The Lost Road and Other Stories

Richard Harding Davis

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Contains:

AN INTRODUCTION BY JOHN T. McCUTCHEON

WITH DAVIS IN VERA CRUZ, BRUSSELS, AND SALONIKA

In common with many others who have been with Richard Harding Davis as correspondents, I find it difficult to realize that he has covered his last story and that he will not be seen again with the men who follow the war game, rushing to distant places upon which the spotlight of news interest suddenly centres.

It seems a sort of bitter irony that he who had covered so many big events of world importance in the past twenty years should be abruptly torn away in the midst of the greatest event of them all, while the story is still unfinished and its outcome undetermined. If there is a compensating thought, it lies in the reflection that he had a life of almost unparalleled fulness, crowded to the brim, up to the last moment, with those experiences and achievements which he particularly aspired to have. He left while the tide was at its flood, and while he still held supreme his place as the best reporter in his country. He escaped the bitterness of seeing the ebb set in, when the youth to which he clung had slipped away, and when he would have to sit impatient in the audience, while younger men were in the thick of great, world−stirring dramas on the stage.

This would have been a real tragedy in "Dick" Davis's case, for, while his body would have aged, it is doubtful if his spirit ever would have lost its youthful freshness or boyish enthusiasm.

It was my privilege to see a good deal of Davis in the last two years.

He arrived in Vera Cruz among the first of the sixty or seventy correspondents who flocked to that news centre when the situation was so full of sensational possibilities. It was a time when the American newspaper−reading public was eager for thrills, and the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the correspondents in Vera Cruz were tried to the uttermost to supply the demand.

In the face of the fiercest competition it fell to Davis's lot to land the biggest story of those days of marking time.

The story "broke" when it became known that Davis, Medill McCormick, and Frederick Palmer had gone through the Mexican lines in an effort to reach Mexico City. Davis and McCormick, with letters to the Brazilian and British ministers, got through and reached the capital on the strength of those letters, but Palmer, having only an American passport, was turned back.

After an ominous silence which furnished American newspapers with a lively period of suspense, the two men returned safely with wonderful stories of their experiences while under arrest in the hands of the Mexican authorities. McCormick, in recently speaking of Davis at that time, said that, "as a correspondent in difficult and dangerous situations, he was incomparable−−cheerful, ingenious, and undiscouraged. When the time came to choose between safety and leaving his companion he stuck by his fellow captive even though, as they both said, a firing−squad and a blank wall were by no means a remote possibility."

This Mexico City adventure was a spectacular achievement which gave Davis and McCormick a distinction which no other correspondents of all the ambitious and able corps had managed to attain.

Davis usually "hunted" alone. He depended entirely upon his own ingenuity and wonderful instinct for news situations. He had the energy and enthusiasm of a beginner, with the experience and training of a veteran. His interest in things remained as keen as though he had not been years at a game which often leaves a man jaded and blase. His acquaintanceship in the American army and navy was wide, and for this reason, as well as for the prestige which his fame and position as a national character gave him, he found it easy to establish valuable connections in the channels from which news emanates. And yet, in spite of the fact that he was "on his own" instead of having a working partnership with other men, he was generous in helping at times when he was able to do so.

Davis was a conspicuous figure in Vera Cruz, as he inevitably had been in all such situations. Wherever he went, he was pointed out. His distinction of appearance, together with a distinction in dress, which, whether from habit or policy, was a valuable asset in his work, made him a marked man. He dressed and looked the "war correspondent," such a one as he would describe in one of his stories. He fulfilled the popular ideal of what a member of that fascinating profession should look like. His code of life and habits was as fixed as that of the Briton who takes his habits and customs and games and tea wherever he goes, no matter how benighted or remote the spot may be.

He was just as loyal to his code as is the Briton. He carried his bath−tub, his immaculate linen, his evening clothes, his war equipment−−in which he had the pride of a connoisseur−−wherever he went, and, what is more, he had the courage to use the evening clothes at times when their use was conspicuous. He was the only man who wore a dinner coat in Vera Cruz, and each night, at his particular table in the crowded "Portales," at the Hotel Diligencia, he was to be seen, as fresh and clean as though he were in a New York or London restaurant.

Each day he was up early to take the train out to the "gap," across which came arrivals from Mexico City. Sometimes a good "story" would come down, as when the long−heralded and long− expected arrival of Consul Silliman gave a first−page "feature" to all the American papers.

In the afternoon he would play water polo over at the navy aviation camp, and always at a certain time of the day his "striker" would bring him his horse and for an hour or more he would ride out along the beach roads within the American lines. After the first few days it was difficult to extract real thrills from the Vera Cruz situation, but we used to ride out to El Tejar with the cavalry patrol and imagine that we might be fired on at some point in the long ride through unoccupied territory; or else go out to the "front," at Legarto, where a little American force occupied a sun−baked row of freight−cars, surrounded by malarial swamps. From the top of the railroad water−tank, we could look across to the Mexican outposts a mile or so away. It was not very exciting, and what thrills we got lay chiefly in our imagination.

Before my acquaintanceship with Davis at Vera Cruz I had not known him well. Our trails didn't cross while I was in Japan in the Japanese−Russian War, and in the Transvaal I missed him by a few days, but in Vera Cruz I had many enjoyable opportunities of becoming well acquainted with him.

The privilege was a pleasant one, for it served to dispel a preconceived and not an entirely favorable impression of his character. For years I had heard stories about Richard Harding Davis−−stories which emphasized an egotism and self−assertiveness which, if they ever existed, had happily ceased to be obtrusive by the time I got to know him.

He was a different Davis from the Davis whom I had expected to find; and I can imagine no more charming and delightful companion than he was in Vera Cruz. There was no evidence of those qualities which I feared to find, and his attitude was one of unfailing kindness, considerateness, and generosity.

In the many talks I had with him, I was always struck by his evident devotion to a fixed code of personal conduct. In his writings he was the interpreter of chivalrous, well−bred youth, and his heroes were young, clean−thinking

college men, heroic big−game hunters, war correspondents, and idealized men about town, who always did the noble thing, disdaining the unworthy in act or motive. It seemed to me that he was modelling his own life, perhaps unconsciously, after the favored types which his imagination had created for his stories. In a certain sense he was living a life of make−believe, wherein he was the hero of the story, and in which he was bound by his ideals always to act as he would have the hero of his story act. It was a quality which only one could have who had preserved a fresh youthfulness of outlook in spite of the hardening processes of maturity.

His power of observation was extraordinarily keen, and he not only had the rare gift of sensing the vital elements of a situation, but also had, to an unrivalled degree, the ability to describe them vividly. I don't know how many of those men at Verz Cruz tried to describe the kaleidoscopic life of the city during the American occupation, but I know that Davis's story was far and away the most faithful and satisfying picture. The story was photographic, even to the sounds and smells.

The last I saw of him in Vera Cruz was when, on the Utah, he steamed past the flagship Wyoming, upon which I was quartered, and started for New York. The Battenberg cup race had just been rowed, and the Utah and Florida crews had tied. As the Utah was sailing immediately after the race, there was no time in which to row off the tie. So it was decided that the names of both ships should be engraved on the cup, and that the Florida crew should defend the title against a challenging crew from the British Admiral Craddock's flagship.

By the end of June, the public interest in Vera Cruz had waned, and the corps of correspondents dwindled until there were only a few left.

Frederick Palmer and I went up to join Carranza and Villa, and on the 26th of July we were in Monterey waiting to start with the triumphal march of Carranza's army toward Mexico City. There was no sign of serious trouble abroad. That night ominous telegrams came, and at ten o'clock on the following morning we were on a train headed for the States.

Palmer and Davis caught the Lusitania, sailing August 4 from New York, and I followed on the Saint Paul, leaving three days later. On the 17th of August I reached Brussels, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world to find Davis already there. He was at the Palace Hotel, where a number of American and English correspondents were quartered.

Things moved quickly. On the 19th Irvin Cobb, Will Irwin, Arno Dosch, and I were caught between the Belgian and German lines in Louvain; our retreat to Brussels was cut, and for three days, while the vast German army moved through the city, we were detained. Then, the army having passed, we were allowed to go back to the capital.

In the meantime Davis was in Brussels. The Germans reached the outskirts of the city on the morning of the 20th, and the correspondents who had remained in Brussels were feverishly writing despatches describing the imminent fall of the city. One of them, Harry Hansen, of the Chicago Daily News, tells the following story, which I give in his words:

"While we were writing," says Hansen, "Richard Harding Davis walked into the writing−room of the Palace Hotel with a bunch of manuscript in his hand. With an amused expression he surveyed the three correspondents filling white paper.

"'I say, men,' said Davis, 'do you know when the next train leaves?'

"'There is one at three o'clock,' said a correspondent, looking up.

"'That looks like our only chance to get a story out,' said Davis. 'Well, we'll trust to that.'

"The story was the German invasion of Brussels, and the train mentioned was considered the forlorn hope of the correspondents to connect with the outside world−−that is, every correspondent thought it to be the other man's hope. Secretly each had prepared to outwit the other, and secretly Davis had already sent his story to Ostend. He meant to emulate Archibald Forbes, who despatched a courier with his real manuscript, and next day publicly dropped a bulky package in the mail−bag.

"Davis had sensed the news in the occupation of Brussels long before it happened. With dawn he went out to the Louvain road, where the German army stood, prepared to smash the capital if negotiations failed. His observant eye took in all the details. Before noon he had written a comprehensive sketch of the occupation, and when word was received that it was under way, he trusted his copy to an old Flemish woman, who spoke not a word of English, and saw her safely on board the train that pulled out under Belgian auspices for Ostend."

With passes which the German commandant in Brussels gave us the correspondents immediately started out to see how far those passes would carry us. A number of us left on the afternoon of August 23 for Waterloo, where it was expected that the great clash between the German and the Anglo−French forces would occur. We had planned to be back the same evening, and went prepared only for an afternoon's drive in a couple of hired street carriages. It was seven weeks before we again saw Brussels.

On the following day (August 24) Davis started for Mons. He wore the khaki uniform which he had worn in many campaigns. Across his breast was a narrow bar of silk ribbon indicating the campaigns in which he had served as a correspondent. He so much resembled a British officer that he was arrested as a British derelict and was informed that he would be shot at once.

He escaped only by offering to walk to Brand Whitlock, in Brussels, reporting to each officer he met on the way. His plan was approved, and as a hostage on parole he appeared before the American minister, who quickly established his identity as an American of good standing, to the satisfaction of the Germans.

In the following few months our trails were widely separated. I read of his arrest by German officers on the road to Mons; later I read the story of his departure from Brussels by train to Holland−−a trip which carried him through Louvain while the town still was burning; and still later I read that he was with the few lucky men who were in Rheims during one of the early bombardments that damaged the cathedral. By amazing luck, combined with a natural news sense which drew him instinctively to critical places at the psychological moment, he had been a witness of the two most widely featured stories of the early weeks of the war.

Arrested by the Germans in Belgium, and later by the French in France, he was convinced that the restrictions on correspondents were too great to permit of good work.

So he left the European war zone with the widely quoted remark: "The day of the war correspondent is over."

And yet I was not surprised when, one evening, late in November of last year, he suddenly walked into the room in Salonika where William G. Shepherd, of the United Press, "Jimmy Hare," the veteran war photographer, and I had established ourselves several weeks before.

The hotel was jammed, and the city, with a normal capacity of about one hundred and seventy−five thousand, was struggling to accommodate at least a hundred thousand more. There was not a room to be had in any of the better hotels, and for several days we lodged Davis in our room, a vast chamber which formerly had been the main dining−room of the establishment, and which now was converted into a bedroom. There was room for a dozen men, if necessary, and whenever stranded Americans arrived and could find no hotel accommodations we simply rigged up emergency cots for their temporary use.

The weather in Salonika at this time, late November, was penetratingly cold. In the mornings the steam coils struggled feebly to dispel the chill in the room.

Early in the morning after Davis had arrived, we were aroused by the sound of violent splashing, accompanied by shuddering gasps, and we looked out from the snug warmth of our beds to see Davis standing in his portable bath−tub and drenching himself with ice−cold water. As an exhibition of courageous devotion to an established custom of life it was admirable, but I'm not sure that it was prudent.

For some reason, perhaps a defective circulation or a weakened heart, his system failed to react from these cold−water baths. All through the days he complained of feeling chilled. He never seemed to get thoroughly warmed, and of us all he was the one who suffered most keenly from the cold. It was all the more surprising, for his appearance was always that of a man in the pink of athletic fitness−−ruddy−faced, clear−eyed, and full of tireless energy.

On one occasion we returned from the French front in Serbia to Salonika in a box car lighted only by candles, bitterly cold, and frightfully exhausting. We were seven hours in travelling fifty−five miles, and we arrived at our destination at three o'clock in the morning. Several of the men contracted desperate colds, which clung to them for weeks. Davis was chilled through, and said that of all the cold he had ever experienced that which swept across the Macedonian plain from the Balkan highlands was the most penetrating. Even his heavy clothing could not afford him adequate protection.

When he was settled in his own room in our hotel he installed an oil−stove which burned beside him as he sat at his desk and wrote his stories. The room was like an oven, but even then he still complained of the cold.

When he left he gave us the stove, and when we left, some time later, it was presented to one of our doctor friends out in a British hospital, where I'm sure it is doing its best to thaw the Balkan chill out of sick and wounded soldiers.

Davis was always up early, and his energy and interest were as keen as a boy's. We had our meals together, sometimes in the crowded and rather smart Bastasini's, but more often in the maelstrom of humanity that nightly packed the Olympos Palace restaurant. Davis, Shepherd, Hare, and I, with sometimes Mr. and Mrs. John Bass, made up these parties, which, for a period of about two weeks or so, were the most enjoyable daily events of our lives.

Under the glaring lights of the restaurant, and surrounded by British, French, Greek, and Serbian officers, German, Austrian, and Bulgarian civilians, with a sprinkling of American, English, and Scotch nurses and doctors, packed so solidly in the huge, high−ceilinged room that the waiters could barely pick their way among the tables, we hung for hours over our dinners, and left only when the landlord and his Austrian wife counted the day's receipts and paid the waiters at the end of the evening.

One could not imagine a more charming and delightful companion than Davis during these days. While he always asserted that he could not make a speech, and was terrified at the thought of standing up at a banquet−table, yet, sitting at a dinner−table with a few friends who were only too eager to listen rather than to talk, his stories, covering personal experiences in all parts of the world, were intensely vivid, with that remarkable "holding" quality of description which characterizes his writings.

He brought his own bread−−a coarse, brown sort, which he preferred to the better white bread−−and with it he ate great quantities of butter. As we sat down at the table his first demand was for "Mastika," a peculiar Greek drink distilled from mastic gum, and his second demand invariably was "Du beurre!" with the "r's" as silent as the stars; and if it failed to come at once the waiter was made to feel the enormity of his tardiness.

The reminiscences ranged from his early newspaper days in Philadelphia, and skipping from Manchuria to Cuba and Central America, to his early Sun days under Arthur Brisbane; they ranged through an endless variety of personal experiences which very nearly covered the whole course of American history in the past twenty years.

Perhaps to him it was pleasant to go over his remarkable adventures, but it could not have been half as pleasant as it was to hear them, told as they were with a keenness of description and brilliancy of humorous comment that made them gems of narrative.

At times, in our work, we all tried our hands at describing the Salonika of those early days of the Allied occupation, for it was really what one widely travelled British officer called it−−"the most amazingly interesting situation I've ever seen"−−−but Davis's description was far and away the best, just as his description of Vera Cruz was the best, and his wonderful story of the entry of the German army into Brussels was matchless as one of the great pieces of reporting in the present war.

In thinking of Davis, I shall always remember him for the delightful qualities which he showed in Salonika. He was unfailingly considerate and thoughtful. Through his narratives one could see the pride which he took in the width and breadth of his personal relation to the great events of the past twenty years. His vast scope of experiences and equally wide acquaintanceship with the big figures of our time, were amazing, and it was equally amazing that one of such a rich and interesting history could tell his stories in such a simple way that the personal element was never obtrusive.

