on without attracting the attention of Morris's. Cleggett noticed that there was usually someone in the neighborhood of that dubious resort cocking an eye in the direction of the vessel. Indeed, the interest became so pronounced, and seemed of a quality so different from ordinary frank rustic curiosity, that it looked very like espionage. It had struck Cleggett that Morris's seemed at all times to have more than its share of idlers and hangers−on; men who appeared to make the place their headquarters and were not to be confused with the occasional off−season parties from the city.

On Sunday morning Cleggett was awakened by Captain Abernethy, who announced:

"Strange craft lookin' us over mighty close, sir."

"A strange craft? Where is she?" Cleggett was instantly alert.

"She's a house boat, if you was to ask me," said the brown old man−−in a new brown suit and with his whiskers newly trimmed he gave the impression of having been overhauled and freshly painted.

"Where is she?" repeated Cleggett, beginning to get into his clothes.

"She must 'a' sneaked up an' anchored mighty early this mornin'," pursued Cap'n Abernethy, true to his conversational principles.

"Is she in the bay or in the canal?"

"She looks like a mighty toney kind o' vessel," said Cap'n Abernethy. "If I was to make a guess I'd say she was

one of them craft that sails herself along when she wants to with one of these newfangled gasoline engines."

"She wasn't towed here then?" Cleggett gave up the attempt to learn from the Captain just where the house boat was.

"She lies in the canal," said the Cap'n. Having established the point that he could not be FORCED to tell where she lay, he volunteered the information as a personal favor from one gentleman to another. "She lies ahead of us in the canal, a p'int or so off our port bow, I should say. And if you was to ask me I'd say she wasn't layin' there for any good purpose."

"What do you think she's up to? What makes you suspicious of her?"

"No, sir, she wasn't towed in," said Cap'n Abernethy, "or I'd 'a' heard a tug towin' her. Comin' of a seafarin' fambly I'm a light sleeper by nature."

Cleggett finished dressing and went on deck. Sure enough, towards the south end of the canal, three or four hundred yards south of the Jasper B., and about the same distance east of Morris's, was anchored a house boat. She was painted a slaty gray color. As Cleggett looked at her a man stepped up on the deck, and, putting a binocular glass to his eye, began to study the Jasper B. After a few minutes of steady scrutiny this person turned his attention to Morris's.

Looking towards Morris's himself Cleggett saw a man standing on the east verandah of that resort intently scanning the house boat through a glass. Cleggett went into the cabin and got his own glass.

Presently the man on Morris's verandah and the man of the house boat ceased to scrutinize each other and both turned their glasses upon the Jasper B. But the moment they perceived that Cleggett was provided with a glass each turned hastily and entered, the one Morris's place, and the other the cabin of the house boat. But Cleggett had already recognized the man at Morris's as the stoop−shouldered man of tall stature and fanciful dress who had tried to stare him down some days before.

As for the man on the house boat (which, as Cleggett had made out, was named the Annabel Lee), there was something vaguely familiar about his general appearance which puzzled and tantalized our hero.

As the morning wore on Cleggett became certain that the Jasper B. was closely watched by both the Annabel Lee and Morris's, although the watchers avoided showing themselves plainly. A slightly agitated blind at a second story window over the verandah showed him where the tall man or one of his associates gazed out from Morris's; and from a porthole of the Annabel Lee he could see a glass thrust forth from time to time. It was evident to him that the Annabel Lee and Morris's were suspicious of each other, and that both suspected the Jasper B. But of what did they suspect Cleggett? What intention did they impute to him? He could only wonder.

Through the entire morning he was conscious of the continuance of this watch. He thought it ceased about luncheon time; but at two in the afternoon he was certain that, if so, it had been resumed.

Cleggett, innocent and honorable, began to get impatient of this persistent scrutiny. And in spite of his courage a vague uneasiness began to possess him. Towards the end of the afternoon he called his little company aft and spoke to them.

"My men," he said, "I do not like the attitude of our neighbors. To put it briefly, there may be squalls ahead of the Jasper B. This is a wild and desolate coast, comparatively speaking. Strange things have happened to innocent people before this along the shores of Long Island. It is well to be prepared. I intend to serve out to each of you two hundred cartridges and a .44 caliber Colt's. In case of an attempt to board, you may find these cutlasses handy.

"Cap'n Abernethy, in all nautical matters you will still be in command of the ship, but in case of a military demonstration, all of you will look to me for leadership. You may go now and rig up a jury mast and bend the American colors to the peak−−and in case of blows, may God defend the right! I know I do not need to exhort you to do your duty!"

As Cleggett spoke the spirit which animated him seemed to communicate itself to his listeners. Their eyes kindled and the keen joy that gallant men always feel in the anticipation of conflict flushed their faces.

"I am a son of Leonidas," said George Stefanopolous, proudly. And he secreted not merely one, but two, of Cleggett's daggers about his body, in addition to the revolver given him. As George had already possessed a dagger or two and an automatic pistol, it was now almost impossible for him to lay his hand casually on any part of his person without its coming into contact with a deadly weapon ready for instant use. Cap'n Abernethy picked up a cutlass, "hefted" it thoughtfully, rolled his sleeve back upon a lean and sinewy old arm that was tanned until

it looked like a piece of weathered oak, spat upon his hand and whirled the weapon till it whistled in the air. "I come of a seafarin' fambly," said the Cap'n, sententiously.

As for Kuroki, he said nothing. He was not given to speech at any time. But he picked up a Malay kris and ran his thumb along the edge of it critically like a man to whom such a weapon is not altogether unfamiliar. A pleased smile stole over his face; he handled the wicked knife almost affectionately; he put it down with a little loving pat.

"Brave boys," murmured Cleggett, as he watched them. He smiled, but at the same time something like a tear blurred his eloquent and magnetic eye for a moment. "Brave boys," he murmured, "we were made for each other!"

The display of the American flag by the Jasper B. had an effect that could not have been foreseen.

Almost immediately the Annabel Lee herself flung an exactly similar American flag to the breeze. But a strange thing happened at Morris's. An American flag was first hung from an upper window over the east verandah. Then, after a moment, it was withdrawn. Then a red flag was put out. But almost immediately Cleggett saw a man rip the red flag from its fastenings and fling it to the ground.

Cleggett, resorting to his glass, perceived that it was the tall man with the stoop shoulders and incongruous clothing who had torn down the red flag. He was now in violent altercation with the man who had hung it out−−the fellow whom he had called Heinrich some days before.

As Cleggett watched, the two men came to blows; then they clinched and struggled, swaying back and forth within the open window, like a moving picture in a frame. Suddenly the tall fellow seemed to get the upper hand; exerting all his strength, he bent the other backward over the window sill. The two contending figures writhed desperately a moment and then the tall man shifted one powerful, sinewy hand to Heinrich's throat.

The binoculars brought the thing so near to Cleggett that it seemed as if he could touch the contorted faces; he could see the tall man's neck muscles work as if that person were panting; he could see the signs of suffocation in Heinrich's countenance. The fact that he saw so plainly and yet could hear no sound of the struggle somehow added to its horror.

All at once the tall man put his knee upon the other's chest, and flung his weight upon Heinrich with a vehement spring. Then he tumbled Heinrich out of the window onto the roof of the verandah.

He stepped out of the window himself, picked Heinrich up with an ease that testified to his immense strength, and flung him over the edge of the verandah onto the ground. A few moments later a couple of men ran out from Morris's, busied themselves about reviving the fellow, and helped him into the house. If Heinrich was not badly injured, certainly all the fight had been taken out of him for one day.

With Heinrich thus disposed of, the tall man turned composedly to the task of putting out the American flag again. Through the glass Cleggett perceived that his face was twisted by a peculiar smile; a smile of joyous malevolence.

"A bad man to cross, that tall man," said Cleggett, musingly. And indeed, his violence with Heinrich had seemed out of all proportion to the apparent grounds of the quarrel; for it was evident to Cleggett that Heinrich and the tall man had differed merely about the policy of displaying the red flag. "A man determined to have his way," mused Cleggett. "If he and I should meet−−−−−−" Cleggett did not finish the sentence in words, but his hand closed over the butt of his revolver.

His musing was interrupted by the noise of an approaching automobile. Turning, he saw a vehicle, the rather long body of which was covered so that it resembled a merchant's delivery wagon, coming along the road from Fairport.

It stopped opposite the Jasper B., and from the seat beside the driver leaped lightly the most beautiful woman Cleggett had ever seen, and walked hesitatingly but gracefully towards him.

She was agitated. She was, in fact, sobbing; and a Pomeranian dog which she carried in her arms was whimpering excitedly as if in sympathy with its mistress. Cleggett, soul of chivalry that he was, born cavalier of beauty in distress, removed his hat and advanced to meet her.

CHAPTER V−BEAUTY IN DISTRESS

"Can you tell me where I can get some ice? Can you sell me some ice?" cried the lady excitedly, when she was

still some yards distant from Cleggett.

"Ice?" The request was so unusual that Cleggett was not certain that he had understood.

"Yes, ice! Ice!" There was no mistaking the genuine character of her eagerness; if she had been begging for her life she could not have been more in earnest. "Don't tell me that you have none on your boat. Don't tell me that! Don't tell me that!"

And suddenly, like a woman who has borne all that she can bear, she burst undisguisedly into a paroxysm of weeping. Cleggett, stirred by her beauty and her trouble, stepped nearer to her, for she swayed with her emotion as if she were about to fall. Impulsively she put a hand on his arm, and the Pomeranian, dropped unceremoniously to the ground, sprang at Cleggett snarling and snapping as if sure he were the author of the lady's misfortunes.

"You will think I am mad," said the lady, endeavoring to control her tears, "but I MUST have ice. Don't tell me that you have no ice!"

"My dear lady," said Cleggett, unconsciously clasping, in his anxiety to reassure her, the hand that she had laid upon his arm, "I have ice−−you shall have all the ice you want!"

"Oh," she murmured, leaning towards him, "you cannot know−−−−"

But the rest was lost in an incoherent babble, and with a deep sigh she fell lax into Cleggett's arms. The reaction from despair had been too much for her; it had come too suddenly; at the first word of reassurance, at the first ray of dawning hope, she had fainted. High−strung natures, intrepid in the face of danger, are apt to such collapses in the moment of deliverance; and, whatever the nature of the lady's trouble, Cleggett gained from her swoon a sharp sense of its intensity.

Cleggett was not used to having beautiful women faint and fall into his arms, and he was too much of a gentleman to hold one there a single moment longer than was absolutely necessary. He turned his head rather helplessly towards the vehicle in which the lady had arrived. To his consternation and surprise it had turned around and the chauffeur was in the act of starting back towards Fairport. But he had left behind him a large zinc bucket with a cover on it, a long unpainted, oblong box, and two steamer trunks; on the oblong box sat a short, squat young man in an attitude of deep dejection.

"Hi there! Stop!" cried Cleggett to the chauffeur. That person stopped his machine. He did more. He arose in the seat, applied his thumb to his nose, and vigorously and vivaciously waggled his outspread fingers at Cleggett in a gesture, derisive and inelegant, that is older than the pyramids. Then he started his machine again and made all speed in the direction of Fairport.

"I say, you, come here!" Cleggett called to the squat young man. "Can't you see that the lady's fainted?"

The squat young man, thus exhorted, sadly approached.

"Can't you see the lady has fainted?" repeated Cleggett.

"Skoits often does," said the squat young man, looking over the situation in a detached, judicial manner. He spoke out of the left corner of his mouth in a hoarse voice, without moving the right side of his face at all, and he seemed to feel that the responsibility of the situation was Cleggett's.

"But, don't you know her? Didn't you come here with her?"

The squat young man appeared to debate some moral issue inwardly for a moment. And then, speaking this time out of the right corner of his mouth, which was now nearer Cleggett, without disturbing the left half of his face, he pointed towards the oblong box and murmured huskily: "That's my job." He went and sat down on the box again.

Without more ado Cleggett lifted the lady and bore her onto the Jasper B. She was a heavy burden, but Cleggett declined the assistance of Cap'n Abernethy and George the Greek, who had come tardily out of the forecastle and now offered their assistance.

"Get a bottle of wine," he told Yosh, as he passed the Japanese on the deck, "and then make some tea."

Cleggett laid the lady on a couch in the cabin, and then lighted a lamp, as it got dark early in these quarters. While he waited for Yoshahira Kuroki and the wine, he looked at her. In her appealing helplessness she looked even more beautiful than she had at first. She was a blonde, with eyebrows and lashes darker than her hair; and, even in her swoon, Cleggett could see that she was of the thin−skinned, high−colored type. Her eyes, as he had seen before she swooned, were of a deep, dark violet color. She was no chit of a girl, but a mature woman, tall and splendid in the noble fullness of her contours. The high nose spoke of love of activity and energy of character. The full mouth indicated warmth of heart; the chin was of that sort which we have been taught to associate with

determination.

The Japanese brought the wine, and Cleggett poured a few spoonfuls down the lady's throat. Presently she sighed and stirred and began to show signs of returning animation.

The Pomeranian, which had followed them into the cabin, and which now lay whimpering at her feet, also seemed to feel that she was awakening, and, crawling higher, began to lick one of her hands.

"Make some tea, Yosh," said Cleggett. "What is it?"

This last was addressed to the lady herself. Her eyes had opened for a fleeting instant as Cleggett spoke to the Japanese, and her lips had moved. Cleggett bent his head nearer, while Yosh picked up the dog, which violently objected, and asked again: "What is it?"

"Orange pekoe, please," the lady murmured, dreamily.

And then she sat up with a start, struggled to recover herself, and looked about her wildly.

"Where am I?" she cried. "What has happened?" She passed her hand across her brow, frowning.

"You fainted, madam," said Cleggett.

"Oh!" Suddenly recollection came to her, and her anxieties rushed upon her once more. "The ice! The ice!" She sprang to her feet, and grasped Cleggett by both shoulders, searching his face with eager eyes. "You did not lie to me, did you? You promised me ice! Where is the ice?"

"You shall have the ice," said Cleggett, "at once."

"Thank God!" she said. And then: "Where are Elmer and the box?"

"Elmer? Oh, the short man! On shore. I believe that he and your chauffeur had some sort of an altercation, for the chauffeur went off and left him."

"Yes," she said, simply, as they passed up the companionway to the deck together, "that man, the driver, refused to bring us any farther."

Cleggett must have looked a little blank at that, for she suddenly threw back her head and laughed at him. And then, sobering instantly, she called to the squat young man:

"Elmer! Oh, Elmer! You may bring the boxes on board!" She turned to Cleggett: "He may, mayn't he? Thank you−−I was sure you would say he might. And if one of your men could just give him a lift? And−−the ice?"

"George," called Cleggett, "help the man get the boxes aboard. Kuroki, bring fifty pounds of ice on deck."

She sighed as she heard him give these orders, but it was a sigh of satisfaction, and she smiled at Cleggett as she signed. Sometimes a great deal can happen in a very short space of time. Ten minutes before, Cleggett had never seen this lady, and now he was giving orders at her merest suggestion. But in those ten minutes he had seen her weep, he had seen her faint, he had seen her recover herself; he had seen her emerge from the depths of despair into something more like self−control; he had carried her in his arms, she had laughed at him, she had twice impulsively grasped him by the arm, she had smiled at him three times, she had sighed twice, she had frowned once; she had swept upon him bringing with her an impression of the mysterious. Many men are married to women for years without seeing their wives display so many and such varied phases; to Cleggett it seemed not so much that he was making a new acquaintance as renewing one that had been broken off suddenly at some distant date. Cleggett, like the true−hearted gentleman and born romanticist that he was, resolved to serve her without question until such time as she chose to make known to him her motives for her actions.

"Do you know," she said, softly and gravely to Cleggett as George and Elmer deposited the oblong box upon a spot which she indicated near the cabin, "I have met very few men in my life who are capable of what you are doing?"

"I?" said Cleggett, surprised. "I have done nothing."

"You have found a woman in a strange position−−an unusual position, indeed!−−and you have helped her without persecuting her with questions."

"It is nothing," murmured Cleggett.

"Would you think me too impulsive," she said, with a rare smile, "if I told you that you are the sort of man whom women are ready to trust implicitly almost at first sight?"

Cleggett did not permit himself to speak for fear that the thrill which her words imparted to him would carry him too far. He bowed.

"But I think you mentioned tea?" she said. "Did I hear you say it was orange pekoe, or did I dream that? And couldn't we have it on deck?"

While Kuroki was bringing a table and chairs on deck and busying himself about that preparation of tea, Cleggett watched Elmer, the squat young man, with a growing curiosity. George and Cap'n Abernethy were also watching Elmer from a discreet distance. Even Kuroki, silent, swift, and well−trained Kuroki, could not but steal occasional glances at Elmer. Had Cleggett been of a less lofty and controlled spirit he would certainly have asked questions.

For Elmer, having uncovered the zinc can and taken from it a hammer and a large tin funnel, proceeded to break the big chunk of ice which Kuroki had brought him, into half a dozen smaller pieces. These smaller lumps, with the exception of two, he put into the zinc bucket, wrapped around with pieces of coffee sacking. Then he put the cover on the bucket to exclude the air.

The zinc bucket was thus a portable refrigerator, or rather, ice house.

Taking one of the lumps of ice which he had left out of the zinc bucket for immediate use, Elmer carefully and methodically broke it into still smaller pieces−−pieces about the size of an English walnut, but irregular in shape. Then he inserted the tin funnel into a small hole in the uppermost surface of the unpainted, oblong box and dropped in twenty or more of the little pieces of ice. When a piece proved to be too big to go through the funnel Elmer broke it again.

Cleggett noticed that there were five of these small holes in the box, and that Elmer was slowly working his way down the length of it from hole to hole, sitting astride of it the while.

From the way in which he worked, and the care with which he conserved every smallest particle of ice, Elmer's motto seemed to be: "Haste not, waste not." But he did not appear to derive any great satisfaction from his task, let alone joy. In fact, Elmer seemed to be a joyless individual; one who habitually looked forward to the worst. On his broad face, of the complexion described in police reports as "pasty," melancholy sat enthroned. His nose was flat and broad, and flat and broad were his cheek bones, too. His hair was cut very short everywhere except in front; in front it hung down to his eyebrows in a straggling black fringe or "bang." Not that the fringe would have covered the average person's forehead; this "bang" was not long; but the truth is that Elmer's forehead was lower than the average person's and therefore easily covered. He had what is known in certain circles as a cauliflower, or chrysanthemum, ear.

But melancholy as he looked, Elmer had evidently had his moments of struggle against dejection. One of these moments had been when he bought the clothes he was wearing. His hat had a bright, red and black band around it; his tweed suit was of a startling light gray, marked off into checks with stripes of green; his waistcoat was of lavender, and his hose were likewise of lavender, but red predominated in both his shirt and his necktie. His collar was too high for his short neck, and seemed to cause him discomfort. But this attempt at gayety of dress was of no avail; one felt at once that it was a surface thing and had no connection with Elmer's soul; it stood out in front of the background of his sorrowful personality, accentuating the gloom, as a blossom may grow upon a bleak rock. As Elmer carefully dropped ice, piece by piece, into the oblong box, progressing slowly from hole to hole, Cleggett thought he had never seen a more depressed young man.

Captain Abernethy approached Cleggett. There was hesitation in the brown old man's feet, there was doubt upon his wrinkled brow, but there was the consciousness of duty in the poise of his shoulders, there was determination in his eyes.

The blonde lady laughed softly as the sailing−master of the Jasper B. saluted the owner of the vessel.

"He is going to tell you," she said to Cleggett, including the Captain himself in her flashing look and her remark, "he is going to tell you that you really should get rid of me and my boxes at once−−I can see it in his face!"

Captain Abernethy stopped short at this, and stared. It was precisely what he HAD planned to say after drawing Cleggett discreetly aside. But it is rather startling to have one's thoughts read in this manner.

He frowned at the lady. She smiled at him. The smile seemed to say to the Cap'n: "You ridiculous old dear, you! You KNOW that's what you were going to advise, so why deny it? I've found you out, but we both might just as well be good−humored about it, mightn't we?"

"Ma'am," said the Cap'n, evidently struggling between a suddenly born desire to quit frowning and a sense that he had a perfect right to frown as much as he wished, "Ma'am, if you was to ask me, I'd say ridin' on steamships and ridin' on sailin' vessels is two different matters entirely."

"Cap'n Abernethy," said Cleggett, attempting to indicate that his sailing master's advice was not absolutely

required, "if you have something to say to me, perhaps later will do just as well."

"As fur as the Jasper B. is concerned," said the Cap'n, ignoring Cleggett's remark, and still addressing the lady, "I dunno as you could call her EITHER a sailin' vessel, OR a steamship, as at present constituted."

"You want to get me off your boat at once," said the lady. "You know you do." And her manner added: "CAN'T you act like a goodnatured old dear? You really are one, you know!"

The Cap'n became embarrassed. He began to fuss with his necktie, as if tying it tighter would assist him to hold on to his frown. He felt the frown slipping, but it was a point of honor with him to retain it.

"She WILL be a sailin' vessel when she gets her sticks into her," said the Cap'n, fumbling with his neckwear.

"Let me fix that for you," said the lady. And before the Cap'n could protest she was arranging his tie for him. "You old sea captains!−−−−−−" she said, untying the scarf and making the ends even. "As if anyone could possibly be afraid to sail in anything one of YOU had charge of!" She gave the necktie a little final pat. "There, now!"

The Captain's frown was gone past replacement. But he still felt that he owed something to himself.

"If you was to ask me," he said, turning to Cleggett, "whether what I'd got to say to you would do later, or whether it wouldn't do later, I'd answer you it would, or it wouldn't, all accordin' to whether you wanted to hear it now, or whether you wanted to hear it later. And as far as SAILIN' her is concerned, Mr. Cleggett, I'll SAIL her, whether you turn her into a battleship or into one of these here yachts. I come of a seafarin' fambly."

And then he said to the lady, indicating the tie and bobbing his head forward with a prim little bow: "Thank ye, ma'am."

"Isn't he a duck!" said the lady, following him with her eyes, as he went behind the cabin. There the Cap'n chewed, smoked, and fished, earnestly and simultaneously, for ten minutes.

Indeed, the blonde lady, from the moment when Elmer began to put ice into the box, seemed to have regained her spirits. The little dog, which was an indicator of her moods, had likewise lost its nervousness. When Kuroki had tea ready, the dog lay down at his mistress' feet, beside the table.

"Dear little Teddy," said the lady, patting the animal upon the head.

"Teddy?" said Cleggett.

"I have named him," she said, "after a great American. To my mind, the greatest−−Theodore Roosevelt. His championship of the cause of votes for women at a time when mere politicians were afraid to commit themselves is enough in itself to gain him a place in history."

She spoke with a kindling eye, and Cleggett had no doubt that there was before him one of those remarkable women who make the early part of the twentieth century so different from any other historical period. And he was one with her in her admiration for Roosevelt−−a man whose facility in finding adventures and whose behavior when he had found them had always made a strong appeal to Cleggett. If he could not have been Cleggett he would have liked to have been either the Chevalier d'Artagnan or Theodore Roosevelt.

"He is a great man," said Cleggett.

But the lady, with her second cup of tea in her hand, was evidently thinking of something else. Leaning back in her chair, she said to Cleggett:

"It is no good for you to deny that you think I'm a horridly unconventional sort of person!"

Cleggett made a polite, deprecatory gesture.

"Yes, yes, you do," she said, decidedly. "And, really, I am! I am impulsive! I am TOO impulsive!" She raised the cup to her lips, drank, and looked off towards the western horizon, which the sun was beginning to paint ruddily; she mused, murmuring as if to herself: "Sir Archibald always thought I was too impulsive, dear man."

After a meditative pause she said, leaning her elbows on the table and gazing searchingly into Cleggett's eyes:

"I am going to trust you. I am going to reward your kindness by telling you a portion of my strange story. I am going to depend upon you to understand it."

Cleggett bowed and murmured his gratitude at the compliment. Then he said:

"You could trust me with−−−−−−" But he stopped. He did not wish to be premature.

"With my life. I could trust you with my life," finished the lady, gravely. "I know that. I believe that. I feel it, somehow. It is because I do feel it that I tell you−−−−" She paused, as if, after all, she lacked the courage. Cleggett said nothing. He was too fine in grain to force a confidence. After a moment she continued: "I can tell you this," she said, with a catch in her voice that was almost a sob, "that I am practically friendless. When you call

a taxicab for me in a few moments, and I leave you, with Elmer and my boxes, I shall have no place to go."

"But, surely, madam−−−−"

"Do not call me madam. Call me Lady Agatha. I am Lady Agatha Fairhaven. What is your name?"

Cleggett told her.

"You have heard of me?" asked Lady Agatha.

Cleggett was obliged to confess that he had not. He thought that a shade of disappointment passed over the lady's face, but in a moment she smiled and remarked:

"How relative a thing is fame! You have never heard of me! And yet I can assure you that I am well enough known in England. I was one of the very first militant suffragettes to break a window−−if not the very first. The point is, indeed, in dispute.

And were it not for my devotion to the cause I would not now be in my present terrible plight−−doomed to wander from pillar to post with that thing" (she pointed with a shudder to the box into which Elmer was still gloomily poking ice)−"chained to me like a−−like a−−−−" She hesitated for a word, and Cleggett, tactlessly enough, with some vague recollection of a classical tale in his mind, suggested:

"Like a corpse."

Lady Agatha turned pale. She gazed at Cleggett with terror−stricken eyes, her beautiful face became almost haggard in an instant; he thought she was about to faint again, but she did not. As he looked upon the change his words had wrought, filled with wonder and compunction, Cleggett suddenly divined that her occasional flashes of gayety had been, all along, merely the forced vivacity of a brave and clever woman who was making a gallant fight against total collapse.

"Mr. Cleggett," she said, in a voice that was scarcely louder than a whisper, "I am going to confide everything to you−−the whole truth. I will spare myself nothing; I will throw myself upon your mercy.

"I firmly believe, Mr. Cleggett−−I am practically certain−−that the box there, upon which Elmer is sitting, contains the body of Reginald Maltravers, natural son of the tenth Earl of Claiborne, and the cousin of my late husband, Sir Archibald Fairhaven."

CHAPTER VI−LADY AGATHA'S STORY

It was with the greatest difficulty that Cleggett repressed a start. Another man might have shown the shock he felt. But Cleggett had the iron nerve of a Bismarck and the fine manner of a Richelieu. He did not even permit his eyes to wander towards the box in question. He merely sat and waited.

Lady Agatha, having brought herself to the point of revelation, seemed to find a difficulty in proceeding. Cleggett, mutely asking permission, lighted a cigarette.

"Oh−−if you will!" said Lady Agatha, extending her hand towards the case. He passed it over, and when she had chosen one of the little rolls and lighted it she said:

"Mr. Cleggett, have you ever lived in England?"

"I have never even visited England."

"I wish you knew England." She watched the curling smoke from her tobacco as it drifted across the table. "If you knew England you would comprehend so much more readily some parts of my story.

"But, being an American, you can have no adequate conception of the conservatism that still prevails in certain quarters. I refer to the really old families among the landed aristocracy. Some of them have not changed essentially, in their attitude towards the world in general, since the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

They make of family a fetish. They are ready to sacrifice everything upon the altar of family. They may exhibit this pride of race less obviously than some of the French or Germans or Italians; but they have a deeper sense of their own dignity, and of what is due to it, than any of your more flighty and picturesque continentals. There are certain things that are done. Certain things are not done. One must conform or−−−−"

She interrupted herself and delicately flicked the ash from her cigarette.

"Conform, or be jolly well damned," she finished, crossing one leg over the other and leaning back in her chair. "This, by the way, is the only decent cigarette I have found in America. I hate to smoke perfume−−I like

tobacco−−and most of your shops seem to keep nothing but the highly scented Turkish and Egyptian varieties."

"They were made in London," said Cleggett, bowing.

"Ah! But where was I? Oh, yes−−one must conform. Especially if one belongs to, or has married into, the Claiborne family. Of all the men in England the Earl of Claiborne is the most conservative, the most reactionary, the most deeply encrusted with prejudice. He would stop at little where the question concerned the prestige of the aristocracy in general; he would stop at nothing where the Claiborne family is concerned.

"I am telling you all this so that you may get an inkling of the blow it was to him when I became a militant suffragist. It was blow enough to his nephew, Sir Archibald, my late husband. The Earl maintains that it hastened poor Archibald's death. But that is ridiculous. Archibald had undermined his constitution with dissipation, and died following an operation for gravel. He was to have succeeded to the title, as both of the Earl's legitimate sons were dead without issue−−one of them perished in the Boer War, and the other was killed in the hunting field.

"Upon Archibald's death the old Earl publicly acknowledged Reginald Maltravers, his natural son, and took steps to have him legitimatized. For all of the bend sinister upon his escutcheon, Reginald Maltravers was as fanatical concerning the family as his father. Perhaps more fanatical, because he secretly suffered for the irregularity of his own position in the world.

"At any rate, supported at first by the old Earl, he began a series of persecutions designed to make me renounce my suffragist principles, or at least to make me cease playing a conspicuous public part in the militant propaganda. As my husband was dead and there were no children, I could not see that I was accountable to the Claiborne family for my actions. But the Claibornes took a different view of it. In their philosophy, once a Claiborne, always a Claiborne. I was bringing disgrace and humiliation upon the family, in their opinion. Knowing the old Earl as I do, I am aware that his suffering was genuine and intense. But what was I to do? One cannot desert one's principles merely because they cause suffering; otherwise there could be no such thing as revolution.

"Reginald Maltravers had another reason for his persecution. After the death of Sir Archibald he himself sought my hand in marriage. I shall always remember the form of his proposal; it concluded with these words: 'Had Archibald lived you would have been a countess. You may still be a countess−−but you must drop this suffragist show, you know. It is all bally rot, Agatha, all bally rot.' I would not have married him without the condition, for I despised the man himself; but the condition made me furious and I drove him from my sight with words that turned him white and made him my enemy forever. 'You will not be my countess, then,' he said. 'Very well−−but I can promise you that you will cease to be a suffragist.' I can still see the evil flash of his eye behind his monocle as he uttered these words and turned away."

Lady Agatha shuddered at the recollection, and took a cup of tea.

"It was then," she resumed, "that the real persecution began. I was peculiarly helpless, as I have no near relations who might have come to my defense. Representing himself always as the agent of his father, but far exceeding the Earl in the malevolence of his inventions, Reginald Maltravers sought by every means he could command to drive me from public life in England.

"Three times he succeeded in having me flung into Holloway Jail. I need not tell you of the terrors of that institution, nor of the degrading horrors of forcible feeding. They are known to a shocked and sympathetic world. But Reginald Maltravers contrived, in my case, to add to the usual brutalities a peculiar and personal touch. By bribery, as I believe, he succeeded in getting himself into the prison as a turnkey. It was his custom, when I lay weak and helpless in the semistupor of starvation, to glide into my cell and, standing by my couch, to recite to me the list of tempting viands that might appear daily upon the board of a Countess of Claiborne.

"He soon learned that his very presence itself was a persecution.

After my release from jail the last time, he began to follow me everywhere. Turn where I would, there was Reginald Maltravers. At suffrage meetings he took his station directly before the speaker's stand, stroked his long blond mustache with his long white fingers, and stared at me steadfastly through his monocle, with an evil smile upon his face. Formerly he had, in several instances, prevented me from attending suffrage meetings; once he had me spirited away and imprisoned for a week when it fell to my lot to burn a railroad station for the good of the cause. He strove to ruin me with my leaders in this despicable manner.

"But in the end he took to showing himself; he stood and stared. Merely that. He was subtle enough to shift the persecution from the province of the physical to the realm of the psychological. It was like being haunted. Even

when I did not see him, I began to THINK that I saw him. He deliberately planted that hallucination in my mind. It is a wonder that I did not go mad.

"I finally determined to flee to America. I made all my arrangements with care and−−as I thought−−with secrecy. I imagined that I had given him the slip. But he was too clever for me. The third day out, as one of the ship's officers was showing me about the vessel, I detected Reginald Maltravers in the hold. It is not usual to allow women so far below decks; but I had insisted on seeing everything. Perspiring, begrimed, and mopping the moisture from his brow with a piece of cotton waste, there he stood in the guise of a−−of−−a croaker, is it, Mr. Cleggett?"

"Stoker, I believe," said Cleggett.

"Stoker. Thank you. He turned away in confusion when he saw that he was discovered. I perceived that, designing to cross on the same ship with me, he had thought himself hidden there. He was not wearing his monocle, but I would know that sloping forehead, that blond mustache, and that long, high, bony nose anywhere."

Lady Agatha broke off for a moment. She was extremely agitated. But presently she continued: "I endeavored to evade him. The attempt was useless. He found me out at once. The persecution went on. It was more terrible here than it had been in England. There I had friends. I had hours, sometimes even whole days, to myself.

"But this was not the worst. A new phase developed. From his appearance it suddenly became apparent to me that Reginald Maltravers could not stop haunting me if he wished!"

"COULD not stop?" cried Cleggett.

"COULD not," said Lady Agatha. "The hunt had become a monomania with him. It had become an obsession. He had given his whole mentality to it and it had absorbed all his faculties. He was now the victim of it. He had grown powerless in the grip of the idea; he had lost volition in the matter.

"You can imagine my consternation when I realized this. I began to fear the day when his insanity would take some violent form and he would endeavor to do me a personal injury. I determined to have a bodyguard. I wanted a man inured to danger; one capable of meeting violence with violence, if the need arose. It struck me that if I could get into touch with one of those chivalrous Western outlaws, of whom we read in American works of fiction, he would be just the sort of man I needed to protect me from Reginald Maltravers.

"I did not consider appealing to the authorities, for I have no confidence in your American laws, Mr. Cleggett. But I did not know how to go about finding a chivalrous Western outlaw. So finally I put an advertisement in the personal column of one of your morning papers for a reformed convict."

"A reformed convict!" exclaimed Cleggett. "May I ask how you worded the ad.?"

"Ad.? Oh, advertisement? I will get it for you."

She went into the stateroom and was back in a moment with a newspaper cutting which she handed to Cleggett. It read:

Convict recently released from Sing Sing, if his reform is really genuine, may secure honest employment by writing to A. F., care Morning Dispatch.

"Out of the answers," she resumed, "I selected four and had their writers call for a personal interview. But only two of them seemed to me to be really reformed, and of these two Elmer's reform struck me as being the more genuine. You may have noticed that Elmer gives the appearance of being done with worldly vanities."

"He does seem depressed," said Cleggett, "but I had imputed it largely to the nature of his present occupation."

"It is due to his attempt to lead a better life−−or at least so he tells me," said Lady Agatha. "Morality does not come easy to Elmer, he says, and I believe him. Elmer's time is largely taken up by inward moral debate as to the right or wrong of particular hypothetical cases which his imagination insists on presenting to his conscience."

"I can certainly imagine no state of mind less enjoyable," said Cleggett.

"Nor I," replied Lady Agatha. "But to resume: The very fact that I had employed a guard seemed to put Reginald Maltravers beside himself. He followed me more closely than ever. Regardless of appearances, he would suddenly plant himself in front of me in restaurants and tramcars, in the streets or parks when I went for an airing, even in the lifts and corridors of the apartment hotel where I stopped, and stare at me intently through his monocle, caressing his mustache the while. I did not dare make a scene; the thing was causing enough remark without that; I was, in fact, losing my reputation.

"Finally, goaded beyond endurance, I called Elmer into my apartment one day and put the whole case before him.

"'I will pay almost any price short of participation in actual crime,' I told him, 'for a fortnight of freedom from that man's presence. I can stand it no longer; I feel my reason slipping from me. Have I not heard that there are in New York creatures who are willing, on the payment of a certain stipulated sum, to guarantee to chastise a person so as to disable him for a definite period, without doing him permanent injury? You must know some such disreputable characters. Procure me some wretches of this sort!'

"Elmer replied that such creatures do, indeed, exist. He called them−−what did he call them?"

"Gunmen?" suggested Cleggett.

"Yes, thank you. He brought two of them to me whom he introduced as−−−−"

She paused. "The names escape me," she said. She called: "Elmer, just step here a moment, please."

Elmer, who was still putting ice into the oblong box, moodily laid away his tools and approached.

"What WERE the odd names of your friends? The ones who−−who made the mistake?" asked Lady Agatha, resuming her seat.

Elmer rolled a bilious eye at Cleggett and asked Lady Agatha, out of that corner of his mouth nearer to her:

"Is th' guy right?"

"Mr. Cleggett is a friend of mine and can keep a secret, if that is what you mean," said Lady Agatha. And the words sent a thrill of elation through Cleggett's being.

"M' friends w'at makes the mistake," said Elmer, apparently satisfied with the assurance, and offering the information to Cleggett out of the side of his mouth which had not been involved in his question to Lady Agatha, "goes by th' monakers of Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat."

"Picturesque," murmured Cleggett.

"Picture−−what? Picture not'in!" said Elmer, huskily. "The bulls got not'in' on them boys. Them guys never been mugged. Them guys is too foxy t' get mugged."

"I infer that you weren't always so foxy," said Cleggett, eyeing him curiously.

The remark seemed to touch a sensitive spot. Elmer flushed and shuffled from one foot to the other, hanging his head as if in embarrassment. Finally he said, earnestly:

"I wasn't no boob, Mr. Cleggett. It was a snitch got ME settled. I was a good cracksman, honest I was. But I never had no luck."

"I intended no reflection on your professional ability," said Cleggett, politely.

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Cleggett," said Elmer, forgivingly. "Nobody's feelin's is hoited. And any friend of th' little dame here is a friend o' mine." The diminutive, on Elmer's lips, was intended as a compliment; Lady Agatha was not a small woman.

"Elmer," said Lady Agatha, "tell Mr. Cleggett how the mistake occurred."

Oratory was evidently not Elmer's strongest point. But he braced himself for the effort and began:

"When th' skoit here says she wants the big boob punched I says to m'self, foist of all: 'Is it right or is it wrong?' Oncet youse got that reform high sign put onto youse, youse can't be too careful. Do youse get me? So when th' skoit here puts it up to me I thinks foist off: 'Is it right or is it wrong?' See? So I thinks it over and I says to m'self th' big boob's been pullin' rough stuff on th' little dame here. Do youse get me? So I says to m'self, the big boob ought to get a wallop on the nut. See? What th' big gink needs is someone to bounce a brick off his bean, f'r th' dame here's a square little dame. Do youse get me? So I says to the little dame: 'I'm wit' youse, see? W'at th' big gink needs is a mont' in th' hospital.' An' the little dame here says he's not to be croaked, but−−−−"

But at that instant Teddy, the Pomeranian, sprang towards the uncovered hatchway that gave into the hold, barking violently. Lady Agatha, who could see into the opening, arose with a scream.

Cleggett, leaping towards the hatchway, was just in time to see two men jump backward from the bottom of the ladder into the murk of the hold. They had been listening. Drawing his pistol, and calling to the crew of the Jasper B. to follow him, Cleggett plunged recklessly downward and into the darkness.

CHAPTER VII−FIRST BLOOD FOR CLEGGETT

As his feet struck the top of the rubbish heap in the hold of the vessel, Cleggett stumbled and staggered

forward. But he did not let go of his revolver.

Perhaps he would not have fallen, but the Pomeranian, which had leaped into the hold after him, yelping like a terrier at a rat hunt, ran between his legs and tripped him.

"Damn the dog!" cried Cleggett, going down.

But the fall probably saved his life, for as he spoke two pistol shots rang out simultaneously from the forward part of the hold. The bullets passed over his head. Raising himself on his elbow, Cleggett fired rapidly three times, aiming at the place where a spurt of flame had come from.

A cry answered him, and he knew that at least one of his bullets had taken effect. He rose to his feet and plunged forward, firing again, and at the same instant another bullet grazed his temple.

The next few seconds were a wild confusion of yelping dog, shouts, curses, shots that roared like the explosion of big guns in that pent−up and restricted place, stinking powder, and streaks of fire that laced themselves across the darkness. But only a single pistol replied to Cleggett's now and he was confident that one of the men was out of the fight.

But the other man, blindly or with intention, was stumbling nearer as he fired. A bullet creased Cleggett's shoulder; it was fired so close to him that he felt the heat of the exploding powder; and in the sudden glow of light he got a swift and vivid glimpse of a white face framed in long black hair, and of flashing white teeth beneath a lifted lip that twitched. The face was almost within touching distance; as it vanished Cleggett heard the sharp, whistling intake of the fellow's breath−−and then a click that told him the other's last cartridge was gone. Cleggett clubbed his pistol and leaped forward, striking at the place where the gleaming teeth had been. His blow missed; he spun around with the force of it. As he steadied himself to shoot again he heard a rush behind him and knew that his men had come to his assistance.

"Collar him!" he cried. "Don't shoot, or−−−−"

But he did not finish that sentence. A thousand lights danced before his eyes, Niagara roared in his ears for an instant, and he knew no more. His adversary had laid him out with the butt of a pistol.

Cleggett was not that inconsiderable sort of a man who is killed in any trivial skirmish: There was a moment at the bridge of Arcole when Napoleon, wounded and flung into a ditch, appeared to be lost. But when Nature, often so stupid, really does take stock and become aware that she has created an eagle she does not permit that eagle to be killed before its wings are fledged. Napoleon was picked out of the ditch. Cleggett was only stunned.

Both were saved for larger triumphs. The association of names is not accidental. These two men were, in some respects, not dissimilar, although Bonaparte lacked Cleggett's breeding.

When Cleggett regained consciousness he was on deck; George, Kuroki and Cap'n Abernethy stood about him in a little semicircle of anxiety; Lady Agatha was applying a cold compress to the bump upon his head. (He made nothing of his other scratches.) As for Elmer, who had not stirred from his seat on the oblong box, he moodily regarded, not Cleggett, but a slight young fellow with long black hair, who lay motionless upon the deck.

Cleggett struggled to his feet. "Is he dead?" he asked, pointing to the figure of his recent assailant. Cap'n Abernethy, for the first time since Cleggett had known him, gave a direct answer to a question.

"Mighty nigh it," he said, staring down at the young man. Then he added: "Kind o' innocent lookin' young fellow, at that."

"But the other one? Was he killed?" asked Cleggett.

"The other?" George inquired. "But there was no other. When we got down there you and this boy−−−−" And George described the struggle that had taken place after Cleggett had lost consciousness. The whole affair, as far as it concerned Cleggett, had been a matter of seconds rather than minutes; it was begun and over like a hundred yard dash on the cinder track. When George and Kuroki and Cap'n Abernethy had tumbled into the hold they had been afraid to shoot for fear of hitting Cleggett; they had reached him, guided by his voice, just as he went down under his assailant's pistol. They had not subdued the youth until he had suffered severely from George's dagger. Later they learned that one of Cleggett's bullets had also found him. Cleggett listened to the end, and then he said:

"But there WERE two men in the hold. And one of them, dead or wounded, must still be down there. Carry this fellow into the forecastle−−we'll look at him later. Then bring some lanterns. We are going down into that hold again."

With their pistols in their right hands and lanterns in their left they descended, Cleggett first. It was not impossible that the other intruder might be lying, wounded, but revived enough by now to work a pistol, behind

one of the rubbish heaps.

But no shots greeted them. The hold of the Jasper B. was not divided into compartments of any sort. If it had ever had them, they had been torn away. Below deck, except for the rubbish heap and the steps for the masts, she was empty as a soup tureen. The pile of debris was the highest toward the waist of the vessel. There it formed a treacherous hill of junk; this hill sloped downward towards the bow and towards the stern; in both the fore and after parts, under the forecastle and the cabin, there were comparatively clear spaces.

The four men forced their way back towards the stern and then came slowly forward in a line that extended across the vessel, exploring with their lanterns every inch of the precarious footing, and overturning and looking behind, under, and into every box, cask, or jumble of planking that might possibly offer a place of concealment. They found no one. And, until they reached a clearer place, well forward, on the starboard side of the ship, they found no trace of anyone.

Cleggett, who was examining this place, suddenly uttered an exclamation which brought the others to him. He pointed to stains of blood upon the planking; near these stains were marks left by boots which had been gaumed with a yellowish clay. A revolver lay on the floor. Cleggett examined it and found that only one cartridge had been exploded. The stains of blood and the stains of yellow clay made an easily followed trail for some yards to a point about halfway between the bow and stern on the starboard side.

There, in the waist of the vessel, they ceased; ceased abruptly, mysteriously. Cleggett, not content, made his men go over the place again, even more thoroughly than before. But there was no one there, dead or wounded, unless he had succeeded in contracting himself to the dimensions of a rat.

"There is nothing," said Cleggett, standing by the ladder that led up to the deck. "Nothing," echoed George; and then as if with one impulse, and moved by the same eerie thought, these four men suddenly raised their lanterns head−high and gazed at one another.

A startled look spread from face to face. But no one spoke. There was no need to. All recognized that they were in the presence of an apparent impossibility. Yet this seemingly impossible thing was the fact. There had been two men in the hold of the Jasper B. They had entered as mysteriously and silently as disembodied spirits might have done. One of them, wounded, had made his exit in the same baffling way. Where? How?

Cleggett broke the silence.

"Let us go to the forecastle and have a look at that fellow," he said, and led the way.

No one lagged as they left the hold. These were all brave men, but there are times when the invisible, the incomprehensible, will send a momentary chill to the heart of the most intrepid.

Cleggett found Lady Agatha, her own troubles for the time forgotten, in the forecastle. She had lighted a lamp and was bending over the wounded man, whose coat and waistcoat she had removed. His clothing was a sop of blood. They cut his shirt and undershirt from him. Kuroki brought water and the medicine chest and surgical outfit with which Cleggett had provided the Jasper B. They examined his wounds, Lady Agatha, with a fine seriousness and a deft touch which claimed Cleggett's admiration, washing them herself and proceeding to stop the flow of blood.

"Oh, I am not an altogether useless person," she said, with a momentary smile, as she saw the look in Cleggett's face. And Cleggett remembered with shame that he had not thanked her for her ministrations to himself.

A pistol bullet had gone quite through the young man's shoulder. There was a deep cut on his head, and there were half a dozen other stab wounds on his body. George had evidently worked with great rapidity in the hold.

In the inside breast pocket of his coat he had carried a thin and narrow little book. There was a dagger thrust clear through it; if the book had not been there this terrible blow delivered by the son of Leonidas must inevitably have penetrated the lung.

Cleggett opened the book. It was entitled "Songs of Liberty, by Giuseppe Jones." The verse was written in the manner of Walt Whitman. A glance at one of the sprawling poems showed Cleggett that in sentiment it was of the most violent and incendiary character.

"Why, he is an anarchist!" said Cleggett in surprise.

"Oh, really!" Lady Agatha looked up from her work of mercy and spoke with animation, and then gazed upon the youth's face again with a new interest. "An anarchist! How interesting! I have ALWAYS wanted to meet an anarchist."

"Poor boy, he don't look like nothin' bad," said Cap'n Abernethy, who seemed to have taken a fancy to Giuseppe Jones.

"Listen," said Cleggett, and read:

"As for your flag, I spit upon your flag! I spit upon your organized society anywhere and everywhere; I spit upon your churches; I spit upon your capitalistic institutions; I spit upon your laws; I spit upon the whole damned thing! But, as I spit, I weep! I weep!"

"How silly!" said Lady Agatha. "What does it mean?"

"It means−−−−" began Cleggett, and then stopped. The book of revolutionary verse, taken in conjunction with the red flag that had been displayed and then withdrawn, made him wonder if Morris's were the headquarters of some band of anarchists.

But, if so, why should this band show such an interest in the Jasper B. ? An interest so hostile to her present owner and his men?

"If you was to ask me what it means," said Captain Abernethy, who had taken the book and was fingering it, "I'd say it means young Jones here has fell into bad company. That don't explain how he sneaked into the hold of the Jasper B., nor what for. But he orter have a doctor."

"He shall have a physician," said Cleggett. "In fact, the Jasper B. needs a ship's doctor."

"It looks to me," said Captain Abernethy, "as if she did. And if you was to go further, Mr. Cleggett, and say that it looks as if she was liable to need a couple o' trained nurses, too, I'd say to you that if they's goin' to be many o' these kind o' goin's−on aboard of her she DOES need a couple of trained nurses."

"Captain," said Cleggett, "you are a humane man −−let me shake your hand. You have voiced my very thought!"

Long ago Cleggett had resolved that if Chance or Providence should ever gratify his secret wish to participate in stirring adventures, he would see to it that all his wounded enemies, no matter how many there might be of them, received adequate medical attention. He had often been shocked at the callousness with which so many of the heroes of romance dash blithely into the next adventure−−though those whom they have seriously injured lie on all sides of them as thick as autumn leaves−−with only the most perfunctory consideration of these victims; sometimes, indeed, with no thought of them at all.

"Something tells me," said Cleggett seriously, "that this intrusion of armed men is only a prelude. I have little doubt of the hostility of Morris's; I am sure that the men who hid in the hold are spies from Morris's. I do not yet know the motive for this hostility. But the Jasper B. is in the midst of dangers and mysteries. There is before us an affair of some magnitude. Ere the Jasper B. sets sail for the China Seas, there may be many wounds."

And then he began to outline a plan that had flashed, full formed, into his mind. It was to rent, or purchase, the buildings at Parker's Beach, and fit them up as a field hospital, with three or four nurses in charge. Lady Agatha, who had been listening intently, interrupted.

"But−−the China Seas," she said. "Did I understand you to say that you intend to set sail for the China Seas?"

"That is the ultimate destination of the Jasper B." said Cleggett.

"I have heard−−it seems to me that I have heard−−that it's a very dangerous place," ventured Lady Agatha. "Pirates, you know, and all that sort of thing."

"Pirates," said Cleggett, "abound."

"Well, then," persisted Lady Agatha, "you are going out to fight them?"

"I should not be surprised," said Cleggett, folding his arms, and standing with his feet spread just a trifle wider than usual, "if the Jasper B. had a brush or two with them. A brush or two!"

Lady Agatha regarded him speculatively. But admiringly, too.

"But those nurses−−−−" she said. "If you're going to the China Seas you can't very well take Parker's Beach along."

"I was coming to that," said Cleggett, bowing. "I contemplate a hospital ship−−a vessel supplied with nurses and lint and medicines, that will accompany the Jasper B., and fly the Red Cross flag."

"But they are frightful people, really, those Chinese pirates, you know," said Lady Agatha. "Do you think they'll quite appreciate a hospital ship?"

"It is my duty," said Cleggett, simply. "Whether they appreciate it or not, a hospital ship they shall have. This is the twentieth century. And although the great spirits of other days had much to commend them, it is not to be denied that they knew little of our modern humanitarianism. It has remained for the twentieth century to develop that. And one owes a duty to one's epoch as well as to one's individuality."

"But," repeated Lady Agatha, with a meditative frown, "they are really FRIGHTFUL people!"

"There is good in all men," said Cleggett, "even in those whom the stern necessities of idealism sentence to death. And I have no doubt that many a Chinese pirate would, under other circumstances, have developed into a very contented and useful laundry−man."

Lady Agatha studied him intently for a moment. "Mr. Cleggett," she said, "if you will permit me to say so, a great suffragist leader was lost when fate made you a man."

"Thank you," said Cleggett, bowing again.

He dispatched George−−a person of address as well as a fighter in whom the blood of ancient Greece ran quick and strong−−on a humanitarian mission. George was to walk a mile to the trolley line, go to Fairport, hire a taxicab, and make all possible speed into Manhattan. There he was to communicate with a young physician of Cleggett's acquaintance, Dr. Harry Farnsworth.

Dr. Farnsworth, as Cleggett knew, was just out of medical school. He had his degree, but no patients. But he was bold and ready. He was, in short, just the lad to welcome with enthusiasm such a chance for active service as the cruise of the Jasper B. promised to afford.

It was something of a risk to weaken his little party by sending George away for several hours. But Cleggett did not hesitate. He was not the man to allow considerations of personal safety to outweigh his devotion to an ideal.

"And now," said Cleggett, turning to Lady Agatha, who had hearkened to his orders to George with a bright smile of approval, "we will dine, and I will hear the rest of your story, which was so rudely interrupted. It is possible that together we may be able to find some solution of your problem."

"Dine!" exclaimed Lady Agatha, eagerly. "Yes, let us dine! It may sound incredible to you, Mr. Cleggett, that the daughter of an English peer and the widow of a baronet should confess that, except for your tea, she has scarcely eaten for twenty−four hours−−but it is so!"

Then she said, sadly, with a sign and sidelong glance at the box of Reginald Maltravers which stood near the cabin companionway dripping coldly: "Until now, Mr. Cleggett−−until your aid had given me fresh hope and strength−−I had, indeed, very little appetite."

Cleggett followed her gaze, and it must be admitted that he himself experienced a momentary sense of depression at the sight of the box of Reginald Maltravers. It looked so damp, it looked so chill, it looked so starkly and patiently and malevolently watchful of himself and Lady Agatha. In a flash his lively fancy furnished him with a picture of the box of Reginald Maltravers suddenly springing upright and hopping towards him on one end with a series of stiff jumps that would send drops of moisture flying from the cracks and seams and make the ice inside of it clink and tinkle. And the mournful Elmer, now drowsing callously over his charge, was not an invitation to be blithe. If Cleggett himself were so affected (he mused) what must be the effect of the box of Reginald Maltravers upon sensibilities as fine and delicate as those of a woman like Lady Agatha Fairhaven?

"Could I−−if I might−−−−" Lady Agatha hesitated, with a glance towards the cabin. Cleggett instantly divined her thought; for brief as was their acquaintance, there was an almost psychic accord between his mind and hers, and he felt himself already answering to her unspoken wish as a ship to its rudder.

"The cabin is at your service," said Cleggett, for he understood that she wished to dress for dinner. He conducted her, with a touch of formality, to his own room in the cabin, which he put at her disposal, ordering her steamer trunks to be placed in it. Then, taking with him some necessaries of his own, he withdrew to the forecastle to make a careful toilet.

It might not have occurred to another man to dress for dinner, but Cleggett's character was an unusual blend of delicacy and strength; he perceived subtly that Lady Agatha was of the nature to appreciate this compliment. At a moment when her fortunes were at a low ebb what could more cheer a woman and hearten her than such a mark of consideration? Already Cleggett found himself asking what would please Lady Agatha.

CHAPTER VIII−A FLAME LEAPS OUT OF THE DARK

Kuroki announced dinner; Cleggett entered the captain's mess room of the cabin, where the cloth was laid, and a moment later lady Agatha emerged from the stateroom and gave him her hand with a smile.

If he had thought her beautiful before, when she wore her plain traveling suit, he thought her radiant now, in the true sense of that much abused word. For she flung forth her charm in vital radiations. If Cleggett had possessed a common mind he might have phrased it to himself that she hit a man squarely in the eyes. Her beauty had that direct and almost aggressive quality that is like a challenge, and with sophisticated feminine art she had contrived that the dinner gown she chose for that evening should sound the keynote of her personality like a leitmotif in an opera. The costume was a creation of white satin, the folds caught here and there with strings of pearls. There was a single large rose of pink velvet among the draperies of the skirt; a looped girdle of blue velvet was the only other splash of color. But the full−leaved, expanded and matured rose became the vivid epitome and illustration of the woman herself. A rope of pearls that hung down to her waist added the touch of soft luster essential to preserve the picture from the reproach of being too obvious an assault upon the senses; Cleggett reflected that another woman might have gone too far and spoiled it all by wearing diamonds. Lady Agatha always knew where to stop.

"I have not been so hungry since I was in Holloway Jail," said Lady Agatha. And she ate with a candid gusto that pleased Cleggett, who loathed in a woman a finical affectation of indifference to food.

When Kuroki brought the coffee she took up her own story again. There was little more to tell.

Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat, it appeared, had mistaken their instructions. Two nights after they had been engaged they had appeared at Lady Agatha's apartment with the oblong box.

"The horrid creatures brought it into my sitting−room and laid it on the floor before I could prevent them," said Lady Agatha.

"'What is this?' I asked them, in bewilderment.

"They replied that they had killed Reginald Maltravers ACCORDING TO ORDERS, and had brought him to me.

"'Orders!' I cried. 'You had no such orders.' Elmer, who lived on the same floor, was absent temporarily, having taken Teddy out for an airing. I was distracted. I did not know what to do. 'Your orders," I said, 'were to−−to−−−−'"

She broke off. "What was it that Elmer told them to do, and what was it that they did?" she mused, perplexed. She called Elmer into the cabin.

"Elmer," she said, "exactly what was it that you told your friends to do to him? And what was it that they did? I can never remember the words."

"Poke him," said Elmer, addressing Cleggett. "I tells these ginks to poke him. But these ginks tells th' little dame here they t'inks I has said to croak him. So they goes an' croaks him. D' youse get me?"

Being assured that they got him, Elmer downheartedly withdrew.

"At any rate," continued Lady Agatha, "there was that terrible box upon my sitting−room floor, and there were those two degraded wretches. The callous beasts stood above the box apparently quite insensible to the ethical enormity of their crime. But they were keen enough to see that it might be used as a lever with which to force more money from me. For when I demanded that they take the box away with them and dispose of it, they only laughed at me. They said that they had had enough of that box. They had delivered the goods−−that was the phrase they used−−and they wanted more money. And they said they would not leave until they got it. They threatened, unless I gave them the money at once, to leave the place and get word to the police of the presence of the box in my apartment.

"I was in no mental condition to combat and get the better of them. I felt myself to be entirely in their power. I saw only the weakness of my own position. I could not, at the moment, see the weak spots in theirs. Elmer might have advised me−−but he was not there. The miserable episode ended with my giving them a thousand dollars each, and they left.

"Alone with that box, my panic increased. When Elmer returned with Teddy, I told him what had happened. He wished to open the box, having a vague idea that perhaps after all it did not really contain what they had said

was in it. But I could not bear the thought of its being opened. I refused to allow Elmer to look into it.

"I determined that I would ship the box at once to some fictitious personage, and then take the next ship back to England.

"I hastily wrote a card, which I tacked on the box, consigning it to Miss Genevieve Pringle, Newark, N. J. The name was the first invention that came into my head. Newark I had heard of. I knew vaguely that it was west of New York, but whether it was twenty miles west or two thousand miles, I did not stop to think. I am ignorant of American geography.

"But no sooner had the box been taken away than I began to be uneasy. I was more frightened with it gone than I had been with it present. I imagined it being dropped and broken, and revealing everything. And then it occurred to me that even if I should get out of the country, the secret was bound to be discovered some time. I do not know why I had not thought of that before−−but I was distracted. Having got rid of the box, I was already wild to get it into my possession again.

"I confided my fears to Elmer, and was surprised to learn from him that Newark is very near New York. We took a taxicab at once, and were waiting at the freight depot in Newark when the thing arrived. There I claimed it in the name of Miss Genevieve Pringle.

"It became apparent to me that I must manage its final disposition myself. Elmer hired for me the vehicle in which we arrived here, and we started back to New York.

"But the driver, from the first, was suspicious of the box. His suspicions were increased when, upon returning to my apartment hotel, where I now decided to keep the box until I could think out a coherent plan of action, the manager of the hotel made inquiries. The manager had seen the box brought in, and taken out again, before. Its return struck him as odd. He offered to store it for me in the basement. I took alarm at once. Naturally, he questioned me more closely. I was unready in my answers. His inquiries excited and alarmed me. I felt that any instant I might do something to betray myself. I cut the manager short, paid my bill, got my luggage, and ordered the chauffeur to drive to the Grand Central Station. But when we had gone three or four blocks, I said to him: 'Stop!−−I do not wish to go to the Grand Central Station. Drive me to Poughkeepsie!' I wished a chance to think. I knew Poughkeepsie was not far from New York City, but I supposed it was far enough to give me a chance to determine what to do next by the time we arrived there.

"But I could not think coherently. I could only feel and fear. The drive was longer than I had expected, but when we arrived at Poughkeepsie and the chauffeur asked me again what disposition to make of the box, I was unable to answer him. Thereupon he insolently demanded an enormous fare.

"I could not choose but pay it. For four days we went from place to place, in and about New York City's suburbs−−now in town and now in the country−−crossing rivers again and again on ferryboats−−stopping at hotels, road houses and all manner of places−−dashing through Brooklyn and out among the villages of Long Island−−and with the fear on me that we were being followed.

"Elmer and I were continually on the lookout for some way to dispose of the box, but nothing presented itself. The driver, who had become more and more impudent in his attitude and outrageous in his charges, was now practically a spy upon us. The necessity for ice made frequent stops imperative; at the same time the increasing fear of pursuit made it agony for me to stop anywhere.

"Today, at a road house thirty or forty miles from here, I made certain that I was pursued. The very man from whom I had claimed the box at the railway goods station in Newark confronted me. It appears, from what Elmer says, that he is taking a holiday and is visiting his brother, who is the proprietor of the road house.

"And the person who is pursuing me is−−a Miss Genevieve Pringle!