When he left Salonika he endeavored to obtain permission from the British staff to visit Moudros, but, failing in this, he booked his passage on a crowded little Greek steamer, where the only obtainable accommodation was a lounge in the dining saloon. We gave him a farewell dinner, at which the American consul and his family, with all the other Americans then in Salonika, were present, and after the dinner we rowed out to his ship and saw him very uncomfortably installed for his voyage.

He came down the sea ladder and waved his hand as we rowed away. That was the last I saw of Richard Harding Davis.

JOHN T. MCCUTCHEON.

THE LOST ROAD

During the war with Spain, Colton Lee came into the service as a volunteer. For a young man, he always had taken life almost too seriously, and when, after the campaign in Cuba, he elected to make soldiering his profession, the seriousness with which he attacked his new work surprised no one. Finding they had lost him forever, his former intimates were bored, but his colonel was enthusiastic, and the men of his troop not only loved, but respected him.

From the start he determined in his new life women should have no part−−a determination that puzzled no one so much as the women, for to Lee no woman, old or young, had found cause to be unfriendly. But he had read that the army is a jealous mistress who brooks no rival, that "red lips tarnish the scabbard steel," that "he travels the fastest who travels alone."

So, when white hands beckoned and pretty eyes signalled, he did not look. For five years, until just before he sailed for his three years of duty in the Philippines, he succeeded not only in not looking, but in building up for himself such a fine reputation as a woman−hater that all women were crazy about him. Had he not been ordered to Agawamsett that fact would not have affected him. But at the Officers' School he had indulged in hard study rather than in hard riding, had overworked, had brought back his Cuban fever, and was in poor shape to face the tropics. So, for two months before the transport was to sail, they ordered him to Cape Cod to fill his lungs with the

bracing air of a New England autumn.

He selected Agawamsett, because, when at Harvard, it was there he had spent his summer vacations, and he knew he would find sailboats and tennis and, through the pine woods back of the little whaling village, many miles of untravelled roads. He promised himself that over these he would gallop an imaginary troop in route marches, would manoeuvre it against possible ambush, and, in combat patrols, ground scouts, and cossack outposts, charge with it "as foragers." But he did none of these things. For at Agawamsett he met Frances Gardner, and his experience with her was so disastrous that, in his determination to avoid all women, he was convinced he was right.

When later he reached Manila he vowed no other woman would ever again find a place in his thoughts. No other woman did. Not because he had the strength to keep his vow, but because he so continually thought of Frances Gardner that no other woman had a chance.

Miss Gardner was a remarkable girl. Her charm appealed to all kinds of men, and, unfortunately for Lee, several kinds of men appealed to her. Her fortune and her relations were bound up in the person of a rich aunt with whom she lived, and who, it was understood, some day would leave her all the money in the world. But, in spite of her charm, certainly in spite of the rich aunt, Lee, true to his determination, might not have noticed the girl had not she ridden so extremely well.

It was to the captain of cavalry she first appealed. But even a cavalry captain, whose duty in life is to instruct sixty men in the art of taking the life of as many other men as possible, may turn his head in the direction of a good−looking girl. And when for weeks a man rides at the side of one through pine forests as dim and mysterious as the aisles of a great cathedral, when he guides her across the wet marshes when the sun is setting crimson in the pools and the wind blows salt from the sea, when he loses them both by moonlight in wood−roads where the hoofs of the horses sink silently into dusty pine needles, he thinks more frequently of the girl at his side than of the faithful troopers waiting for him in San Francisco. The girl at his side thought frequently of him.

With the "surface indications" of a young man about to ask her to marry him she was painfully familiar; but this time the possibility was the reverse of painful. What she meant to do about it she did not know, but she did know that she was strangely happy. Between living on as the dependent of a somewhat exacting relative and becoming the full partner of this young stranger, who with men had proved himself so masterful, and who with her was so gentle, there seemed but little choice. But she did not as yet wish to make the choice. She preferred to believe she was not certain. She assured him that before his leave of absence was over she would tell him whether she would remain on duty with the querulous aunt, who had befriended her, or as his wife accompany him to the Philippines.

It was not the answer he wanted; but in her happiness, which was evident to every one, he could not help but take hope. And in the questions she put to him of life in the tropics, of the life of the "officers' ladies," he saw that what was in her mind was a possible life with him, and he was content.

She became to him a wonderful, glorious person, and each day she grew in loveliness. It had been five years of soldiering in Cuba, China, and on the Mexican border since he had talked to a woman with interest, and now in all she said, in all her thoughts and words and delights, he found fresher and stronger reasons for discarding his determination to remain wedded only to the United States Army. He did not need reasons. He was far too much in love to see in any word or act of hers anything that was not fine and beautiful.

In their rides they had one day stumbled upon a long−lost and long−forgotten road through the woods, which she had claimed as their own by right of discovery, and, no matter to what point they set forth each day, they always returned by it. Their way through the woods stretched for miles. It was concealed in a forest of stunted oaks and black pines, with no sign of human habitation, save here and there a clearing now long neglected and alive only with goldenrod. Trunks of trees, moss−grown and crumbling beneath the touch of the ponies' hoofs, lay in their

path, and above it the branches of a younger generation had clasped hands. At their approach squirrels raced for shelter, woodcock and partridge shot deeper into the network of vines and saplings, and the click of the steel as the ponies tossed their bits, and their own whispers, alone disturbed the silence.

"It is an enchanted road," said the girl; "or maybe we are enchanted."

"Not I," cried the young man loyally. "I was never so sane, never so sure, never so happy in knowing just what I wanted! If only you could be as sure!"

One day she came to him in high excitement with a book of verse. "He has written a poem," she cried, "about our own woods, about our lost road! Listen" she commanded, and she read to him:

"'They shut the road through the woods Seventy years ago. Weather and rain have undone it again, And now you would never know There was once a road through the woods Before they planted the trees. It is underneath the coppice and heath, And the thin anemones. Only the keeper sees That, where the ringdove broods, And the badgers roll at ease, There was once a road through the woods.

"'Yet, if you enter the woods Of a summer evening late, When the night air cools on the trout−ringed pools Where the otter whistles his mate (They fear not men in the woods Because they see so few), You will hear the beat of a horse's feet, And the swish of a skirt in the dew, Steadily cantering through The misty solitudes, As though they perfectly knew The old lost road through the woods. . . . But there is no road through the woods.'"

"I don't like that at all," cried the soldierman. "It's too−−too sad−−it doesn't give you any encouragement. The way it ends, I mean: 'But there is no road through the woods.' Of course there's a road! For us there always will be. I'm going to make sure. I'm going to buy those woods, and keep the lost road where we can always find it."

"I don't think," said the girl, "that he means a real road."

"I know what he means," cried the lover, "and he's wrong! There is a road, and you and I have found it, and we are going to follow it for always."

The girl shook her head, but her eyes were smiling happily.

The "season" at Agawamsett closed with the tennis tournament, and it was generally conceded fit and proper, from every point of view, that in mixed doubles Lee and Miss Gardner should be partners. Young Stedman, the Boston artist, was the only one who made objection. Up in the sail−loft that he had turned into a studio he was painting a portrait of the lovely Miss Gardner, and he protested that the three days' tournament would sadly interrupt his work. And Frances, who was very much interested in the portrait, was inclined to agree.

But Lee beat down her objections. He was not at all interested in the portrait. He disapproved of it entirely. For the sittings robbed him of Frances during the better part of each morning, and he urged that when he must so soon leave her, between the man who wanted her portrait and the man who wanted her, it would be kind to give her time to the latter.

"But I had no idea," protested Frances, "he would take so long. He told me he'd finish it in three sittings. But he's so critical of his own work that he goes over it again and again. He says that I am a most difficult subject, but that I inspire him. And he says, if I will only give him time, he believes this will be the best thing he has done."

"That's an awful thought," said the cavalry officer.

"You don't like him," reproved Miss Gardner. "He is always very polite to you."

"He's polite to everybody," said Lee; "that's why I don't like him. He's not a real artist. He's a courtier. God gave him a talent, and he makes a mean use of it. Uses it to flatter people. He's like these long−haired violinists who play anything you ask them to in the lobster palaces."

Miss Gardner looked away from him. Her color was high and her eyes very bright.

"I think," she said steadily, "that Mr. Stedman is a great artist, and some day all the world will think so, too!"

Lee made no answer. Not because he disagreed with her estimate of Mr. Stedman's genius−he made no pretense of being an art critic−−but because her vehement admiration had filled him with sudden panic. He was not jealous. For that he was far too humble. Indeed, he thought himself so utterly unworthy of Frances Gardner that the fact that to him she might prefer some one else was in no way a surprise. He only knew that if she should prefer some one else not all his troop horses nor all his men could put Humpty Dumpty back again.

But if, in regard to Mr. Stedman, Miss Gardner had for a moment been at odds with the man who loved her, she made up for it the day following on the tennis court. There she was in accord with him in heart, soul, and body, and her sharp "Well played, partner!" thrilled him like one of his own bugle calls. For two days against visiting and local teams they fought their way through the tournament, and the struggle with her at his side filled Lee with a great happiness. Not that the championship of Agawamsett counted greatly to one exiled for three years to live among the Moros. He wanted to win because she wanted to win. But his happiness came in doing something in common with her, in helping her and in having her help him, in being, if only in play, if only for three days, her "partner."

After they won they walked home together, each swinging a fat, heavy loving−cup. On each was engraved:

"Mixed doubles, Agawamsett, 1910."

Lee held his up so that the setting sun flashed on the silver.

"I am going to keep that," he said, "as long as I live. It means you were once my 'partner.' It's a sign that once we two worked together for something and won." In the words the man showed such feeling that the girl said soberly:

"Mine means that to me, too. I will never part with mine, either."

Lee turned to her and smiled, appealing wistfully.

"It seems a pity to separate them," he said. "They'd look well together over an open fireplace."

The girl frowned unhappily. "I don't know," she protested. "I don't know."

The next day Lee received from the War Department a telegram directing him to "proceed without delay" to San Francisco, and there to embark for the Philippines.

That night he put the question to her directly, but again she shook her head unhappily; again she said: "I don't know!"

So he sailed without her, and each evening at sunset, as the great transport heaved her way across the swell of the Pacific, he stood at the rail and looked back. With the aid of the first officer he calculated the difference in time between a whaling village situated at forty−four degrees north and an army transport dropping rapidly toward the equator, and so, each day, kept in step with the girl he loved.

"Now," he would tell himself, "she is in her cart in front of the post−office, and while they sort the morning mail she gossips with the fisher folks, the summer folks, the grooms, and chauffeurs. Now she is sitting for her portrait to Stedman" (he did not dwell long on that part of her day), "and now she is at tennis, or, as she promised, riding alone at sunset down our lost road through the woods."

But that part of her day from which Lee hurried was that part over which the girl herself lingered. As he turned his eyes from his canvas to meet hers, Stedman, the charming, the deferential, the adroit, who never allowed his painting to interrupt his talk, told her of what he was pleased to call his dreams and ambitions, of the great and beautiful ladies who had sat before his easel, and of the only one of them who had given him inspiration. Especially of the only one who had given him inspiration. With her always to uplift him, he could become one of the world's most famous artists, and she would go down into history as the beautiful woman who had helped him, as the wife of Rembrandt had inspired Rembrandt, as "Mona Lisa" had made Leonardo.

Gilbert wrote: "It is not the lover who comes to woo, but the lover's way of wooing!" His successful lover was the one who threw the girl across his saddle and rode away with her. But one kind of woman does not like to have her lover approach shouting: "At the gallop! Charge!"

She prefers a man not because he is masterful, but because he is not. She likes to believe the man needs her more than she needs him, that she, and only she, can steady him, cheer him, keep him true to the work he is in the world to perform. It is called the "mothering" instinct.

Frances felt this mothering instinct toward the sensitive, imaginative, charming Stedman. She believed he had but two thoughts, his art and herself. She was content to place his art first. She could not guess that to one so unworldly, to one so wrapped up in his art, the fortune of a rich aunt might prove alluring.

When the transport finally picked up the landfalls of Cavite Harbor, Lee, with the instinct of a soldier, did not exclaim: "This is where Dewey ran the forts and sank the Spanish fleet!" On the contrary, he was saying: "When she comes to join me, it will be here I will first see her steamer. I will be waiting with a field−glass on the end of that wharf. No, I will be out here in a shore−boat waving my hat. And of all those along the rail, my heart will tell me which is she!"

Then a barefooted Filipino boy handed him an unsigned cablegram. It read: "If I wrote a thousand words I could not make it easier for either of us. I am to marry Arthur Stedman in December."

Lee was grateful for the fact that he was not permitted to linger in Manila. Instead, he was at once ordered up−country, where at a one−troop post he administered the affairs of a somewhat hectic province, and under the guidance of the local constabulary chased will−o'−the−wisp brigands. On a shelf in his quarters he placed the silver loving−cup, and at night, when the village slept, he would sit facing it, filling one pipe after another, and through the smoke staring at the evidence to the fact that once Frances Gardner and he had been partners.

In these post−mortems he saw nothing morbid. With his present activities they in no way interfered, and in thinking of the days when they had been together, in thinking of what he had lost, he found deep content. Another man, having lost the woman he loved, would have tried to forget her and all she meant to him. But Lee was far too honest with himself to substitute other thoughts for those that were glorious, that still thrilled him. The girl could take herself from him, but she could not take his love for her from him. And for that he was grateful. He never had considered himself worthy, and so could not believe he had been ill used. In his thoughts of her there was no bitterness: for that also he was grateful. And, as he knew he would not care for any other woman in the way he cared for her, he preferred to care in that way, even for one who was lost, than in a lesser way for a possible she who some day might greatly care for him. So she still remained in his thoughts, and was so constantly with him that he led a dual existence, in which by day he directed the affairs of an alien and hostile people and by night again lived through the wonderful moments when she had thought she loved him, when he

first had learned to love her. At times she seemed actually at his side, and he could not tell whether he was pretending that this were so or whether the force of his love had projected her image half around the world.

Often, when in single file he led the men through the forest, he seemed again to be back on Cape Cod picking his way over their own lost road through the wood, and he heard "the beat of a horse's feet and the swish of a skirt in the dew." And then a carbine would rattle, or a horse would stumble and a trooper swear, and he was again in the sweating jungle, where men, intent upon his life, crouched in ambush.

She spared him the mockery of wedding−cards; but the announcement of the wedding came to him in a three−months−old newspaper. Hoping they would speak of her in their letters, he kept up a somewhat one−sided correspondence with friends of Mrs. Stedman's in Boston, where she now lived. But for a year in none of their letters did her name appear. When a mutual friend did write of her Lee understood the silence.

From the first, the mutual friend wrote, the life of Mrs. Stedman and her husband was thoroughly miserable. Stedman blamed her because she came to him penniless. The rich aunt, who had heartily disapproved of the artist, had spoken of him so frankly that Frances had quarrelled with her, and from her no longer would accept money. In his anger at this Stedman showed himself to Frances as he was. And only two months after their marriage she was further enlightened.

An irate husband made him the central figure in a scandal that filled the friends of Frances with disgust, and that for her was an awakening cruel and humiliating. Men no longer permitted their womenfolk to sit to Stedman for a portrait, and the need of money grew imperative. He the more blamed Frances for having quarrelled with her aunt, told her it was for her money he had married her, that she had ruined his career, and that she was to blame for his ostracism−−a condition that his own misconduct had brought upon him. Finally, after twelve months of this, one morning he left a note saying he no longer would allow her to be a drag upon him, and sailed for Europe.

They learned that, in Paris, he had returned to that life which before his marriage, even in that easy−going city, had made him notorious. "And Frances," continued Lee's correspondent, "has left Boston, and now lives in New York. She wouldn't let any of us help her, nor even know where she is. The last we heard of her she was in charge of the complaint department of a millinery shop, for which work she was receiving about the same wages I give my cook."