"As fate would have it, there lives in Newark a person who really owns that name which I thought I had invented. It seems that she had been expecting a shipment, and had called to inquire for it; upon learning that a box had been delivered to a person in her name she had taken up the trail at once. Having somehow traced me to Long Island, she had actually made inquiries at this very road house some hours earlier. The railway employee, I am certain, would have denounced me at once−−he would have accused me of theft, and would have endeavored to have me held until he could get into communication with Miss Pringle or with the authorities−−but I bought from him a promise of silence. It cost me another large sum.

"A few hours ago the chauffeur, divining from a conversation between Elmer and me that I was running short of ready money, deserted me here. You know the rest."

Her voice trailed off into a tired whisper as she finished, and with her elbows on the table Lady Agatha wearily supported her head in her hands. Her attitude acknowledged defeat. She was despairingly certain that she would never see the last of the box which she believed to contain Reginald Maltravers.

Cleggett did not hesitate an instant. "Lady Agatha," he said, "the Jasper B. is at your service as long as you may require the ship. The cabin is your home until we arrive at a solution of your difficulties."

His glance and manner added what his tongue left unuttered−−that the commander of the ship was henceforth her devoted cavalier. But she understood.

She extended her hand. Her answer was on her lips. But at that instant the jarring roar of an explosion struck the speech from them.

The blast was evidently near, though muffled. The earth shook; a tremor ran through the Jasper B.; the glasses leaped and rang upon the table. Cleggett, followed by Lady Agatha, darted up the companionway.

As Cleggett reached the deck there was a second shock, and he beheld a flame leap out of the earth itself−−a sudden sword of fire thrust into the night from the midst of the sandy plain before him. The light that stabbed and was gone in an instant was about halfway between the Jasper B. and Morris's. A second after, a missile−−which Cleggett later learned was a piece of rock the size of a man's head−−fell with a splintering crash upon and through the wooden platform beside the Jasper B., not thirty feet from where Cleggett stood; another splashed into the canal. The next day Cleggett saw several of these fragments lying about the plain.

Calling to his men to bring lanterns−−for the night had fallen dark and cloudy−−Cleggett ran towards the place. Lady Agatha, refusing to remain behind, went with them. Moving lights and a stir of activity at Morris's, and the gleam of lanterns on board the Annabel Lee, showed Cleggett that his neighbors likewise were excited.

But if Cleggett had expected an easy solution of this astonishing eruption he was disappointed. Arrived at the scene of the explosion, he found that its nature was such as to tease and balk his faculties of analysis. The blast had blown a hole into the ground, certainly; but this hole was curiously filled. Two large bowlders that leaned towards each other had stood on top of the ground. These had been split and shattered into many fragments. A few pieces, like the one that came so near Cleggett, had been flung to a distance, but for the most part the shivered crowns and broken bulks had been served otherwise; the force of the blast had disintegrated them, but had not scattered them; the greater part of this newly−rent stone had toppled into the fissure in the ground, and lay there mixed with earth, almost filling the hole. It was impossible to determine just where and how the blast had been set off; the rocks hid the facts. But Cleggett judged that the force must have come from below the bowlders; mightily smitten from beneath, they had collapsed into the cavern suddenly opening there, as a building might collapse into and fill a cellar. The pieces that had been thrown high into the air were insignificant in proportion to the great bulk which had settled into the hole and made its origin a mystery.

As Cleggett, bewildered, stood and gazed upon the mass of rock and earth, Cap'n Abernethy gave a cry and pointed at something with his finger. Cleggett, looking at the spot indicated, saw upon the edge of this singular fracture in the earth a thing that sent a quick chill of horror and repulsion to his heart. It was a dead hand, roughly severed between the wrist and the elbow. The back of it was uppermost; the fingers were clenched. Cleggett set down his lantern beside it and turned it over with his foot.

The dead fingers clutched a scrap of something yellow. On one of them was a large and peculiar ring.

"My God!" murmured Lady Agatha, grasping Cleggett convulsively by the shoulder, "that is the Earl of Claiborne's signet ring!"

But Cleggett scarcely realized what she had said, until she repeated her words. Fighting down his repugnance, he took from the lifeless and stubborn fingers the yellow scrap of paper.

It was a torn and crumpled twenty−dollar bill.

CHAPTER IX−MYSTERIES MULTIPLY

Directing Kuroki to remove the ring and bring it along, Cleggett gave his arm to Lady Agatha and led the way back to the Jasper B. Neither said anything to the point until, seated in the cabin, with the twenty−dollar bill and the ring before them, Cleggett picked up the latter and remarked:

"You are certain of the identity of this ring?"

"Certain," she said. "I could not mistake it. There is no other like it, anywhere."

It was a very heavy gold band, set with a large piece of dark green jade which was deeply graven on its surface with the Claiborne crest.

"Was it," asked Cleggett, "in the possession of Reginald Maltravers?"

"It might have been, readily enough," she said, "although I had not known that it was. Still, that does not explain. . . ." She shrugged her shoulders.

"There are a number of things unexplained," answered Cleggett, "and the presence of this ring, and the manner in which it has come into our possession, are not the most mysterious of them. The explosion itself appears to me, just now, at least, hard to account for."

"The manner in which people get into and out of the hold of your vessel is also obscure," said Lady Agatha.

"Nor is the motive of their hostility clear," said Cleggett.

He picked up the piece of paper money. Something about the feel of it aroused his suspicions. He called Elmer, and when that exponent of reform entered the cabin, asked him bluntly:

"Did you ever have anything to do with bad money?"

Elmer intimated that he might know it if he saw it.

"Then look at that, please."

Elmer took the torn bill, produced a penknife, slit the yellow paper, and cut out of it one of the small hair−like fibers with which the texture of such notes is sprinkled. After wetting this fiber and mangling it with his penknife he gave his judgment briefly.

"Queer," he said.

"But what does that explain?" asked Lady Agatha. "Perhaps the Earl of Claiborne came to this country and took to making counterfeit money in the hold of the Jasper B., into and out of which he stole like a ghost? Finally he got tired of it and blew himself up with a bomb out there, leaving his ring with a piece of money intact? Is that the explanation we get out of our facts? Because, you know," she added, as Cleggett did not smile, "all that is absurd!"

"Yes," said Cleggett, still refusing to be amused, "but out of all this jumble of mystery, just one certain thing appears."

"And that is?"

"That our destinies are somehow linked!"

"Our destinies? Linked?"

She gave him a swift look, and as suddenly dropped her eyes again. Cleggett could not tell whether she was offended or not by his expression of the idea.

"The same people," said Cleggett, after a brief pause, "who are so persistently hostile to me are also in some manner connected with your own misfortunes. Their possession of this ring shows that."

"Yes," she said, following his thought, "that is true−−whoever set off that bomb was also wearing this ring, or was very near the person who was wearing it. And," with a shudder which conveyed to Cleggett that she was thinking of the box on deck, "it COULDN'T have been Reginald Maltravers!"

"Perhaps," said Cleggett, "someone was sneaking over from Morris's with the intention of destroying the Jasper B., and was himself the victim of a premature explosion as he crouched behind the rocks to await his opportunity."

"But why," puzzled Lady Agatha, with contracted brows, "should a dynamiter, anarchistic or otherwise, be holding a counterfeit twenty−dollar bill in his hand as he went about his work?"

Cleggett brooded in silence.

"We are in the midst of mysteries," he said finally. "They are multiplying about us."

He was about to say more. He was about to express again his belief that they had been flung together by fate. The sense that their stories were inextricably intertwined, that they must henceforward march on as one mystery towards a solution, was exhilarating to him. But how was it possible that she should feel the same sense of pleasure in the fact that they faced dangers, seen and unseen, together?

Together!−−How the thought thrilled him!

On deck, Elmer, before returning to the box of Reginald Maltravers, suddenly and unexpectedly grasped

Cleggett by the hand.

"Bo," he said, "I'm wit' youse. I'm wit' youse the whole way. Any friend of the little dame is a friend of mine. She's a square little dame. D' youse get me?"

"Thank you," said Cleggett, more affected than he would have cared to own. "Thank you, my loyal fellow."

Cleggett established a watch on deck that night, with a relief every two hours. Towards morning George returned, with Dr. Farnsworth and a nurse. This nurse, Miss Antoinette Medley, was a black−eyed, slender girl with pretty hands and white teeth; she gestured a great deal and smiled often. She and Dr. Farnsworth devoted themselves at once to the young anarchist poet, who had come out of his stupor, indeed, but was now babbling weakly in the delirium of fever.

The night was not a cheerful one, and morning came gloomily out of a gray bank of mist. Cleggett, as he looked about the boat in the first pale light, could not resist a slight feeling of depression, courageous as he was. The wounded man gibbered in a bunk in the forecastle. The box of Reginald Maltravers stood on one end, leaning against the port side of the cabin, and dripped steadily. Elmer, wrapped in blankets, lay on the deck near the box of Reginald Maltravers, looking even more dejected in slumber than when his eyes were open. Teddy, the Pomeranian, was snuggled against Elmer's feet, but, as if a prey to frightful nightmares, the little dog twitched and whined in his sleep from time to time. These were the apparent facts, and these facts were set to a melancholy tune by the long−drawn, dismal snores of Cap'n Abernethy, which rose and fell, and rose and fell, and rose again like the sad and wailing song of some strange bird bereft of a beloved mate. They were the music for, and the commentary on, what Cleggett beheld; Cap'n Abernethy seemed to be saying, with these snores: "If you was to ask me, I'd say it ain't a cheerful ship this mornin', Mr. Cleggett, it ain't a cheerful ship."

But Cleggett's nature was too lively and vigorous to remain clouded for long. By the time the red disk of the sun had crept above the eastern horizon he had shaken off his fit of the blues.

The sun looked large and bland and friendly, and, somehow, the partisan of integrity and honor. He drew strength from it. Cleggett, like all poetic souls, was responsive to these familiar recurrent phenomena of nature.

The sun did him another office. It showed him a peculiar tableau vivant on the eastern bank of the canal, near the house boat Annabel Lee. This consisted of three men, two of them naked except for bathing trunks of the most abbreviated sort, running swiftly and earnestly up and down the edge of the canal. He saw with astonishment that the two men in bathing suits were handcuffed together, the left wrist of one to the right wrist of the other. A rope was tied to the handcuffs, and the other end of it was held by the third man, who was dressed in ordinary tweeds. The third man had a magazine rifle over one shoulder. He followed about twenty feet behind the two men in bathing suits and drove them.

Cleggett perceived that the man who was doing the driving was the same who had watched the Jasper B. so persistently the day before from the deck of the Annabel Lee. He was middle−sized, and inclined to be stout, and yet he followed his strange team with no apparent effort. Cleggett saw through the glass that he had a rather heavy black mustache, and was again struck by something vaguely familiar about him. The two men in bathing suits were slender and undersized; they did not look at all like athletes, and although they moved as fast as they could it was apparent that they got no pleasure out of it. They ran with their heads hanging down, and it seemed to Cleggett that they were quarreling as they ran, for occasionally one of them would give a vicious jerk to the handcuffs that would almost upset the other, and that must have hurt the wrists of both of them.

As Cleggett watched, the driver pulled them up short, and waved them towards the canal. They stopped, and it was apparent that they were balking and expostulating. But the driver was inexorable. He went near to them and threatened their bare backs with the slack of the rope. Gingerly and shiveringly they stepped into the cold water, while the driver stood on the bank. The water was up to their waists and he had to threaten them again with his rope before they would duck their heads under.

When he allowed them on shore again they needed no urging, it was evident, to make them hit up a good rate of speed, and back and forth along the bank they sprinted. But the cold bath had not improved their temper, for suddenly one of them leaped and kicked sidewise at the other, with the result that both toppled to the ground. The stout man was upon them in an instant, hazing them with the rope end. He drove them, still lashing out at each other with their bare feet, into the water again, and after a more prolonged ducking whipped them, at a plunging gallop, upon the Annabel Lee, where they disappeared from Cleggett's view.

While Cleggett was still wondering what significance could underlie this unusual form of matutinal exercise,

Dr. Farnsworth came out of the forecastle and beckoned to him. The young Doctor had a red Vandyck beard sedulously cultivated in the belief that it would make him look older and inspire the confidence of patients, and a shock of dark red hair which he rumpled vigorously when he was thinking. He was rumpling it now.

"Who's 'Loge'?" he demanded.

"Loge?" repeated Cleggett.

"You don't know anyone named 'Loge,' or Logan?"

"No. Why?"

"Whoever he is, 'Loge' is very much on the mind of our young friend in there," said Farnsworth, with a movement of his head towards the forecastle. "And I wouldn't be surprised, to judge from the boy's delirium, if 'Loge' had something to do with all the hell that's been raised around your ship. Come in and listen to this fellow."

Miss Medley, the nurse, was sitting beside the wounded youth's bunk, endeavoring to soothe and restrain him. The young anarchist, whose eyes were bright with fever, was talking rapidly in a weak but high−pitched singsong voice.

"He's off on the poems again," said the Doctor, after listening a moment. "But wait, he'll get back to Loge. It's been one or the other for an hour now."

"I spit upon your flag," shrilled Giuseppe Jones, feebly declamatory. "'I spit−−I spit−−but, as I spit, I weep.'" He paused for a moment, and then began at the beginning and repeated all of the lines which Cleggett had read from the little book. One gathered that it was Giuseppe's favorite poem.

"'I spit upon the whole damned thing!'" he shrilled, and then with a sad shake of his head: "But, as I spit, I weep!"

If the poem was Giuseppe's favorite poem, this was evidently his favorite line, for he said it over and over again−−"'But, as I spit, I weep'"−−in a breathless babble that was very wearing on the nerves.

But suddenly he interrupted himself; the poems seemed to pass from his mind. "Loge!" he said, raising himself on his elbow and staring, with a frown not at, but through, Cleggett: "Logan−−it isn't square!"

There was suffering and perplexity in his gaze; he was evidently living over again some painful scene.

"I'm a revolutionist, Loge, not a crook! I won't do it, Loge!"

Watching him, it was impossible not to understand that the struggle, which his delirium made real and present again, had stamped itself into the texture of his spirit. "You shouldn't ask it, Loge," he said. The crisis of the conflict which he was living over passed presently, and he murmured, with contracted brows, and as if talking to himself: "Is Loge a crook? A crook?"

But after a moment of this he returned again to a rapid repetition of the phrase: "I'm a revolutionist, not a crook−not a crook−−not a crook−−a revolutionist, not a crook, Loge, not a crook−−−−" Once he varied it, crying with a quick, hot scorn: "I'll cut their throats and be damned to them, but don't ask me to steal." And then he was off again to declaiming his poetry: "I spit, but, as I spit, I weep!"

But as Cleggett and the Doctor listened to him the youth's ravings suddenly took a new form. He ceased to babble; terror expanded the pupils of his eyes and he pointed at vacancy with a shaking finger. "Stop it!" he cried in a croaking whisper. "Stop it! It's his skull−−it's Loge's skull come alive. Stop it, I say, it's come alive and getting bigger." With a violent effort he raised himself before the nurse could prevent him, shrinking back from the horrid hallucination which pressed towards him, and then fell prone and senseless on the bunk.

"God!−−his wounds!" cried the Doctor, starting forward. As Farnsworth had feared, they had broken open and were bleeding again. "It's a ticklish thing," said Farnsworth, rumpling his hair. "If I give him enough sedative to keep him quiet his heart may stop any time. If I don't, he'll thrash himself to pieces in his delirium before the day's over."

But Cleggett scarcely heeded the Doctor. The reference to "Loge's" skull had flashed a sudden light into his mind. Whatever else "Loge" was, Cleggett had little doubt that "Loge" was the tall man with the stoop shoulders and the odd, skullshaped scarfpin, for whom he had conceived at first sight such a tingling hatred−−the same fellow who had so ruthlessly manhandled the flaxen−haired Heinrich on the roof of the verandah the day before.

CHAPTER X−IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP

At seven o'clock that morning five big−bodied automobile trucks rolled up in a thundering procession. As they hove in sight on the starboard quarter and dropped anchor near the Jasper B., Cleggett recalled that this was the day which Cap'n Abernethy had set for getting the sticks and sails into the vessel. In the hurry and excitement of recent events aboard the ship he had almost forgotten it.

A score of men scrambled from the trucks and began to haul out of them all the essentials of a shipyard. Wheel, rudder, masts, spars, bowsprit, quantities of rope and cable followed−−in fact, every conceivable thing necessary to convert the Jasper B. from a hulk into a properly rigged schooner. Cleggett, with a pith and brevity characteristic of the man, had given his order in one sentence.

"Make arrangements to get the sails and masts into her in one day," he had told Captain Abernethy.

It was in the same large and simple spirit that a Russian Czar once laid a ruler across the map of his empire and, drawing a straight line from Moscow to Petersburg, commanded his engineers: "Build me a railroad to run like that." Genius has winged conceptions; it sees things as a completed whole from the first; it is only mediocrity which permits itself to be lost in details.

Cleggett was like the Romanoffs in his ability to go straight to the point, but he had none of the Romanoff cruelty.

Captain Abernethy had made his arrangements accordingly. If it pleased Cleggett to have a small manufacturing plant brought to the Jasper B. instead of having the Jasper B. towed to a shipyard, it was Abernethy's business as his chief executive officer to see that this was done. The Captain had let the contract to an enterprising and businesslike fellow, Watkins by name, who had at once looked the vessel over, taken the necessary measurements, and named a good round sum for the job. With several times the usual number of skilled workmen employed at double the usual rate of pay, he guaranteed to do in ten hours what might ordinarily have taken a week.

Under the leadership of this capable Watkins, the workmen rushed at the vessel with the dash and vim of a gang of circus employees engaged in putting up a big tent and making ready for a show. To a casual observer it might have seemed a scene of confusion. But in reality the work jumped forward with order and precision, for the position of every bolt, chain, nail, cord, piece of iron and bit of wood had been calculated beforehand to a nicety; there was not a wasted movement of saw, adze, or hammer. The Jasper B., in short, had been measured accurately for a suit of clothes, the clothes had been made; they were now merely being put on.

Refreshed by the first sound sleep she had been able to obtain for several nights, Lady Agatha joined Cleggett at an eight−o'clock breakfast. It was the first of May, and warm and bright; in a simple morning dress of pink linen Lady Agatha stirred in Cleggett a vague recollection of one of Tennyson's earlier poems. The exact phrases eluded him; perhaps, indeed, it was the underlying sentiment of nearly ALL of Tennyson's earlier poems of which she reminded him−−those lyrics which are at once so romantic and so irreproachable morally.

"We must give you Americans credit for imagination at any rate," she said smilingly, making her Pomeranian sit up on his hind legs and beg for a morsel of crisp bacon. "I awake in a boatyard after having gone to sleep in a dismantled barge."

"Barge!" The word "barge" struck Cleggett unexpectedly; he was not aware that he had given a start and frowned.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Lady Agatha, "how the dear man glares! What should I call it? Scow?"

"Scow?" said Cleggett. He had scarcely recovered from the word "barge"; it is not to be denied that "scow" jarred upon him even more than "barge" had done.

"I beg your pardon," said Lady Agatha, "but what IS the Jasper B., Mr. Cleggett?"

"The Jasper B. is a schooner," said Cleggett. He tried to say it casually, but he was conscious as he spoke that there was a trace of hurt surprise in his voice. The most generous and chivalrous soul alive, Cleggett would have gone to the stake for Lady Agatha; and yet so unaccountable is that vain thing, the human soul (especially at breakfast time), that he felt angry at her for misunderstanding the Jasper B.

"You aren't going to be horrid about it, are you?" she said. "Because, you know, I never said I knew anything about ships."

She picked up the little dog and stood it on the table, making the animal extend its paws as if pleading. "Help me to beg Mr. Cleggett's pardon," she said, "he's going to be cross with us about his old boat."

If Lady Agatha had been just an inch taller or just a few pounds heavier the playful mood itself would have jarred upon the fastidious Cleggett; indeed, as she was, if she had been just a thought more playful, it would have jarred. But Lady Agatha, it has been remarked before, never went too far in any direction.

Even as she smiled and held out the dog's paws Cleggett was aware of something in her eyes that was certainly not a tear, but was just as certainly a film of moisture that might be a tear in another minute. Then Cleggett cursed himself inwardly for a brute−−it rushed over him how difficult to Lady Agatha her position on board the Jasper B. must seem. She must regard herself as practically a pensioner on his bounty. And he had been churl enough to show a spark of temper−−and that, too, after she had repeatedly expressed her gratitude to him.

"I am deeply sorry, Lady Agatha," he began, blushing painfully, "if−−−−"

"Silly!" She interrupted him by reaching across the table and laying a forgiving hand upon his arm. "Don't be so stiff and formal. Eat your egg before it gets cold and don't say another work. Of course I know you're not REALLY going to be cross." And she attacked her breakfast, giving him such a look that he forthwith forgave himself and forgot that he had had anything to forgive in her.

"There's going to be a frightful racket around here today," he said presently. "Maybe you'd like to get away from it for a while. How'd you like to go for a row?"

"I'd love it!" she said.

"George will be glad to take you, I'm sure."

"George? And you?" He thought he detected a note of disappointment in her voice; he had not thought to disappoint her, but when he found her disappointed he got a certain thrill out of it.

"I am going over to Morris's this morning," he said.

"To Morris's? Alone?"

"Why, yes."

"But−−but isn't it dangerous?"

Cleggett smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Promise me that you will not go over there alone," she demanded.

"I am sorry. I cannot."

"But it is rash−−it is mad!"

"There is no real danger."

"Then I am going with you."

"I think that would hardly be advisable."

"I'm going with you," she repeated, rising with determination.

"But you're not," said Cleggett. "I couldn't think of allowing it."

"Then there IS danger," she said.

He tried to evade the point. "I shouldn't have mentioned it," he murmured.

She ran into the stateroom and was back in an instant with her hat, which she pinned on as she spoke.

"I'm ready to start," she said.

"But you're not going."

"After what you've done for me I insist upon my right to share whatever danger there may be." She spoke heatedly.

In her heat and impulsiveness and generous bravery Cleggett thought her adorable, although he began to get really angry with her, too. At the same time he was aware that her gratitude to him was such that she was on fire to give him some positive and early proof of it. It had not so much as occurred to her to enjoy immunity on account of her sex; it had not entered her mind, apparently, that her sex was an obstacle in the way of participating in whatever dangerous enterprise he had planned. She was, in fact, behaving like a chivalric but obstinate boy; she had not been a militant suffragette for nothing. And yet, somehow, this attitude only served to enhance her essential femininity. Nevertheless, Cleggett was inflexible.

"You would scarcely forbid me to go to Morris's today, or anywhere else I may choose," she said hotly, with a spot of red on either cheek bone, and a dangerous dilatation of her eyes.

"That is exactly what I intend to do," said Cleggett, with an intensity equal to her own, "FORBID you."

"You are curiously presumptuous," she said.

It was a real quarrel before they were done with it, will opposed to naked will. And oddly enough Cleggett

found his admiration grow as his determination to gain his point increased. For she fought fair, disdaining the facile weapon of tears, and when she yielded she did it suddenly and merrily.

"You've the temper of a sultan, Mr. Cleggett," she said with a laugh, which was her signal of capitulation. And then she added maliciously: "You've a devil of a temper−−for a little man!"

"Little!" Cleggett felt the blood rush into his face again and was vexed at himself. "I'm taller than you are!" he cried, and the next instant could have bitten his tongue off for the childish vanity of the speech.

"You're not!" she cried, her whole face alive with laughter. "Measure and see!"

And pulling off her hat she caught up a table knife and made him stand with his back to hers. "You're cheating," said Cleggett, laughing now in spite of himself, as she laid the knife across their heads. But his voice broke and trembled on the next words, for he was suddenly thrilled with her delicious nearness. "You're standing on your tiptoes, and your hair's piled on top of your head."

"Maybe you are an inch taller," she admitted, with mock reluctance. And then she said, with a ripple of mirth: "You are taller than I am−−I give up; I won't go to Morris's."

Cleggett, to tell the truth, was a bit relieved at the measurement. He was of the middle height; she was slightly taller than the average woman; he had really thought she might prove taller than he. He could scarcely have told why he considered the point important.

But after the quarrel she looked at Cleggett with a new and more approving gaze. Neither of them quite realized it, but she had challenged his ability to dominate her, and she had been worsted; he had unconsciously met and satisfied in her that subtle inherent craving for domination which all women possess and so few will admit the possession of.

Cleggett started across the sands toward Morris's with an automatic pistol slung in a shoulder holster under his left arm and a sword cane in his hand. He paused a moment by the scene of the explosion of the night before, but daylight told him nothing that lantern light had failed to reveal. He had no very definite plan, although he thought it possible that he might gain some information. The more he reflected on the attitude of Morris's, the more it irritated him, and he yearned to make this irritation known.

Perhaps there was more than a little of the spirit of bravado in the call he proposed to pay. He planned, the next day, to sail the Jasper B. out into the bay and up and down the coast for a few miles, to give himself and his men a bit of practice in navigation before setting out for the China Seas. And he could not bear to think that the hostile denizens of Morris's should think that he had moved the Jasper B. from her position through any fear of them. He reasoned that the most pointed way of showing his opinion of them would be to walk casually into Morris's barroom and order a drink or two. If Cleggett had a fault as a commander it lay in these occasional foolhardy impulses which he found it difficult to control. Julius Caesar had the same sort of pride, which, in Caesar's case, amounted to positive vanity. In fact, the character of Caesar and the character of Cleggett had many points in common, although Cleggett possessed a nicer sense of honor than Caesar.

The main entrance to Morris's was on the west side. From the west verandah one could enter directly either the main dining−room, at the north side of the building, the office, or the barroom. The barroom, which was large, ran the whole length of the south side of the place. Doors also led into the barroom, from the south verandah, which was built over the water, and from the east verandah, which was visible from the Jasper B.−−and onto the roof of which Cleggett had seen Loge tumble the limp body of his victim, Heinrich. That had been only the day before, but so much had happened since that Cleggett could scarcely realize that so little time had elapsed.

Cleggett strolled into the barroom and took a seat at a table in the southeast corner of it, with his back to the angle of the walls. He thus commanded a view of the bar itself; a door which led, as he conjectured, into the kitchen; the door communicating with the office, and a door which gave upon the west verandah−−all this easily, and without turning his head. By turning his head ever so slightly to his right, he could command a view of the door leading to the east verandah. Unless the ceiling suddenly opened above him, or the floor beneath, it would be impossible to surprise him. Cleggett took this position less through any positive fear of attack than because he possessed the instinct of the born strategist. Cleggett was like Robert E. Lee in his quick grasp of a situation and, indeed, in other respects−−although Cleggett would never under any circumstances have countenanced human slavery.

There were only two men in the place when Cleggett took his seat, the bartender and a fellow who was evidently a waiter. He had entered the west door and walked across the room without looking at them,

withholding his gaze purposely. When he looked towards the bar, after seating himself, the waiter, with his back towards Cleggett's corner, was talking in a low tone to the bartender. But they had both seen him; Cleggett perceived they both knew him.

"See what the gentleman wants, Pierre," said the bartender in a voice too elaborately casual to hide his surprise at seeing Cleggett.

The waiter turned and came towards him, and Cleggett saw the man's face for the first time. It was a face that Cleggett never forgot. Cleggett judged the man to be a Frenchman; he was dark and sallow, with nervous, black eyebrows, and a smirk that came and went quickly. But the unforgettable feature was a mole that grew on his upper lip, on the right side, near the base of his flaring nostril. Many moles have hairs in them; Pierre's mole had not merely half a dozen hairs, but a whole crop. They grew thick and long; and, with a perversion of vanity almost inconceivable in a sane person, Pierre had twisted these hairs together, as a man twists a mustache, and had trained them to grow obliquely across his cheek bone. He was a big fellow, for a Frenchman, and, as he walked towards Cleggett with a mincing elasticity of gait, he smirked and caressed this whimsical adornment. Cleggett, fascinated, stared at it as the fellow paused before him. Pierre, evidently gratified at the sensation he was creating, continued to smirk and twist, and then, seeing that he held his audience, he took from his waistcoat pocket a little piece of cosmetic and, as a final touch of Gallic grotesquerie, waxed the thing. It was all done with that air of quiet histrionicism, and with that sense of self−appreciation, which only the French can achieve in its perfection. "You ordered, M'sieur?" Pierre, having produced his effect, like the artist (though debased) that he was, did not linger over it.

"Er−−a Scotch highball," said Cleggett, recovering himself. "And with a piece of lemon peeling in it, please."

Pierre served him deftly. Cleggett stirred his drink and sipped it slowly, gazing at the bartender, who elaborately avoided watching him. But after a moment a little noise at his right attracted his attention. Pierre, with his hand cupped, had dashed it along a window pane and caught a big stupid fly, abroad thus early in the year. With a sense of almost intolerable disgust, Cleggett saw the man, with a rapt smile on his face, tear the insect's legs from it, and turn it loose. If ever a creature rejoiced in wickedness for its own sake, and as if its practice were an art in itself, Pierre was that person, Cleggett concluded. Knowing Pierre, one could almost understand those cafes of Paris where the silly poets of degradation ostentatiously affect the worship of all manner of devils.

An instant later, Pierre, as if he had been doing something quite charming, looked at Cleggett with a grin; a grin that assumed that there was some kind of an understanding between them concerning this delightful pastime. It was too much. Cleggett, with an oath−−and never stopping to reflect that it was perhaps just the sort of action which Pierre hoped to provoke−−grasped his cane with the intention of laying it across the fellow's shoulders half a dozen times, come what might, and leaving the place.

But at that instant the door from the office opened and the man whom he knew only as Loge entered the room.

Loge paused at the right of Cleggett, and then marched directly across the room and sat down opposite the commander of the Jasper B. at the same table. He was wearing the cutaway frock coat, and as he swung his big frame into the seat one of his coat tails caught in the chair back and was lifted.

Cleggett saw the steel butt of an army revolver. Loge perceived by his face that he had seen it, and laughed.

"I've been wanting to talk to you," he said, leaning across the table and showing his yellow teeth in a smile which he perhaps intended to be ingratiating. Cleggett, looking Loge fixedly in the eye, withdrew his right hand from beneath his coat, and laid his magazine pistol on the table under his hand.

"I am at your service," he said, steadily, giving back unwavering gaze for gaze. "I am looking for some information myself, and I am in exactly the humor for a little comfortable chat."

CHAPTER XI−REPARTEE AND PISTOLS

Loge dropped his gaze to the pistol, and the smile upon his lips slowly turned into a sneer. But when he lifted his eyes to Cleggett's again there was no fear in them.

"Put up your gun," he said, easily enough. "You won't have any use for it here."

"Thank you for the assurance," said Cleggett, "but it occurs to me that it is in a very good place where it is."

"Oh, if it amuses you to play with it−−−−" said Loge.

"It does," said Cleggett dryly.

"It's an odd taste," said Loge.

"It's a taste I've formed during the last few days on board my ship," said Cleggett meaningly.

"Ship?" said Loge. "Oh, I beg your pardon. You mean the old hulk over yonder in the canal?"

"Over yonder in the canal," said Cleggett, without relaxing his vigilance.

"You've been frightened over there?" asked Loge, showing his teeth in a grin.

"No," said Cleggett. "I'm not easily frightened."

Loge looked at the pistol under Cleggett's hand, and from the pistol to Cleggett's face, with ironical gravity, before he spoke. "I should have thought, from the way you cling to that pistol, that perhaps your nerves might be a little weak and shaky."

"On the contrary," said Cleggett, playing the game with a face like a mask, "my nerves are so steady that I could snip that ugly−looking skull off your cravat the length of this barroom away."

"That would be mighty good shooting," said Loge, turning in his chair and measuring the distance with his eye. "I don't believe you could do it. I don't mind telling you that _I_ couldn't."

"While we are on the subject of your scarfpin," said Cleggett, in whom the slur on the Jasper B. had been rankling, "I don't mind telling YOU that I think that skull thing is in damned bad taste. In fact, you are dressed generally in damned bad taste.−−Who is your tailor?"

Cleggett was gratified to see a dull flush spread over the other's face at the insult. Loge was silent a moment, and then he said, dropping his bantering manner, which indeed sat rather heavily upon him: "I don't know why you should want to shoot at my scarfpin−−or at me. I don't know why you should suddenly lay a pistol between us. I don't, in short, know why we should sit here paying each other left−handed compliments, when it was merely my intention to make you a business proposition."

"I have been waiting to hear what you had to say to me," said Cleggett, without being in the least thrown off his guard by the other's change of manner.

"If you had not chanced to drop in here today," said Loge, "I had intended paying you a visit."

"I have had several visitors lately," said Cleggett nonchalantly, "and I think at least two of them can make no claim that they were not warmly received."

"Yes?" said Loge. But if Cleggett's meaning reached him he was too cool a hand to show it. He persisted in his affectation of a businesslike air. "Am I right in thinking that you have bought the boat?"

"You are."

"To come to the point," said Loge, "I want to buy her from you. What will you take for her?"

The proposition was unexpected to Cleggett, but he did not betray his surprise.

"You want to buy her?" he said. "You want to buy the old hulk over yonder in the canal?" He laughed, but continued: "What on earth can your interest be in her?"

There was a trace of surliness in Loge's voice as he answered: "YOU were enough interested in her to buy her, it seems. Why shouldn't I have the same interest?"

Cleggett was silent a moment, and then he leaned across the table and said with emphasis: "I have noticed your interest in the Jasper B. since the day I first set foot on her. And let me warn you that unless you show your curiosity in some other manner henceforth, you will seriously regret it. A couple of your men have repented of your interest already."

"My men? What do you mean by my men? I haven't any men." Loge's imitation of astonishment was a piece of art; but if anything he overdid it a trifle. He frowned in a puzzled fashion, and then said: "You talk about my men; you speak riddles to me; you appear to threaten me, but after all I have only made you a plain business proposition. I ask you again, what will you take for her?"

"She's not for sale," said Cleggett shortly.

Loge did not speak again for a moment. Instead, he picked up the spoon with which Cleggett had stirred his highball and began to draw characters with its wet point upon the table. "If it's a question of price," he said finally, "I'm prepared to allow you a handsome profit."

Cleggett determined to find out how far he would go.

"You might be willing to pay as much as $5,000 for her−−for the old hulk over there in the canal?"

Loge stopped playing with the spoon and looked searchingly into Cleggett's face. Then he said:

"I will. Turn her over to me the way she was the day you bought her, and I'll give you $5,000." He paused, and then repeated, stressing the words: "MIND YOU, WITH EVERYTHING IN HER THE WAY IT ***WAS THE DAY YOU BOUGHT HER.***"

Cleggett fumbled with his fingers in a waistcoat pocket, drew out the torn piece of counterfeit money which he had taken from the dead hand, and flung it on the table.

"Five thousand dollars," he said, "in THAT kind of money?"

Loge looked at it with eyes that suddenly contracted. Clever dissembler that he was, he could not prevent an involuntary start. He licked his lips, and Cleggett judged that perhaps his mouth felt a little dry. But these were the only signs he made. Indeed, when he spoke it was with something almost like an air of relief.

"Come," he said, "now we're down to brass tacks at last on this proposition. Mr. Detective, name your real price."

Cleggett did not answer immediately. He appeared to consider his real price. But in reality he was thinking that there was no longer any doubt of the origin of the explosion. Since Loge practically acknowledged the counterfeit money, the man who had died with this piece of it in his hand must have been one of Loge's men. But he only said:

"Why do you call me a detective?"

Loge shrugged his shoulders. Then he said again: "Your real price?"

"What," said Cleggett, trying him out, "do you think of $20,000?"

The other gave a long, low whistle.

"Gad!" he cried, "what crooks you bulls are."

"It's not so much," said Cleggett deliberately, "when one takes everything into consideration."

Loge appeared to meditate. Then he said: "That figure is out of the question. I'll give you $10,000 and not a cent more."

"You want her pretty badly," said Cleggett. "Or you want what's on her."

"Why," said Loge, with an assumption of great frankness, "between you and me I don't care a damn about your boat. I think we understand each other. I'm buying her to get what's on her."

"Suppose I sell you what's on her for $10,000 and keep the ship," said Cleggett, wondering what WAS on the Jasper B.

"Agreed," said Loge.

"Since we're being so frank with one another," said Cleggett, "would you mind telling me why you didn't come to me at the start with an offer to buy, instead of making such a nuisance of yourself?"

"Eh?" Loge appeared genuinely surprised. "Why should I pay you any money if I could get it, or destroy it, without that? Besides, how was I to know you could be bought?"

Cleggett wondered more than ever what piece of evidence the hold of the Jasper B. contained. He felt certain that it was not merely counterfeit bills. Cleggett determined upon a minute and thorough search of the hold.

"You'll send for it?" said Cleggett, still trying to get a more definite idea of what "it" was, without revealing that he did not know.

"I'll come myself with a taxicab," said Loge.

Cleggett rose, smiling; he had found out as much as he could expect to learn.

"On the whole," he said, "I think that I prefer to keep the Jasper B. and everything that's in her. But before I leave I must thank you for the pleasure I have derived from our little talk−−and the information as well. You can hardly imagine how you have interested me. Will you kindly step back and let me pass?"

Loge got to his feet with a muttered oath; his face went livid and a muscle worked in his throat; his fingers contracted like the claws of some big and powerful cat. But, out of respect for Cleggett's pistol, he stepped backward.

"You have confessed to making counterfeit money," went on Cleggett, enjoying the situation, "and you have as good as told me that there are further evidences of crime on board the Jasper B. You can rest assured that I will find them. You have also betrayed the fact that you planned to blow my ship up, and there are several other little matters which you have shed light upon.

"I am not a detective. Nevertheless, I hope in the near future to see you behind the bars and to help put you

there. It may interest you to know that my opinion of your intellect is no higher than my opinion of your character. You seem to me to have a vast conceit of your own cleverness, which is not justified by the facts. You are a very stupid fellow; a−−a−−what is the slang word? Boob, I believe."

But while Cleggett was finishing his remarks a subtle change stole over Loge's countenance. His attitude, which had been one of baffled rage, relaxed. As Cleggett paused the sneer came back upon Loge's lips.

"Boob," he said quietly, "boob is the word. Look above you."

A sharp metallic click overhead gave point to Loge's words. Looking up, Cleggett saw that a trap−door had opened in the ceiling, and through the aperture Pierre, who had left the room some moments before with the bartender, was pointing a revolver, which he had just cocked, at Cleggett's head. He sighted along the barrel with an eager, anticipatory smile upon his face; Pierre would, no doubt, have preferred to see a man boiled in oil rather than merely shot, but shooting was something, and Pierre evidently intended to get all the delight possible out of the situation.

Cleggett's own pistol was within an inch of Loge's stomach.

"I was willing to pay you real money," said Loge, "for the sake of peace. But you're a damned fool if you think you can throw me down and then walk straight out of here to headquarters." Then he added, showing his yellow teeth: "You WOULD bring pistols into the conversation, you know. That was YOUR idea. And now you're in a devil of a fix."

The man certainly had an iron nerve; he spoke as calmly as if Cleggett's weapon were not in existence; there was nothing but the pressure of a finger wanting to send both him and Cleggett to eternity. Yet he jested; he laid his strong and devilish will across Cleggett's mentality; it was a duel in which the two minds met and tried each other like swords; the first break in intention, and one or the other was a dead man. Cleggett felt the weight of that powerful and evil soul upon his own almost as if it were a physical thing.

"You are not altogether safe yourself," said Cleggett grimly, with his eyes fixed on Pierre's and his pistol touching Loge's waistband. "If Pierre so much as winks an eye−−if you move a hair's breadth−−I'll put a stream of bullets through YOU. Understand?"

How long this singular psychological combat might have lasted before a nerve quivered somewhere and brought the denouement of a double death, there is no telling. For accident (or fate) intervened to pluck these antagonists back into life and rob the gloating Pierre of the happiness of seeing two men perish without danger to himself. Something of uncertain shape, but of a blue color, loomed vaguely behind Pierre's head; loomed and suddenly descended to the accompaniment of a piercing shriek. Pierre's pistol went off, but he had evidently been stricken between the shoulders; the ball went wild, and the pistol itself dropped from his hand, another cartridge exploding as it hit the floor. The next instant Pierre tumbled headlong through the hole, landing upon Loge, who, not braced for the shock, went down himself.

As the two men struggled to rise a strange figure precipitated itself from the room above, feet first, and hit both of them, knocking them down again. It was a tall man, thin and lank, clad only in a suit of silk pajamas of the color known as baby blue; he was barefoot, and Cleggett, with that lucid grasp of detail which comes to men oftener in nightmares than in real life, noticed that he had a bunion at the large joint of his right great toe.

If the man was startling, he was no less startled himself. Leaping from the struggling forms of Pierre and Loge, who defeated each other's frantic efforts to rise, he was across the barroom in three wild bounds, shrieking shrilly as he leaped; he bolted through the west door and cleared the verandah at a jump.

Loge, gaining his feet, was after the man in blue in an instant, evidently thinking no more of Cleggett than if the latter had been in Madagascar. And as for Cleggett, although he might have shot down Loge a dozen times over, he was so astonished at what he saw that the thought never entered his head. He had, in fact, forgotten that he held a pistol in his hand. Pierre scrambled to his feet and followed Loge.

Cleggett, running after them, saw the man in the blue pajamas sprinting along the sandy margin of the bay. But Loge, his hat gone, his coat tails level in the wind behind him, and his large patent leather shoes flashing in the morning sunlight, was overhauling him with long and powerful strides. Cleggett saw the quarry throw a startled glance over his shoulder; he was no match for the terrible Loge in speed, and he must have realized it with despair, for he turned sharply at right angles and rushed into the sea. Loge unhesitatingly plunged after him, and had caught him by the shoulder and whirled him about before he had reached a swimming depth. They clinched, in water mid−thigh deep, and then Cleggett saw Loge plant his fist, with scientific precision and awful force, upon

the point of the other's jaw. The man in the blue pajamas collapsed; he would have dropped into the water, but Loge caught him as he fell, threw his body across a shoulder with little apparent effort, and trotted back into the house with him.

Cleggett had left his sword cane in the barroom, but he judged it would be just as well to allow it to remain there for the present. He turned and walked meditatively across the sands towards the Jasper B.

CHAPTER XII−THE SECOND OBLONG BOX

When Cleggett returned to the ship he found Captain Abernethy in conversation with a young man of deprecating manner whom the Captain introduced as the Rev. Simeon Calthrop.

"I been tellin' him," said the Cap'n, pitching his voice shrilly above the din the workmen made, and not giving the Rev. Mr. Calthrop an opportunity to speak for himself, "I been tellin' him it may be a long time before the Jasper B. gets to the Holy Land."

"Do you want to go to Palestine?" asked Cleggett of Mr. Calthrop, who stood with downcast eyes and fingers that worked nervously at the lapels of his rusty black coat.

"I've knowed him sence he was a boy. He's in disgrace, Simeon Calthrop is," shrieked the Captain, preventing the preacher from answering Cleggett's question, and scorning to answer it directly himself. "Been kicked out of his church fur kissin' a married woman, and can't get another one." (The Cap'n meant another church.)

The preacher merely raised his eyes, which were large and brown and slightly protuberant, and murmured with a kind of brave humility:

"It is true."

"But why do you want to go to Palestine?" said Cleggett.

"She sung in the choir and she had three children," screamed Cap'n Abernethy, "and she limped some. Folks say she had a cork foot. Hey, Simeon, DID she have a cork foot?"

Mr. Calthrop flushed painfully, but he forced himself courageously to answer. "Mr. Abernethy, I do not know," he said humbly, and with the look of a stricken animal in his big brown eyes.

He was a handsome young fellow of about thirty−−or he would have been handsome, Cleggett thought, had he not been so emaciated. His hair was dark and brown and inclined to curl, his forehead was high and white and broad, and his fingers were long and white and slender; his nose was well modeled, but his lips were a trifle too full. Although he belonged to one of the evangelical denominations, the Rev. Mr. Calthrop affected clothing very like the regulation costume of the Episcopalian clergy; but this clothing was now worn and torn and dusty. Buttons were gone here and there; the knees of the unpressed trousers were baggy and beginning to be ragged, and the sole of one shoe flapped as he walked. He had a three days' growth of beard and no baggage.

When Cap'n Abernethy had delivered himself and walked away, the Rev. Mr. Calthrop confirmed the story of his own disgrace, speaking in a low but clear voice, and with a gentle and wistful smile.

"I am one of the most miserable of sinners, Mr. Cleggett," he said. "I have proved myself to be that most despicable thing, an unworthy minister. I was tempted and I fell."

The Rev. Mr. Calthrop seemed to find the sort of satisfaction in confessing his sins to the world that the medieval flagellants found in scoring themselves with whips; they struck their bodies; he drew forth his soul and beat it publicly.

Cleggett learned that he had set himself as a punishment and a mortification the task of obtaining his daily bread by the work of his hands. It was his intention to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, refusing all assistance except that which he earned by manual labor. After such a term of years as should satisfy all men (and particularly his own spiritual sense) of the genuineness of his penitence, he would apply to his church for reinstatement, and ask for an appointment to some difficult mission in a wild and savage country. The Rev. Mr. Calthrop intimated that if he chose to accept rehabilitation on less arduous terms, he might obtain it; but the poignancy of his own sense of failure drove him to extremes.

"Are you sure," said Cleggett sternly, "that you are not making a luxury of this very penitence itself? Are you sure that it would not be more acceptable to Heaven if you forgave yourself more easily?"

"Alas, yes, I am sure!" said Mr. Calthrop, with a sigh and his calm and wistful smile. "I know myself too well! I know my own soul. I am cursed with a fatal magnetism which women find it impossible to resist. And I am continually tempted to permit it to exert itself. This is the cross that I bear through life."

"You should marry some good woman," said Cleggett.

"I do not feel that I am worthy," said Mr. Calthrop meekly. "And think of the pain my wife would experience in seeing me continually tempted by some woman who believed herself to be my psychic affinity!"

"You are a thought too subtle, Mr. Calthrop," said Cleggett bluntly. "But I suppose you cannot help that. To each of us his destiny. I am prepared, until I see some evidence to the contrary, to believe your repentance to be genuine. In the meantime, we need a ship's chaplain. If your conscience permits, you may have the post−−combining it, however, with the vocation of a common sailor before the mast. I am inclined to agree with you that manual labor will do you good. Some time or another, in her progress around the world, the Jasper B. will undoubtedly touch at a coast within walking distance of Jerusalem. There we will put you ashore. Before we sail you can put in your time holystoning the deck.

"The deck of the Jasper B., said Cleggett, looking at it, "to all appearances, has not been holystoned for some years. You will find in the forecastle several holystones that have never been used, and may begin at once."

Cleggett, if his tastes had not inclined him towards a more active and adventurous life, would have made a good bishop, for he knew how to combine justice and mercy. And yet few bishops have possessed his rapidity of decision, when compelled, upon the spur of the moment, to become the physician of an ailing soul. He had determined in a flash to make the man ship's chaplain, that Calthrop might come into close contact with other spiritual organisms and not think too exclusively of his own.

The Rev. Mr. Calthrop thanked him with becoming gratitude and departed to get the new holystones.

By three o'clock that afternoon, with such celerity had the work gone forward, Mr. Watkins, the contractor, announced to Cleggett that his task was finished, except for the removal of the rubbish in the hold. Cleggett, going carefully over the vessel, and examining the new parts with a brochure on the construction and navigation of schooners in his hand, verified the statement.

"She is ready to sail," said Cleggett, standing by the new wheel with a swelling heart, and sweeping the vessel from bowsprit to rudder with a gradual glance.

It was a look almost paternal in its pride; Cleggett loved the Jasper B. She was an idea that no one else but Cleggett could have had.

"Sail?" said Mr. Watkins.

"Why not?" said Cleggett, puzzled at his tone.

"Oh, nothing," said Mr. Watkins. "It's none of my business. My business was to do the work I was hired to do according to specifications. Further than that, nothing."

"But why did you think I was having the work done?"

"Can't say I thought," said Mr. Watkins. "I took the job, and I done it. Had an idea mebby you were in the movin' picture game."

Mr. Watkins, as he talked, had been regarding Cap'n Abernethy, who in turn was looking at the mainmast. There seemed to be something in the very way Cap'n Abernethy looked at the mainmast which jarred on Mr. Watkins. Mr. Watkins dropped his voice, indicating the Cap'n with a curved, disparaging thumb, as he asked Cleggett:

"Is HE going to sail her?"

"Why not?"

"Oh−−nothing; nothing at all," said Mr. Watkins. "It's none o' MY business."

Cleggett began to be a little annoyed. "Have you," he said with dignity, and fixing a rather stern glance upon Mr. Watkins, "have you any reason to doubt Cap'n Abernethy's ability as a sailing master?"

"No, indeed," said Mr. Watkins cheerfully, "not as a sailing master. He may be the best in the world, for all I know. _I_ never seen him sail anything. I never heard him play the violin, neither, for that matter, and he may be a regular jim−dandy on the violin for all I know."

"You are facetious," said Cleggett stiffly.

"Meaning I ain't paid to be fresh, eh?" said Mr. Watkins. "And right you are, too. And there's all that junk down in the hold to pass out and cart away."

Cleggett personally supervised this removal, standing on the deck by the hatchway and scanning everything that was handed up. The character of this junk has already been described. Every barrel or cask that was placed upon the deck was stove in with an ax before Cleggett's eyes; he satisfied himself that every bottle was empty; he turned over the broken boxes and beer cases with his foot to see that they contained nothing.

But the work was three−quarters done before he found what he was looking for. From under a heap of debris, which had completely hidden it, towards the forward part of the vessel, the workmen unearthed an unpainted oblong box, almost seven feet in length. It was of substantial material and looked newer than any of the other stuff. Cleggett had it placed on one side of the hatchway and sat down on it. It was tightly nailed up; all of its surfaces were sound. Cleggett did not doubt that he would find in it what he wanted, yet in order to be on the safe side he continued to scrutinize everything else that came out of the hold.

But finally the hold was as empty as a drum, and Watkins and his men departed. The oblong box upon which Cleggett sat was the only possible receptacle of any sort in an undamaged condition, which had been in the hold. He determined to have it opened in the cabin.

As he arose from it he was struck by its resemblance to the box in Elmer's charge, the dank box of Reginald Maltravers, which stood on one end near the cabin companionway, leaning against the port side of the cabin so that it was not visible from the road, which ran to the starboard of the Jasper B. But, since all oblong boxes are bound to have a general resemblance, Cleggett, at the time, thought little enough of this likeness.

He called to George and Mr. Calthrop, who, with Dr. Farnsworth, were forward receiving their first lecture on seamanship from Cap'n Abernethy and Kuroki, to carry the box into the cabin.

But as George and the Rev. Mr. Calthrop lifted the box to their shoulders, Cleggett was startled by a loud and violent oath; a veritable bellow of blasphemy that made him shudder. Turning, he saw than an automobile had paused in the road. In the forward part of the machine stood Loge, raving in an almost demoniac fury and pointing at the box. He writhed in the grip of three men who endeavored to restrain him. One of them was the sinister Pierre.

Hoisting himself, as it were, on a mounting billow of his own profanity, Loge cast himself with a wide swimming motion of his arms from the auto. But one of the men clung to him; they came to the ground together like tackler and tackled in a football game. The others cast themselves out of the machine and flung themselves upon their leader; he fought like a lion, but he was finally overpowered and thrown back into the auto, which was immediately started up and which made off towards Fairport at a rattling speed. Three hundred yards away, however, Loge rose again and shook a furious fist at the Jasper B., and though Cleggett could not distinguish the words, the sense of Loge's impotent rage rolled towards him on the wind in a roaring, vibrant bass.

The sight of the box that he had not been able to buy, in Cleggett's possession, had stirred him beyond all caution; he had actually contemplated an attempt to rush the Jasper B. in broad daylight.

But while this queer tableau of baffled rage was enacting itself on the starboard bow of the Jasper B., a no less strange and far less explicable thing was occurring on the port side. The swish of oars and the ripple of a moving boat drew Cleggett's attention in that direction as Loge's booming threats grew fainter. He saw that two oarsmen, near the eastern and farther side of the canal, had allowed the dainty, varnished little craft they were supposed to propel to come to a rest in spite of the evident displeasure of a man who sat in its stern. This third man was the same that Cleggett had seen on the deck of the Annabel Lee with a spy glass, and again that same morning driving the two almost nude figures up and down the canal.

The two oarsmen, Cleggett saw with surprise, rowed with shackled feet; their feet were, indeed, chained to the boat itself. About the wrists of each were steel bands; fixed to these bands were chains, the other ends of which were locked to their oars. They were, in effect, galley slaves.

All this iron somewhat hampered their movements. But the reason of their pause was an engrossing interest in the box of Reginald Maltravers, which stood, as has already been said, on the port side of the cabin, on one end, and so was visible from their boat. They were looking at it with slack oars, dropped jaws and starting eyes; the thing seemed to have fascinated them and bereft them of motion; it was as if they were unable to get past it at all. Elmer, worn out by his many long vigils, lay asleep on the deck at the foot of the box, with an arm flung over his face.

The stout man, after vainly endeavoring to start his oarsmen with words, took up an extra oar and began vigorously prodding them with it. Cleggett had not seen this man look towards the Jasper B., but he nevertheless

had the feeling that the man had missed little of what had been going on there. He seemed to be that kind of man.

His crew responding to the stabs of the oar, the little vessel went perhaps fifty yards farther up the canal towards Parker's, and then swung daintily around and came back towards the Jasper B. at almost the speed of a racing shell, the men in chains bending doggedly to their work. Cleggett saw that the boat must pass close to the Jasper B., and leaned over the port rail.

The man in the stern had picked up a magazine and was lolling back reading it. As the boat passed under him Cleggett saw on the cover page of the magazine a picture of the very man who was perusing it. It was a singularly urbane face; both the counterfeit presentment on the cover page and the real face were smiling and calm and benign. Cleggett could read the legend on the magazine cover accompanying the picture. It ran:

Wilton Barnstable Tells In this Issue the Inside Story of How he Broke up the Gigantic Smuggling Conspiracy.

At that instant the man dropped the magazine and looked Cleggett full in the face. He waved his arm in a meaning gesture in the direction in which Loge had disappeared and said, with a gentle shake of his head at Cleggett, as if he were chiding a naughty child:

"When thieves fall out−−! When thieves fall out, my dear sir!"

As he swept by he resumed his magazine with the pleased air of a man who has delivered himself of a brilliant epigram; it showed in his very shoulders.

"And that," murmured Cleggett, "is Wilton Barnstable, the great detective!"

CHAPTER XIII−THE SOUL OF LOGAN BLACK

Wilton Barnstable, the great detective, having witnessed Loge's outburst of wrath, had thought it signified a quarrel between thieves, as his words to Cleggett indicated. He had thought Cleggett a crook, and Loge's ally.

Loge, on the other hand, had thought Cleggett a detective. He had addressed him as "Mr. Detective" that morning at Morris's. Loge believed the Jasper B. and the Annabel Lee to be allied against him.

Whereas Cleggett, until he had recognized Wilton Barnstable in the boat, had thought it likely that the Annabel Lee and Morris's were allied against the Jasper B.

Now that Cleggett knew the commander of the Annabel Lee to be Wilton Barnstable, his first impulse was to go to the Great Detective and invite his cooperation against Loge and the gang at Morris's. But almost instantly he reflected that he could not do this. For there was the box of Reginald Maltravers! Indeed, how did he know that it was not the box of Reginald Maltravers which had brought the Great Detective to that vicinity? This man−−of world−wide fame, and reputed to possess an almost miraculous instinct in the unraveling of criminal mysteries−−might be even now on the trail of Lady Agatha. If so, he was Cleggett's enemy. When it came to a choice between the championship of Lady Agatha and the defiance of Wilton Barnstable, and all that he represented, Cleggett did not hesitate for an instant.

There were still some aspects of the situation in which he found himself that were as puzzling as ever to Cleggett. It is true that he now knew why Loge's men had been in the hold of the vessel; they had been there, no doubt, in an attempt to get possession of the oblong, unpainted box which had caused Loge's explosion of wrath; the box which was the real thing Loge had tried to buy from Cleggett when he dickered for the purchase of the Jasper B. But why this box should have been in the hold of the vessel, Cleggett could not understand. And how Loge's men had been able to get into and out of the hold without his knowledge still perplexed him.

The motive behind the attempt to dynamite the vessel was clear. Having failed to purchase it, having failed to recover the box from it, Loge had sought to destroy it with all on board. But the strange character of this explosion still defied his powers of analysis. And then there was the tenth Earl of Claiborne's signet ring on the dead hand. Beyond the fact that it was a circumstance which connected his fortunes with those of Lady Agatha, he could make nothing at all of the signet ring. What, he asked himself again and again, was the connection of the criminal gang at Morris's with the proudest Earl in England?

Loge himself was a puzzle to Cleggett. The man was a counterfeiter. That he knew. The "queer" twenty−dollar bill, which he had practically acknowledged, left no doubt of that. But he was more than a counterfeiter. Cleggett

believed him to be also an anarchist. At least he was associated with anarchists.

But counterfeiting and anarchy are not ordinarily found together. The anarchist is not a criminal in the more sordid sense. He is the enemy of society as at present organized. He considers society to be built on a thieving basis; he is not himself a thief. He scorns and hates society, wishes to see it overturned, and believes himself superior to it. He will commit the most savage atrocities for the cause and cheerfully die for his principles. The anarchist is not a crook. He is an idealist.

Convinced that the unpainted oblong box would furnish a clew to the man's real personality, Cleggett, assisted by Lady Agatha and Dr. Farnsworth, opened it in the cabin.

They first took out a number of plates, some broken, some intact, for the manufacture of counterfeit notes of various denominations. There was some of the fibrous paper used in this process. There was a quantity of the apparatus essential to engraving the plates. This stuff more than half filled the box. Then there were a number of books.

"Elementary textbooks," said Dr. Farnsworth, glancing at them. On the flyleaf of one of them was written in a bold, firm hand: "Logan Black."

"Loge−−or Logan Black," said Dr. Farnsworth, "has been giving himself an education in the manufacture of high explosives."

"But THESE aren't textbooks," said Lady Agatha, who had pulled out three long, narrow volumes from the pile. "They're in manuscript, and they look more like account books."

The first of them, in Loge's handwriting, contained a series of notes, mostly unintelligible to Cleggett, dealing with experiments in two sorts of manufacture: first, the preparation of counterfeit money; second, the production of dynamite bombs.

The second of the manuscript books was in cipher. Cleggett might have deciphered it without assistance, for he was skilled in these matters, but the labor was not necessary. The book was for Loge's own eye. A loose sheet of paper folded between the leaves gave the key.

The book showed that Loge had been employed as an expert operator, in the pay of a certain radical organization, to pull off dynamiting jobs in various parts of the country. This was his account book with the organization. He had done his work and taken his pay as methodically as a plumber might. And he had been paid well. Cleggett guessed that Loge was not particularly interested in the work in its relationship to the revolutionary cause; it was the money to be made in this way, and not any particular sympathy with his employers, which attracted Loge, so Cleggett divined. Cleggett was astonished at the number of jobs which Loge had engineered. The book threw light on mysterious explosions which had occurred throughout a period of five years.

But it was the third manuscript book which displayed the real Logan Black.

This was also in cipher. Dr. Farnsworth and Cleggett had translated but a few lines of it when they perceived that it was a diary. With a vanity almost inconceivable to those who have not reflected upon the criminal nature, Loge had written here the tale of his own life, for his own reading. He had written it in loving detail. It was, in fact, the book in which he looked when he wished to admire himself.

"It is odd," said Cleggett, "that so clever a man should write down his own story in this way."

"This book," said Farnsworth, "would be a boon to a psychologist interested in criminology. You say it is odd. But with a certain type of criminal, it is almost usual. The human soul is full of strange impulses. One of the strangest is towards just this sort of record. Cunning, and the vanity which destroys cunning, often exist side by side. The criminal of a certain type almost worships himself; he is profoundly impressed with his own cleverness. He is a braggart; he swaggers; he defeats himself. A strange idiocy mingles with his cleverness."

"Even people who are not criminals do just that sort of thing," said Lady Agatha. "Look at Samuel Pepys. He was one of the most timid of beings. And he valued his place in the world mightily. But he wrote down the story of his own disgrace in his diary−−it had to come out of him! And then, timid and cautious as he was, he did not destroy the book! He let it get out of his possession."

It was an evil, a monstrous personality which leered out of Logan Black's diary. Boastful of his own iniquity, swaggering in his wickedness, fatuous with self−love, he recounted his deeds with gusto and with particularity. They did not read a quarter of this terrible autobiography at the time, but they read enough to see the man in the process of building up a criminal organization of his own, with ramifications of the most surprising nature.

"This man," said Dr. Farnsworth, with a shudder, "actually has the ambition to be the head of nothing less than

a crime trust."

"It seems to be something more than an ambition," said Cleggett. "It seems to be almost an accomplished fact."

"Ugh!" said Lady Agatha, with a gesture of disgust, "he's like a great horrid spider spinning webs!"