Lee did not stop to wonder why the same woman, who to one man was a "drag," was to another, even though separated from her by half the world, a joy and a blessing. Instead, he promptly wrote his lawyers to find Mrs. Stedman, and, in such a way as to keep her ignorant of their good offices, see that she obtained a position more congenial than her present one, and one that would pay her as much as, without arousing her suspicions, they found it possible to give.

Three months had passed, and this letter had not been answered, when in Manila, where he had been ordered to make a report, he heard of her again. One evening, when the band played on the Luneta, he met a newly married couple who had known him in Agawamsett. They now were on a ninety−day cruise around the world. Close friends of Frances Gardner, they remembered him as one of her many devotees and at once spoke of her.

"That blackguard she married," the bridegroom told him, "was killed three months ago racing with another car from Versailles back to Paris after a dinner at which, it seems, all present drank 'burgundy out of the fingerbowls.' Coming down that steep hill into Saint Cloud, the cars collided, and Stedman and a woman, whose husband thought she was somewhere else, were killed. He couldn't even die without making a scandal of it."

"But the worst," added the bride, "is that, in spite of the way the little beast treated her, I believe Frances still cares for him, and always will. That's the worst of it, isn't it?" she demanded.

In words, Lee did not answer, but in his heart he agreed that was much the worst of it. The fact that Frances was free filled him with hope; but that she still cared for the man she had married, and would continue to think only of him, made him ill with despair.

He cabled his lawyers for her address. He determined that, at once, on learning it, he would tell her that with him nothing was changed. He had forgotten nothing, and had learned much. He had learned that his love for her was a splendid and inspiring passion, that even without her it had lifted him up, helped and cheered him, made the whole world kind and beautiful. With her he could not picture a world so complete with happiness.

Since entering the army he had never taken a leave of absence, and he was sure, if now he asked for one, it would not be refused. He determined, if the answer to his cable gave him the address, he would return at once, and again offer her his love, which he now knew was deeper, finer, and infinitely more tender than the love he first had felt for her. But the cable balked him. "Address unknown," it read; "believed to have gone abroad in capacity of governess. Have employed foreign agents. Will cable their report."

Whether to wait for and be guided by the report of the detectives, or to proceed to Europe and search for her himself, Lee did not know. He finally determined that to seek for her with no clew to her whereabouts would be but a waste of precious moments, while, if in their search the agents were successful, he would be able to go directly to her. Meanwhile, by cable, he asked for protracted leave of absence and, while waiting for his answer, returned to his post. There, within a week, he received his leave of absence, but in a fashion that threatened to remove him forever from the army.

The constabulary had located the will−o'−the−wisp brigands behind a stockade built about an extinct volcano, and Lee and his troop and a mountain battery attempted to dislodge them. In the fight that followed Lee covered his brows with laurel wreaths and received two bullet wounds in his body.

For a month death stood at the side of his cot; and then, still weak and at times delirious with fever, by slow stages he was removed to the hospital in Manila. In one of his sane moments a cable was shown him. It read: "Whereabouts still unknown." Lee at once rebelled against his doctors. He must rise, he declared, and proceed to Europe. It was upon a matter of life and death. The surgeons assured him his remaining exactly where he was also was a matter of as great consequence. Lee's knowledge of his own lack of strength told him they were right.

Then, from headquarters, he was informed that, as a reward for his services and in recognition of his approaching convalescence, he was ordered to return to his own climate and that an easy billet had been found for him as a recruiting officer in New York City. Believing the woman he loved to be in Europe, this plan for his comfort only succeeded in bringing on a relapse. But the day following there came another cablegram. It put an abrupt end to his mutiny, and brought him and the War Department into complete accord.

"She is in New York," it read, "acting as agent for a charitable institution, which one not known, but hope in a few days to cable correct address."

In all the world there was no man so happy. The next morning a transport was sailing, and, probably because they had read the cablegram, the surgeons agreed with Lee that a sea voyage would do him no harm. He was carried on board, and when the propellers first churned the water and he knew he was moving toward her, the hero of the fight around the crater shed unmanly tears. He would see her again, hear her voice; the same great city would shelter them. It was worth a dozen bullets.

He reached New York in a snow−storm, a week before Christmas, and went straight to the office of his lawyers. They received him with embarrassment. Six weeks before, on the very day they had cabled him that Mrs. Stedman was in New York, she had left the charitable institution where she had been employed, and had again disappeared.

Lee sent his trunks to the Army and Navy Club, which was immediately around the corner from the recruiting office in Sixth Avenue, and began discharging telegrams at every one who had ever known Frances Gardner. The net result was discouraging. In the year and a half in which he had been absent every friend of the girl he sought had temporarily changed his place of residence or was permanently dead.

Meanwhile his arrival by the transport was announced in the afternoon papers. At the wharf an admiring trooper had told a fine tale of his conduct at the battle of the crater, and reporters called at the club to see him. He did not discourage them, as he hoped through them the fact of his return might be made known to Frances. She might send him a line of welcome, and he would discover her whereabouts. But, though many others sent him hearty greetings, from her there was no word.

On the second day after his arrival one of the telegrams was answered in person by a friend of Mrs. Stedman. He knew only that she had been in New York, that she was very poor and in ill health, that she shunned all of her friends, and was earning her living as the matron of some sort of a club for working girls. He did not know the name of it.

On the third day there still was no news. On the fourth Lee decided that the next morning he would advertise. He would say only: "Will Mrs. Arthur Stedman communicate with Messrs. Fuller & Fuller?" Fuller &Fuller were his lawyers. That afternoon he remained until six o'clock at the recruiting office, and when he left it the electric street lights were burning brightly. A heavy damp snow was falling, and the lights and the falling flakes and the shouts of drivers and the toots of taxicabs made for the man from the tropics a welcome homecoming.

Instead of returning at once to his club, he slackened his steps. The shop windows of Sixth Avenue hung with Christmas garlands, and colored lamps glowed like open fireplaces. Lee passed slowly before them, glad that he had been able to get back at such a season. For the moment he had forgotten the woman he sought, and was conscious only of his surroundings. He had paused in front of the window of a pawn−shop. Over the array of cheap jewelry, of banjos, shot−guns, and razors, his eyes moved idly. And then they became transfixed and staring. In the very front of the window, directly under his nose, was a tarnished silver loving−cup. On it was engraved, "Mixed Doubles. Agawamsett, 1910." In all the world there were only two such cups, and as though he were dodging the slash of a bolo, Lee leaped into the shop. Many precious seconds were wasted in persuading Mrs. Cohen that he did not believe the cup had been stolen; that he was not from the Central Office; that he believed the lady who had pawned the cup had come by it honestly; that he meant no harm to the lady; that he meant no harm to Mrs. Cohen; that, much as the young lady may have needed the money Mrs. Cohen had loaned her on the cup, he needed the address of the young lady still more.

Mrs. Cohen retired behind a screen, and Lee was conscious that from the other side of it the whole family of Cohens were taking his measurements. He approved of their efforts to protect the owner of the cup, but not from him.

He offered, if one of the younger Cohens would take him to the young lady, to let him first ask her if she would receive Captain Lee, and for his service he would give the young Cohen untold gold. He exhibited the untold gold. The young Cohen choked at the sight and sprang into the seat beside the driver of a taxicab.

"To the Working Girls' Home, on Tenth Street!" he commanded.

Through the falling snow and the flashing lights they slid, skidded, and leaped. Inside the cab Lee shivered with excitement, with cold, with fear that it might not be true. He could not realize she was near. It was easier to imagine himself still in the jungle, with months of time and sixteen thousand miles of land and water separating them; or in the hospital, on a white−enamel cot, watching the shadow creep across the whitewashed wall; or lying beneath an awning that did not move, staring at a burning, brazen sea that did not move, on a transport that, timed by the beating of his heart, stood still.

Those days were within the radius of his experience. Separation, absence, the immutable giants of time and space, he knew. With them he had fought and could withstand them. But to be near her, to hear her voice, to bring his love into her actual presence, that was an attack upon his feelings which found him without weapons. That for a very few dollars she had traded the cup from which she had sworn never to part did not concern him. Having parted from him, what she did with a silver mug was of little consequence. It was of significance only in that it meant she was poor. And that she was either an inmate or a matron of a lodging−house for working girls also showed she was poor.

He had been told that was her condition, and that she was in ill health, and that from all who loved her she had refused to accept help. At the thought his jaws locked pugnaciously. There was one who loved her, who, should she refuse his aid, was prepared to make her life intolerable. He planned in succession at lightning speed all he might do for her. Among other things he would make this Christmas the happiest she or he would ever know. Not for an instant did he question that she who had refused help from all who loved her could refuse anything he offered. For he knew it was offered with a love that demanded nothing in return, with a love that asked only to be allowed to love, and to serve. To refuse help inspired by such a feeling as his would be morbid, wicked, ridiculous, as though a flower refused to turn its face to the sun, and shut its lips to the dew.

The cab stopped in front of a brick building adorned with many fire− escapes. Afterward he remembered a bare, brilliantly lit hall hung with photographs of the Acropolis, and a stout, capable woman in a cap, who looked him over and said:

"You will find Mrs. Stedman in the writing−room."

And he remembered entering a room filled with Mission furniture and reading−lamps under green shades. It was empty, except for a young girl in deep black, who was seated facing him, her head bent above a writing−desk. As he came into the circle of the lamps the girl raised her eyes and as though lifted to her feet by what she saw, and through no effort of her own, stood erect.

And the young man who had persuaded himself his love demanded nothing, who asked only to worship at her gate, found his arms reaching out, and heard his voice as though it came from a great distance, cry, "Frances!"

And the girl who had refused the help of all who loved her, like a homing pigeon walked straight into the outstretched arms.

After five minutes, when he was almost able to believe it was true, he said in his commanding, masterful way: "And now I'm going to take you out of here. I'm going to buy you a ring, and a sable coat, and a house to live in, and a dinner. Which shall we buy first?"

"First," said Frances, frowning happily, "I am afraid we must go to the Ritz, to tell Aunt Emily. She always loved you, and it will make her so happy."

"To the Ritz!" stammered the young man. "To Aunt Emily! I thought they told me your aunt and−you−"

"We quarrelled, yes," said Frances, "and she has forgiven me; but she has not forgiven herself, so she spoils me, and already I have a house to live in, and several sable coats, and, oh! everything, everything but the ring."

"I am so sorry!" cried Lee. "I thought you were poor. I hoped you were poor. But you are joking!" he exclaimed delightedly. "You are here in a working girls' home−"

"It is one of Aunt Emily's charities. She built it," said Frances. "I come here to talk to the girls."

"But," persisted Lee triumphantly, "if you are not poor, why did you pawn our silver loving−cup?"

The face of the girl became a lovely crimson, and tears rose to her eyes. As though at a confessional, she lifted her hands penitently.

"Try to understand," she begged; "I wanted you to love me, not for my money−"

"But you knew!" cried Lee.

"I had to be sure," begged the girl; "and I wanted to believe you loved me even if I did not love you. When it was too late I knew you loved me as no woman ever deserved to be loved; and I wanted that love. I could not live without it. So when I read in the papers you had returned I wouldn't let myself write you; I wouldn't let myself beg you to come to see me. I set a test for you. I knew from the papers you were at the Army and Navy Club, and that around the corner was the recruiting office. I'd often seen the sergeant there, in uniform, at the door. I knew you must pass from your club to the office many times each day, so I thought of the loving−cup and the pawn−shop. I planted it there. It was a trick, a test. I thought if you saw it in a pawn−shop you would believe I no longer cared for you, and that I was very poor. If you passed it by, then I would know you yourself had stopped caring, but if you asked about it, if you inquired for me, then I would know you came to me of your own wish, because you−"

Lee shook his head.

"You don't have to tell me," he said gently, "why I came. I've a cab outside. You will get in it," he commanded, "and we will rescue our cup. I always told you they would look well together over an open fireplace."

THE MIRACLE OF LAS PALMAS

This is the story of a gallant officer who loved his profession, his regiment, his country, but above all, whiskey; of his miraculous conversion to total abstinence, and of the humble instrument that worked the miracle. At the time it was worked, a battalion of the Thirty−third Infantry had been left behind to guard the Zone, and was occupying impromptu barracks on the hill above Las Palmas. That was when Las Palmas was one of the four thousand stations along the forty miles of the Panama Railroad. When the railroad was "reconstructed" the name of Las Palmas did not appear on the new time−table, and when this story appears Las Palmas will be eighty feet under water. So if any one wishes to dispute the miracle he will have to conduct his investigation in a diving−bell.

On this particular evening young Major Aintree, in command of the battalion, had gone up the line to Panama to dine at the Hotel Tivoli, and had dined well. To prevent his doing this a paternal government had ordered that at the Tivoli no alcoholic liquors may be sold; but only two hundred yards from the hotel, outside the zone of temperance, lies Panama and Angelina's, and during the dinner, between the Tivoli and Angelina's, the Jamaican waiter−boys ran relay races.

After the dinner, the Jamaican waiter−boys proving too slow, the dinner−party in a body adjourned to Angelina's, and when later, Major Aintree moved across the street to the night train to Las Palmas, he moved unsteadily.

Young Standish of the Canal Zone police, who, though but twenty− six, was a full corporal, was for that night on duty as "train guard," and was waiting at the rear steps of the last car. As Aintree approached the steps he saw indistinctly a boyish figure in khaki, and, mistaking it for one of his own men, he clasped the handrail for support, and halted frowning.

Observing the condition of the officer the policeman also frowned, but in deference to the uniform, slowly and with reluctance raised his hand to his sombrero. The reluctance was more apparent than the salute. It was less of a

salute than an impertinence.

Partly out of regard for his rank, partly from temper, chiefly from whiskey, Aintree saw scarlet.

"When you s'lute your s'perior officer," he shouted, "you s'lute him quick. You unnerstan', you s'lute him quick! S'lute me again," he commanded, "and s'lute me damn quick."

Standish remained motionless. As is the habit of policemen over all the world, his thumbs were stuck in his belt. He answered without offense, in tones matter−of−fact and calm.

"You are not my superior officer," he said.

It was the calmness that irritated Aintree. His eyes sought for the infantryman's cap and found a sombrero.

"You damned leatherneck," he began, "I'll report−−"

"I'm not a marine, either," interrupted Standish. "I'm a policeman. Move on," he ordered, "you're keeping these people waiting."

Others of the dinner−party formed a flying wedge around Aintree and crowded him up the steps and into a seat and sat upon him. Ten minutes later, when Standish made his rounds of the cars, Aintree saw him approaching. He had a vague recollection that he had been insulted, and by a policeman.

"You!" he called, and so loudly that all in the car turned, "I'm going to report you, going to report you for insolence. What's your name?"

Looking neither at Aintree nor at the faces turned toward him, Standish replied as though Aintree had asked him what time it was.

"Standish," he said, "corporal, shield number 226, on train guard." He continued down the aisle.

"I'll remember you," Aintree shouted.

But in the hot, glaring dawn of the morning after, Aintree forgot. It was Standish who remembered.

The men of the Zone police are hand−picked. They have been soldiers, marines, cowboys, sheriffs, "Black Hussars" of the Pennsylvania State constabulary, rough riders with Roosevelt, mounted police in Canada, irregular horse in South Africa; they form one of the best−organized, best−disciplined, most efficient, most picturesque semi−military bodies in the world. Standish joined them from the Philippine constabulary in which he had been a second lieutenant. There are several like him in the Zone police, and in England they would be called gentlemen rankers. On the Isthmus, because of his youth, his fellow policemen called Standish "Kid." And smart as each of them was, each of them admitted the Kid wore his uniform with a difference. With him it always looked as though it had come freshly ironed from the Colon laundry; his leather leggings shone like meerschaum pipes; the brim of his sombrero rested impudently on the bridge of his nose.

"He's been an officer," they used to say in extenuation. "You can tell when he salutes. He shows the back of his hand." Secretly, they were proud of him. Standish came of a long chain of soldiers, and that the weakest link in the chain had proved to be himself was a sorrow no one else but himself could fathom. Since he was three years old he had been trained to be a soldier, as carefully, with the same singleness of purpose, as the crown prince is trained to be a king. And when, after three happy, glorious years at West Point, he was found not clever enough to pass the examinations and was dropped, he did not curse the gods and die, but began again to work his way up.