Interested in anarchy only on its practical side, as the paid dynamiter of the inner circle of radicals, Logan Black in his diary jeered at and mocked the cause he served. And more than that, the man seemed to take a perverted pleasure in attaching to himself young enthusiasts of the radical type, eager to follow him as the disinterested leader of a group of Reds, and then betraying them into the most sordid sort of crime. Cleggett found−−and could imagine the grimace of malevolent satisfaction with which it had been written−−this note:

Heinrich is about ready to leave off talking his cant of universal brotherhood, and make a little easy money in the way I have shown him. It will be interesting to see what happens in side of Heinrich when he realizes he is not an idealist, but a criminal. Will he stick to me on the new lay? But those Germans are so sentimental −−he may commit suicide.

Cleggett recalled the manhandling Heinrich had received. A little farther along he came upon this entry:

The Italian−American boy is a find. Jones and Giuseppe! Puritan father, Italian mother−−and he worships me! It will be a test for my personal magnetism, the handling of Gieseppe Jones will. He hates a thief worse than the devil hates holy water. If I could make him steal for me, I would know that I could do anything.

"That's our young poet in the forecastle!" said Cleggett. "I wonder if Loge still held him." And then as the memory of the boy's ravings came to him he mused: "Yes−−he held the boy! That is what the fellow meant in his delirium. Do you remember that he kept saying: 'I'm a revolutionist, not a crook!'? And yet he continued to obey Loge!"

"Is it not strange," said Lady Agatha, "that the man should take such pride in working ruin?"

All three were silent for a space. And then they looked at each other with a shiver. The sense of the strong and sinister personality of Logan Black struck on their spirits like a bleak wind.

Cleggett was the first to recover himself.

"God willing," he said solemnly, "I will bring that man to justice personally!"

Just then two bells struck. It had taken them more time than they had realized to make even a partial examination of the contents of the box. Cleggett, when the bell sounded, looked at his watch to see what time it was−−he was still a little unfamiliar with the nautical system.

"He will go to any length to get this back into his possession," said Cleggett, as he dumped the heap of incriminating evidence back into the box and began to nail the boards on again.

"Any length," echoed the Doctor.

Pat upon the thought came the sound of taxicabs without. They went on deck and saw a sinister procession rolling by. It consisted of three machines, and there were three men in each cab. Loge and Pierre were in the foremost one. None of the company vouchsafed so much as a glance in the direction of the Jasper B. as the cabs whirled past towards Morris's. It was undoubtedly a reinforcement of gunmen.

"Ah!" said Cleggett, pointing to them. "The real battle is about to begin! They are making ready for the attack!"

CHAPTER XIV−CLEGGETT STANDS BY HIS SHIP

Cleggett did not fear (or rather, expect, since there was very little that Cleggett feared) an attack until well after nightfall. Nevertheless, he began to prepare for it at once. He called the entire ship's company aft, with the exception of Miss Medley, who was on duty with Giuseppe Jones.

"My friends−−for I hope we stand in the relation of friends as well as that of commander and crew−−I have every reason to expect that the enemy will make a demonstration in force sometime during the night," he said. "We have opposed to us the leader of a dangerous and powerful criminal organization. He is, in fact, the president of a crime trust. He will stop at nothing to compass the destruction of the Jasper B. and all on board her. My quarrel with him has become, in a sense, personal. I have no right to ask you to share my risk unless you choose to do so voluntarily. Therefore, if there is anyone of you who wishes to leave the Jasper B., let him do it now."

Cleggett paused. But not a man moved. On the contrary, a little murmur of something like reproach ran around the semicircle. The ship's company looked in each other's eyes; they stood shifting their feet uneasily.

Finally Cap'n Abernethy spoke, clearing his throat with a prefatory hem:

"If you was to ask me, Mr. Cleggett," said the Captain, with less than his usual circumlocution, "I'd say the boys here ain't flattered by what you've just said. The boys here DOES consider themselves friends of yours, and if you was anxious to hear my opinion of it I'd say you've hurt their feelin's by your way of putting it. Speakin' for myself, Mr. Cleggett, as the nautical commander of this here ship to the military commander, I don't mind owning up that MY feelin's is hurt."

"Aye, aye, sir," said George the Greek, addressing the nautical commander, and the word went from lip to lip.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Dr. Farnsworth, "the Captain speaks for us all."

And the Reverend Mr. Calthrop remarked with a sigh: "You may have cause to doubt my circumspection, Mr. Cleggett, but you have no cause to doubt my courage."

Cleggett was not the sort of man who is ashamed to acknowledge an error. "Friends," he cried impulsively, "forgive me! I should have known better than to phrase my remarks as I did. I would not have hurt your feelings for worlds. I know you are devoted to me. I call for volunteers for the perilous adventure which is before us!"

The ship's company stepped forward as one man. As if by magic the atmosphere cleared.

"Now," said Cleggett, smiling back on the enthusiastic faces before him, but inexpressibly touched by the fineness of his crew's devotion, "to get to the point. There are seven of us, but there are at least a dozen of them. We have, however, the advantage in position, for we can find cover on the ship, whereas they must attack from the open. More than that, we will have the advantage in arms; here is a magazine rifle for each of you, while they, if I am not mistaken, will attack with pistols. We must keep them at a distance, if possible. If they should attempt to rush us we will meet them with cutlasses and sabers."

"Mr. Cleggett," said Lady Agatha, rising when he had finished, and speaking with animation, "will you permit me to make a suggestion?"

She went on, without waiting for an answer: "It is this: Choose your own ground for this battle! The Jasper B. is now a full−rigged schooner. Very well, then, sail her! At the moment you are attacked, weigh anchor, fight your way to the mouth of the canal, take up a position in the bay in front of Morris's within easy rifle range and out of pistol shot, and compel the place to surrender on your own terms!"

As the brilliance of this plan flashed upon her hearers, applause ran around the room, and Kuroki, who spoke seldom, cried in admiration:

"The Honorable Miss Englishman have hit her head on the nail! Let there be some naval warfares!"

"You are right," cried Cleggett, catching fire with the idea, "a hundred times right! And why wait to be attacked? Let us carry the war to the enemy's coast. Crack all sail upon her!−−Up with the anchors! We will show these gentry that the blood of Drake, Nelson, and Old Dave Farragut still runs red in the veins of their countrymen!"

"Banzai!" cried Kuroki. "Also Honorable Admiral Togo's veins!"

A good breeze had sprung up out of the northwest while the conference in the cabin was in progress.

Cleggett was relieved that it was not from the south. There is not much room to maneuver a schooner in a canal, and a breeze from the south might have sailed the Jasper B. backwards towards Parker's Beach, which would undoubtedly have given the enemy the idea that Cleggett was retreating. The Jasper B.'s bow was pointed south, and Cleggett was naturally anxious that she should sail south.

At the outset a slight difficulty presented itself with regard to the anchors−−for although, as has been explained before, the Jasper B. was a remarkably stable vessel, Cleggett had had the new anchors furnished by the contractor let down. Having the anchors down seemed, somehow, to make things more shipshape. It appeared that no one of the adventurers was acquainted with an anchor song, and Cleggett, and, indeed, all on board, felt that these anchors should be hoisted to the accompaniment of some rousing chantey. Lady Agatha was especially insistent on the point.

While they stood about the capstan debating the matter the Reverend Simeon Calthrop hesitatingly offered a suggestion which showed that, while he was a novice as far as the nautical life was concerned, he was also a person of resource.

"How many of those present," inquired the young preacher, "know 'Onward Christian Soldiers'?"

All were acquainted with the hymn; the pastor grasped a capstan bar and struck up the song in an agreeable tenor voice; they put their backs into the work and their hearts into the song, and the anchors of the Jasper B. came out of mud to the stirring notes of "Onward Christian Soldiers, marching as to war!"

While they were so engaged the breeze strengthened perceptibly. Looking towards the west, Cleggett perceived the sun sinking below the horizon. A long, blue, low−lying bank of clouds seemed to engulf it; for a moment the top of this cloud was shot through with a golden color; then a mass of quicker moving, nearer vapors from the north seemed to leap suddenly nearer still; to extend itself at a bound over almost a third of the sky; in a breath the day was gone; a storm threatened.

The rising wind made the task of getting the canvas on the poles extraordinarily difficult. Cleggett was well aware that the usual method of procedure, in the presence of a storm, is rather to take in sail than to crack on; but, always the original, he decided in this case to reverse the common custom. Ashore or at sea, he never permitted himself to be the slave of conventionalities. The Jasper B. had lain so long in one spot that it would undoubtedly take more than a capful of wind to move her. Cleggett did not know when he would get such a strong wind again, coming from the right direction, and determined to make the most of this one while he had it. Genius partly consists in the acuteness which grasps opportunities.

From the struggles of Cap'n Abernethy and the crew with the canvas, which he saw none too clearly through the increasing dusk from his post at the wheel, Cleggett judged that the wind was indeed strong enough for his purpose. Yards, sheets and sails seemed to be acting in the most singular manner. He could not remember reading of any parallel case in the treatises on navigation which he had perused. Every now and then the Cap'n or one of the crew would be jerked clean off his feet by some quick and unexpected motion of a sail and flung into the water. When this occurred the person who had been ducked crawled out on the bank of the canal again and went on board by way of the gangplank, returning stubbornly to his task.

The booms in particular were possessed of a restless and unstable spirit. They made sudden swoops, sweeps, and dashes in all directions. Sometimes as many as three of the crew of the Jasper B. would be knocked to the deck or into the water by a boom at the same time. But Cleggett noted with satisfaction that they were plucky; they stuck valiantly to the job. A doubt assailed Cleggett as to the competence of Cap'n Abernethy, but he was loyal and fought it down.

Finally Cap'n Abernethy hit upon a novel and ingenious idea. He tied stout lines to the ends of the booms. The other ends of these ropes he ran through the eyes of a couple of spare anchors. Taking the anchors ashore, he made them fast to the wooden platform which was alongside the Jasper B. Then he took up the slack in the lines, pulling them taut and fastening them tightly.

Thus the booms were held fast and stiff in position, and the crew could get the canvas spread without being endangered by their strange and unaccountable actions.

This brilliant idea of anchoring the booms to the land would not have been practicable had it not been for a whimsical cessation of the wind, a lull such as incident to the coming of spring storms in these latitudes. While the wind was in abeyance the men got the sails spread. Then the Captain untied the lines, brought the spare anchors on board, knocked the gangplank loose with a few blows of his ax, and waited for the wind to resume.

When the wind did blow again it came in a gust which was accompanied by a twinkle of lightening over the whole sky and grumble of thunder. A whirl of dust and fine gravel enveloped the Jasper B. For a moment it was like a sandstorm. A few large drops of water fell. The gust was violent; the sails filled with it and struggled like kites to be free; here and there a strand of rope snapped; the masts bent and creaked; the booms jumped and swung round like live things; the whole ship from bowsprit to rudder shook and trembled with the assault.

Cleggett, watchful at the wheel, prepared to turn her nose away from the bank, but he was astonished to perceive that in spite of her quaking and shivering the Jasper B. did not move one inch forward from her position. He was prepared for a certain stability on the part of the Jasper B., but not for quite so much of it.

With the next gust the storm was on them in earnest. This blast came with zigzag flashes of lightning that showed the heavens riotous with battalions of charging clouds; it came with deafening thunder and a torrential discharge of rain. One would have thought the power of the wind sufficient to set a steel battleship scudding before it like a wooden shoe. And yet the extraordinary Jasper B., although she shrieked and groaned and seemed to stagger with the force of the blow, did not move either forward or sidewise.

She flinched, but she stood her ground.

Second by second the storm increased in fury; in a moment it was no longer merely a storm, it was a tempest. Cleggett, alarmed for the safety of his masts, now ordered his men to take in sail.

But even as he gave the order he realized that it could no longer be done. A cloudburst, a hurricane, an electrical bombardment, struck the Jasper B. all at once. One could not hear one's own voice. In the glare of the lightning Cleggett saw the rigging tossing in an indescribable confusion of canvas, spars, and ropes. Both masts and the bowsprit snapped at almost the same instant. The whole chaotic mass was lifted; it writhed in the air a moment, and then it came crashing down, partly on the deck and partly in the seething waters of the canal, where it lay and whipped ship and water with lashing tentacles of wreckage.

But still the unusual Jasper B. had not moved from her position.

Cleggett's men had had warning enough to save themselves. They gathered around him to wait for orders. More than one of them cast anxious glances towards the land. Shouting to them to attack the debris with axes, and setting the example himself, Cleggett soon saw the deck clear again, and the Jasper B., to all intents, the same hulk she had been when he bought her. But such was the fury of the tempest that even with the big kites gone the Jasper B. continued to shake and quiver where she lay. Speech was almost impossible on deck, but Cap'n Abernethy signed to Cleggett that he had something important to say to him.

The whole company adjourned to the cabin, and there, shouting to make himself heard, the Cap'n cried out:

"Her timbers have been strained something terrible, Mr. Cleggett.

She ain't what I would call safe and seaworthy any more. The' don't seem to be any danger of her sailin' off, but that's no sign she can't be blowed over onto her beam ends and sunk with all on board. If you was to ask me, Mr. Cleggett, I'd say the time had come to leave the Jasper B. "

The anxiety depicted on the faces of the little circle about him might have communicated itself to a less intrepid nature. The old Cap'n himself was no coward. Indeed, in owning to his alarm he had really done a brave thing, since few have the moral courage to proclaim themselves afraid. But Cleggett was a man of iron. Although the tempest smote the hulk with blow after blow, although both earth and water seemed to lie prostrate and trampled beneath its unappeasable fury, Cleggett had no thought of yielding.

Unconsciously he drew himself up. It seemed to his crew that he actually gained in girth and height. The soul, in certain great moments, seems to have power to expand the body and inform it with the quality of immortality; Ajax, in his magnificent gesture of defiance, is all spirit. Cleggett, with his hand on his hip, uttered these words, not without their sublimity:

"Whether the Jasper B. sinks or swims, her commander will share her fate. I stay by my ship!"

CHAPTER XV−NIGHT, TEMPEST, LOVE AND BATTLE

And, indeed, if Cleggett had been of a mind to abandon the vessel, he could scarcely have done so now. For his words were no more than uttered when the sharp racket of a volley of pistol shots ripped its way through the low−pitched roaring of the wind.

Loge had chosen the height of the storm to mask his approach. He attacked with the tempest.

Without a word Cleggett put out the light in the cabin. His men grasped their weapons and followed him to the deck. A flash of lightning showed him, through the driving rain, the enemy rushing towards the Jasper B., pistol in hand. They were scarcely sixty yards away, and were firing as they came. Loge, a revolver in one hand, and Cleggett's own sword cane in the other, was leading the rush. Besides their firearms, each of Loge's men carried a wicked−looking machete.

"Fire!" shouted Cleggett. "Let them have it, men!" And the rifles blazed from the deck of the Jasper B. in a crashing volley. Instantly the world was dark again; it was impossible to determine whether the fire of the Jasper B. had taken effect.

"To the starboard bulwark," cried Cleggett, "and give them hell with the next lightning flash!"

It came as he spoke, with its vivid glare showing to Cleggett the enemy magnified to a portentous bigness against a background of chaotic night. Two or three of them stood, leaning keenly forward; several of the others had dropped to one knee; the rifle discharge had checked the rush, and they also were waiting for the lightning.

Cleggett and his men threw a second volley at this wavering silhouette of astonishment.

A cartridge jammed in the mechanism of Cleggett's gun. With an oath he flung the weapon to the deck. A hand thrust another one into his grasp, and Lady Agatha's voice said in his ear, "Take this one−−it's loaded."

"My God," said Cleggett, "I thought you were in the cabin!"

"Not I!" she cried, "I'm loading!"

Just then the lightning came again and showed her to him plainly. Drenched, bare−armed, bareheaded, her hair down and rolling backward in a rich wet mass, she knelt on the deck behind the bulwark. Her eyes blazed with excitement, and there was a smile upon her lips. Beside her was the zinc bucket half full of cartridges. George tossed a rifle to her. She flung him back a loaded one, and began methodically to fill the empty one with cartridges.

"Agatha," shouted Cleggett, catching her by the wrist, "go to the cabin at once−−you will get yourself killed!"

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" she shouted.

"I love you!" cried Cleggett, beside himself with fear for her, and scarcely knowing what his words were. "Do you hear−−I love you, and I won't have you killed!"

A bullet ripped its way through the bulwark, perforated the zinc bucket, struck the gun which Lady Agatha was loading and knocked it from her hands.

"Go to the cabin yourself!" she shouted in Cleggett's ear. "As for me, I like it!"

"I tell you," shouted Cleggett, "I won't have you here−−I won't have you killed!"

He rose to his feet, and attempted to draw her out of danger. She rose likewise and struggled with him in the dark. She wrenched herself free, and in doing so flung him back against the rail; it lightened again, and she screamed. Cleggett turned, and with the next flash saw that one of the enemy, his face bloody from the graze of a bullet across his forehead, and evidently crazed with excitement of fight and storm, was leaping towards the rail of the vessel.

Cleggett stooped to pick up a gun, but as he stooped the madman vaulted over the bulwark and landed upon him, bearing him to the deck. As he struggled to his feet Lady Agatha, who had grasped a cutlass, cut the fellow down. The man fell back over the rail with a cry.

For a long moment there was one continuous electric flash from horizon to horizon, and Cleggett saw her, with windblown hair and wide eyes and parted lips, standing poised with the red blade in her hand beneath the driving clouds, the figure of an antique goddess.

The next instant all was dark; her arms were around his neck in the rain. "Oh, Clement," she sobbed, "I've killed a man! I've killed a man!"

CHAPTER XVI−ROMANCE REGNANT

Cleggett kissed her. . . .

CHAPTER XVII−MISS PRINGLE CALLS ON MR. CLEGGETT

But the rushing onset of events struck them apart. Out of the night leaped danger, enhancing love and forbidding it. From the starboard bow Captain Abernethy shrilled a cry of warning, and the heavy, bellowing voice of Loge shouted an answer of challenge and ferocity. The wind had fallen, but the lightning played from the clouds now almost without intermission. Cleggett saw Loge and his followers, machete in hand, flinging themselves at the rail. They lifted a hoarse cheer as they came. The fire from the Jasper B. had checked the assault temporarily; it had not broken it up; once they found lodgment on the deck the superior numbers of Loge's crowd must inevitably tell.

Loge was a dozen feet in advance of his men. He had cast aside the light sword which belonged to Cleggett, and now swung a grim machete in his hand. Cleggett flung down his gun, grasped a cutlass, and sprang forward,

his one idea to come to close quarters with that gigantic figure of rage and power.

But before Loge reached the bulwark on one side, and while Cleggett was bounding toward him on the other, this on−coming group of Cleggett's foes were suddenly smitten in the rear as if by a thunderbolt. Out of the night and storm, mad with terror, screaming like fiends, with distended nostrils and flying manes and flailing hoofs, there plunged into the midst of the assaulting party a pair of snow−white horses−−astounding, felling, trampling, scattering, filling them with confusion. A rocking carriage leaped and bounded behind the furious animals, and as the horses struck the bulwark and swerved aside, its weight and bulk, hurled like a missile among Cleggett's staggered and struggling enemies, completed and confirmed their panic.

No troops on earth can stand the shock of a cavalry charge in the rear and flank; few can face surprise; the boarding party, convinced that they had fallen into a trap, melted away. One moment they were sweeping forward, vicious and formidable, confident of victory; the next they were floundering weaponless, scrambling anyhow for safety, multiplying and transforming, with the quick imagination of panic terror, these two horses into a troop of mounted men.

This sudden and almost spectral apparition of galloping steeds and flying carriage, hurled upon the vessel out of the tempest, flung, a piece of whirling chaos, from the chaotic skies, had almost as startling an effect upon the defenders. For a moment they paused, with weapons uplifted, and stared. Where an enemy had been, there was nothing. So doubtful Greeks or Trojans might have paused and stared upon the plains of Ilion when some splenetic and fickle deity burst unannounced and overwhelming into the central clamor of the battle.

But it is in these seconds of pause and doubt that great commanders assert themselves; it is these electric seconds from which the hero gathers his vital lightning and forges his mordant bolt. Genius claims and rules these instants, and the gods are on the side of those who boldly grasp loose wisdom and bind it into sheaves of judgment. Cleggett (whom Homer would have loved) was the first to recover his poise. He came to his decision instantaneously. A lesser man might have lost all by rushing after his retreating enemies; a lesser man, carried away by excitement, would have pursued. Cleggett did not relax his grasp upon the situation, he restrained his ardor.

"Stand firm, men! Do not leave the ship," he shouted. "The day is ours!"

And then, turning to Captain Abernethy, he cried:

"We have routed them!"

"Look at them crazy horses!" screamed the Captain in reply.

The animals were rearing and struggling among the ruins of the broken gangplank. As the Captain spoke, they plunged aboard the ship, and the carriage, bounding after them, overturned on the deck−−horses and carriage came down together in a welter of splintering wheels and broken harness and crashing wood.

A negro driver, whom Cleggett now noticed for the first time, shot clear of the mass and landed on the deck in a sitting posture.

For a moment, there he sat, and did nothing more. The pole broke loose from the carriage, the traces parted, and the two big white horses, still kicking and plunging, struggled to their feet and free from the wreckage. Still side by side they leaped the port bulwark, splashed into the canal, and swam straight across it, as if animated with the instinct of going straight ahead in that fashion to the end of the world. Cleggett never saw or heard of them again.

"Bring a lantern," said Cleggett to Abernethy. "Let's see if this man is badly hurt."

But the negro was not injured. He rose to his feet as the Captain brought the light−−the storm was now subsiding, and the lightning was less frequent−−and stood revealed as a person of surprising size and unusual blackness. He was, in fact, so black that it was no wonder that Cleggett had not seen him on the seat of the carriage, for unless one turned a light full upon him his face could not be seen at all after dark. He was in a blue livery, and his high, cockaded coachman's hat had stayed on his head in spite of everything.

Even sitting down on the deck he had possessed an air of patience. When he arose and the Captain flashed the light upon his face, it revealed a countenance full of dignified good humor.

"Where did you come from?" asked Cleggett.

The negro removed the hat with the cockade before answering. He did it politely. Even ceremoniously. But he did not do it hastily. He had the air of one who was never inclined to do things hastily.

"From Newahk, sah," he said. "Newahk, New Jehsey, sah."

"But who are you?" said Cleggett. "How did you get here?"

The negro was gazing reflectively at the broken carriage.

"Ah yo' Mistah Cleggett, sah? Mistah Clement J. Cleggett, sah, the ownah of dis hyeah boat?"

"Yes."

The negro fumbled in an inner pocket and produced a card. He gave it to Cleggett with a deferential bow, and then announced sonorously:

"Miss Genevieve Pringle, sah−−in de cah−age, sah−−a callin' on Mistah Clement J. Cleggett."

He completed the announcement with a dignified and courtly gesture, which seemed to indicate that he was presenting the ruined carriage itself to Cleggett.

"You don't mean in that carriage?" cried Cleggett.

"Yes, sah," said the negro. "Leas'ways, she was, sah, some time back. Mah time an' mah 'tention done been so tooken up wif dem incompatible hosses fo' some moments past, sah, dat I cain't say fo' suah ef she adheahed, or ef she didn't adheah."

He glanced speculatively at the carriage again. Cleggett sprang towards the broken vehicle, expecting to find someone seriously injured at the very least. But, from the ruin, a precise and high−pitched feminine voice piped out:

"Jefferson! Kindly assist me to disentangle myself!"

"Yassum," said the negro, moving forward in a leisurely and dignified manner, "comin', ma'am. I hopes an' trusts, Miss Pringle, ma'am, yo' ain't suffered none in yo' anatomy an' phlebotomy from dis hyeah runaway."

With which cheerful wish Jefferson lifted respectfully, and with a certain calm detachment, the figure of a woman from the debris.

"Thank you, Jefferson," she said. "I fear I am very much bruised and shaken, but I have been feeling all my bones while lying there, and I believe that I have sustained no fractures."

Miss Pringle was a woman of about fifty, small and prim. Prim with an unconquerable primness that neither storm nor battle nor accident could shake. If she had been killed in the runaway she would have looked prim in death while awaiting the undertaker. She must have been wet almost to those unfractured bones which she had been feeling; her black silk dress, with its white ruching about the neck, was torn and bedraggled; her black hat, with its jet ornaments, was crushed and hung askew over one ear; nevertheless, Miss Pringle conveyed at once and definitely an impression of unassailable respectability and strong character.

"Which of you is Mr. Cleggett?" she asked, looking about her, in the lantern light, at the crew of the Jasper B., as she leaned upon the arm of Jefferson, her mannerly and deliberate servitor.

"I am Mr. Cleggett."

"Ah!" Miss Pringle inspected him with an eye which gleamed with a hint of latent possibilities of belligerency. "Mr. Cleggett," she continued, pursing her lips, "I have sought an interview to warn you that you are harboring an impostor on your ship."

At that moment Lady Agatha joined the group. As the light fell upon her Miss Pringle stepped forward and thrust an accusing, a denunciatory finger at the Englishwoman.

"You," she said, "call yourself Lady Agatha Fairhaven!"

"I do," said Lady Agatha.

"Woman!" cried Miss Pringle, shaking with the stress of her moral wrath. "Where are my plum preserves?"

And with this cryptic utterance the little lady, having come to the end of her strength, primly fainted.

Jefferson picked her up and carried her, in a serene and stately manner, to the cabin.

CHAPTER XVIII−THE MAN IN THE BLUE PAJAMAS

The rain had ceased almost as Miss Pringle was removed to the cabin. The storm had passed. Low down on the edges of the world there were still a few dark clouds, there was still an occasional glimmer of lightning; but overhead the mists were fleecy, light and broken. A few stars were visible here and there.

And then in a moment more a full moon rose high and serene above the world. The May moon is often very

brilliant in these latitudes, as sailors who are familiar with the coasts of Long Island can testify. This moon was unusually brilliant, even for the season of the year and the quarter of the globe. It lighted up earth and sky so that it was (in the familiar phrase) almost possible to read by it. Only a few moments had elapsed since the rout of Logan Black's ruffians, but in the vicinity of this remarkable island such sudden meteorological changes are anything but rare, geographers and travelers know.

Lady Agatha had gone into the cabin to resuscitate Miss Pringle and, as she said, "have it out with her." Cleggett, gazing from the deck towards Morris's, in the strong moonlight, wondered when the attack would be renewed. He thought, on the whole, that it was improbable that Loge would return to the assault while this brightness continued.

Suddenly three figures appeared within his range of vision. They were running. But running slowly, painfully, lamely. In the lead were the two men whom he had first seen hazed up and down the bank of the canal by Wilton Barnstable, and whom he had seen the second time chained in the great detective's boat.

They were shackled wrist to wrist now. To the left leg of one of them was attached a heavy ball. A similar ball was attached to the right leg of the other. They had picked these balls up and were struggling along under their weight at a gait which was more like a staggering walk than a trot.

They were pursued by the man whom Cleggett had seen attempt to escape from Morris's. This man still wore his suit of baby blue pajamas.

He wore nothing else. He was stiff. He moved as if the ground hurt his bare feet.

He especially favored, as Cleggett noticed, the foot on which there was a bunion. He was lame. He crept rather than ran. But he seemed bitterly intent upon reaching the two men in irons who labored along twenty or thirty feet ahead of him. And they, on their part, casting now and then backward glances over their shoulders at their pursuer.

Cleggett divined that the men in irons had escaped from the Annabel Lee, and that the man in the baby blue pajamas was loose from Morris's. But why the man in the pajamas pursued and the others fled he could not guess.

They passed within fifty yards of the Jasper B. But the men in irons were so intent upon their own troubles, and the pursuer was so keen on vengeance, that none of them noticed the vessel. As they limped along, splashing through the pools the rain had left, the pursuer would occasionally pause to fling stones and sticks and even cakes of mud at the fugitives, who were whimpering as they tottered forward.

The man in the baby blue pajamas was cursing in a high−pitched, nasal, querulous voice. Cleggett noticed with astonishment that a single−barreled eyeglass was screwed into one of his eyes. Occasionally it dropped to the ground, and he would stop and fumble for it and wipe it on his wet sleeve and replace it. Had it not been for these stops he would have overtaken the men in irons.

"Clement!" Lady Agatha laid her hand upon his arm. "Miss Pringle wants to see you in the cabin."

"Well−−imposter!" laughed Cleggett. "Is she able to talk to you yet? And what on earth did she mean by her plum preserves?"

"That is what she wants to tell, evidently," said Lady Agatha. And she went aft with him.

Miss Pringle, who had been rubbed dry by Lady Agatha, and was now dressed in some articles of that lady's clothing, which were much too large for her, sat on the edge of the bed in Lady Agatha's stateroom and awaited them. Her appearance was scarcely conventional, and she seemed to feel it; nevertheless, she had a duty to perform, and her innate propriety still triumphed over her situation and habiliments.

"Mr. Cleggett," she said, pointing to the box which contained the evidence against Logan Black, which was exactly similar to the box of Reginald Maltravers, and which had been placed in this inner room for safe−keeping, "what does that box contain?"

Cleggett was startled. He and Lady Agatha exchanged glances.

"What do you think it contains?" he asked.

"That box," she said, "was shipped to me from Flatbush, and was claimed in my name−−in the name of Genevieve Pringle−−at the freight depot at Newark, New Jersey, by this lady here. Deny it if you can!"

"I do deny it, Miss Pringle," said Lady Agatha, accompanying her words with a winsome smile. But Miss Pringle was not to be won over so easily as all that; she met the smile with a look of steady reprobation. And then she turned to Cleggett again.

"Mr. Cleggett," she said, "my birthday occurred a few days ago. It was−−I have nothing to conceal, Mr.

Cleggett−−it was my forty−ninth birthday. Every year, for many years past, a niece of mine who lives in Flatbush sends me on my birthday a box of plum preserves.

"These preserves have for me, Mr. Cleggett, a value that they would not possess for anyone else; a value far above their intrinsic or, as one might say, culinary value. They have a sentimental value as well. I was born in Flatbush, and lived there, during my youth, on my father's estate. The city has since grown around the old place, which my niece now owns, but the plum trees stand as they have stood for more than fifty years. It was beneath these plum trees. . . ."

Miss Pringle suddenly broke off; her face twitched; she felt for a handkerchief, and found none; she wiped her eyes on her sleeve.

In another person this action might have appeared somewhat careless, but Miss Pringle, by the force of her character, managed to invest it with propriety and dignity; looking at her, one felt that to wipe one's eyes on one's sleeve was quite proper when done by the proper person.

"I will conceal nothing, Mr. Cleggett. It was under these plum trees that I once received an offer of marriage from a worthy young man. It was from one of these plum trees that he later fell, injuring himself so that he died. You can understand what these plum trees mean to me, perhaps?"