He was determined he still would wear shoulder−straps. He owed it to his ancestors. It was the tradition of his family, the one thing he wanted; it was his religion. He would get into the army even if by the side door, if only after many years of rough and patient service. He knew that some day, through his record, through the opportunity of a war, he would come into his inheritance. Meanwhile he officered his soul, disciplined his body, and daily tried to learn the lesson that he who hopes to control others must first control himself.

He allowed himself but one dissipation, one excess. That was to hate Major Aintree, commanding the Thirty−third Infantry. Of all the world could give, Aintree possessed everything that Standish considered the most to be desired. He was a graduate of West Point, he had seen service in Cuba, in the Boxer business, and in the Philippines. For an act of conspicuous courage at Batangas, he had received the medal of honor. He had had the luck of the devil. Wherever he held command turned out to be the place where things broke loose. And Aintree always attacked and routed them, always was the man on the job. It was his name that appeared in the newspapers, it was his name that headed the list of the junior officers mentioned for distinguished conduct. Standish had followed his career with an admiration and a joy that was without taint of envy or detraction. He gloried in Aintree, he delighted to know the army held such a man. He was grateful to Aintree for upholding the traditions of a profession to which he himself gave all the devotion of a fanatic. He made a god of him. This was the attitude of mind toward Aintree before he came to the Isthmus. Up to that time he had never seen his idol. Aintree had been only a name signed to brilliant articles in the service magazines, a man of whom those who had served with him or under him, when asked concerning him, spoke with loyalty and awe, the man the newspapers called "the hero of Batangas." And when at last he saw his hero, he believed his worship was justified. For Aintree looked the part. He was built like a greyhound with the shoulders of a stevedore. His chin was as projecting, and as hard, as the pointed end of a flat−iron. His every movement showed physical fitness, and his every glance and tone a confidence in himself that approached insolence. He was thirty− eight, twelve years older than the youth who had failed to make his commission, and who, as Aintree strode past, looked after him with wistful, hero−worshipping eyes. The revulsion, when it came, was extreme. The hero−worship gave way to contempt, to indignant condemnation, in which there was no pity, no excuse. That one upon whom so much had been lavished, who for himself had accomplished such good things, should bring disgrace upon his profession, should by his example demoralize his men, should risk losing all he had attained, all that had been given, was intolerable. When Standish learned his hero was a drunkard, when day after day Aintree furnished visible evidences of that fact, Standish felt Aintree had betrayed him and the army and the government that had educated, trained, clothed, and fed him. He regarded Aintree as worse than Benedict Arnold, because Arnold had turned traitor for power and money; Aintree was a traitor through mere weakness, because he could not say "no" to a bottle.

Only in secret Standish railed against Aintree. When his brother policemen gossiped and jested about him, out of loyalty to the army he remained silent. But in his heart he could not forgive. The man he had so generously envied, the man after whose career he had wished to model his own, had voluntarily stepped from his pedestal and made a swine of himself. And not only could he not forgive, but as day after day Aintree furnished fresh food for his indignation he felt a fierce desire to punish.

Meanwhile, of the conduct of Aintree, men older and wiser, if less intolerant than Standish, were beginning to take notice. It was after a dinner on Ancon Hill, and the women had left the men to themselves. They were the men who were placing the Panama Canal on the map. They were officers of the army who for five years had not worn a uniform. But for five years they had been at war with an enemy that never slept. Daily they had engaged in battle with mountains, rivers, swamps, two oceans, and disease. Where Aintree commanded five hundred soldiers, they commanded a body of men better drilled, better disciplined, and in number half as many as those who formed the entire army of the United States. The mind of each was occupied with a world problem. They thought and talked in millions −−of millions of cubic yards of dirt, of millions of barrels of cement, of millions of tons of steel, of hundreds of millions of dollars, of which latter each received enough to keep himself and his family just beyond the reach of necessity. To these men with the world waiting upon the outcome of their endeavor, with responsibilities that never relaxed, Aintree's behavior was an incident, an annoyance of less importance than an

overturned dirt train that for five minutes dared to block the completion of their work. But they were human and loyal to the army, and in such an infrequent moment as this, over the coffee and cigars, they could afford to remember the junior officer, to feel sorry for him, for the sake of the army, to save him from himself.

"He takes his orders direct from the War Department," said the chief. "I've no authority over him. If he'd been one of my workmen I'd have shipped him north three months ago."

"That's it," said the surgeon, "he's not a workman. He has nothing to do, and idleness is the curse of the army. And in this climate−−"

"Nothing to do!" snorted the civil administrator. "Keeping his men in hand is what he has to do! They're running amuck all over Panama, getting into fights with the Spiggoty police, bringing the uniform into contempt. As for the climate, it's the same climate for all of us. Look at Butler's marines and Barber's Zone police. The climate hasn't hurt them. They're as smart men as ever wore khaki. It's not the climate or lack of work that ails the Thirty−third, it's their commanding officer. 'So the colonel, so the regiment.' That's as old as the hills. Until Aintree takes a brace, his men won't. Some one ought to talk to him. It's a shame to see a fine fellow like that going to the dogs because no one has the courage to tell him the truth."

The chief smiled mockingly.

"Then why don't you?" he asked.

"I'm a civilian," protested the administrator. "If I told him he was going to the dogs he'd tell me to go to the devil. No, one of you army men must do it. He'll listen to you."

Young Captain Haldane of the cavalry was at the table; he was visiting Panama on leave as a tourist. The chief turned to him.

"Haldane's the man," he said. "You're his friend and you're his junior in rank, so what you say won't sound official. Tell him people are talking; tell him it won't be long before they'll be talking in Washington. Scare him!"

The captain of cavalry smiled dubiously.

"Aintree's a hard man to scare," he said. "But if it's as bad as you all seem to think, I'll risk it. But, why is it," he complained, "that whenever a man has to be told anything particularly unpleasant they always pick on his best friend to tell him? It makes them both miserable. Why not let his bitterest enemy try it? The enemy at least would have a fine time."

"Because," said the chief, "Aintree hasn't an enemy in the world− except Aintree." The next morning, as he had promised, Haldane called upon his friend. When he arrived at Las Palmas, although the morning was well advanced toward noon, he found Aintree still under his mosquito bars and awake only to command a drink. The situation furnished Haldane with his text. He expressed his opinion of any individual, friend or no friend, officer or civilian, who on the Zone, where all men begin work at sunrise, could be found at noon still in his pajamas and preparing to face the duties of the day on an absinth cocktail. He said further that since he had arrived on the isthmus he had heard only of Aintree's misconduct, that soon the War Department would hear of it, that Aintree would lose his commission, would break the backbone of a splendid career.

"It's a friend talking," continued Haldane, "and you know it! It's because I am your friend that I've risked losing your friendship! And, whether you like it or not, it's the truth. You're going down−hill, going fast, going like a motor−bus running away, and unless you put on the brakes you'll smash!"

Aintree was not even annoyed.

"That's good advice for the right man," he granted, "but why waste it on me? I can do things other men can't. I can stop drinking this minute, and it will mean so little to me that I won't know I've stopped."

"Then stop," said Haldane.

"Why?" demanded Aintree. "I like it. Why should I stop anything I like? Because a lot of old women are gossiping? Because old men who can't drink green mint without dancing turkey−trots think I'm going to the devil because I can drink whiskey? I'm not afraid of whiskey," he laughed tolerantly. "It amuses me, that's all it does to me; it amuses me." He pulled back the coat of his pajamas and showed his giant chest and shoulder. With his fist he struck his bare flesh and it glowed instantly a healthy, splendid pink.

"See that!" commanded Aintree. "If there's a man on the isthmus in any better physical shape than I am, I'll−−" He interrupted himself to begin again eagerly. "I'll make you a sporting proposition," he announced "I'll fight any man on the isthmus ten rounds−− no matter who he is, a wop laborer, shovel man, Barbadian nigger, marine, anybody−−and if he can knock me out I'll stop drinking. You see," he explained patiently, "I'm no mollycoddle or jelly−fish. I can afford a headache. And besides, it's my own head. If I don't give anybody else a headache, I don't see that it's anybody else's damned business."

"But you do," retorted Haldane steadily. "You're giving your own men worse than a headache, you're setting them a rotten example, you're giving the Thirty−third a bad name−"

Aintree vaulted off his cot and shook his fist at his friend. "You can't say that to me," he cried.

"I do say it," protested Haldane. "When you were in Manila your men were models; here they're unshaven, sloppy, undisciplined. They look like bell−hops. And it's your fault. And everybody thinks so."

Slowly and carefully Aintree snapped his fingers.

"And you can tell everybody, from me," he cried, "that's all I care what they think! And now," he continued, smiling hospitably, "let me congratulate you on your success as a missionary, and, to show you there's not a trace of hard feeling, we will have a drink."

Informally Haldane reported back to the commission, and the wife of one of them must have talked, for it was soon known that a brother officer had appealed to Aintree to reform, and Aintree had refused to listen.

When she heard this, Grace Carter, the wife of Major Carter, one of the surgeons at the Ancon Hospital, was greatly perturbed. Aintree was engaged to be married to Helen Scott, who was her best friend and who was arriving by the next steamer to spend the winter. When she had Helen safely under her roof, Mrs. Carter had planned to marry off the young couple out of hand on the isthmus. But she had begun to wonder if it would not be better they should delay, or best that they should never marry.

"The awakening is going to be a terrible blow to Helen," she said to her husband. "She is so proud of him."

"On the contrary," he protested, "it will be the awakening of Aintree−−if Helen will stand for the way he's acting, she is not the girl I know. And when he finds she won't, and that he may lose her, he'll pull up short. He's talked Helen to me night after night until he's bored me so I could strangle him. He cares more for her than he does for anything, for the army, or for himself, and that's saying a great deal. One word from her will be enough."

Helen spoke the word three weeks after she arrived. It had not been necessary to tell her of the manner in which her lover was misconducting himself. At various dinners given in their honor he had made a nuisance of himself; on another occasion, while in uniform, he had created a scene in the dining−room of the Tivoli under the prying eyes of three hundred seeing−the−Canal tourists; and one night he had so badly beaten up a cabman who had laughed at his condition that the man went to the hospital. Major Carter, largely with money, had healed the injuries of the cabman, but Helen, who had witnessed the assault, had suffered an injury that money could not heal.

She sent for Aintree, and at the home of her friend delivered her ultimatum.

"I hit him because he was offensive to you," said Aintree. "That's why I hit him. If I'd not had a drink in a year, I'd have hit him just as quick and just as hard."

"Can't you see," said the girl, "that in being not yourself when I was in your care you were much more insulting to me than any cabman could possibly be? When you are like that you have no respect for me, or for yourself. Part of my pride in you is that you are so strong, that you control yourself, that common pleasures never get a hold on you. If you couldn't control your temper I wouldn't blame you, because you've a villainous temper and you were born with it. But you weren't born with a taste for liquor. None of your people drank. You never drank until you went into the army. If I were a man," declared the girl, "I'd be ashamed to admit anything was stronger than I was. You never let pain beat you. I've seen you play polo with a broken arm, but in this you give pain to others, you shame and humiliate the one you pretend to love, just because you are weak, just because you can't say 'no.'"

Aintree laughed angrily.

"Drink has no hold on me," he protested. "It affects me as much as the lights and the music affect a girl at her first dance, and no more. But, if you ask me to stop−−"

"I do not!" said the girl. "If you stop, you'll stop not because I have any influence over you, but because you don't need my influence. If it's wrong, if it's hurting you, if it's taking away your usefulness and your power for good, that's why you'll stop. Not because a girl begs you. Or you're not the man I think you."

Aintree retorted warmly. "I'm enough of a man for this," he protested: "I'm enough of a man not to confess I can't drink without making a beast of myself. It's easy not to drink at all. But to stop altogether is a confession of weakness. I'd look on my doing that as cowardly. I give you my word−−not that I'll swear off, that I'll never do−−but I promise you you'll have no further reason to be what you call humiliated, or ashamed. You have my word for it."

A week later Aintree rode his pony into a railway cutting and rolled with it to the tracks below, and, if at the time he had not been extremely drunk, would have been killed. The pony, being quite sober, broke a leg and was destroyed.

When word of this came to Helen she was too sick at heart to see Aintree, and by others it was made known to him that on the first steamer Miss Scott would return North. Aintree knew why she was going, knew she had lost faith and patience, knew the woman he loved had broken with him and put him out of her life. Appalled at this calamity, he proceeded to get drunk in earnest.

The night was very hot and the humidity very heavy, and at Las Palmas inside the bungalow that served as a police−station the lamps on either side of the lieutenant's desk burned like tiny furnaces. Between them, panting in the moist heat and with the sweat from his forehead and hand dripping upon an otherwise immaculate report, sat Standish. Two weeks before, the chief had made him one of his six lieutenants. With the force the promotion had been most popular.

Since his promotion Standish had been in charge of the police− station at Las Palmas and daily had seen Aintree as, on his way down the hill from the barracks to the railroad, the hero of Batangas passed the door of the station−house. Also, on the morning Aintree had jumped his horse over the embankment, Standish had seen him carried up the hill on a stretcher. At the sight the lieutenant of police had taken from his pocket a notebook, and on a flyleaf made a cross. On the flyleaf were many other dates and opposite each a cross. It was Aintree's record and as the number of black crosses grew, the greater had grown the resentment of Standish, the more greatly it had increased his anger against the man who had put this affront upon the army, the greater became his desire to punish.

In police circles the night had been quiet, the cells in the yard were empty, the telephone at his elbow had remained silent, and Standish, alone in the station−house, had employed himself in cramming "Moss's Manual for Subalterns." He found it a fascinating exercise. The hope that soon he might himself be a subaltern always burned brightly, and to be prepared seemed to make the coming of that day more certain. It was ten o'clock and Las Palmas lay sunk in slumber, and after the down train which was now due had passed, there was nothing likely to disturb her slumber until at sunrise the great army of dirt−diggers with shrieks of whistles, with roars of dynamite, with the rumbling of dirt−trains and steam−shovels, again sprang to the attack. Down the hill, a hundred yards below Standish, the night train halted at the station, with creakings and groanings continued toward Colon, and again Las Palmas returned to sleep.

And, then, quickly and viciously, like the crack of a mule−whip, came the reports of a pistol; and once more the hot and dripping silence.

On post at the railroad−station, whence the shots came, was Meehan, one of the Zone police, an ex−sergeant of marines. On top of the hill, outside the infantry barracks, was another policeman, Bullard, once a cowboy.

Standish ran to the veranda and heard the pebbles scattering as Bullard leaped down the hill, and when, in the light from the open door, he passed, the lieutenant shouted at him to find Meehan and report back. Then the desk telephone rang, and Standish returned to his chair.

"This is Meehan," said a voice. "Those shots just now were fired by Major Aintree. He came down on the night train and jumped off after the train was pulling out and stumbled into a negro, and fell. He's been drinking and he swore the nigger pushed him; and the man called Aintree a liar. Aintree pulled his gun and the nigger ran. Aintree fired twice; then I got to him and knocked the gun out of his hand with my nightstick."

There was a pause. Until he was sure his voice would be steady and official, the boy lieutenant did not speak.

"Did he hit the negro?" he asked.

"I don't know," Meehan answered. "The man jumped for the darkest spot he could find." The voice of Meehan lost its professional calm and became personal and aggrieved.

"Aintree's on his way to see you now, lieutenant. He's going to report me."

"For what?"

The voice over the telephone rose indignantly.

"For knocking the gun out of his hand. He says it's an assault. He's going to break me!"

Standish made no comment.

"Report here," he ordered.

He heard Bullard hurrying up the hill and met him at the foot of the steps.

"There's a nigger," began Bullard, "lying under some bushes−−"

"Hush!" commanded Standish.