Lady Agatha impulsively sat down beside the elder woman and put her arm about her. But Miss Pringle stiffly moved away. After a moment she continued:

"The preserved plums, as I have said, are sent me every year on my birthday. This year, when I received from my niece a notification that they had been shipped, I called for the box personally at the freight office.

"What was my astonishment to learn that the box had been claimed in my name, not a quarter of an hour before, and taken away.

"I obtained a description of the person who had represented herself as Miss Genevieve Pringle, and of the vehicle in which she had carried off my box. And I followed her. The paltriness of the theft revolted me, Mr. Cleggett, and I determined to bring this person to justice.

"The fugitive, with my plum preserves in her possession, had left, goodness knows, a broad enough trail. I found but little difficulty in following in my family carriage. In fact, Mr. Cleggett, I discovered the very chauffeur who had deposited her here with the box. Inquiries in Fairport gave me your name as the owner of this lighter."

"Lighter!" interrupted Cleggett. "The Jasper B., madam, is not a lighter."

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Pringle. "But what sort of vessel is it then?"

"The Jasper B.," said Cleggett, with a touch of asperity, "is a schooner, madam."

"I intended no offense, Mr. Cleggett. I am quite willing to believe that the vessel is a schooner, since you say that it is. I am not informed concerning nautical affairs. But, to conclude−−I discovered from the chauffeur that this lady, calling herself Lady Agatha Fairhaven, had been deposited here, with my box. I learned yesterday, after inquiries in Fairport, that you were the owner of this vessel. The real estate person from whom you purchased it assured me that you were financially responsible. I came to expose this imposter and to recover my box. On my way hither I was caught in the storm. The runaway occurred, and you know the rest."

Miss Pringle, during this recital, had not deigned to favor Lady Agatha with a look. Lady Agatha, on her part, after the rebuff which she had received, had sat in smiling silence.

"Miss Pringle," she said, pleasantly but seriously, when the other woman had finished, "first I must convince you that this box does not contain your plum preserves, and then I will tell you my story."

With Cleggett's assistance Lady Agatha removed the cover from the oblong box, and showed her its contents.

"That explains nothing," said Miss Pringle, dryly. "Of course you would remove the plum preserves to a place of safety."

"Miss Pringle," said Lady Agatha, "I will tell you everything. I DID claim a box in your name at the railway goods station in Newark−−and if there had been nothing in it but plum preserves, how happy I should be! I beg of you, Miss Pringle, to give me your attention."

And Lady Agatha began to relate to Miss Pringle the same story which she had told to Cleggett. At the first word indicative of the fact the Lady Agatha had suffered for the cause of votes for women, a change took place in the expression of Miss Pringle's countenance. Cleggett thought she was about to speak. But she did not. Nevertheless, although she listened intently, some of her rigidity had gone. When Lady Agatha had finished Miss Pringle said:

"I suppose that you can prove that you are really Lady Agatha Fairhaven?"

For answer Lady Agatha went to one of her trunks and opened it. She drew therefrom a letter, and passed it over without a word.

As Miss Pringle read it, her face lighted up. She did not lose her primness, but her suspicion seemed altogether to depart.

"A letter from Emmeline Pankhurst!" she said, in a hushed voice, handling the missive as if it were a sacred relic. "Can you ever forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," beamed Lady Agatha. "I am willing to admit, now that you understand me, that the thing looked a bit suspicious, on the face of it."

"You have suffered for the cause," said Miss Pringle. "I have suffered for it, too!" And, with a certain shyness, she patted Lady Agatha on the arm. But the next moment she said:

"But what IS in the box you brought here then, Lady Agatha? Two boxes were shipped to Newark, addressed to me. Which one did you get? What is really in the one you have been carrying around? My plum preserves, or−−−−"

She shuddered and left the sentence unfinished.

"Let us open it," said Cleggett.

"No! No!" cried Lady Agatha. "Clement, no! I could not bear to have it opened."

Miss Pringle rose. It was evident that a bit of her earlier suspicion had returned.

"After all," said Miss Pringle, indicating the letter again, "how do I know that−−−−"

"That it is not a forgery?" said Lady Agatha. "I see." She mused a moment, and then said, with a sigh, "Well, then, let us open the box!"

"I think it best, Agatha," said Cleggett. "I shall have it brought down."

But even as he turned upon his heel to go on deck and give the order, Dr. Farnsworth and the Rev. Simeon Calthrop ran excitedly down the cabin companionway.

"The box of Reginald Maltravers," cried the Doctor, who was in Cleggett's confidence, "is gone!"

CHAPTER XIX−TWO GREAT MEN MEET

"Gone!" Lady Agatha, who had emerged from her stateroom, turned pale and caught at her heart.

They rushed on deck. The young Doctor was right; the box, which had stood on the larboard side of the cabin, had disappeared.

"It might have been blown into the canal during the storm," suggested the Rev. Mr. Calthrop. All of the crew of the Jasper B. knew Lady Agatha's story, and were aware of the importance of the box.

"It was on the lee side of the cabin," objected Dr. Farnsworth, "and while it might have been blown flat to the deck, in spite of its protected position, it would scarcely have been picked up by the wind again and wafted over the port bulwarks."

"If you was to ask me," said Cap'n Abernethy, who had joined in the discussion, "I'd give it as MY opinion it's a good riddance of bad rubbish."

"Rubbish?" said Miss Pringle. "Rubbish, indeed! I am confident that that box contained my plum preserves!"

"It has been stolen!" cried Cleggett, with conviction. "Fool that I was, not to have taken it into the cabin!"

"But, if you had, you know," said Lady Agatha, "one would scarcely have cared to stay in there with it."

"Loge has outgeneraled me," murmured Cleggett, well−nigh frantic with self−reproach. "While he made the attack in front, he sent some of his men to the rear of the vessel and it was quietly made off with while we were fighting." Had the disappearance of the box concerned himself alone Cleggett's sense of disaster might have been less poignant. But the thought that his own carelessness had enabled the enemy to get possession of a thing likely to involve Lady Agatha in further trouble was nearly insupportable. He gritted his teeth and clenched his hands in impotent rage.

"No doubt Loge caught sight of it during the early part of the skirmish, by a flash of lightning," said Dr. Farnsworth, "and acted as you suggest, Mr. Cleggett. But does he believe it to be the box which contains the

evidence against him? Or can he, by any chance, be aware of its real contents?"

"No matter which," groaned Cleggett, "no matter which! For when he opens it, he will learn what is in it. Don't you see that he has us now? If he offers to trade it back to us for the other oblong box, how can I refuse? If we have his secret, Loge has ours!"

But Dr. Farnsworth was not listening. He had suddenly leaned over the port rail and was staring down the canal. The others followed his gaze.

The house boat Annabel Lee, they perceived, had got under weigh, and was slowly approaching the Jasper B. in the moonlight. They watched her gradual approach in silence. She stopped within a few yards of the Jasper B., and a voice which Cleggett recognized as that of Wilton Barnstable, the great detective, sang out:

"Jasper B., ahoy!"

"Aye, aye!" shouted Cleggett.

"Is Mr. Cleggett on board?"

"He is speaking."

"Mr. Cleggett, have you lost anything from your canal boat?"

Cleggett did not answer, and for a moment he did not move. Then, tightening his sword belt, and cocking his hat a trifle, he climbed over the starboard rail and walked along the bank of the canal a few yards until he was opposite the Annabel Lee. The great detective, on his part, also stepped ashore. They stood and faced each other in the moonlight, silently, and their followers, also in silence, gathered in the bows of the respective vessels and watched them.

Finally, Cleggett, with one hand on his hip, and standing with his feet wide apart, said very incisively:

"Sir, the Jasper B. is NOT a canal boat."

"Eh?" Wilton Barnstable started at the emphasis.

"The Jasper B.," pursued Cleggett, staring steadily at Wilton Barnstable, "is a schooner."

"Ah!" said the other. "Indeed?"

"A schooner," repeated Cleggett, "indeed, sir! Indeed, sir, a schooner!"

There was another silence, in which neither man would look aside; they held each other with their eyes; the nervous strain communicated itself to the crews of the two vessels. At last, however, the detective, although he did not lower his gaze, and although he strove to give his new attitude an effect of ease and jauntiness by twisting the end of his mustache as he spoke, said to Cleggett:

"A schooner, then, Mr. Cleggett, a schooner! No offense, I hope?"

"None at all," said Cleggett, heartily enough, now that the point had been established. And the tension relaxed on both ships.

"You have lost an oblong box, Mr. Cleggett." The great detective affirmed it rather than interrogated.

"How did you know that?"

The other laughed. "We know a great many things−−it is our business to know things," he said. Then he dropped his voice to a whisper, and said rapidly, "Mr. Cleggett, do you know who I am?" Before Cleggett could reply he continued, "Brace yourself−−do not make an outcry when I tell you who I am. I am Wilton Barnstable."

"I knew you," said Cleggett. The other appeared disappointed for a moment. And then he inquired anxiously, "How did you know me?"

"Why, from your pictures in the magazines," said Cleggett.

The detective brightened perceptibly. "Ah, yes−−the magazines! Yes, yes, indeed! publicity is unavoidable, unavoidable, Mr. Cleggett! But this box, now−−−−"

The great detective interrupted himself to laugh again, a trifle complacently, Cleggett thought.

"I will not mystify you, Mr. Cleggett, about the box. Mystification is one of the tricks of the older schools of detection. I never practice it, Mr. Cleggett. With me, the detection of crime is a business−−yes, a business. I will tell you presently how the box came into my possession."

"It IS in your possession?" Cleggett felt a dull pang of the heart. If the box of Reginal Maltravers were in the hands of Logan Black he could at least trade the other oblong box to Loge for it, and thus save Lady Agatha. But in the possession of Wilton Barnstable, the great detective−−−−! Cleggett pulled himself together; he thought rapidly; he recognized that the situation called, above all things else, for diplomacy and adroitness. He went on, nonchalantly:

"I suppose you are aware of the contents of the box?"

The other laughed again as if Cleggett had made an excellent jest; there was something urbane and benign in his manner; it appeared as if he regarded the contents of the box of Reginald Maltravers as anything but serious; his tone puzzled Cleggett.

"Suppose I bring the box on board the Jasper B.," suggested the great detective. "It interests me, that box. I have no doubt it has its story. And perhaps, while you are telling me some things about it, I may be able to give you some information in turn."

There was no mistaking the fact that the man, whether genuinely friendly or no, wished to appear so.

"Have it brought into my cabin," said Cleggett, "and we will discuss it."

A few minutes later Wilton Barnstable, Cleggett, Lady Agatha, Miss Pringle, and two of Wilton Barnstable's men sat in the cabin of the Jasper B., with the two oblong boxes before them−−the one which had contained Loge's incriminating diary, and the one which had caused Lady Agatha so much trouble.

In the light of the cabin the three detectives were revealed as startlingly alike. Barton Ward and Watson Bard, Barnstable's two assistants, might, indeed, almost have been taken for Barnstable himself, at a casual glance. In height, in bulk, in dress, in facial expression, they seemed Wilton Barnstable all over again. But, looking intently at the three men, Cleggett began to perceive a difference between the real Wilton Barnstable and his two counterfeits. It was the difference between the face which is informed of genius, and the countenance which is indicative of mere talent.

"Mr. Cleggett," began Wilton Barnstable, "as I said before, I will make no attempt to mystify you. I was a witness to the attack upon your vessel. Mr. Ward, Mr. Bard, and myself, in fact, had determined to assist you, had we seen that the combat was going against you. We lay, during the struggle, in the lee of your−−your−−er, schooner!−−in the lee of your schooner, armed, and ready to bear a hand. We have our own little matter to settle with Logan Black. Why Logan Black should desire possession of this particular box, I am unable to state. Nevertheless, at the moment when he was leading his assault upon your starboard bow, two of his men, who had made a detour to the stern of your vessel, had clambered stealthily aboard, and were quietly pushing the box over the side into the canal. They let themselves down into the water, and swam towards the mouth of the canal, pushing it ahead of them. We followed in our rowboat, Mr. Ward, Mr. Bard, and myself, at a discreet distance. We let them push the box as far south as the Annabel Lee. And then−−−−"

He paused a moment, and smiled reminiscently. Barton Ward and Watson Bard also smiled reminiscently, and the three detectives exchanged crafty glances.

"Then, to be brief, we took the box away from them. They were so ill−advised as to struggle. They are in irons, now, on board the Annabel Lee.

"But what I cannot understand, Mr. Cleggett, is why these men should risk so much to make off with an empty box."

"An empty box!" cried Cleggett.

"Empty!" echoed Lady Agatha and Miss Pringle, in concert.

The detective wrenched the cover from the box of Reginald Maltravers.

"Practically empty, at any rate," he said.

And, indeed, except for a few wads of wet excelsior, there was nothing in the box of Reginald Maltravers.

"Where, then," cried Lady Agatha, "is Reginald Maltravers?"

"Where, indeed," said Wilton Barnstable, "is Reginald Maltravers?"

"Where, then," cried Miss Pringle, "are my plum preserves?"

"Where, indeed?" repeated Wilton Barnstable. And Barton Ward and Watson Bard, although they did not speak aloud, stroked their mustaches and their lips formed the ejaculation, "Where, indeed?"

"We will tell you everything," said Cleggett. And beginning with his purchase of the Jasper B. he recounted rapidly, but with sufficient detail, all the facts with which the reader is already familiar, weaving into his story the tale of Lady Agatha and the adventures of Miss Pringle. Wilton Barnstable listened attentively. So did Barton Ward and Watson Bard. The benign smile which was so characteristic of Wilton Barnstable never left the three faces, but it was evident to Cleggett that these trained intelligences grasped and weighed and ticketed every detail.

While Cleggett narrates, and Wilton Barnstable and his men listen, a word to the reader concerning this great detective.

CHAPTER XX−THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DETECTIVE

Wilton Barnstable was the inventor of a new school of detection of crime. The system came in with him, and it may go out with him for lack of a man of his genius to perpetuate it. He insisted that there was nothing spectacular or romantic in the pursuit of the criminal, or, at least, that there should be nothing of the sort. And he was especially disgusted when anyone referred to him as "a second Sherlock Holmes."

"I am only a plain business man," he would insist, urbanely, with a wave of his hand. "I have merely brought order, method, system, business principles, logic, to the detection of crime. I know nothing of romance. Romance is usually all nonsense in my estimation. The real detective, who gets results in real life, is NOT a Sherlock Holmes."

The enemies of Wilton Barnstable sometimes said of him that he was jealous of Sherlock Holmes. When this was reported to Barnstable he invariably remarked: "How preposterous! The idea of a man being envious of a literary creation!"

Perhaps his denial of the existence of romance was merely one of those poses which geniuses so often permit themselves. Perhaps he saw it and was thrilled with it even while he denied it. At any rate, he lived in the midst of it. The realism which was his metier was that sort of realism into which are woven facts and incidents of the most bizarre and startling nature.

And, certainly, behind the light blue eyes that could look with such apparent ingenuousness out of his plump, bland face there was the subtle mind of a psychologist. Barnstable, true to his attitude of the plain business man, would have been the first to ridicule the idea publicly if anyone had dubbed him "the psychological detective." That, to his mind, would have savored of charlatanism. He would have said: "I am nothing so strange and mystifying as that−−I am a plain business man." But in reality there was no new discovery of the investigating psychologists of which he did not avail himself at once. His ability to clothe himself with the thoughts of the criminal as an actor clothes himself with a role, was marvelous; he knew the criminal soul. That is to say, he knew the human soul. He refused to see anything extraordinary in this. "It is only my business to know such things," he would say. "We know many things. It is our business to know them. There is no miracle about it." This was the public character he had created for himself, and emphasized−−that of the plain business man. This was his mask. He was so subtle that he hid the vast range of his powers behind an appearance of commonplaceness.

Wilton Barnstable never disguised himself, in the ordinary sense of the term. That is, he never resorted to false whiskers or wigs or obvious tricks of that sort.

But if Wilton Barnstable were to walk into a convention of blacksmiths, let us say, he would quite escape attention. For before he had been ten minutes in that gathering he would become, to all appearances, the typical blacksmith. If he were to enter a gathering of bankers, or barbers, or bakers, or organ grinders, or stockbrokers, or school−teachers, a similar thing would happen. He could make himself the composite photograph of all the individuals of any group. He disguised himself from the inside out.

This art of becoming inconspicuous was one of his greatest assets as a detective. Newspaper and magazine writers would have liked to dwell upon it. But he requested them not to emphasize it. As he modestly narrated his triumphs to the young journalists, who hung breathless upon his words, he was careful not to stress his talent for becoming just like anybody and everybody else−−his peculiar genius for being the average man.

The front which he presented to the world was, in reality, his cleverest creation. The magazine and newspaper articles which were written about him, the many pictures which were printed every month, presented the mental and physical portrait of a knowing, bustling, extraordinarily candid personality. A personality with a touch of smugness in it. This was very generally thought to be the real Wilton Barnstable. It was a fiction which he had succeeded in establishing. When he addressed meetings, talked with reporters, wrote articles about himself, or came into touch with the public in any manner, he assumed this personality. When he did not wish to be known he laid it aside. When he desired to pass incognito, therefore, it was not necessary for him to assume a disguise. He simply dropped one.

The two men with him, Barton Ward and Watson Bard, were his cleverest agents. They were learning from the

master detective the art of looking like other people, and were at present practicing by looking like the popular conception of Wilton Barnstable. They were clever men. But Barton Ward and Watson Bard were, as Cleggett had felt at once, only men of extraordinary talent, while Wilton Barnstable was a genius.

As Cleggett talked he was given a rather startling proof of Wilton Barnstable's gift. He was astonished to find a change stealing over Wilton Barnstable's features. Subtly the detective began to look like someone else. The expression of the face, the turn of the eyes, the lines about the mouth, began to suggest someone whom Cleggett knew. It was rather a suggestion, an impression, than a likeness; it was rather the spirit of a personality than a definite resemblance. It was a psychic thing. Barnstable was disguising himself from the inside out; he had assumed the mental and spiritual clothing of someone else.

Cleggett could not think at first who it was that Wilton Barnstable suggested. But presently he saw that it was himself. He glanced at Barton Ward and Watson Bard; they still resembled the popular conception of Wilton Barnstable.

Gradually the look of Cleggett faded from Wilton Barnstable's face. It changed, it shifted, that look did; Cleggett almost cried out as he saw the face of Wilton Barnstable become an impressionistic portrait of the soul of Logan Black. He looked at Barton Ward. Barton Ward was now looking like Wilton Barnstable's conception of Cleggett. But Watson Bard, less facile and less creative, still clung stolidly to the popular conception of Wilton Barnstable.

But, even as Cleggett looked, this remarkable exhibition ceased; the Wilton Barnstable look dominated the faces again. Plump, yet dignified, smiling easily and kindly, three plain business men looked at him; respectable citizens, commonplace citizens, a little smug; faces that spoke of comfort, method, regularity; eyes that seemed to wink with the pressure of platitudes in the minds behind them; platitudes that desired to force their way to the lips and out into the world.

Yes, such was the genius of Wilton Barnstable that he could at will impose himself upon people as the apotheosis of the commonplace. He did it often. It was almost second nature to him now. His urbane smile was the only visible sign of his own enjoyment of this habitual feat. He knew his own genius, and smiled to think how easy it was to pass for an average man!

CHAPTER XXI−THE THIRD OBLONG BOX ARRIVES

"I think," said Wilton Barnstable, when Cleggett had finished, "that I may be able to clear up a few points for you.

"The two men whom you saw me hazing up and down the bank of the canal, and whom you saw again tonight, followed by the man in the baby blue silk pajamas, were Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat!"

"The wretches!" cried Lady Agatha.

"Wretches indeed," said Wilton Barnstable, Barton Ward, and Watson Bard, in unison, and with conviction.

"And the man in the baby blue silk pajamas, was−−−−" the great detective paused, as if to make his revelation more effective. And while he paused, Miss Genevieve Pringle, with pursed lips and averted face, signified that the very idea of introducing a man in baby blue silk pajamas into the conversation was intensely displeasing to her.

"The man in pajamas was Reginald Maltravers," finished the great detective.

"Reginald Maltravers!" cried Lady Agatha.

She opened her mouth again as if to say something more, but words failed her, and she only stared at the detective, with parted lips and round eyes.

Cleggett went to her and touched her on the arm, and with the touch she gave a sob of emotion and found her tongue again.

"Reginald Maltravers," she said, "is not dead then! Not dead after all!"

She endeavored to control herself, but for a moment or two she trembled. It was evident that it was all she could do to keep from crying hysterically with relief. The nightmare that had haunted her for days had vanished almost too suddenly. Presently she began to be herself again.

"You are sure that he is not dead?" she said with a voice that still shook.

"Sure," said Wilton Barnstable.

And as if quietly satisfied with the sensation they had produced, the three detectives smiled at each other urbanely and contentedly. Barnstable continued:

"Reginald Maltravers came to my agency some days ago and requested a bodyguard. Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat had attacked him, no doubt intending to earn the money which Elmer had promised them. He beat them off. In fact, he caned them soundly. But they still continued to dog him.

"Mr. Ward here, who handled the case, soon reported to me that he believed Reginald Maltravers to be insane."

"Insane he was," cried Lady Agatha. "I have seen the light of insanity in his eye, gleaming through his accursed monocle." She spoke with vehemence. Now that she knew the man to be alive, her hatred of him had flared up again.

"Insane he was," agreed Wilton Barnstable. "And shortly after that discovery was made, he disappeared. The next day after his disappearance, Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat were liberally supplied with money.

"Of course they got the money, Lady Agatha, through the clever trick they worked upon you."

"A great many people have got money from me since I have been in America," said Lady Agatha.

"Ah! Yes?" The great detective went on with his masterly summing up. "Of course they got the money from the trick they worked on Lady Agatha. But at the time I thought it possible that they had robbed Reginald Maltravers and then put him out of the way. They are well−known gunmen.

"I took them into custody and determined to hold them until such time as Reginald Maltravers would be found, or his fate discovered. Eventually I brought them with me on my house boat. I was really holding them without due legal warrant, but I am forced to do that, sometimes. They complained of lack of exercise, so I gave them exercise in the manner which you saw the other morning, Mr. Cleggett.

"One of my agents, shortly after this, picked up the trail of Reginald Maltravers again. When I learned that he was alive my first impulse was to release Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat. But I learned that the two gunmen could, if they would, give me a tip as to certain of the activities of Logan Black, against whom I have been collecting evidence for nearly a year. So I kept them on my boat.

"Reginald Maltravers, most of the time that you were riding about the country, Lady Agatha, with the box that you thought contained him, was really following you. He would lose your trail and find it again, but he was always some hours behind you. Of course, he knew nothing of the oblong box. He thought that you were running away from him. And all the time that Reginald Maltravers was following you, agents of mine were following Reginald Maltravers."

"Lady Agatha," interrupted Cleggett, "was also being pursued by Miss Pringle here."

Wilton Barnstable carefully made a note in a little book which he drew from his waistcoat pocket. Barton Ward also made a note in a little book, Watson Bard started to make a note, and then paused; in fact, Watson Bard did not complete his note until he had gotten a peep into the notebook of Barton Ward. The notes made, the three detectives once more smiled craftily at each other, and Wilton Barnstable resumed:

"We knew, of course, that another lady was also following Lady Agatha. But, until the present moment, we had not identified her with Miss Pringle. And I should not be at all surprised, not at ALL surprised, if still another person had been following Miss Pringle."

"With what object?" asked Miss Pringle, looking alarmed at the idea.

"The motive, my dear lady, I must for the present withhold," said Wilton Barnstable. And again the three detectives exchanged knowing glances.

"Reginald Maltravers' pursuit of you, Lady Agatha, led him to Fairport," went on the great sleuth. "No doubt he met the driver of the vehicle which brought you hither, and learned that you and Elmer had been set down in this neighborhood, just as Miss Pringle learned it. No doubt it was well after dark when he arrived in the vicinity of the Jasper B. And it is to be supposed that, once out here, he went to Morris's road house, thinking it quite likely that you and Elmer would stop there, as he had been tracking you from road house to road house. Logan Black, knowing that the authorities were on his trail, mistook Reginald Maltravers for a detective, and held him prisoner at Morris's. Logan Black's men took away his clothes in order to minimize the possibility of his escape."

"And the Earl of Claiborne's signet ring−−−−" began Cleggett.

"Of course, Reginald Maltravers was wearing it, and of course they took his valuables from him," said

Barnstable. "One of the ruffians was wearing the ring as he approached your vessel with a bomb. But, Mr. Cleggett, there are points about that bomb explosion which I do not understand."

"Nor I," admitted Cleggett.

"We will clear them up later," said the great detective, smiling benignly at his thumbs, which he was revolving slowly about each other as he reconstructed the case.

"Later!" smiled Barton Ward. "Later!" murmured Watson Bard. With their hands clasped over their stomachs, they, too, benignly twirled their thumbs.

"Tonight," pursued Barnstable, "having finally got all the information I wished from Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat with regard to Logan Black, I tossed them the key to their irons and told them to unlock themselves and clear out. It was just before the storm began, and they were sitting on the bank of the canal at the time. I allowed them to sit there in the evenings and get the fresh air.

"But before they could unlock themselves Reginald Maltravers, who had, we must suppose, escaped from Morris's through the carelessness of one of Logan Black's subordinates, crawled up the bank of the canal, which he had swum, and made for the two gunmen, with the water dripping from his eyeglass. He had recognized them as the men who had dogged and assaulted him, and every other idea was obliterated in his desire for vengeance.

"They fled. He pursued. He caught them, and they fought. They succeeded in dropping one of the iron balls on his foot−−on his bunion foot, Mr. Cleggett−−crippling him."

As this mention of the bunion, Miss Genevive Pringle arose with dignity, and, flinging a shawl about her shoulders, left the cabin, chin in air. She did not vouchsafe so much as one backward glance at Cleggett or the three detectives or lady Agatha as she left, but outraged propriety was expressed in every line of her figure.

"H'm," mused the detective, flushing slightly; and Watson Bard and Barton Ward also colored a little, and looked hacked. They glanced furtively at Lady Agatha, to see if she too might be offended.

"Proceed, Mr. Barnstable," she said a little impatiently. "Bunions don't bother me, either mentally or physically. I am familiar with the idea of bunions. There are many bunions in the Claiborne family."

"On his bunion foot, crippling him," resumed the detective, reassured. "The storm came up, and still the gunmen fled, and still Reginald Maltravers pursued. I suppose, since you saw them on the west side of the canal, Mr. Cleggett, that they had run around the north end of it. Probably, while you and Logan Black were fighting, they were running up and down in the neighborhood, in the storm, intent only upon their own feud."

"They certainly seemed exhausted when I saw them," said Cleggett, "all three of them. But if you will permit me to say so, the astuteness with which you are reconstructing this case compels my admiration."

Wilton Barnstable bowed, and Barton Ward and Watson Bard slightly inclined their heads.

"Your skill," said Lady Agatha, "is equal to that of Sherlock Holmes."

At the name of Sherlock Holmes a shade passed over the face of Wilton Barnstable. He slightly compressed his lips, and his eyebrows went up a fraction of an inch. This shade was reflected on the faces of Barton Ward and Watson Bard. There was a moment of silence, but presently Wilton Barnstable continued, repressing a sigh:

"I thought at first, Mr. Cleggett, that you were an ally of Logan Black's, just as you believed me to be his ally, and as he believed you and me to be working together. It may interest you to know that smuggling has been one of his side lines. There is, somewhere hereabouts, a cave in which smuggled goods are stored. These coasts have a sinister history, Mr. Cleggett. It is possible that your canal boat−−I beg your pardon, your schooner, Mr. Cleggett−−played some part in their smuggling operations. At any rate it is evident that Logan Black transferred to the hold of this vessel the incriminating evidence against him, contained in that oblong box, when he learned that my agents were watching Morris's. The Jasper B. has been lying in her present position for a long time. In the event that a sudden get−away from Morris's became necessary, it was an advantage to Logan Black to be able to leave without being hampered with this matter. No one, for many years, had paid any attention to the Jasper B., with the exception of the old truck farmer, Abernethy, who used sometimes to fish from her deck, and−−−−"

"Truck farmer!" cried Cleggett. "Abernethy?"

"Truck farmer," repeated Wilton Barnstable.

"Is not Abernethy an old sea captain?" asked Cleggett.

"Why, no, I believe not," said Barnstable. "At least I never heard so. He is well known as a small truck gardener in this neighborhood. It is true that he comes of a seafaring family−−indeed, it is his boast. But, in a community where nearly everyone knows a little about boats, I believe that Abernethy is remarkable for an

indisposition to venture far from shore."

"I can scarcely believe it," breathed Cleggett.

"He does not understand boats," said Barnstable. "That is the reason, I take it, why he has always fished in the canal from the deck of the Jasper B. "

"Abernethy is a gallant man," said Cleggett, rather sternly. "And even although he may have had little actual seafaring experience, the instinct is in him! The inherited love of a nautical life has been latent in him all along. And at the first opportunity it has come out. He has shown his mettle aboard the Jasper B. "

"I do not doubt it, if you insist upon it," said Wilton Barnstable, politely. And from revolving his thumbs benignly towards himself he began to revolve them urbanely from himself. The reversal was imitated at once by Barton Ward, but Watson Bard was slower in putting this new coup into execution.

"The resemblance between the two oblong boxes evidently fooled Logan Black," continued Barnstable, "and his men stole the wrong one. but he knows by this time that his plan to get the box has failed."

"He knows it?" said Cleggett.

"From the bank of the canal he witnessed our capture of the box, and of the two men who were making off with it. After you had beaten off his assault upon the ship, he turned his attention to the canal, to see if the men whom he had assigned to the job of creeping over the stern of the Jasper B. had by any chance succeeded in purloining the box. He was alone, but he attempted to come to the assistance of his two followers even as we made them prisoners. In fact, we exchanged shots."

The great detective made little of the danger he had encountered.

Indeed, his smile became one of amusement as he removed his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and exhibited a bandaged wound in the fleshy part of his arm.

"It is only a slight wound," he said, beaming on it as if wounds were quite delightful affairs, "and scarcely inconveniences me."

Barton Ward and Watson Bard, with their sleeves rolled up, were also smiling placidly and indulgently at bandages about their left arms. Whether there were real wounds beneath their bandages also, Cleggett could not determine. The bandage of Barton Ward was slightly stained with red, but the bandage of Watson Bard was quite white. All three replaced their coats at the same time, and Wilton Barnstable went on:

"Our course of procedure is plain, Mr. Cleggett. We have the evidence against Logan Black. We must have the man himself. I depend upon you to cooperate with me. I think," he said, beaming at Barton Ward and Watson Bard with an air of modest triumph, "that the case of Logan Black is going to prove one of my really GREAT cases.

"There is only one point which I have not yet made clear to you, I believe−−and that is how Logan Black's men were able to enter and leave the hold of your vessel so mysteriously. But I am shaping up my theory about that! I am shaping it up!"

"Would it be indescreet to inquire just what your theory is?" asked Cleggett.

And Lady Agatha murmured:

"For my part, I can make nothing of it, and I should be glad to hear your theory."

"It would," said Wilton Barnstable, soberly, "it would be premature, if I told you my theory at the present moment. You must pardon me−−but it WOULD. In my line of business−−and I insist, Mr. Cleggett, that I am a plain business man, nothing more−−I find it absolutely necessary not to communicate all my information to the layman until the case is quite perfect in all its points. But do not get the notion, Mr. Cleggett, that I underestimate the part that you have taken in the case of Logan Black. You have helped me, Mr. Cleggett. When I have my secretary prepare the case of Logan Black for magazine and newspaper publication I shall have your name mentioned as that of a person who has helped me. Yes, you have helped me."

As he spoke he picked from a reading table a magazine, on the cover of which appeared his own portrait−−or rather, the portrait of the popular conception of Wilton Barnstable−−and began to make motions about it with his finger. He appeared to be marking off the space beside the portrait into an arrangement of letters and spaces. His lips moved as he did so; he murmured: "The Case of Logan Black−−the Case of Logan Black!" He seemed to see, with the eye of a typographical expert, the legend printed there. Barton Ward and Watson Bard, slightly flushed and a little excited in spite of themselves, seemed also to see it there.

It might have occurred to a person more critical than Cleggett that it was he himself who had furnished nearly

all the real evidence upon which Wilton Barnstable was constructing this Case of Logan Black. But Cleggett looked for the gold in men, not the dross; the great qualities of Wilton Barnstable appealed to his imagination; the best in Cleggett responded to the best in Wilton Barnstable; if the detective possessed a certain amount of vanity, Cleggett preferred to overlook it.

"Decidedly," said Wilton Barnstable, laying down the magazine, and looking at Cleggett kindly and serenely, "I shall see to it that your name is mentioned in connection with the Case of Logan Black." And Barton Ward and Watson Bard also bent upon him their bland and friendly regard.

Cleggett was about to thank them, but at that moment there was a commotion of some sort on deck.

Two female voices, one of which they all recognized as that of Miss Genevieve Pringle, were mingling in a babble of greeting, expostulation, interjection, and explanation, and presently Miss Pringle entered the cabin, followed by a younger lady who, except for her youth, looked much like her.

"My niece, Miss Henrietta Pringle, of Flatbush," said Miss Pringle, primly presenting her prim relation. "She has just arrived−−−−"

"With the plum preserves!" cried Lady Agatha.

"With the plum preserves," confirmed Miss Genevieve Pringle.

And Captain Abernethy and George the Greek bore into the cabin a third oblong box, exactly similar in appearance to the box of Reginald Maltravers and the box which contained the evidence against Logan Black, and set it on the floor.

The three detectives stood and looked at the three boxes with an air of great satisfaction.

"With this addition to our oblong boxes," said Wilton Barnstable, "their number is now complete. Miss Henrietta Pringle, we will listen to your story."

There was little to tell, and Miss Henrietta Pringle told it in a breath. Having received no acknowledgment of the receipt of the plum preserves from her aunt, an unusual oversight on her aunt's part, she had journeyed to Newark with a vague fear that there might be something wrong.

"Arrived in Newark," she said, "I learned that my aunt, with her two white horses and her family carriage driven by Jefferson, the negro coachmen, had suddenly left Newark, without giving any explanation to anyone, or making her destination known.

"The proceeding was very strange; it was very unlike my aunt, and I was frightened. Everyone who had seen her start testified that she was laboring under a great nervous strain of some sort.

"I called at the freight depot and got the box of plum preserves which I had shipped to her. To tell the truth, I feared for her reason. I thought that if I could find her, and could show her the familiar plum preserves, which she loved so well, they would be of material assistance in influencing her to return to her home. So, setting out to search for her in my Ford auto, I took the box of plum preserves with me.

"I soon got upon her trail. The negro coachman, the family carriage and the white horses had excited remark everywhere. Briefly, I traced her here, and am happy to discover that my worst fears with regard to her have proved false."

"Henrietta," said her aunt, reproachfully, "your fears do you very little credit, or me either."

"Aunt Genevieve," said the niece, "pray, do not rebuke me."

"I was certain," said Wilton Barnstable, complacently, "that it would develop that Miss Genevieve Pringle was herself being pursued. I was confident of it, Cleggett. And now that I have cleared up for you the mystery of Logan Black, the mystery of the box of Reginald Maltravers, and the mystery of the box of plum preserves, there only remains the capture of Logan Black to hold me in this part of the country and to keep you from your voyage to the China Seas."

"We must get together," said Cleggett, "on a plan of campaign. Logan Black will certainly attack again. He has only been beaten off temporarily. In the meanwhile, it is almost breakfast time."

And, indeed, the lights in the cabin were suddenly growing pale. The sun was rising. Its beams, shining through the cabin skylight, fell upon the three great detectives, each one of whom, with an air of ineffable satisfaction, was gloating−−but gloating urbanely and with dignity−−over an oblong box.

CHAPTER XXII−DANCING ON THE DECK

It was decided, at a conference of Lady Agatha, Cleggett, and the three detectives, at the breakfast table, to throw up a line of entrenchments along the bank of the canal commanding the approach to the Jasper B. and the Annabel Lee. No one felt the least doubt that Logan Black would renew the attack sooner or later, unless the two vessels made off.

"And," said Cleggett, "I shall not leave until the Jasper B. has been rigged as a schooner again. Anything else would have the appearance of a retreat. Nor will I be hurried. I am on my own property, and I purpose to defend it at whatever cost."

He set his jaws firmly as he declared this intention, and Lady Agatha's eyes dwelt upon him in admiration.

"The Annabel Lee could tow you away, you know," demurred Wilton Barnstable.

"When the Jasper B. moves," said Cleggett, with finality, "it will be under her own power."

Accordingly, work was begun at once on the entrenchments. Everyone on board the Jasper B. was sadly in need of sleep, but Cleggett felt that the earthworks could not wait. He divided his force into two shifts. Cleggett, the three detectives, Jefferson the genial coachman, and Washington Artillery Lamb, the janitor and butler of the house boat Annabel Lee, a negro as large and black as Jefferson himself, took a two−hour trick with the spades and then lay down and slept while Abernethy, Kuroki, Elmer, Calthrop, George the Greek, and Farnsworth dug for an equal length of time. The two prisoners captured by Barnstable the night before, one of whom was the smirking and sinister Pierre, were compelled to dig all the time. Even Teddy, Lady Agatha's little Pomeranian, dug. The ladies of the party slept throughout the morning.

During the forenoon Cleggett dispatched Dr. Farnsworth to the city in Miss Henrietta Pringle's Ford car, and he returned about one o'clock with four more trained nurses. They were installed on board the houseboat Annabel Lee, instead of at Parker's Beach as Cleggett had originally intended, and the Red Cross flag was hoisted over that vessel. Cleggett felt confident that the next battle would be sanguinary in character, and, true to his humanitarian ideals, was resolved to be fully prepared this time to care for as many people as he might disable. Giuseppe Jones, who was quieter now, although at times still irrationally babbling incendiary vers libre poems, was removed to the Annabel Lee, where Miss Medley, quite worn out, turned him over to a fresh nurse.

By the time the reinforcement of nurses had arrived the earthworks of the good ship Jasper B. were completed, and, after a double portion of stiff grog all around, Cleggett ordered all hands to lie down on the deck for an hour's comfortable nap. He stood watch himself. Cleggett had not slept much during the past forty−eight hours, but he was a man of iron. Like King Henry Fifth of England, Cleggett found a certain pleasure in watching while his troops slumbered. Cleggett and this lively monarch had other points in common, although Cleggett, even in his youth, would never have associated with a character so habitually dissolute as Sir John Falstaff.

The construction of the trench was not without its effect upon the gang of villains at Morris's. About nine in the morning Cleggett noticed that he was under observation from the roof of the east verandah of the road house. Loge and two of his ruffianly lieutenants were scrutinizing the Cleggett flotilla and fortifications through their binoculars. Cleggett, through his own glass, returned the compliment.

The three men were conducting an animated discussion. From their gestures they seemed to be completely nonplussed by the entrenchments. Watching their pantomime closely, Cleggett gathered that Loge was endeavoring to enforce some point of view with regard to the Jasper B. upon his two followers. Finally Loge, making a gesture towards Cleggett with one hand, tapped himself several times on the forehead with the other, his lips moving rapidly the while. The two other men shrugged their shoulders and nodded, as if in agreement with Loge. The insulting significance of the gesture was only too apparent. As plainly as if he had heard the accompanying words Cleggett understood that Loge, out of the depths of his perplexity, had said that he (Cleggett) was mentally erratic.

"Ah, you think so, do you?" said Cleggett aloud, laying down his glass and seizing a rifle. "Well, just to let you know that I have a certain opinion of you, also, my friend Loge−−−−" And he sent a bullet over the heads of the three men. They hastily ducked into the house. Cleggett might have picked Loge off, but he disdained to do so. It was his purpose to take the man alive, if possible.

But the rifle shot did not end the espionage. All day scouting parties in taxicabs kept appearing on the sandy plain to reconnoiter the fleet and fortress. They circled, they swooped, they dashed, they zigzagged here and there, but always at a high rate of speed, and always at a prudent distance from the canal. Beyond sending an occasional

rifle ball whistling towards the wheels of the cabs, or over the heads of the occupants, to remind them to keep their distance, Cleggett paid but little attention to these parties. If Loge thought him demented, if he had his enemy guessing, so much the better. The eccentric movements of these cabs was a circumstance which in itself testified to Loge's bewilderment and curiosity.

Cleggett had no idea that there would be an attack before nightfall, and at two o'clock in the afternoon he awakened all the members of his crew who were still sleeping, ordered them into bathing suits, a supply of which he had been thoughtful enough to have the young doctor bring out along with the nurses, and piped them into the canal. The water was cold, but they came out refreshed and invigorated by the plunge and feeling fit for any struggle that might be ahead of them. This maneuver on the part of Cleggett and his marines and infantrymen seemed still more to excite the curiosity and contribute to the bewilderment of Loge and his ruffians.

After the general bath and a substantial lunch, Cleggett called all hands aft and addressed them.

"Ladies and loyal followers and co−workers," he said. "We have passed some nights and days of peril. And there are, I doubt not, still parlous times ahead of the Jasper B. before our ship sets sail for the China Seas. But what is sweeter than pleasure snatched from the very presence of danger? Courage and gayety should go hand in hand! It is a beautiful May afternoon, we have a goodly deck beneath our feet, and, briefly, who is for a dance?"

A huzza showed the popularity of the suggestion. Washington Artillery Lamb, the janitor and butler of the Annabel Lee, possessed an accordion on which he was an earnest and artistic performer. Miss Pringle's Jefferson had with him a harmonica, or mouth organ, which he at once produced. Jefferson was endowed with the peculiar gift of manipulating this little musical instrument solely with his lips, moving it back and forth and round about as he played, without touching it with his hands; and this left his hands free to pat the time. The negro orchestra perched itself on the top of the cabin, and in a moment Lady Agatha, the five nurses, Cleggett, the three detectives, Dr. Farnsworth, and Captain Abernethy were tangoing on the deck. And this to the still further perplexity of Logan Black. As the dance started Cleggett saw that person, almost distracted by his inability to comprehend the mental processes of the commander of the Jasper B., rise to his feet in an automobile that had stopped a couple of hundred yards away, and beat with both hands upon his temples, gnashing his long yellow teeth the while.

The Rev. Simeon Calthrop turned sadly away from the vessel, and, with a sigh, went and sat in the trench, where he was soon joined by Elmer. The disgraced preacher and the reformed convict had struck up a fast friendship. They sat with their backs towards the Jasper B., and Cleggett supposed from their attitude that they were sternly condemnatory of the frivolity and festivity on board ship.

Cleggett, after the first dance, sought them out.

"I hope," he said to the Rev. Mr. Calthrop, not unkindly, "that you don't disapprove of us."

"It isn't that, Mr. Cleggett," said the ship's chaplain, with sorrow in his eloquent brown eyes, "it isn't that at all. In fact, I had a tango class in the basement of my church, every Thursday evening−when I had a church."

"Then what is it?"

"Alas!" sighed the young preacher. "I do not trust myself! Women, as I have told you, Mr. Cleggett, are apt to become fascinated with me. I cannot help it. It is in such gay scenes as this that the danger lies, Mr. Cleggett. As an honorable man, I feel that I am bound to withdraw myself and my fatal influence."

"You are too subtle−−too subtle for moral health," said Cleggett.

"But I will not attempt to influence you. Elmer, are you also afraid of inspiring a hopeless passion?"

"Mister Cleggett," said Elmer gloomily and huskily, out of one corner of his mouth, "I ain't takin' a chance. D' youse get me? Not a chancet. Oncet youse reformed, Mr. Cleggett, youse can't be too careful."

Cleggett returned to the vessel. Miss Pringle the elder was leaving it. Miss Henrietta Pringle was following. Cleggett gathered that the niece left reluctantly, and under the coercion of the aunt.

Miss Pringle the elder was about to join the Rev. Mr. Calthrop in the trench. Morality, as well as misery, loves company. But Mr. Calthrop saw the Misses Pringle coming. He swiftly rose, passed them by with his face averted, and went aboard the Annabel Lee. It was evident that he believed that his fatal gift of fascination had attracted these ladies towards him in spite of himself. Elmer and the Misses Pringle sat gloomily on a clean plank in the trench while the dance went gayly on.

"If you was to ask me," said Captain Abernethy, pausing winded from the tango, strong old man that he was, "I'd give it as my opinion that them that gits their enjoyment in an oncheerful way don't git nigh as much of it as

them that gits it in a cheerful way. Mrs. Lady Agatha, ma'am, if you kin fox−trot as well as you kin tango I'll never have another word to say agin female suffragettes."

But as Cap'n Abernethy spoke the grin froze upon his face.

"My God! Look there!" he shrilled, pointing a long finger towards the plain. Simultaneously the Misses Pringle, shrieking wildly, leaped from the trench towards the ship and Elmer fired a pistol shot.

Cleggett beheld five taxicabs, filled with Loge's assassins, charging towards the vessel at the rate of thirty miles an hour.

"To arms! To arms!" shouted the commander of the Jasper B.

But the enemy, with Logan Black in the lead, had already reached the trenches. They flung themselves to the ground and swept over the trench towards the bulwarks, twenty strong, with flashing machetes. So confident had Cleggett been that Loge would not dare to attack in broad daylight that he had scarcely even considered the possibility. It was the one fault of his military and naval career.

"Cutlasses, men, and at them!" he cried.

CHAPTER XXIII−CUTLASSES

There was no thought of guns or pistols. There was no time to aim or fire. Loge's rush had lodged him on the deck. Roaring like a wild animal, he carried the fight to the defenders. He meant to make a finish of it this time, and with the edged and bitter steel.

As the women scurried into the cabin the two lines met, with a ringing clash of blades, on the deck of the Jasper B., and the sparks flew from the stricken metal. Cleggett strove to engage Loge hand to hand; and Loge, on his part, attempted to fight his way to Cleggett; they shouted insults at each other across the press of battle. But in affairs of this sort a man must give his attention to the person directly in front of him; otherwise he is lost. As Cleggett cut and thrust and parried, a sudden seizure overtook him; he moved as if in a dream; he had the eerie feeling that he had done all this before, sometime, perhaps in a previous existence, and would do it again. The clangor of the meeting swords, the inarticulate shouts and curses, the dance of struggling men across the deck, the whirling confusion of the whole fantastic scene beneath the quiet skies, struck upon his consciousness with that strange phantasmagoric quality which makes the hurrying unreality of dreams so much more vivid and more real than anything in waking life.

In the center of Cleggett's line stood the three detectives shoulder to shoulder. Their three swords rose and fell as one. They cut and lunged and guarded with a machine−like regularity, advancing, giving ground, advancing again, with a rhythmic unanimity which was baffling to their opponents.

On either flank of the detectives fought one of the gigantic negroes. Washington Artillery Lamb, almost at once, had broken his cutlass, and now he raged in the waist of the Jasper B. with a long iron bar in his hand. Miss Pringle's Jefferson, with his high cockaded hat still firmly fixed upon his head, laid about him with a heavy cavalry saber; in his excitement he still held his harmonica in his mouth and blew blasts upon it as he fought. The Rev. Simeon Calthrop, in a loud agitated voice, sang hymns as he swung his cutlass. And, among the legs of the combatants, leapt and snapped Teddy the Pomeranian, biting friend and foe indiscriminately upon the ankles.

But gradually the weight of superior numbers began to tell. Farnsworth staggered from the fight with a face covered with blood which blinded him. Cap'n Abernethy likewise was bleeding from a wound in the head; George the Greek and Watson Bard were hurt, but both fought on. The crew of the Jasper B. and their allies of the Annabel Lee were being slowly forced back towards the cabin, when there came a sudden and decisive turn in the fortunes of the fight.

Cleggett, straining to meet Loge, who hung sword to sword with Wilton Barnstable, saw Giuseppe Jones, deserted by his nurses, tumbling feebly over the bow of the Jasper B. in the rear of Loge's line. Barelegged, a red blanket fastened about his throat with a big brass safety pin, a thermometer in one hand and a medicine bottle in the other, he tottered, crazily and weakly between Loge and Barnstable, chanting a vers libre poem in a shrill, insane voice.

Loge, who had extended himself in a vigorous lunge, was struck by the weight of the young anarchist's body at

the crook of the knees, and came down on the deck at full length, his machete flying from his hand as he fell.

Cleggett was upon the criminal in an instant, his hand at the outlaw's throat. They grappled and rolled upon the deck. But in another second Wilton Barnstable and Barton Ward, coming to Cleggett's assistance, had snapped irons upon the president of the crime trust, hand and foot.

His overthrow was the signal of his men's defeat. As he went down they hesitated and wavered. The two great negroes, taking advantage of this hesitation, burst among them with mighty blows and strange Afro−American oaths, Castor and Pollux in bronze. With a shout of "Banzai!" Kuroki rushed forward with his kris; the other defenders added weight and fury to the rally. Before the irons were on the wrists of Loge his men were routed. They leaped the rail and made off for their fleet of taxicabs, flinging away their weapons as they ran.

Loge writhed and twisted and lashed the deck with his legs and body for a moment, striving even against the bands of steel that bit into his wrists and ankles. And then he lay still with his face against the planks as if in a vast and overwhelming bitterness of despair.

It had been Cleggett's earlier thought to take the man alive, if possible, and turn him over to the authorities. But now that Loge was taken he burned with the wish for personal combat with him. He desired to be the agent of society, and put an end to Logan Black himself.

Cleggett, as he gazed at the fellow lying prone upon the deck, could not repress a murmur of dissatisfaction.

"We never fought it out," he said.

Whether Loge heard him or not, the same thought was evidently running is his mind. He lifted his head. A slow, malignant grin that showed his yellow canine teeth lifted his upper lip. He fixed his eyes on Cleggett with a cold deadliness of hatred and said:

"You are lucky."

Outwardly Cleggett remained calm, but inwardly he was shaken with an intensity of passion that matched Loge's own.

"Lucky?" he said quietly. "That is as may be. And if, as I infer, you desire a settlement of a more personal nature than the law recognizes, it is still not too late to accommodate you."

"Desire!" cried Loge, with a movement of his manacled hands. "I would go to Hell happy if I sent you ahead of me!"

"Very well," said Cleggett. "Since you have challenged me I will fight you. I will do you that honor."

Loge was about to answer when Wilton Barnstable broke in:

"Mr. Cleggett," he said, "I scarcely understand you. Are you consenting to fight this man?"

"Certainly," said Cleggett. "He has challenged me."

"A duel?" said Wilton Barnstable in astonishment.

"A duel."

"But that is impossible. His life is forfeit to the law. I hope, before the year is out, to send him to the electric chair. Under the circumstances, a duel is an absurdity."

"An absurdity?" Cleggett, with his hands on his hips, and a little dancing light in his eyes, faced the great detective squarely. "You permit yourself very peculiar expressions, Mr. Barnstable!"

"I beg your pardon," said Wilton Barnstable. "I withdraw 'absurdity.' But you must see yourself, Mr. Cleggett, that a duel is useless, if nothing else. The man is our prisoner. He belongs to the law."

Loge had struggled to a sitting posture, his back against the port bulwark, and was listening with an odd look on his face.

"The law?" said Cleggett. "I suppose, in one sense, that is true. But the matter has its personal element as well."

"I must insist," said Wilton Barnstable, "that Logan Black is my prisoner."

Cleggett was silent a moment. Then he said firmly: "Mr. Barnstable, it is painful to me to have to remind you of it, but your attitude forces me to an equal directness. The fact that Logan Black is now a captive is due to his efforts to recover certain evidence which may be used against him. This evidence I discovered and defended, and this evidence I now hold in my possession."

Wilton Barnstable was about to retort, perhaps heatedly, but Cleggett, generous even while determined to have his own way, hastened to add: "Do not think, Mr. Barnstable, that I minimize your work, or your assistance−−but, after all, what am I demanding that is unreasonable? If Logan Black dies by my hand, are not the ends of justice

served as well as if he died in the electric chair? And if I fall, the law may still take its course."

Loge had listened to this speech attentively. He lifted his head and glanced about the deck, filling his lungs with a deep draft of air. Something like a gleam of hope was visible in his features.

"It is irregular," said Wilton Barnstable, frowning, and not half convinced. "And, in the name of Heaven, why imperil your life needlessly? Why expose yourself again to the power of this monstrous criminal?"

"The fellow has challenged me, and I have granted him a meeting," said Cleggett. "I hope there is such a thing as honor!"

"Clement!" It was Lady Agatha who spoke. As she did so she laid her hand on Cleggett's arm. She had hearkened in silence to the colloquy between him and Barnstable, as had the others. She drew him out of sight and hearing behind the cabin."

"Clement," she said with agitation, "do not fight this man!"

"I must," he said simply. It cut him to the heart to refuse the first request that she had asked of him since his avowal of his love for her and her tacit acceptance. But, to a man of Cleggett's ideas, there was no choice.

"Clement," she said in a low tone, "you have told me that you love me."

"Agatha!" he murmured brokenly.

"And you know−−−−" she paused, as if she could not continue, but her eyes and manner spoke the rest. In a moment her lips spoke it too; she was not the sort of woman who is afraid to avow the promptings of her heart. "You know," she said, "that I love you."

"Agatha!" he cried again. He could say no more.

"Oh, Clement," she said, "if you were killed−−killed uselessly!−−now that I have found you, I could not bear it. Dear, I could not bear it!"

Cleggett was profoundly moved. He yearned to take her in his arms to comfort her, and to promise anything she wished. And the thought came to him too that, if he should perish, the one kiss, given and received in the darkness and danger of fight and storm, would be all the brave sweetness of her that he would know this side of the grave; the thought came to him bitterly. For an instant he wavered.

"Agatha!" he said with dry lips. "I have already accepted the fellow's challenge."

"And what of that?" she cried. "Would you cling to a barren point of honor in despite of love?"

"Even so," he said, and sighed.

"Oh, Clement," she said, "I cannot bear it! I cannot bear to lose you! I always knew you were in the world somewhere−−and now that I have found you it is only to give you up! It is too much!"

Cleggett was silent for a moment. When he spoke it was slowly and gently, but earnestly.

"No point of honor is a barren one, dear," he said. "What the man lying there may be matters nothing. It is not to him that I have given my word, but to myself. In our hurried modern life we are not punctilious enough about these things. Perhaps, in the old days, the men and women were worse than we in many ways. But they held to a few traditions, or the best of them did, that make the loose and tawdry manners of this age seem cheap indeed. All my life I have known that there was something shining and simple and precious concealed from the common herd of men in this common age, which the brighter spirits of the old days lived by and served and worshiped. I have always seen it plainly, and always tried to live by it, too. Perhaps it was never, in any period, more than a dream; but I have dreamed that dream. And anyone who dreams that dream will have a reverence for his spoken word no matter to whom it is passed. I may be a fool to fight this man; well then, that is the kind of fool I am! Indeed, I know I am a fool by the judgments of this age. But I have never truly lived in this age. I have lived in the past; I have held to the dream; I have believed in the bright adventure; I have walked with the generous, chivalric spirits of the great ages; they have come to me out of my books and dwelt with me and been my companions, and the realities of time and place have been unreal in their presence. I see myself so walking always. It may be that I am a vain ass, but I cannot help it. It may be that I am a little mad; but I would rather be mad with a Don Quixote than sane with an Andrew Carnegie and pile up platitudes and dollars.

"And all this foolishness of mine is somehow bound up with the thought that I have engaged to fight that evil fellow, and must do it; all the bright, sane madness in me cries out that he is to die by this hand of mine.

"I have opened my heart to you, as I have never done to anyone before. And now I put myself into your hands. But, oh, take care−−for it is something in me better than myself that I give you to deal with! And you can cripple it forever, because I love you and I shall listen to you. Shall I fight him?"

She had listened, mute and immobile, and as he spoke the red sun made a sudden glory of her hair. She leaned towards him, and it was as if the spirit of all the man's lifelong, foolish, romantic musings were in her eyes and on her face.

"Fight him!" she said. "And kill him!"

And then her head was on his shoulder, and his arms were about her. "Don't die!" she sobbed. "Don't die!"

"Don't fear," he said, "I feel that I'll make short work of him."

She smiled courageously back at him; with her hands upon his shoulders she held him back and looked at him with tilted head.

"If you are killed," she said, "it will have been more than most women ever get, to have known and loved you for two days."

"Two days?" he said. "Forever!"

"Forever!" she said.

CHAPTER XXIV−THE DUEL

Cleggett took Wilton Barnstable by the sleeve and drew him towards Loge, who, still seated on the deck with his long legs stretched out in front of him, was now yawning with a cynical affectation of boredom.

"I wish you to act as my second in this affair," said Cleggett to the detective, "and I suggest that either Mr. Ward or Mr. Bard perform a like office for Mr. Black."

Loge shrugged his shoulders, and said with a sneer:

"A second, eh? We seem to be doing a great deal of arranging for a very small amount of fighting."

"I suggest," said Wilton Barnstable, "that a night's rest would be quite in order for both principals."

Loge broke in quickly, with studied insolence: "I object to the delay. Mr. Cleggett might find some excuse for changing his mind overnight. Let us, if you please, begin at once."

"It was not I who suggested the delay," said Cleggett, haughtily.

"Then give us the pistols," cried Loge, with a sudden, grim ferocity in his voice, "and let's make an end of it!"

"We fight with swords," said Cleggett. "I am the challenged party."

"Ho! Swords!" cried Loge, with a harsh, jarring laugh. "A bout with the rapiers, man to man, eh? Come, this is better and better! I may go to the chair, but first I will spit you like a squab on a skewer, my little nut!" And then he said again, with a shout of gusty mirth, and a clanking of his manacles: "Swords, eh? By God! The little man says SWORDS!"

Wilton Barnstable drew Cleggett to one side.

"Name pistols," he said. "For God's sake, Cleggett, name pistols! If I had had any idea that you were going to demand rapiers I should have warned you before."

Cleggett was amused at the great detective's anxiety. "It appears that the fellow handles the rapier pretty well, eh?" he said easily.

"Cleggett−−−−" began Barnstable. And then he paused and groaned and mopped his brow. Presently he controlled his agitation and continued. "Cleggett," he said, "the man is an expert swordsman. I have been on his trail; I know his life for years past. He was once a maitre d'armes. He gave lessons in the art."

"Yes?" said Cleggett, laughing and flexing his wrist. "I am glad to hear that! It will be really interesting then."

"Cleggett," said Barnstable, "I beg of you−−name pistols. This is the man who invented that diabolical thrust with which Georges Clemenceau laid low so many of his political opponents. If you must go on with this mad duel, name pistols!"

"Barnstable," said Cleggett, "I know what I am about, believe me. Your anxiety does me little honor, but I am willing to suppose that you are not deliberately insulting, and I pass it over. I intend to kill this man. It is a duty which I owe to society. And as for the rapier−−believe me, Barnstable, I am no novice. And my blood tingles and my soul aches with the desire to expunge that man from life with my own hand. Come, we have talked enough. There is a case of swords in the cabin. Will you do me the favor to bring them on deck?"

Loge's irons were unlocked. He rose to his feet and stretched himself. He removed his coat and waistcoat.

Then he took off his shirt, revealing the fact that he wore next his skin a long−sleeved undershirt of red flannel.

Cleggett began to imitate him. But as the commander of the Jasper B. began to pull his shirt over his head he heard a little scream. Everyone turned in the direction from which it had emanated. They beheld Miss Genevieve Pringle perched upon the top of the cabin, whither she had mounted by means of a short ladder. This lady, perhaps not quite aware of the possibly sanguinary character of the spectacle she was about to witness, had, nevertheless, sensed the fact that a spectacle was toward. Miss Pringle had with her a handsome lorgnette.

"Madam," said Cleggett, hastily pulling his shirt back on again and approaching the cabin, "did you cry out?"

"Mr.−−er−−Cleggett," said Miss Pringle, pursing her lips, "if you will kindly hold the ladder for me I think I will descend and retire at once to the cabin."

"As you wish," said Cleggett politely, complying with her wish, but at a loss to comprehend her.

"I beg you to believe, Mr. Cleggett," said Miss Pringle, averting her face and flushing painfully, while she turned the lorgnette about and about with embarrassed fingers, "I beg you to believe that in electing to witness this spectacle I had no idea of its exceedingly informal nature."

With these words she passed into the cabin, with the air of one who has sustained a mortal insult.

"Ef you was to ask me what she's tryin' to get at," piped up Cap'n Abernethy, "I'd say it's her belief that it ain't proper for gents to sword each other with their shirts off. She's shocked, Miss Pringle is."

"In great and crucial moments," said Cleggett soberly, pulling off his shirt again and picking up a sword, "we may dispense with the minor conventions without apology."

Loge chose a weapon with the extreme of care and particularity, trying the hang and balance of several of them. He looked well to the weight, bent the blade in his hands to test the spring and temper, tried the point upon his thumb. He handled the rapier as if he had found an old friend again after a long absence; he looked around upon his enemies with a sort of ferocious, bantering gayety.