From the path below came the sound of footsteps approaching unsteadily, and the voice of a man swearing and muttering to himself. Standish pulled the ex−cowboy into the shadow of the darkness and spoke in eager whispers.

"You understand," he concluded, "you will not report until you see me pick up a cigar from the desk and light it. You will wait out here in the darkness. When you see me light the cigar, you will come in and report."

The cowboy policeman nodded, but without enthusiasm. "I understand, lieutenant," he said, "but," he shook his head doubtfully, "it sizes up to me like what those police up in New York call a 'frame−up.'"

Standish exclaimed impatiently.

"It's not my frame−up!" he said. "The man's framed himself up. All I'm going to do is to nail him to the wall!"

Standish had only time to return to his desk when Aintree stumbled up the path and into the station−house. He was "fighting drunk," ugly, offensive, all but incoherent with anger.

"You in charge?" he demanded. He did not wait for an answer. "I've been 'saulted!" he shouted. "'Saulted by one of your damned policemen. He struck me−−struck me when I was protecting myself. He had a nigger with him. First the nigger tripped me; then, when I tried to protect myself, this thug of yours hits me, clubs me, you unnerstan', clubs me! I want him−−"

He was interrupted by the entrance of Meehan, who moved into the light from the lamps and saluted his lieutenant.

"That's the man!" roared Aintree. The sight of Meehan whipped him into greater fury.

"I want that man broke. I want to see you strip his shield off him−−now, you unnerstan', now−−for 'saulting me, for 'saulting an officer in the United States army. And, if you don't," he threw himself into a position of the prize−ring, "I'll beat him up and you, too." Through want of breath, he stopped, and panted. Again his voice broke forth hysterically. "I'm not afraid of your damned night−sticks," he taunted. "I got five hundred men on top this hill, all I've got to do is to say the word, and they'll rough−house this place and throw it into the cut−−and you with it."

Standish rose to his feet, and across the desk looked steadily at Aintree. To Aintree the steadiness of his eyes and the quietness of his voice were an added aggravation.

"Suppose you did," said Standish, "that would not save you."

"From what?" roared Aintree. "Think I'm afraid of your night− sticks?"

"From arrest!"

"Arrest me!" yelled Aintree. "Do you know who's talking to you? Do you know who I am? I'm Major Aintree, damn you, commanding the infantry. An' I'm here to charge that thug−−"

"You are here because you are under arrest," said Standish. "You are arrested for threatening the police, drunkenness, and assaulting a citizen with intent to kill−−" The voice of the young man turned shrill and rasping. "And if the man should die−−"

Aintree burst into a bellow of mocking laughter.

Standish struck the desk with his open palm.

"Silence!" he commanded.

"Silence to me!" roared Aintree, "you impertinent pup!" He flung himself forward, shaking his fist. "I'm Major Aintree. I'm your superior officer. I'm an officer an' a gentleman−−"

"You are not!" replied Standish. "You are a drunken loafer!"

Aintree could not break the silence. Amazement, rage, stupefaction held him in incredulous wonder. Even Meehan moved uneasily. Between the officer commanding the infantry and an officer of police, he feared the lieutenant would not survive.

But he heard the voice of his lieutenant continuing, evenly, coldly, like the voice of a judge delivering sentence.

"You are a drunken loafer," repeated the boy. "And you know it. And I mean that to−morrow morning every one on the Zone shall know it. And I mean to−morrow night every one in the States shall know it. You've killed a man, or tried to, and I'm going to break you." With his arm he pointed to Meehan. "Break that man?" he demanded. "For doing his duty, for trying to stop a murder? Strip him of his shield?" The boy laughed savagely. "It's you I am going to strip, Aintree," he cried, "you 'hero of Batangas'; I'm going to strip you naked. I'm going to 'cut the buttons off your coat, and tear the stripes away.' I'm going to degrade you and disgrace you, and drive you out of the army!" He threw his note−book on the table. "There's your dossier, Aintree," he said. "For three months you've been drunk, and there's your record. The police got it for me; it's written there with dates and the names of witnesses. I'll swear to it. I've been after you to get you, and I've got you. With that book, with what you did to−night, you'll leave the army. You may resign, you may be court−martialled, you may be hung. I don't give a damn what they do to you, but you will leave the army!"

He turned to Meehan, and with a jerk of the hand signified Aintree.

"Put him in a cell," he said. "If he resists−−"

Aintree gave no sign of resisting. He stood motionless, his arms hanging limp, his eyes protruding. The liquor had died in him, and his anger had turned chill. He tried to moisten his lips to speak, but his throat was baked, and no sound issued. He tried to focus his eyes upon the menacing little figure behind the desk, but between the two lamps it swayed, and shrank and swelled. Of one thing only was he sure, that some grave disaster had overtaken him, something that when he came fully to his senses still would overwhelm him, something he could not conquer with his fists. His brain, even befuddled as it was, told him he had been caught by the heels, that he was in a trap, that smashing this boy who threatened him could not set him free. He recognized, and it was this knowledge that stirred him with alarm, that this was no ordinary officer of justice, but a personal enemy, an avenging spirit who, for some unknown reason, had spread a trap; who, for some private purpose of revenge, would drag him down.

Frowning painfully, he waved Meehan from him.

"Wait," he commanded. "I don' unnerstan'. What good's it goin' to do you to lock me up an' disgrace me? What harm have I done you? Who asked you to run the army, anyway? Who are you?"

"My name is Standish," said the lieutenant. "My father was colonel of the Thirty−third when you first joined it from the Academy."

Aintree exclaimed with surprise and enlightenment. He broke into hurried speech, but Standish cut him short.

"And General Standish of the Mexican War," he continued, "was my grandfather. Since Washington all my people have been officers of the regular army, and I'd been one, too, if I'd been bright enough. That's why I respect the army. That's why I'm going to throw you out of it. You've done harm fifty men as good as you can't undo. You've made drunkards of a whole battalion. You've taught boys who looked up to you, as I looked up to you once, to laugh at discipline, to make swine of themselves. You've set them an example. I'm going to make an example of you. That's all there is to this. I've got no grudge against you. I'm not vindictive; I'm sorry for you. But," he paused and pointed his hand at Aintree as though it held a gun, "you are going to leave the army!"

Like a man coming out of an ugly dream, Aintree opened and shut his eyes, shivered, and stretched his great muscles. They watched him with an effort of the will force himself back to consciousness. When again he spoke, his tone was sane.

"See here, Standish," he began, "I'll not beg of you or any man. I only ask you to think what you're doing. This means my finish. If you force this through to−night it means court−martial, it means I lose my commission, I lose−−lose things you know nothing about. And, if I've got a record for drinking, I've got a record for other things, too. Don't forget that!"

Standish shook his head. "I didn't forget it," he said.

"Well, suppose I did," demanded Aintree. "Suppose I did go on the loose, just to pass the time, just because I'm sick of this damned ditch? Is it fair to wipe out all that went before, for that? I'm the youngest major in the army, I served in three campaigns, I'm a medal−of−honor man, I've got a career ahead of me, and−−and I'm going to be married. If you give me a chance−"

Standish struck the table with his fist.

"I will give you a chance," he cried. "If you'll give your word to this man and to me, that, so help you God, you'll never drink again−−I'll let you go."

If what Standish proposed had been something base, Aintree could not have accepted it with more contempt.

"I'll see you in hell first," he said.

As though the interview was at an end, Standish dropped into his chair and leaning forward, from the table picked up a cigar. As he lit it, he motioned Meehan toward his prisoner, but before the policeman could advance the sound of footsteps halted him.

Bullard, his eyes filled with concern, leaped up the steps, and ran to the desk.

"Lieutenant!" he stammered, "that man−−the nigger that officer shot−−he's dead!"

Aintree gave a gasp that was partly a groan, partly a cry of protest, and Bullard, as though for the first time aware of his presence, sprang back to the open door and placed himself between it and Aintree.

"It's murder!" he said.

None of the three men spoke; and when Meehan crossed to where Aintree stood, staring fearfully at nothing, he had only to touch his sleeve, and Aintree, still staring, fell into step beside him.

From the yard outside Standish heard the iron door of the cell swing shut, heard the key grate in the lock, and the footsteps of Meehan returning.

Meehan laid the key upon the desk, and with Bullard stood at attention, waiting.

"Give him time," whispered Standish. "Let it sink in!"

At the end of half an hour Standish heard Aintree calling, and, with Meehan carrying a lantern, stepped into the yard and stopped at the cell door.

Aintree was quite sober. His face was set and white, his voice was dull with suffering. He stood erect, clasping the bars in his hands.

"Standish," he said, "you gave me a chance a while ago, and I refused it. I was rough about it. I'm sorry. It made me hot because I thought you were forcing my hand, blackmailing me into doing something I ought to do as a free agent. Now, I am a free agent. You couldn't give me a chance now, you couldn't let me go now, not if I swore on a thousand Bibles. I don't know what they'll give me−−Leavenworth for life, or hanging, or just dismissal. But, you've got what you wanted−−I'm leaving the army!" Between the bars he stretched out his arms and held a hand toward Meehan and Standish. In the same dull, numbed voice he continued.

"So, now," he went on, "that I've nothing to gain by it, I want to swear to you and to this man here, that whether I hang, or go to jail, or am turned loose, I will never, so help me God, take another drink."

Standish was holding the hand of the man who once had been his hero. He clutched it tight.

"Aintree," he cried, "suppose I could work a miracle; suppose I've played a trick on you, to show you your danger, to show you what might come to you any day−−does that oath still stand?"

The hand that held his ground the bones together.

"I've given my word!" cried Aintree. "For the love of God, don't torture me. Is the man alive?"

As Standish swung open the cell door, the hero of Batangas, he who could thrash any man on the isthmus, crumpled up like a child upon his shoulder.

And Meehan, as he ran for water, shouted joyfully.

"That nigger," he called to Bullard, "can go home now. The lieutenant don't want him no more. "

EVIL TO HIM WHO EVIL THINKS

As a rule, the instant the season closed Aline Proctor sailed on the first steamer for London, where awaited her many friends, both English and American−−and to Paris, where she selected those gowns that on and off the stage helped to make her famous. But this particular summer she had spent with the Endicotts at Bar Harbor, and it was at their house Herbert Nelson met her. After Herbert met her very few other men enjoyed that privilege. This was her wish as well as his.

They behaved disgracefully. Every morning after breakfast they disappeared and spent the day at opposite ends of a canoe. She, knowing nothing of a canoe, was happy in stabbing the waters with her paddle while he told her how he loved her and at the same time, with anxious eyes on his own paddle, skilfully frustrated her efforts to drown them both. While the affair lasted it was ideal and beautiful, but unfortunately it lasted only two months.

Then Lord Albany, temporarily in America as honorary attache to the British embassy, his adoring glances, his accent, and the way he brushed his hair, proved too much for the susceptible heart of Aline, and she chucked Herbert and asked herself how a woman of her age could have seriously considered marrying a youth just out of Harvard! At that time she was a woman of nineteen; but, as she had been before the public ever since she was eleven, the women declared she was not a day under twenty−six; and the men knew she could not possibly be over sixteen!

Aline's own idea of herself was that without some one in love with her she could not exist−−that, unless she knew some man cared for her and for her alone, she would wither and die. As a matter of fact, whether any one loved her or not did not in the least interest her. There were several dozen men who could testify to that. They knew! What she really wanted was to be head over ears in love−−to adore some one, to worship him, to imagine herself starving for him and making sacrifice hits for him; but when the moment came to make the sacrifice hit and marry the man, she invariably found that a greater, truer love had arisen−−for some one else.

This greater and truer love always made her behave abominably to the youth she had just jilted. She wasted no time on post−mortems. She was so eager to show her absolute loyalty to the new monarch that she grudged every thought she ever had given the one she had cast into exile. She resented him bitterly. She could not forgive him for having allowed her to be desperately in love with him. He should have known he was not worthy of such a love as hers. He should have known that the real prince was waiting only just round the corner.

As a rule the rejected ones behaved well. Each decided Aline was much too wonderful a creature for him, and continued to love her cautiously and from a distance. None of them ever spoke or thought ill of her and would gladly have punched any one who did. It was only the women whose young men Aline had temporarily confiscated, and then returned saddened and chastened, who were spiteful. And they dared say no more than that Aline would probably have known her mind better if she had had a mother to look after her. This, coming to the ears of Aline, caused her to reply that a girl who could not keep straight herself, but needed a mother to help her, would not keep straight had she a dozen mothers. As she put it cheerfully, a girl who goes wrong and then pleads "no mother to guide her" is like a jockey who pulls a race and then blames the horse.

Each of the young men Aline rejected married some one else and, except when the name of Aline Proctor in the theatrical advertisements or in electric lights on Broadway gave him a start, forgot that for a month her name and his own had been linked together from Portland to San Francisco. But the girl he married did not forget. She never understood what the public saw in Aline Proctor. That Aline was the queen of musical comedy she attributed to the fact that Aline knew the right people and got herself written about in the right way. But that she could sing, dance, act; that she possessed compelling charm; that she "got across" not only to the tired business man, the wine agent, the college boy, but also to the children and the old ladies, was to her never apparent.

Just as Aline could not forgive the rejected suitor for allowing her to love him, so the girl he married never forgave Aline for having loved her husband. Least of all could Sally Winthrop, who two years after the summer at Bar Harbor married Herbert Nelson, forgive her. And she let Herbert know it. Herbert was properly in love with Sally Winthrop, but he liked to think that his engagement to Aline, though brief and abruptly terminated, had proved him to be a man fatally attractive to all women. And though he was hypnotizing himself into believing that his feeling for Aline had been the grand passion, the truth was that all that kept her in his thoughts was his own vanity. He was not discontented with his lot−−his lot being Sally Winthrop, her millions, and her estate of three hundred acres near Westbury. Nor was he still longing for Aline. It was only that his vanity was flattered by the recollection that one of the young women most beloved by the public had once loved him.

"I once was a king in Babylon," he used to misquote to himself, "and she was a Christian slave."

He was as young as that.

Had he been content in secret to assure himself that he once had been a reigning monarch, his vanity would have harmed no one; but, unfortunately, he possessed certain documentary evidence to that fact. And he was sufficiently foolish not to wish to destroy it. The evidence consisted of a dozen photographs he had snapped of Aline during the happy days at Bar Harbor, and on which she had written phrases somewhat exuberant and sentimental.

From these photographs Nelson was loath to part−−especially with one that showed Aline seated on a rock that ran into the waters of the harbor, and on which she had written: "As long as this rock lasts!" Each time she was in love Aline believed it would last. That in the past it never had lasted did not discourage her.

What to do with these photographs that so vividly recalled the most tumultuous period of his life Nelson could not decide. If he hid them away and Sally found them, he knew she would make his life miserable. If he died and Sally then found them, when he no longer was able to explain that they meant nothing to him, she would believe he always had loved the other woman, and it would make her miserable. He felt he could not safely keep them in his own house; his vanity did not permit him to burn them, and, accordingly, he decided to unload them on some one else.

The young man to whom he confided his collection was Charles Cochran. Cochran was a charming person from the West. He had studied in the Beaux Arts and on foot had travelled over England and Europe, preparing himself to try his fortune in New York as an architect. He was now in the office of the architects Post & Constant, and lived alone in a tiny farmhouse he had made over for himself near Herbert Nelson, at Westbury, Long Island.

Post &Constant were a fashionable firm and were responsible for many of the French chateaux and English country houses that were rising near Westbury, Hempstead, and Roslyn; and it was Cochran's duty to drive over that territory in his runabout, keep an eye on the contractors, and dissuade clients from grafting mansard roofs on Italian villas. He had built the summer home of the Herbert Nelsons, and Herbert and Charles were very warm friends. Charles was of the same lack of years as was Herbert, of an enthusiastic and sentimental nature; and, like many other young men, the story of his life also was the lovely and much−desired Aline Proctor. It was this coincidence that had made them friends and that had led Herbert to select Charles as the custodian of his treasure. As a custodian and confidant Charles especially appealed to his new friend, because, except upon the stage and in restaurants, Charles had never seen Aline Proctor, did not know her−−and considered her so far above him, so unattainable, that he had no wish to seek her out. Unknown, he preferred to worship at a distance. In this determination Herbert strongly encouraged him.

When he turned over the pictures to Charles, Herbert could not resist showing them to him. They were in many ways charming. They presented the queen of musical comedy in several new roles. In one she was in a sailor suit, giving an imitation of a girl paddling a canoe. In another she was in a riding−habit mounted upon a pony of which she seemed very much afraid.

In some she sat like a siren among the rocks with the waves and seaweed snatching at her feet, and in another she crouched beneath the wheel of Herbert's touring car. All of the photographs were unprofessional and intimate, and the legends scrawled across them were even more intimate.

"'As long as this rock lasts!'" read Herbert. At arm's length he held the picture for Cochran to see, and laughed bitterly and unmirthfully as he had heard leading men laugh in problem plays.

"That is what she wrote," he mocked−−"but how long did it last? Until she saw that little red−headed Albany playing polo. That lasted until his mother heard of it. She thought her precious lamb was in the clutches of a designing actress, and made the Foreign Office cable him home. Then Aline took up one of those army aviators, and chucked him for that fellow who painted her portrait, and threw him over for the lawn−tennis champion. Now she's engaged to Chester Griswold, and Heaven pity her! Of course he's the greatest catch in America; but he's a prig and a snob, and he's so generous with his money that he'll give you five pennies for a nickel any time you ask him. He's got a heart like the metre of a taxicab, and he's jealous as a cat. Aline will have a fine time with Chester! I knew him at St. Paul's and at Harvard, and he's got as much red blood in him as an eel!"

Cochran sprang to the defense of the lady of his dreams.

"There must be some good in the man," he protested, "or Miss Proctor−"

"Oh, those solemn snobs," declared Herbert, "impress women by just keeping still. Griswold pretends the reason he doesn't speak to you is because he's too superior, but the real reason is that he knows whenever he opens his mouth he shows he is an ass."

Reluctantly Herbert turned over to Charles the precious pictures. "It would be a sin to destroy them, wouldn't it?" he prompted.

Cochran agreed heartily.

"You might even," suggested Herbert, "leave one or two of them about. You have so many of Aline already that one more wouldn't be noticed. Then when I drop in I could see it." He smiled ingratiatingly.

"But those I have I bought," Cochran pointed out. "Anybody can buy them, but yours are personal. And they're signed."

"No one will notice that but me," protested Herbert. "Just one or two," he coaxed−"stuck round among the others. They'd give me a heap of melancholy pleasure."

Charles shook his head doubtfully.

"Your wife often comes here with you," he said. "I don't believe they'd give her melancholy pleasure. The question is, are you married to Sally or to Aline Proctor?"

"Oh, of course," exclaimed Herbert−−" if you refuse!"

With suspicious haste Charles surrendered.

"I don't refuse," he explained; "I only ask if it's wise. Sally knows you were once very fond of Miss Proctor−−knows you were engaged to her."

"But," protested Herbert, "Sally sees your photographs of Aline. What difference can a few more make? After she's seen a dozen she gets used to them."

No sooner had Herbert left him than the custodian of the treasure himself selected the photographs he would display. In them the young woman he had−−from the front row of the orchestra−−so ardently admired appeared in a new light. To Cochran they seemed at once to render her more kindly, more approachable; to show her as she really was, the sort of girl any youth would find it extremely difficult not to love. Cochran found it extremely easy. The photographs gave his imagination all the room it wanted. He believed they also gave him an insight into

her real character that was denied to anybody else. He had always credited her with all the virtues; he now endowed her with every charm of mind and body. In a week to the two photographs he had selected from the loan collection for purposes of display and to give Herbert melancholy pleasure he had added three more. In two weeks there were half a dozen. In a month, nobly framed in silver, in leather of red, green, and blue, the entire collection smiled upon him from every part of his bedroom. For he now kept them where no one but himself could see them. No longer was he of a mind to share his borrowed treasure with others−−not even with the rightful owner.

Chester Griswold, spurred on by Aline Proctor, who wanted to build a summer home on Long Island, was motoring with Post, of Post &Constant, in the neighborhood of Westbury. Post had pointed out several houses designed by his firm, which he hoped might assist Griswold in making up his mind as to the kind of house he wanted; but none they had seen had satisfied his client.

"What I want is a cheap house," explained the young millionaire. "I don't really want a house at all," he complained. "It's Miss Proctor's idea. When we are married I intend to move into my mother's town house, but Miss Proctor wants one for herself in the country. I've agreed to that; but it must be small and it must be cheap."

"Cheap" was a word that the clients of Post &Constant never used; but Post knew the weaknesses of some of the truly rich, and he knew also that no house ever built cost only what the architect said it would cost.

"I know the very house you want!" he exclaimed. "One of our young men owns it. He made it over from an old farmhouse. It's very well arranged; we've used his ground−plan several times and it works out splendidly. If he's not at home, I'11 show you over the place myself. And if you like the house he's the man to build you one."

When they reached Cochran's home he was at Garden City playing golf, but the servant knew Mr. Post, and to him and his client threw open every room in the house.

"Now, this," exclaimed the architect enthusiastically, "is the master's bedroom. In your case it would probably be your wife's room and you would occupy the one adjoining, which Cochran now uses as a guest−room. As you see, they are entirely cut off from−"

Mr. Griswold did not see. Up to that moment he had given every appearance of being both bored and sulky. Now his attention was entirely engaged−−but not upon the admirable simplicity of Mr. Cochran's ground−plan, as Mr. Post had hoped. Instead, the eyes of the greatest catch in America were intently regarding a display of photographs that smiled back at him from every corner of the room. Not only did he regard these photographs with a savage glare, but he approached them and carefully studied the inscriptions scrawled across the face of each.

Post himself cast a glance at the nearest photographs, and then hastily manoeuvred his client into the hall and closed the door.

"We will now," he exclaimed, "visit the butler's pantry, which opens upon the dining−room and kitchen, thus saving−−"

But Griswold did not hear him. Without giving another glance at the house he stamped out of it and, plumping himself down in the motor−car, banged the door. Not until Post had driven him well into New York did he make any comment.

"What did you say," he then demanded, "is the name of the man who owns that last house we saw?"

Post told him.

"I never heard of him!" said Griswold as though he were delivering young Cochran's death sentence. "Who is he?"

"He's an architect in our office," said Post. "We think a lot of him. He'll leave us soon, of course. The best ones always do. His work is very popular. So is he."

"I never heard of him," repeated Griswold. Then, with sudden heat, he added savagely: "But I mean to to−night."

When Griswold had first persuaded Aline Proctor to engage herself to him he had suggested that, to avoid embarrassment, she should tell him the names of the other men to whom she had been engaged.

"What kind of embarrassment would that avoid?"

"If I am talking to a man," said Griswold, "and he knows the woman I'm going to marry was engaged to him and I don't know that, he has me at a disadvantage."

"I don't see that he has," said Aline. "If we suppose, for the sake of argument, that to marry me is desirable, I would say that the man who was going to marry me had the advantage over the one I had declined to marry."

"I want to know who those men are," explained Griswold, "because I want to avoid them. I don't want to talk to them. I don't want even to know them."

"I don't see how I can help you," said Aline. "I haven't the slightest objection to telling you the names of the men I have cared for, if I can remember them, but I certainly do not intend to tell you the name of any man who cared for me enough to ask me to marry him. That's his secret, not mine−−certainly not yours."

Griswold thought he was very proud. He really was very vain; and as jealousy is only vanity in its nastiest development he was extremely jealous. So he persisted.

"Will you do this?" he demanded. "If I ever ask you, 'Is that one of the men you cared for?' will you tell me?"

"If you wish it," said Aline; "but I can't see any health in it. It will only make you uncomfortable. So long as you know I have given you the greatest and truest love I am capable of, why should you concern yourself with my mistakes?"

"So that I can avoid meeting what you call your mistakes," said Griswold−−" and being friendly with them."

"I assure you," laughed Aline, "it wouldn't hurt you a bit to be as friendly with them as they'd let you. Maybe they weren't as proud of their families as you are, but they made up for that by being a darned sight prouder of me!"

Later, undismayed by this and unashamed, on two occasions Griswold actually did demand of Aline if a genial youth she had just greeted joyfully was one of those for whom she once had cared.

And Aline had replied promptly and truthfully that he was. But in the case of Charles Cochran, Griswold did not ask Aline if he was one of those for whom she once had cared. He considered the affair with Cochran so serious that, in regard to that man, he adopted a different course.

In digging rivals out of the past his jealousy had made him indefatigable, but in all his researches he never had heard the name of Charles Cochran. That fact and the added circumstance that Aline herself never had mentioned the man was in his eyes so suspicious as to be almost a damning evidence of deception. And he argued that if in the past Aline had deceived him as to Charles Cochran she would continue to do so. Accordingly, instead of

asking her frankly for the truth he proceeded to lay traps for it. And if there is one thing Truth cannot abide, it is being hunted by traps.

That evening Aline and he were invited to a supper in her honor, and as he drove her from the theatre to the home of their hostess he told her of his search earlier in the day.

The electric light in the limousine showed Aline's face as clearly as though it were held in a spotlight, and as he prepared his trap Griswold regarded her jealously.

"Post tells me," he said, "he has the very man you want for your architect. He's sure you'll find him most understanding and−−and− − sympathetic. He's a young man who is just coming to the front, and he's very popular, especially with women."

"What's his being popular with women," asked Aline, "got to do with his carrying out my ideas of a house?"

"That's just it," said Griswold−−"it's the woman who generally has the most to say as to how her house shall be built, and this man understands woman. I have reasons for believing he will certainly understand you!"

"If he understands me well enough to give me all the linen−closets I want," said Aline, "he will be perfectly satisfactory."

Before delivering his blow Griswold sank back into his corner of the car, drew his hat brim over his forehead, and fixed spying eyes upon the very lovely face of the girl he had asked to marry him.

"His name," he said in fateful tones, "is Charles Cochran!"

It was supposed to be a body blow; but, to his distress, Aline neither started nor turned pale. Neither, for trying to trick her, did she turn upon him in reproof and anger. Instead, with alert eyes, she continued to peer out of the window at the electric−light advertisements and her beloved Broadway.

"Well?" demanded Griswold; his tone was hoarse and heavy with meaning.

"Well what?" asked Aline pleasantly.

"How," demanded Griswold, "do you like Charles Cochran for an architect?"

"How should I know?" asked Aline. "I've not met him yet!"

She had said it! And she had said it without the waver of one of her lovely eyelashes. No wonder the public already hailed her as a finished actress! Griswold felt that his worst fears were justified. She had lied to him. And, as he knew she had never before lied to him, that now she did so proved beyond hope of doubt that the reason for it was vital, imperative, and compelling. But of his suspicions Griswold gave no sign. He would not at once expose her. He had trapped her, but as yet she must not know that. He would wait until he had still further entangled her−−until she could not escape; and then, with complete proof of her deceit, he would confront and overwhelm her.

With this amiable purpose in mind he called early the next morning upon Post &Constant and asked to see Mr. Cochran. He wished, he said, to consult him about the new house. Post had not yet reached the office, and of Griswold's visit with Post to his house Cochran was still ignorant. He received Griswold most courteously. He felt that the man who was loved by the girl he also had long and hopelessly worshipped was deserving of the highest consideration. Griswold was less magnanimous. When he found his rival−−for as such he beheld him−−was of

charming manners and gallant appearance he considered that fact an additional injury; but he concealed his resentment, for he was going to trap Cochran, too.

He found the architect at work leaning over a drawing−board, and as they talked Cochran continued to stand. He was in his shirt−sleeves, which were rolled to his shoulders; and the breadth of those shoulders and the muscles of his sunburned arms were much in evidence. Griswold considered it a vulgar exhibition.

For over ten minutes they talked solely of the proposed house, but not once did Griswold expose the fact that he had seen any more of it than any one might see from the public road. When he rose to take his leave he said:

"How would it do if I motored out Sunday and showed your house to Miss Proctor? Sunday is the only day she has off, and if it would not inconvenience you−−"

The tender heart of Cochran leaped in wild tumult; he could not conceal his delight, nor did he attempt to do so; and his expression made it entirely unnecessary for him to assure Griswold that such a visit would be entirely welcome and that they might count on finding him at home. As though it were an afterthought, Griswold halted at the door and said:

"I believe you are already acquainted with Miss Proctor."

Cochran, conscious of five years of devotion, found that he was blushing, and longed to strangle himself. Nor was the blush lost upon Griswold.

"I'm sorry," said Cochran, "but I've not had that honor. On the stage, of course−−"

He shrugged the broad shoulders deprecatingly, as though to suggest that not to know Miss Proctor as an artist argues oneself unknown.

Griswold pretended to be puzzled. As though endeavoring to recall a past conversation he frowned.

"But Aline," he said, "told me she had met you−met you at Bar Harbor." In the fatal photographs the familiar landfalls of Bar Harbor had been easily recognized.

The young architect shook his head.

"It must be another Cochran," he suggested. "I have never been in Bar Harbor."

With the evidence of the photographs before him this last statement was a verdict of guilty, and Griswold, not with the idea of giving Cochran a last chance to be honest, but to cause him to dig the pit still deeper, continued to lead him on. "Maybe she meant York Harbor?"

Again Cochran shook his head and laughed.

"Believe me," he said, "if I'd ever met Miss Proctor anywhere I wouldn't forget it!"

Ten minutes later Griswold was talking to Aline over the telephone. He intended to force matters. He would show Aline she could neither trifle with nor deceive Chester Griswold; but the thought that he had been deceived was not what most hurt him. What hurt him was to think that Aline had preferred a man who looked like an advertisement for ready−made clothes and who worked in his shirt−sleeves.

Griswold took it for granted that any woman would be glad to marry him. So many had been willing to do so that he was convinced, when one of them was not, it was not because there was anything wrong with him, but because the girl herself lacked taste and perception.

That the others had been in any degree moved by his many millions had never suggested itself. He was convinced each had loved him for himself alone; and if Aline, after meeting him, would still consider any one else, it was evident something was very wrong with Aline. He was determined that she must be chastened−−must be brought to a proper appreciation of her good fortune and of his condescension.

On being called to the telephone at ten in the morning, Aline demanded to know what could excuse Griswold for rousing her in the middle of the night!

Griswold replied that, though the day was young, it also was charming; that on Sunday there might be rain; and that if she desired to see the house he and Post thought would most suit her, he and his car would be delighted to convey her to it. They could make the run in an hour, lunch with friends at Westbury, and return in plenty of time for the theatre. Aline was delighted at the sudden interest Griswold was showing in the new house. Without a moment's hesitation she walked into the trap. She would go, she declared, with pleasure. In an hour he should call for her.

Exactly an hour later Post arrived at his office. He went directly to Cochran.

"Charles," he said, "I'm afraid I got you into trouble yesterday. I took a client to see your house. You have often let us do it before; but since I was there last you've made some changes. In your bedroom−−" Post stopped.

Cochran's naive habit of blushing told him it was not necessary to proceed. In tones of rage and mortification Cochran swore explosively; Post was relieved to find he was swearing at himself.

"I ought to be horsewhipped!" roared Cochran. "I'll never forgive myself! Who," he demanded, "saw the pictures? Was it a man or a woman?"

Post laughed unhappily.

"It was Chester Griswold."

A remarkable change came over Cochran. Instead of sobering him, as Post supposed it would, the information made him even more angry−−only now his anger was transferred from himself to Griswold.

"The blankety−blank bounder!" yelled Cochran. "That was what he wanted! That's why he came here!"

"Here!" demanded Post.

"Not an hour ago," cried Cochran. "He asked me about Bar Harbor. He saw those pictures were taken at Bar Harbor!"

"I think," said Post soothingly, "he'd a right to ask questions. There were so many pictures, and they were very−−well−−very!"