"And now," said Loge, "if this is to be a duel indeed, Mr. Cleggett and I will need plenty of room, I suggest that the rest of you retire to the bulwarks and give us the deck to ourselves."

"For my part," said Cleggett, "I order it."

"And," said Wilton Barnstable, drawing his pistol, "Mr. Black will please note that while I am standing by the bulwarks I shall be watching indeed. Should he make an attempt to escape from the vessel I shall riddle him with bullets."

"Come, come," said Loge, "all this conversation is a waste of time!"

"That is my opinion also," said Cleggett.

They saluted formally, and engaged their blades.

With Cleggett, swordsmanship was both a science and an art. And something more. It was also a passion. A good swordsman can be made; a superior swordsman may be born; the real masters are both born and made. It was so with Cleggett. His interest in fencing had been keen from his early boyhood. In his teens he had acquired unusual practical skill without great theoretical knowledge. Then he had recognized the art for what it is, the most beautiful game on earth, and had made a profound and thorough study of it; it appealed to his imagination.

He became, in a way, the poet of the foil.

Cleggett seldom fenced publicly, and then only under an assumed name; he abhorred publicity. But there was not a teacher in New York City who did not know him for a master. They brought him their half worked out visions of new combinations, new thrusts; he perfected them, and simplified, or elaborated, and gave back the finished product.

They were the workmen, the craftsmen, the men of talent; he was the originator, the genius.

And he was especially lucky in not having been tied down, in his younger years, to one national tradition of the art. The limitations of the French, the Spanish, the Italian, or the Austrian schools had not enslaved him in youth and hampered the free development of his individuality. He had studied them all; he chose from them all their superiorities; their excellences he blended into a system of his own.

It might be called the Cleggett System.

The Frenchman is an intellectual swordsman; the basis of his art is a thorough knowledge of its mathematics. Upon this foundation he superimposes a structure of audacity. But he often falls into one error or another, for all his mental brilliancy. He may become rigidly formal in his practice, or, in a revolt from his own formalism, be seduced into a display of showy, sensational tricks that are all very well in the studio but dangerous to their

practitioner on the actual dueling ground.

The Italian, looser, freer, less formal, more individual in his style, springing from a line of forbears who have preferred the thrust to the cut, the point to the edge, for centuries, is a more instinctive and less intellectual swordsman than the Frenchman. It is in his blood; he uses his rapier with a wild and angry grace that is feline.

The Frenchman, even when he is thoroughly serious in his desire to slay, loves a duel for its own sake; he is never free from the thought of the picture he is making; the art, the science, the practical cleverness, appeal to him independently of the bloodshed.

The Italian thinks of but one thing; to kill. He will take a severe wound to give a fatal one. The French are the best fencers in the world; the Italians the deadliest duelists.

Cleggett, as has been said, knew all the schools without being the slave of any of them.

He brought his sword en tierce; Loge's blade met his with strength and delicacy. The strength Cleggett was prepared for. The delicacy surprised him. But he was too much the master, too confident of his own powers, to trifle. He delivered one of his favorite thrusts; it was a stroke of his own invention; three times out of five, in years past, it had carried home the button of his foil to his opponent's jacket. It was executed with the directness and rapidity of a flash of lightning.

But Loge parried it with a neatness which made Cleggett open his eyes, replying with a counter so shrewd and close, and of such a darting ferocity, that Cleggett, although he met it faultlessly, nevertheless gave back a step.

"Ah," cried Loge, showing his yellow teeth in a grin, "so the little man knows that thrust!"

"I invented it," said Cleggett.

With the word he pressed forward and, making a swift and dazzling feint, followed it with two brilliant thrusts, either of which would have meant the death of a tyro. The first one Loge parried; the second touched him; but it gave him nothing more than a scratch. Nevertheless, the smile faded from Loge's face; he gave ground in his turn before this rapid vigor of attack; he measured Cleggett with a new glance.

"You are touched, I think," said Cleggett, meditating a fresh combination, "and I am glad to see you drop that ugly pretense at a grin. You have no idea how the sight of those yellow teeth of yours, which you were evidently never taught to brush when you were a little boy, offends a person of any refinement."

Loge's answer was a sudden attempt to twist his blade around Cleggett's; followed by a direct thrust, as quick as light, which grazed Cleggett's shoulder; a little smudge of blood appeared on his undershirt.

"Take care, take care, Cleggett!" warned Wilton Barnstable, from his post by the starboard bulwark.

"Make yourself easy," said Cleggett, parrying a counter en carte, "I am only getting warm."

And both of them, stung by the slight scratches which they had received, settled to the business with an intent and silent deadliness of purpose.

To all appearances Loge had an immense advantage over Cleggett; his legs were a good two inches longer; so were his arms. And he knew how to make these peculiarities count. He fought for a while with a calm and steady precision that repeatedly baffled the calculated impetuosity of Cleggett's attack. But the air of bantering certainty with which he had begun the duel had left him. He no longer wasted his breath on repartee; no doubt he was surprised to find Cleggett's strength so nearly equal to his own, as Cleggett had been astonished to find in Loge so much finesse. But with a second slight wound Loge began to give ground.

With Cleggett a bout with the foils had always been a duel. It has been indicated, we believe, that he was of a romantic disposition and much given to daydreaming; his imagination had thus made every set−to in the fencing room a veritable mortal combat to him. Therefore, this was not his first duel; he had fought hundreds of them. And he fought always on a settled plan, adapting it, of course, to the idiosyncrasies of his adversary. It was his custom to vary the system of his attack frequently in the most disconcerting manner, at the same time steadily increasing the pace at which he fought. And when Loge began to give ground and breathe a little harder, Cleggett, far from taking advantage of his opponent's growing distress to rest himself, as a less distinguished swordsman might have done, redoubled the vigor of his assault. Cleggett knew that sooner or later a winded man makes a fault. The lungs labor and fail to give the blood all the oxygen it needs. The circulation suffers. Nerves and muscles are no longer the perfect servants of the brain; for a fraction of a second the sword deviates from the proper line.

It was for this that Cleggett waited, pressing Loge closer and closer, alert for the instant when Loge would fence wide; waxing as the other waned; menacing eyes, throat, and heart with a point that leaped and dazzled; and

at the same time inclosing himself within a rampart of steel which Loge found it more and more hopeless to attempt to penetrate. It was as if Cleggett's blade were an extension of his will; he and his sword were not two things, but one. The metal in his hand was no longer merely a whip of steel; it was a thing that lived with his own life. His pulse beat in it. It was a part of him. His nervous force permeated it and animated it; it was his thought turned to tempered metal, and it was with the rapidity, directness and subtlety of thought that his sword responded to his mind.

"Come!" said Cleggett, as Loge broke ground, scarcely aware that he spoke aloud. "At this rate we shall be at home thrusts soon!"

Loge must have thought so too; a shade passed over his face, his upper lip lifted haggardly. Perhaps even that iron nature was beginning to feel at last something of the dull sickness which is the fear of death. He retreated continually, and Cleggett was smitten with the fancy to force him backward and nail him, with a final thrust, to the stump of the foremast, which had been broken off some eight feet above the deck.

But Loge, gathering his power, made a brilliant and desperate rally; twice he grazed Cleggett, whose blade was too closely engaged; and then suddenly broke ground again. This time Cleggett perceived that he had been retreating in accordance with a preconceived program. He was certain the man contemplated a trick, perhaps some foul stroke.

He rushed forward with a terrible thrust. Loge, whose last maneuver had taken him within a yard of the hatchway opening into the hold, grasped Cleggett's blade in his left hand, and at the same instant flung his own sword, hilt first, full in Cleggett's face. As Cleggett, struck in the mouth with the pommel, staggered back, Loge plunged feet foremost into the hold. It was too unexpected, and too quickly done, for a shot from Barnstable or any of Cleggett's men.

Cleggett, with the blood streaming from his mouth, recovered himself and leaped through the aperture in the deck. He landed upon his feet with a jar, and, shortening his sword in his hand, stared about him in the gloom.

He saw no one.

An instant later Wilton Barnstable and Cap'n Abernethy were beside him.

"Gone!" said Cleggett simply.

Barnstable drew from his pocket a small electric lantern and swept the beam in a circle about the hold. Again and again he raked the darkness until the finger of light had rested upon every foot of the interior.

But Loge had vanished as completely as a snowflake that falls into a tub of water.

CHAPTER XXV−THE SECRET OF THE VESSEL'S HOLD

"Idiot that I am," cried Cleggett, "not to have covered that hole!" His chagrin was touching to behold.

"There, there, Cleggett," said Wilton Barnstable kindly, "do not reproach yourself too bitterly."

"But to let him escape when I had him−−−−" Cleggett finished the sentence with a groan.

But Wilton Barnstable was thinking.

"Please have some lights brought down here if you will, Captain," he said to Abernethy, "and ask Mr. Bard and Mr. Ward to come."

In a few minutes the interior of the hold was illuminated with lanterns; it was as bright as day. But the detectives did not proceed at once to a minute examination of the hold as Cleggett had supposed they would.

Instead, they stood in the waist of the vessel and thought.

Visibly they thought. Wilton Barnstable thought.

Barton Ward thought. Watson Bard thought. They thought in silence. Cleggett could almost feel these three master brains pulsating in unison, working in rhythmic accord, there in the silence; the sense of this intense cerebral effort became almost oppressive. . . .

Finally Wilton Barnstable began to stroke his mustache, and a pleased smile stole over his plump and benign visage. Barton Ward also began to stroke his mustache and smile. But it was twenty seconds more before Watson Bard's corrugated brow relaxed and his eyes twinkled with the idea that had come so much more readily to the other two.

"Cleggett," said Wilton Barnstable, "you have heard of the deductive method as applied to the work of the detective?"

"I have," said Cleggett. "I have read Poe's detective tales and Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories."

"Ah! Sherlock Holmes!" The three detectives looked at each other with glances in which were mingled both bitterness and amusement; the look seemed to dispose of Sherlock Holmes. Once again Cleggett had a fleeting thought that Wilton Barnstable might possibly be a vain man.

"Sherlock Holmes," said Barnstable, "never existed. His marvelous feats are not possible in real life, Cleggett. But the deductive method which he pretended to use−−mind you, I say PRETENDED, Cleggett!−−is, nevertheless, sound."

And then the three detectives gave Cleggett an example of the phenomenal cleverness.

"Mr. Ward," said Wilton Barnstable, "Logan Black entered this hold."

"He did," said Barton Ward.

"He is not here now," said Wilton Barnstable.

"He is not," said Watson Bard.

"Therefore he has escaped," said Wilton Barnstable.

"But how?" said Barton Ward.

"Only a ghost or an insect could leave this hold otherwise than by the hatchway, to all appearances," said Wilton Barnstable.

"Logan Black is not a ghost," said Barton Ward firmly.

"Logan Black is not an insect," said Watson Bard with conviction.

"Then," said Barnstable, "that eliminates the supernatural and the−−the−−−−"

"The entomological?" suggested Cleggett.

The three detectives stared at him fixedly for a moment, as if surprised at the interruption. But if they were miffed they were too dignified to do more than hint it. Barnstable continued:

"There is no such thing as magic."

"There is not," said Ward.

"The fourth dimension does not exist," said Bard.

"Therefore Logan Black's exit," said Barnstable, "was in accordance with well−known physical laws. We are forced to the conclusion that he made his escape through a secret passageway."

"A tunnel," said Barton Ward.

"With a concealed door opening into the hold," said Watson Bard.

"A ship with a secret tunnel!" cried Cleggett. "Who ever heard of the like? Why, the thing is−−−−"

But he broke off. He had been leaning against the starboard side of the hold. Even as he spoke he felt the wall behind him moving. He turned. A door was opening. It was built into the side of the Jasper B. and the joints were cleverly concealed. He had inadvertently found, with his elbow, the nailhead which was in reality the push button that released the spring. The black entrance of a subterranean passage yawned before him.

He stared in astonishment. The three detectives were pointing at the tunnel with plump forefingers and bland, triumphant smiles.

"Nothing is impossible, my dear Cleggett," said Barnstable. "The tunnel HAD to be there!"

"It explains everything," said Cleggett. "But a tunnel into MY ship!"

And, in truth, for a moment he felt disappointed in the Jasper B.

A tunnel is all very well leading from the basement of a house, or extending backward from a cave; but Cleggett felt that it was scarcely a dignified sort of arrangement, nautically speaking, for a ship to have leading from its hold.

It seemed, somehow, to stamp the Jasper B. indelibly as a thing of the land rather than as the gallant creature of piping winds and following seas. Could the Jasper B., a bone in her teeth and her tackle humming, ever again sail through Cleggett's dreams? For a moment, if the worst must be known, he was almost disgusted with the Jasper B., considered as a ship. For a moment he was willing to believe that Cap'n Abernethy was nothing but a Long Island truck farmer, and NOT of a seafaring family at all. For a moment he felt himself to be a copyreader again on the New York Enterprise.

But only for a moment! The star of romance, clouded temporarily by fact, rose serene and bright again in the

wide heaven of the unusual spirit, the barber's basin gleamed once more the helmet of Mambrino. Cleggett began to see the matter in its proper light.

"A tunnel!" he cried, brightening, and looking at it with his legs spread a little wide and his hands on his hips. "A tunnel! Eh, by gad! Who could have prophesied a tunnel? Barnstable, never tell me again there is no romance in real life! I tell you, Barnstable, she's a good old ship, the Jasper B.! I don't suppose there was ever another schooner in the world with a secret passageway leading out of her hold!"

"She IS a remarkable vessel," agreed Wilton Barnstable gravely. "But, come, we are wasting time! The other end of this passage is at Morris's, that is plain. Loge Black has only a few minutes' start of us. Therefore, to Morris's!"

CHAPTER XXVI−A DOG DIES GAME

Clambering out of the hold, the three detectives and Cleggett briefly made their followers acquainted with the extraordinary turn of events. The Rev. Mr. Calthrop, Miss Pringle's Jefferson, and Washington Artillery Lamb were detailed to guard the Jasper B. end of the tunnel. The others, seizing their rifles, raced across the sands towards Morris's.

In a few moments the place was invested, with riflemen on every side except the south, which fronted on the bay. The steel−jacketed bullets from the high−power guns tore through and through the flimsy walls. Nevertheless the defenders replied pluckily, and the siege might have dragged on for hours had it not been for the courage and resource of Kuroki. Gaining the stable, Kuroki found an old pushcart there. He piled three bales of hay upon it, and then set fire to the hay. Pushing the cart before him, and crouching behind the bales to protect himself from revolver shots, he worked his way to the east verandah of the building and left the hay blazing against the planks. Then he ran as if the devil were after him, and was almost out of pistol shot before he got a bullet in the calf of his leg.

The blaze caught the wood and spread. In two minutes the east verandah was in flames. Loge and his men attempted to pour water on the blaze from above. But Cleggett's party directed so hot a fire upon the windows that the defenders were forced to retire.

The main building caught. The road house was old, and was of very light construction; the fire spread with rapidity. Loge was in a trap.

But that evil and indomitable spirit refused to yield. Even when his remaining ruffians came out and gave themselves up Loge still fought on alone in a sullen fury of despair.

Reckless of bullets, he leaned from an open window, a figure not without its grandeur against the background of smoke and flame, and shouted a savage and obscene insult at Cleggett.

"Give yourself up," cried Wilton Barnstable.

"Damn it, man, anything's better than roasting to death!"

Loge raised his hand and sped a last bullet at the detective, grazing Barnstable's temple.

"Come in and get me!" he shouted.

Barnstable fired, just as a whirl of smoke blew in front of Loge.

Cleggett thought the outlaw staggered, but he was not certain.

A moment later a portion of the roof fell; then the east wall crashed in. Morris's was a blazing ruin.

"He has perished in the flames," said Wilton Barnstable. "So ends Logan Black!"

"More like he's blowed his head off," said Cap'n Abernethy. "If you was to ask me, that's what I'd do."

"He has done neither!" cried Cleggett. "He has taken to the tunnel. That man will fight to the last breath."

And without waiting to see whether the others followed him or not Cleggett set off at top speed for the Jasper B.

With a dagger between his teeth, his pistol in its holster, and his electric, watchman's lantern in his pocket he entered the tunnel and crawled forward on his hands and knees. If Loge were in there indeed he had the fire at one end and Cleggett at the other. But even at that, escape was possible, for all Cleggett knew. What ramifications this peculiar passageway might have he could not guess.

The place was narrow, and in spots so low that it was necessary for a man to crouch almost to the ground. Cleggett, because he did not wish to reveal his presence, did not flash his lantern; there were stretches where he might have stood almost erect and made quicker progress, if he had found them with the light. The earth beneath him was beaten hard and smooth.

Cleggett thought possibly that the tunnel had originally led from Morris's basement to the smuggler's cave which Wilton Barnstable had spoken of, and that it had been extended later to the ship. He learned afterwards that this was true from the men who had surrendered. The Jasper B. had been abandoned for so long, and was so completely abandoned except for the visits of Cap'n Abernethy, who fished from it now and then, that Loge had conceived the idea of making it the back−door, so to speak, of Morris's. In the event of a raid upon Morris's his "get−away" through the hulk was provided for. He had intended buying the ship himself; but Cleggett had forestalled him.

From the prisoners Cleggett also learned later that two men had been concerned in the explosion which had broken the big rocks on the plain. One of them had won the Claiborne signet ring at poker after Reginald Maltravers had been stripped of his valuables, and had worn it. They had been dispatched with a bomb each, which they were to introduce into the hold of the Jasper B., retiring through the tunnel after they had started the clockwork mechanism going. It was known that one of them owed the other money; they had been quarreling about it as they entered the tunnel from the cellar of Morris's. It was conjectured that the quarrel had progressed and that the debtor had endeavored, by the light of his pocket lantern in the tunnel, to palm off a counterfeit bill in settlement of the debt. This may have led to a blow, or more likely only to an argument during which a bomb was dropped and exploded, followed quickly by the other explosion. Dead hand, counterfeit bill and ring were flung whimsically to the surface of the earth together, and the leaning rocks had been astonishingly broken from beneath through this trivial quarrel. Had it not been for this squabble the Jasper B. and all on board must have been destroyed. Verily, the minds of wicked men compass their own downfall, and retribution can sometimes be an artist.

But Cleggett, as he crawled forward through the darkness and the damp, thought little of these things that had so mystified him at the time. He was alert for what the immediate future might hold, not doubting that Loge had retreated to the tunnel. He had too strong a sense of the man's powerful and iniquitous personality to suppose that Loge would kill himself while one chance remained, however remote, of injuring his enemies. Loge was the kind of dog that dies biting.

Suddenly, after pressing forward for several minutes, he ran against an obstruction. The tunnel seemed to come to an end. He did not dare show his light. But he felt with his hands. It was rock that blocked his way. Cleggett understood that this barrier was the result of the explosion. Groping and exploring with his hands, he found that the passage turned sharply to the left. It was more narrow and curving, for the distance of a few yards, and the earth beneath was fresher. When the tunnel had been blocked by the explosion, Loge and his men had burrowed around the obstruction.

Cleggett judged that he must be at about the middle of the tunnel. He felt the more solid earth beneath his hands again, and knew that he had passed the rock. The passage now descended deeper into the ground, slanting steeply downward. This incline was twenty feet in length; then the floor became horizontal again on the lower level. At the same time the passage widened. Cleggett stretched one arm out, then the other; he could not touch the wall on either hand. He stood erect and held his hand up; the roof was six inches above his head. He was in a room of some sort. Wishing, if possible, to learn the extent of this subterranean chamber, which he did not doubt had at one time been used as a cave and storehouse of smugglers, Cleggett began to sidle around walls, feeling his way with his hands.

He dislodged a pebble. It rolled to the ground with what was really a slight sound.

But to Cleggett, who had been getting more and more excited, it was loud as an avalanche. He stopped and held his breath; he fancied that he had heard another noise besides the one which his pebble made. But he could not be sure.

The sensation that he was not alone suddenly gripped him with overwhelming force. His heart began to beat more quickly; the blood drummed in his ears. Nevertheless, he kept his head. He took his pocket lantern in his left hand, and his pistol in his right, and leaned with his back against the wall. He listened. He heard nothing.

But the eerie feeling that he was watched grew upon him. Presently he fancied that the darkness began to

vibrate, as if an electrical current of some sort were being passed through it, and it might forthwith burst into light. Cleggett, as we know, was not easily frightened. But now he was possessed of a strange feeling, akin to terror, but which was at the same time not any terror of physical injury. He did not fear Loge; in dark or daylight he was ready to grapple with him and fight it out; nevertheless he feared. That he could not say what he feared only increased his fear.

Children say they are "afraid of the dark." It is not the dark which they are afraid of. It is the bodiless presences which they imagine in the dark. It was so with Cleggett now. He was not daunted by anything that could strike a blow. But the sense of a personality began to encompass him. It pressed in upon him, played upon him, embraced him; his flesh tingled as if he were being brushed; he felt his hair stir. One recognizes a flower by its odor. So a soul flings off, in some inexplicable way, the sense of itself. This force that laid itself upon Cleggett and flowed around him had an individuality without a body. Not through his senses, but psychically, he recognized it; it was the hateful and sinister individuality of Loge.

With choking throat and dry lips Cleggett stood and suffered beneath the smothering presence of this terror while the slow seconds mounted to an intolerable minute; then there burst from him an uncontrollable shout.

"Loge!" he roared, and the cavern rang.

And with the word he pressed the button of his electric pocket lamp and shot a beam of light straight in front of him. It fell upon the yellowish brow and the wide, unwinking eyes of Loge. The eyes stared straight at Cleggett's own from across the cave, thirty feet away. Loge's teeth were bared in his malevolent grimace; he head was bent forward; he sat upon a rock. Cleggett, unable to withdraw his eyes, waited for Loge's first movement. The man made no sign. Cleggett slowly raised his pistol. . . .

But he did not fire. The open, staring eyes, unchanging at the menace of the lifted pistol, told the story. Loge was dead. Cleggett crossed over and examined him. Clutched on his knees was a bomb. He had been wounded by Barnstable's last shot, but he had crawled through the tunnel with a bomb for a final attempt on the Jasper B. His strength had failed; he had rested upon the rock and bled to death.

As for his last thought, Cleggett had felt it. Loge had died hating and lusting for his blood.

CHAPTER XXVII−CLEGGETT ACCOMMODATES THE KING

There was a wedding next day on the deck of the Jasper B. The Rev. Simeon Calthrop performed the ceremony, and Wilton Barnstable insisted upon lending his vessel for a bridal cruise. Washington Artillery Lamb, engineer, janitor, cook and butler of the Annabel Lee, went with the vessel.

As for the Jasper B., although his wife urged him to keep the ship for the sake of old associations, Cleggett had the hole in its side built in and gave it to the Rev. Simeon Calthrop for a gospel ship. George the Greek, who married Miss Medley, shipped with the preacher in his cruise around the world, and he and his wife eventually reached Greece, as he had originally intended. Elmer went with the Rev. Mr. Calthrop to assist him in his missionary work.

But it was some time before the Jasper B. sailed. Besides the hole which was the entrance to the tunnel it was discovered that the vessel rested on a brick foundation. The man who had used her for a saloon and dancing platform in years past had dug away part of the bank of the canal to fit the curve of her starboard side and had then jammed her tight into the land. Even then she would move a trifle at times, so he had built a dam around her, pumped the water out of the inclosed space, jacked the hulk up, built the brick foundation, and let her down solidly on it again.

With the dam removed the water covered this masonry work, and she looked quite like a real ship. Mr. Goldberg had known about this foundation, but he had forgotten it, he explained to Cleggett.

The Rev. Mr. Calthrop fitted her out as a floating chapel and filled her with Bibles printed in all languages, which he distributes in many lands. When his fatal attractiveness for women threatens to involve him in trouble he hastily puts to sea. He has never become a really accomplished sailor, and the Jasper B. is something of a menace to navigation in the ports and harbors of the world. The suggestion has frequently been made that she should be set ashore permanently and put on wheels. But she has her features. She is, possibly, the only ship extant with a

memorial skylight to her cabin. Cleggett wished her to carry some sort of memorial to the faithful Teddy, the Pomeranian dog, who perished of a stray shot in the fight at Morris's. And as a memorial window did not seem feasible a compromise was made on the memorial skylight. The glass is by Tiffany.

Dopey Eddie and Izzy the Cat, still followed by Reginald Maltravers, made their way to Brooklyn, where all three were arrested and lodged in the observation ward of the Kings County Hospital on the suspicion that they were insane. The two gunmen were able to get free through political influence, but Maltravers was sent to England. He was maintained for some time in a private institution through the generosity of the Cleggetts, but finally went on a hunger strike and died.

Wilton Barnstable smiles and prospers. He gained great additional fame for his clever work in the Case of Logan Black.

Cleggett, in 1925, was the father of four boys named D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis Cleggett; and the owner of the Claiborne estates.

He is now immensely wealthy. It never would have occurred to him, perhaps, to attempt to increase his modest fortune of $500,000 by speculating on the Stock Exchange, had it not been for a fortunate meeting with a barber in Nassau Street.

This barber, whose Christian name was Walter, was, indeed, a mine of suggestion and information of all sorts. And being a good−natured fellow, who wished the world well, Walter delighted to impart his original ideas and the fruits of his observation to his patrons while shaving them. Some of these received his remarks coldly, it is true, but Walter was so charged with a sense of friendliness towards all mankind that he was never daunted for long by a rebuff.

His interests were wide and varied; Walter found no difficulty in talking pleasantly upon any subject; he could touch it lightly, or deal with it in a more serious vein, as the mood of his customer seemed to require; and he had the art of making deft and rapid transitions from topic to topic. But there were two things in particular concerning which Walter had thought deeply: racehorses and the stock market.

It was the settled grief of Walter's life that he had never been able to persuade any person with money to take his advice concerning the races, or follow any of the dazzling stock market campaigns which he was forever outlining.

"They listen to me," said Walter, a little wistfully, but with a brave smile, "or else they do not listen−−but no one has ever yet taken my advice! Do you wet your hair when you part it, sir?"

"What," said Cleggett, carefully concealing from Walter the fact that he spoke of himself, "would be your advice to a man with $100,000 who wished to double it in a few weeks?"

"Double it!" cried Walter. "Why, I could show such a person how to multiply it by ten inside of two months." And he rapidly outlined to Cleggett a scheme so audacious and so brilliant that it fairly took our hero's breath away. Moreover, it stood the test of reflection; it was sound. Not to descend to the sordid details, in three weeks Cleggett found himself possessed of a million dollars' gain. Half of this he gave to the excellent Walter, and in three months ran the other half million up to twenty millions.

Then he withdrew permanently from business, as Lady Agatha complained that it took too much of his time; moreover, he shrank from notoriety, which his stock market operations were beginning to bring upon him.

Giuseppe Jones, who recovered of his wounds, forswore anarchy and became a newspaper reporter, and grew to be a fast friend of Cleggett, who discovered that he was a lad of parts. Cleggett eventually made him president of a college of journalism which he founded. While he was establishing the institution the man Wharton, his old managing editor, broken, shattered, out of work, and a hopeless drunkard, came to him and begged for a position. The man had sunk so low that he was repeatedly arrested for pretending to be blind on the street corners, and had debauched an innocent dog to assist in this deception. Cleggett forgave him the slights of many years and made him an assistant janitor in the new college of journalism.

The post is a sinecure, and well within even the man Wharton's powers.

Cap'n Abernethy travels with the Cleggetts a great deal, under the hallucination, which they humor, that he is of service to them. The children are very fond of him. At Claiborne Castle Cleggett has had a shallow lake constructed for him. There the Captain, still firm in the belief that he is a sailor, loves to potter about with catboats and rafts.

Dr. Farnsworth enjoys a lucrative position as physician to the Cleggett family, and Kuroki is their butler.

By 1925 the prejudice against militants had abated in certain exalted circles in England, and Lady Agatha Cleggett and her husband were much at court.

Cleggett, hating notoriety, had endeavored to conceal the story of his adventures along the dangerous coasts of Long Island; but concealment was impossible. After the death of the old Earl of Claiborne, and the demise of Reginald Maltravers, and Cleggett's purchase of the Claiborne estate, the King wished Cleggett to take the title of Earl of Claiborne.

His Majesty sent the Premier to sound Cleggett upon the matter.

"No, no," said Cleggett affably. "I couldn't think of it. I am quite democratic, you know."

The second time the King sent one of the Royal Dukes to see Cleggett. They were at a house party in Wales, and Cleggett was a little disturbed that this business affair should be brought up at a gathering so distinctly social in its nature. He was too tactful to let it be seen, but secretly he felt that in approaching the matter in that fashion the Duke had erred in taste.

"But we need men like you in the House of Lords," pleaded the Duke.

"I cannot think of it," said Cleggett. And then, not wishing to hurt the Englishman's feelings, he said kindly: "But I will promise you this: if I should change my mind and decide to become a member of any aristocracy at all, it will be the English aristocracy."

The Duke thanked Cleggett for the compliment; and Cleggett thought he had heard the end of it.

He was, therefore, surprised, a few weeks later, as he was conversing with the King at Buckingham Palace, when His Majesty himself, laying his hand familiarly on Cleggett's shoulder, renewed the petition in person. It is hard to refuse things continually without seeming unappreciative. In fact, Cleggett felt trapped; if the truth must be known, he was a little angry.

"Come, come, Cleggett," said the King, "lay aside your prejudices and oblige me. After all, it is not the sort of thing I run about offering to every American in London!"

"Your Majesty," said Cleggett, politely but with a note of firmness and finality in his voice, "since you mention the word American you force me to speak plainly. I would not willingly wound your sensibilities in any particular, but−−pardon me if I am direct−−you have been very persistent. I AM an American, your Majesty, and I consider the honor of being an American citizen far above any that it is within your power to bestow. If I have not mentioned this before, it was because I did not wish to hurt you. I hope our friendship will not cease, but I must tell you flatly that I desire to hear no more of this. You will oblige me by not mentioning it again, Your Majesty."

The King begged Cleggett's pardon with a becoming sincerity, and was about to withdraw. Cleggett, who liked him immensely, was sudden smitten with a regret that it had been so impossible to oblige him.

"Your Majesty," he cried impulsively, "I BEG of you not to get the idea that there is anything personal in this refusal."

"I respect principle," said the King gravely. But he WAS hurt and could not help showing it, and he was a little stiff.

"We will compromise," said Cleggett, with a flash of inspiration.

"I will let you have my second son, Athos Cleggett. You may make him Earl of Claiborne, if you choose. After all, HE is half English!"

"That is like your generosity, Cleggett," said the King, smiling, and giving Cleggett his hand.