"I'd have answered his questions," roared Cochran, "if he'd asked them like a man, but he came snooping down here to spy on me. He tried to trick me. He insulted me! He insulted her!" He emitted a howl of dismay. "And I told him I'd never been to Bar Harbor−− that I'd never met Aline Proctor!"

Cochran seized his coat and hat. He shouted to one of the office boys to telephone the garage for his car.

"What are you−−where are you going?" demanded Post.

"I'm going home first," cried Cochran, "to put those pictures in a safe, as I should have done three months ago. And then I'm going to find Chester Griswold and tell him he's an ass and a puppy!"

"If you do that," protested Post, "you're likely to lose us a very valuable client."

"And your client," roared Charles, "is likely to lose some very valuable teeth!"

As Charles whirled into the country road in which stood his house he saw drawn up in front of it the long gray car in which, that morning, Chester Griswold had called at the office. Cochran emitted a howl of anger. Was his home again to be invaded? And again while he was absent? To what extreme would Griswold's jealousy next lead him? He fell out of his own car while it still moved, and leaped up the garden walk. The front rooms of the house were empty, but from his bedroom he heard, raised in excited tones, the voice of Griswold. The audacity of the man was so surprising, and his own delight at catching him red−handed so satisfying, that no longer was Cochran angry. The Lord had delivered his enemy into his hands! And, as he advanced toward his bedroom, not only was he calm, but, at the thought of his revenge, distinctly jubilant. In the passageway a frightened maid servant, who, at his unexpected arrival, was now even more frightened, endeavored to give him an explanation; but he waved her into silence, and, striding before her, entered his bedroom.

He found confronting him a tall and beautiful young woman. It was not the Aline Proctor he knew. It was not the well−poised, gracious, and distinguished beauty he had seen gliding among the tables at Sherry's or throwing smiles over the footlights. This Aline Proctor was a very indignant young person, with flashing eyes, tossing head, and a stamping foot. Extended from her at arm's length, she held a photograph of herself in a heavy silver frame; and, as though it were a weapon, she was brandishing it in the face of Chester Griswold. As Cochran, in amazement, halted in the doorway she was exclaiming:

"I told you I didn't know Charles Cochran! I tell you so now! If you can't believe me−"

Out of the corner of her flashing eyes the angry lady caught sight of Cochran in the doorway. She turned upon the intruder as though she meant forcibly to eject him.

"Who are you?" she demanded. Her manner and tone seemed to add: "And what the deuce are you doing here?"

Charles answered her tone.

"I am Charles Cochran," he said. "I live here. This is my house!"

These words had no other effect upon Miss Proctor than to switch her indignation down another track. She now turned upon Charles.

"Then, if this is your house," cried that angry young person, "why have you filled it with photographs of me that belong to some one else?"

Charles saw that his hour had come. His sin had found him out. He felt that to prevaricate would be only stupid.

Griswold had tried devious methods−−and look where his devious methods had dumped him! Griswold certainly was in wrong. Charles quickly determined to adopt a course directly opposite. Griswold had shown an utter lack of confidence in Aline. Charles decided that he would give her his entire confidence, would throw himself upon

the mercy of the court.

"I have those photographs in my house, Miss Proctor," he said, "because I have admired you a long time. They were more like you than those I could buy. Having them here has helped me a lot, and it hasn't done you any harm. You know very well you have anonymous admirers all over this country. I'm only one of them. If I have offended, I have offended with many, many thousands."

Already it has been related that Cochran was very good to look upon. At the present moment, as he spoke in respectful, even soulful accents, meekly and penitently proclaiming his long−concealed admiration, Miss Proctor found her indignation melting like an icicle in the sun.

Still, she did not hold herself cheaply. She was accustomed to such open flattery. She would not at once capitulate.

"But these pictures," she protested, "I gave to a man I knew. You have no right to them. They are not at all the sort of picture I would give to an utter stranger!" With anxiety the lovely lady paused for a reply. She hoped that the reply the tall young man with appealing eyes would make would be such as to make it possible for her to forgive him.

He was not given time to reply. With a mocking snort Griswold interrupted. Aline and Charles had entirely forgotten him.

"An utter stranger!" mimicked Griswold. "Oh, yes; he's an utter stranger! You're pretty good actors, both of you; but you can't keep that up long, and you'd better stop it now."

"Stop what?" asked Miss Proctor. Her tone was cold and calm, but in her eyes was a strange light. It should have warned Griswold that he would have been safer under the bed.

"Stop pretending!" cried Griswold. "I won't have it!"

"I don't understand," said Miss Proctor. She spoke in the same cold voice, only now it had dropped several degrees nearer freezing. "I don't think you understand yourself. You won't have what?"

Griswold now was frightened, and that made him reckless. Instead of withdrawing he plunged deeper.

"I won't have you two pretending you don't know each other," he blustered. "I won't stand being fooled! If you're going to deceive me before we're married, what will you do after we're married?"

Charles emitted a howl. It was made up of disgust, amazement, and rage. Fiercely he turned upon Miss Proctor.

"Let me have him!" he begged.

"No!" almost shouted Miss Proctor. Her tone was no longer cold−−it was volcanic. Her eyes, flashing beautifully, were fixed upon Griswold. She made a gesture as though to sweep Charles out of the room. "Please go!" she demanded. "This does not concern you."

Her tone was one not lightly to be disregarded. Charles disregarded it.

"It does concern me," he said briskly. "Nobody can insult a woman in my house−−you, least of all!" He turned upon the greatest catch in America. "Griswold," he said, "I never met this lady until I came into this room; but I know her, understand her, value her better than you'd understand her if you knew her a thousand years!"

Griswold allowed him to go no farther.

"I know this much," he roared: "she was in love with the man who took those photographs, and that man was in love with her! And you're that man!"

"What if I am!" roared back Charles. "Men always have loved her; men always will−−because she's a fine, big, wonderful woman! You can't see that, and you never will. You insulted her! Now I'll give you time to apologize for that, and then I'll order you out of this house! And if Miss Proctor is the sort of girl I think she is, she'll order you out of it, too!"

Both men swung toward Miss Proctor. Her eyes were now smiling excitedly. She first turned them upon Charles, blushing most becomingly.

"Miss Proctor," she said, "hopes she is the sort of girl Mr. Cochran thinks she is." She then turned upon the greatest catch in America. "You needn't wait, Chester," she said, "not even to apologize."

Chester Griswold, alone in his car, was driven back to New York. On the way he invented a story to explain why, at the eleventh hour, he had jilted Aline Proctor; but when his thoughts reverted to the young man he had seen working with his sleeves rolled up he decided it would be safer to let Miss Proctor tell of the broken engagement in her own way.

Charles would not consent to drive his fair guest back to New York until she had first honored him with her presence at luncheon. It was served for two, on his veranda, under the climbing honeysuckles. During the luncheon he told her all.

Miss Proctor, in the light of his five years of devotion, magnanimously forgave him.

"Such a pretty house!" she exclaimed as they drove away from it. "When Griswold selected it for our honeymoon he showed his first appreciation of what I really like."

"It is still at your service!" said Charles.

Miss Proctor's eyes smiled with a strange light, but she did not speak. It was a happy ride; but when Charles left her at the door of her apartment−house he regarded sadly and with regret the bundle of retrieved photographs that she carried away.

"What is it?" she asked kindly.

"I'm thinking of going back to those empty frames," said Charles, and blushed deeply. Miss Proctor blushed also. With delighted and guilty eyes she hastily scanned the photographs. Snatching one from the collection, she gave it to him and then ran up the steps.

In the light of the spring sunset the eyes of Charles devoured the photograph of which, at last, he was the rightful owner. On it was written: "As long as this rock lasts!"

As Charles walked to his car his expression was distinctly thoughtful.

THE MEN OF ZANZIBAR

When his hunting trip in Uganda was over, Hemingway shipped his specimens and weapons direct from Mombasa to New York, but he himself journeyed south over the few miles that stretched to Zanzibar.

On the outward trip the steamer had touched there, and the little he saw of the place had so charmed him that all the time he was on safari he promised himself he would not return home without revisiting it. On the morning he arrived he had called upon Harris, his consul, to inquire about the hotel; and that evening Harris had returned his call and introduced him at the club.

One of the men there asked Hemingway what brought him to Africa, and when he answered simply and truthfully that he had come to shoot big game, it was as though he had said something clever, and every one smiled. On the way back to the hotel, as they felt their way through the narrow slits in the wall that served as streets, he asked the consul why every one had smiled.

The consul laughed evasively.

"It's a local joke," he explained. "A lot of men come here for reasons best kept to themselves, and they all say what you said, that they've come to shoot big game. It's grown to be a polite way of telling a man it is none of his business."

"But I didn't mean it that way," protested Hemingway. "I really have been after big game for the last eight months."

In the tone one uses to quiet a drunken man or a child, the consul answered soothingly.

"Of course," he assented−− "of course you have." But to show he was not hopelessly credulous, and to keep Hemingway from involving himself deeper, he hinted tactfully: "Maybe they noticed you came ashore with only one steamer trunk and no gun−cases."

"Oh, that's easily explained," laughed Hemingway. "My heavy luggage−−"

The consul had reached his house and his "boy" was pounding upon it with his heavy staff.

"Please don't explain to me," he begged. "It's quite unnecessary. Down here we're so darned glad to see any white man that we don't ask anything of him except that he won't hurry away. We judge them as they behave themselves here; we don't care what they are at home or why they left it."

Hemingway was highly amused. To find that he, a respectable, sport−loving Hemingway of Massachusetts, should be mistaken for a gun−runner, slave−dealer, or escaping cashier greatly delighted him.

"All right!" he exclaimed. "I'll promise not to bore you with my past, and I agree to be judged by Zanzibar standards. I only hope I can live up to them, for I see I am going to like the place very much."

Hemingway kept his promise. He bored no one with confidences as to his ancestors. Of his past he made a point never to speak. He preferred that the little community into which he had dropped should remain unenlightened, should take him as they found him. Of the fact that a college was named after his grandfather and that on his father's railroad he could travel through many States, he was discreetly silent.

The men of Zanzibar asked no questions. That Hemingway could play a stiff game of tennis, a stiffer game of poker, and, on the piano, songs from home was to them sufficient recommendation. In a week he had become one of the most popular members of Zanzibar society. It was as though he had lived there always. Hemingway found himself reaching out to grasp the warmth of the place as a flower turns to the sun. He discovered that for thirty years something in him had been cheated. For thirty years he had believed that completely to satisfy his soul all he needed was the gray stone walls and the gray−shingled cabins under the gray skies of New England, that what in nature he most loved was the pine forests and the fields of goldenrod on the rock−bound coast of the North Shore.

But now, like a man escaped from prison, he leaped and danced in the glaring sunlight of the equator, he revelled in the reckless generosity of nature, in the glorious confusion of colors, in the "blooming blue" of the Indian Ocean, in the Arabian nights spent upon the housetops under the purple sky, and beneath silver stars so near that he could touch them with his hand.

He found it like being perpetually in a comic opera and playing a part in one. For only the scenic artist would dare to paint houses in such yellow, pink, and cobalt−blue; only a "producer" who had never ventured farther from Broadway than the Atlantic City boardwalk would have conceived costumes so mad and so magnificent. Instinctively he cast the people of Zanzibar in the conventional roles of musical comedy.

His choruses were already in waiting. There was the Sultan's body−guard in gold−laced turbans, the merchants of the bazaars in red fezzes and gowns of flowing silk, the Malay sailors in blue, the black native police in scarlet, the ladies of the harems closely veiled and cloaked, the market women in a single garment of orange, or scarlet, or purple, or of all three, and the happy, hilarious Zanzibari boys in the color God gave them.

For hours he would sit under the yellow−and−green awning of the Greek hotel and watch the procession pass, or he would lie under an umbrella on the beach and laugh as the boatmen lifted their passengers to their shoulders and with them splash through the breakers, or in the bazaars for hours he would bargain with the Indian merchants, or in the great mahogany hall of the Ivory House, to the whisper of a punka and the tinkle of ice in a tall glass, listen to tales of Arab raids, of elephant poachers, of the trade in white and black ivory, of the great explorers who had sat in that same room−−of Emin Pasha, of Livingstone, of Stanley. His comic opera lacked only a heroine and the love interest.

When he met Mrs. Adair he found both. Polly Adair, as every one who dared to do so preferred to call her, was, like himself, an American and, though absurdly young, a widow. In the States she would have been called an extremely pretty girl. In a community where the few dozen white women had wilted and faded in the fierce sun of the equator, and where the rest of the women were jet black except their teeth, which were dyed an alluring purple, Polly Adair was as beautiful as a June morning. At least, so Hemingway thought the first time he saw her, and each succeeding time he thought her more beautiful, more lovely, more to be loved.

He met her, three days after his arrival, at the residence of the British agent and consul−general, where Lady Firth was giving tea to the six nurses from the English hospital and to all the other respectable members of Zanzibar society.

"My husband's typist," said her ladyship as she helped Hemingway to tea, "is a copatriot of yours. She's such a nice gell; not a bit like an American. I don't know what I'd do in this awful place without her. Promise me," she begged tragically, "you will not ask her to marry you."

Unconscious of his fate, Hemingway promised.

"Because all the men do," sighed Lady Firth, "and I never know what morning one of the wretches won't carry her off to a home of her own. And then what would become of me? Men are so selfish! If you must fall in love," suggested her ladyship, "promise me you will fall in love with"−−she paused innocently and raised baby−blue eyes, in a baby−like stare−−"with some one else."

Again Hemingway promised. He bowed gallantly. "That will be quite easy," he said.

Her ladyship smiled, but Hemingway did not see the smile. He was looking past her at a girl from home, who came across the terrace carrying in her hand a stenographer's note−book.

Lady Firth followed the direction of his eyes and saw the look in them. She exclaimed with dismay:

"Already! Already he deserts me, even before the ink is dry on the paper."

She drew the note−book from Mrs. Adair's fingers and dropped it under the tea−table.

"Letters must wait, my child," she declared.

"But Sir George−−" protested the girl.

"Sir George must wait, too," continued his wife; "the Foreign Office must wait, the British Empire must wait until you have had your tea."

The girl laughed helplessly. As though assured her fellow countryman would comprehend, she turned to him.

"They're so exactly like what you want them to be," she said−−"I mean about their tea!"

Hemingway smiled back with such intimate understanding that Lady Firth glanced up inquiringly.

"Have you met Mrs. Adair already?" she asked.

"No," said Hemingway, "but I have been trying to meet her for thirty years."

Perplexed, the Englishwoman frowned, and then, with delight at her own perspicuity, laughed aloud.

"I know," she cried, "in your country you are what they call a 'hustler'! Is that right?" She waved them away. "Take Mrs. Adair over there," she commanded, "and tell her all the news from home. Tell her about the railroad accidents and 'washouts' and the latest thing in lynching."

The young people stretched out in long wicker chairs in the shade of a tree covered with purple flowers. On a perch at one side of them an orang−outang in a steel belt was combing the whiskers of her infant daughter; at their feet what looked like two chow puppies, but which happened to be Lady Firth's pet lions, were chewing each other's toothless gums; and in the immediate foreground the hospital nurses were defying the sun at tennis while the Sultan's band played selections from a Gaiety success of many years in the past. With these surroundings it was difficult to talk of home. Nor on any later occasions, except through inadvertence, did they talk of home.

For the reasons already stated, it amused Hemingway to volunteer no confidences. On account of what that same evening Harris told him of Mrs. Adair, he asked none.

Harris himself was a young man in no way inclined to withhold confidences. He enjoyed giving out information. He enjoyed talking about himself, his duties, the other consuls, the Zanzibaris, and his native State of Iowa. So long as he was permitted to talk, the listener could select the subject. But, combined with his loquacity, Hemingway had found him kind−hearted, intelligent, observing, and the call of a common country had got them quickly together.

Hemingway was quite conscious that the girl he had seen but once had impressed him out of all proportion to what he knew of her. She seemed too good to be true. And he tried to persuade himself that after eight months in the hinterland among hippos and zebras any reasonably attractive girl would have proved equally disturbing.

But he was not convinced. He did not wish to be convinced. He assured himself that had he met Mrs. Adair at home among hundreds of others he would have recognized her as a woman of exceptional character, as one especially charming. He wanted to justify this idea of her; he wanted to talk of Mrs. Adair to Harris, not to learn more concerning her, but just for the pleasure of speaking her name.

He was much upset at that, and the discovery that on meeting a woman for the first time he still could be so boyishly and ingenuously moved greatly pleased him. It was a most delightful secret. So he acted on the principle that when a man immensely admires a woman and wishes to conceal that fact from every one else he can best do so by declaring his admiration in the frankest and most open manner. After the tea−party, as Harris and himself sat in the consulate, he so expressed himself.

"What an extraordinary nice girl," he exclaimed, "is that Mrs. Adair! I had a long talk with her. She is most charming. However did a woman like that come to be in a place like this?"

Judging from his manner, it seemed to Hemingway that at the mention of Mrs. Adair's name he had found Harris mentally on guard, as though the consul had guessed the question would come and had prepared for it.

"She just dropped in here one day," said Harris, "from no place in particular. Personally, I always have thought from heaven."

"It's a good address," said Hemingway.

"It seems to suit her," the consul agreed. "Anyway, if she doesn't come from there, that's where she's going−−just on account of the good she's done us while she's been here. She arrived four months ago with a typewriting−machine and letters to me from our consuls in Cape Town and Durban. She had done some typewriting for them. It seems that after her husband died, which was a few months after they were married, she learned to make her living by typewriting. She worked too hard and broke down, and the doctor said she must go to hot countries, the 'hotter the better.' So she's worked her way half around the world typewriting. She worked chiefly for her own consuls or for the American commission houses. Sometimes she stayed a month, sometimes only over one steamer day. But when she got here Lady Firth took such a fancy to her that she made Sir George engage her as his private secretary, and she's been here ever since."

In a community so small as was that of Zanzibar the white residents saw one another every day, and within a week Hemingway had met Mrs. Adair many times. He met her at dinner, at the British agency; he met her in the country club, where the white exiles gathered for tea and tennis. He hired a launch and in her honor gave a picnic on the north coast of the island, and on three glorious and memorable nights, after different dinner−parties had ascended to the roof, he sat at her side and across the white level of the housetops looked down into the moonlit harbor.

What interest the two young people felt in each other was in no way discouraged by their surroundings. In the tropics the tender emotions are not winter killed. Had they met at home, the conventions, his own work, her social duties would have kept the progress of their interest within a certain speed limit. But they were in a place free of conventions, and the preceding eight months which Hemingway had spent in the jungle and on the plain had made the society of his fellow man, and of Mrs. Adair in particular, especially attractive.

Hemingway had no work to occupy his time, and he placed it unreservedly at the disposition of his countrywoman. In doing so it could not be said that Mrs. Adair encouraged him. Hemingway himself would have been the first to acknowledge this. From the day he met her he was conscious that always there was an intangible barrier between them. Even before she possibly could have guessed that his interest in her was more than even she, attractive as she was, had the right to expect, she had wrapped around herself an invisible mantle of defense.

There were certain speeches of his which she never heard, certain tones to which she never responded. At moments when he was complimenting himself that at last she was content to be in his company, she would suddenly rise and join the others, and he would be left wondering in what way he could possibly have offended.

He assured himself that a woman, young and attractive, in a strange land in her dependent position must of necessity be discreet, but in his conduct there certainly had been nothing that was not considerate, courteous, and straightforward.

When he appreciated that he cared for her seriously, that he was gloriously happy in caring, and proud of the way in which he cared, the fact that she persistently held him at arm's length puzzled and hurt. At first when he had deliberately set to work to make her like him he was glad to think that, owing to his reticence about himself, if she did like him it would be for himself alone and not for his worldly goods. But when he knew her better he understood that if once Mrs. Adair made up her mind to take a second husband, the fact that he was a social and financial somebody, and not, as many in Zanzibar supposed Hemingway to be, a social outcast, would make but little difference.

Nor was her manner to be explained by the fact that the majority of women found him unattractive. As to that, the pleasant burden of his experience was to the contrary. He at last wondered if there was some one else, if he had come into her life too late. He set about looking for the man and so, he believed, he soon found him.

Of the little colony, Arthur Fearing was the man of whom Hemingway had seen the least. That was so because Fearing wished it. Like himself, Fearing was an American, young, and a bachelor, but, very much unlike Hemingway, a hermit and a recluse.

Two years before he had come to Zanzibar looking for an investment for his money. In Zanzibar there were gentlemen adventurers of every country, who were welcome to live in any country save their own.

To them Mr. Fearing seemed a heaven−sent victim. But to him their alluring tales of the fortunes that were to rise from buried treasures, lost mines, and pearl beds did not appeal. Instead he conferred with the consuls, the responsible merchants, the partners in the prosperous trading houses. After a month of "looking around" he had purchased outright the goodwill and stock of one of the oldest of the commission houses, and soon showed himself to be a most capable man of business. But, except as a man of business, no one knew him. From the dim recesses of his warehouse he passed each day to the seclusion of his bungalow in the country. And, although every one was friendly to him, he made no friends.

It was only after the arrival of Mrs. Adair that he consented to show himself, and it was soon noted that it was only when she was invited that he would appear, and that on these occasions he devoted himself entirely to her. In the presence of others, he still was shy, gravely polite, and speaking but little, and never of himself; but with Mrs. Adair his shyness seemed to leave him, and when with her he was seen to talk easily and eagerly. And, on her part, to what he said, Polly Adair listened with serious interest.

Lady Firth, who, at home, was a trained and successful match−maker, and who, in Zanzibar, had found but a limited field for her activities, decided that if her companion and protegee must marry, she should marry Fearing.

Fearing was no gentleman adventurer, remittance−man, or humble clerk serving his apprenticeship to a steamship line or an ivory house. He was one of the pillars of Zanzibar society. The trading house he had purchased had had its beginnings in the slave−trade, and now under his alert direction was making a turnover equal to that of any of its ancient rivals. Personally, Fearing was a most desirable catch. He was well−mannered, well−read, of good appearance, steady, and, in a latitude only six degrees removed from the equator, of impeccable morals.

It is said that it is the person who is in love who always is the first to discover his successful rival. It is either an instinct or because his concern is deeper than that of others.

And so, when Hemingway sought for the influence that separated him from Polly Adair, the trail led to Fearing. To find that the obstacle in the path of his true love was a man greatly relieved him. He had feared that what was

in the thoughts of Mrs. Adair was the memory of her dead husband. He had no desire to cross swords with a ghost. But to a living rival he could afford to be generous.

For he was sure no one could care for Polly Adair as he cared, and, like every other man in love, he believed that he alone had discovered in her beauties of soul and character that to the rest of mankind were hidden. This knowledge, he assured himself, had aroused in him a depth of devotion no one else could hope to imitate, and this depth of devotion would in time so impress her, would become so necessary to her existence, that it would force her at last into the arms of the only man who could offer it.

Having satisfied himself in this fashion, he continued cheerfully on his way, and the presence of a rival in no way discouraged him. It only was Polly Adair who discouraged him. And this, in spite of the fact that every hour of the day he tried to bring himself pleasantly to her notice. All that an idle young man in love, aided and abetted by imagination and an unlimited letter of credit, could do, Hemingway did. But to no end.

The treasures he dug out of the bazaars and presented to her, under false pretenses as trinkets he happened at that moment to find in his pockets, were admired by her at their own great value, and returned also under false pretenses, as having been offered her only to examine.

"It is for your sister at home, I suppose," she prompted. "It's quite lovely. Thank you for letting me see it."

After having been several times severely snubbed in this fashion, Hemingway remarked grimly as he put a black pearl back into his pocket:

"At this rate sister will be mighty glad to see me when I get home. It seems almost a pity I haven't got a sister."

The girl answered this only with a grave smile.

On another occasion she admired a polo pony that had been imported for the stable of the boy Sultan. But next morning Hemingway, after much diplomacy, became the owner of it and proudly rode it to the agency. Lady Firth and Polly Adair walked out to meet him arm in arm, but at sight of the pony there came into the eyes of the secretary a look that caused Hemingway to wish himself and his mount many miles in the jungle. He saw that before it had been proffered, his gift−horse had been rejected. He acted promptly.

"Lady Firth," he said, "you've been so awfully kind to me, made this place so like a home to me, that I want you to put this mare in your stable. The Sultan wanted her, but when he learned I meant to turn her over to you, he let her go. We both hope you'll accept."

Lady Firth had no scruples. In five minutes she had accepted, had clapped a side−saddle on her rich gift, and was cantering joyously down the Pearl Road.

Polly Adair looked after her with an expression that was distinctly wistful. Thus encouraged, Hemingway said:

"I'm glad you are sorry. I hope every time you see that pony you'll be sorry."

"Why should I be sorry?" asked the girl.

"Because you have been unkind," said Hemingway, "and it is not your character to be unkind. And that you have shown lack of character ought to make you sorry."

"But you know perfectly well," said Mrs. Adair, "that if I were to take any one of these wonderful things you bring me, I wouldn't have any character left."

She smiled at him reassuringly. "And you know," she added, "that that is not why I do not take them. It isn't because I can't afford to, or because I don't want them, because I do; but it's because I don't deserve them, because I can give you nothing in return."

"As the copy−book says," returned Hemingway, "'the pleasure is in the giving.' If the copy−book don't say that, I do. And to pretend that you give me nothing, that is ridiculous!"

It was so ridiculous that he rushed on vehemently. "Why, every minute you give me something," he exclaimed. "Just to see you, just to know you are alive, just to be certain when I turn in at night that when the world wakes up again you will still be a part of it; that is what you give me. And its name is−−Happiness!"

He had begun quite innocently; he had had no idea that it would come. But he had said it. As clearly as though he had dropped upon one knee, laid his hand over his heart and exclaimed: "Most beautiful of your sex, I love you! Will you marry me?" His eyes and the tone of his voice had said it. And he knew that he had said it, and that she knew.

Her eyes were filled with sudden tears, and so wonderful was the light in them that for one mad moment Hemingway thought they were tears of happiness. But the light died, and what had been tears became only wet drops of water, and he saw to his dismay that she was most miserable.

The girl moved ahead of him to the cliff on which the agency stood, and which overhung the harbor and the Indian Ocean. Her eyes were filled with trouble. As she raised them to his they begged of him to be kind.

"I am glad you told me," she said. "I have been afraid it was coming. But until you told me I could not say anything. I tried to stop you. I was rude and unkind−−"

"You certainly were," Hemingway agreed cheerfully. "And the more you would have nothing to do with me, the more I admired you. And then I learned to admire you more, and then to love you. It seems now as though I had always known and always loved you. And now this is what we are going to do."

He wouldn't let her speak; he rushed on precipitately.

"We are first going up to the house to get your typewriting−machine, and we will bring it back here and hurl it as far as we can off this cliff. I want to see the splash! I want to hear it smash when it hits that rock. It has been my worst enemy, because it helped you to be independent of me, because it kept you from me. Time after time, on the veranda, when I was pretending to listen to Lady Firth, I was listening to that damned machine banging and complaining and tiring your pretty fingers and your dear eyes. So first it has got to go. You have been its slave, now I am going to be your slave. You have only to rub the lamp and things will happen. And because I've told you nothing about myself, you mustn't think that the money that helps to make them happen is 'tainted.' It isn't. Nor am I, nor my father, nor my father's father. I am asking you to marry a perfectly respectable young man. And, when you do−−"

Again he gave her no opportunity to interrupt, but rushed on impetuously: "We will sail away across that ocean to wherever you will take me. To Ceylon and Tokio and San Francisco, to Naples and New York, to Greece and Athens. They are all near. They are all yours. Will you accept them and me?" He smiled appealingly, but most miserably. For though he had spoken lightly and with confidence, it was to conceal the fact that he was not at all confident. As he had read in her eyes her refusal of his pony, he had read, even as he spoke, her refusal of himself. When he ceased speaking the girl answered:

"If I say that what you tell me makes me proud, I am saying too little." She shook her head firmly, with an air of finality that frightened Hemingway. "But what you ask−−what you suggest is impossible."

"You don't like me?" said Hemingway.

"I like you very much," returned the girl, "and, if I don't seem unhappy that it can't be, it is because I always have known it can't be−−"

"Why can't it be?" rebelled Hemingway. "I don't mean that I can't understand your not wanting to marry me, but if I knew your objection, maybe, I could beat it down."

Again, with the same air of finality, the girl moved her head slowly, as though considering each word; she began cautiously.

"I cannot tell you the reason," she said, "because it does not concern only myself."

"If you mean you care for some one else," pleaded Hemingway, "that does not frighten me at all." It did frighten him extremely, but, believing that a faint heart never won anything, he pretended to be brave.

"For you," he boasted, "I would go down into the grave as deep as any man. He that hath more let him give. I know what I offer. I know I love you as no other man−−"

The girl backed away from him as though he had struck her. "You must not say that," she commanded.

For the first time he saw that she was moved, that the fingers she laced and unlaced were trembling. "It is final!" exclaimed the girl. "I cannot marry−−you, or any one. I−−I have promised. I am not free."

"Nothing in the world is final," returned Hemingway sharply, "except death." He raised his hat and, as though to leave her, moved away. Not because he admitted defeat, but because he felt that for the present to continue might lose him the chance to fight again. But, to deliver an ultimatum, he turned back.

"As long as you are alive, and I am alive," he told her, "all things are possible. I don't give up hope. I don't give up you."

The girl exclaimed with a gesture of despair. "He won't understand!" she cried.

Hemingway advanced eagerly.

"Help me to understand," he begged.

"You won't understand," explained the girl, "that I am speaking the truth. You are right that things can change in the future, but nothing can change the past. Can't you understand that?"

"What do I care for the past?" cried the young man scornfully. "I know you as well as though I had known you for a thousand years and I love you."

The girl flushed crimson.

"Not my past," she gasped. "I meant−−"

"I don't care what you meant," said Hemingway. "I'm not prying into your little secrets. I know only one thing−−two things, that I love you and that, until you love me, I am going to make your life hell!"

He caught at her hands, and for an instant she let him clasp them in both of his, while she looked at him.

Something in her face, other than distress and pity, caused his heart to leap. But he was too wise to speak, and, that she might not read the hope in his eyes, turned quickly and left her. He had not crossed the grounds of the agency before he had made up his mind as to the reason for her repelling him.

"She is engaged to Fearing!" he told himself. "She has promised to marry Fearing! She thinks that it is too late to consider another man!" The prospect of a fight for the woman he loved thrilled him greatly. His lower jaw set pugnaciously.

"I'll show her it's not too late," he promised himself. "I'll show her which of us is the man to make her happy. And, if I am not the man, I'll take the first outbound steamer and trouble them no more. But before that happens," he also promised himself, "Fearing must show he is the better man."

In spite of his brave words, in spite of his determination, within the day Hemingway had withdrawn in favor of his rival, and, on the Crown Prince Eitel, bound for Genoa and New York, had booked his passage home.

On the afternoon of the same day he had spoken to Polly Adair, Hemingway at the sunset hour betook himself to the consulate. At that hour it had become his custom to visit his fellow countryman and with him share the gossip of the day and such a cocktail as only a fellow countryman could compose. Later he was to dine at the house of the Ivory Company and, as his heart never ceased telling him, Mrs. Adair also was to be present.

"It will be a very pleasant party," said Harris. "They gave me a bid, too, but it's steamer day to−morrow, and I've got to get my mail ready for the Crown Prince Eitel. Mrs. Adair is to be there."

Hemingway nodded, and with pleasant anticipation waited. Of Mrs. Adair, Harris always spoke with reverent enthusiasm, and the man who loved her delighted to listen. But this time Harris disappointed him.

"And Fearing, too," he added.

Again Hemingway nodded. The conjunction of the two names surprised him, but he made no sign. Loquacious as he knew Harris to be, he never before had heard his friend even suggest the subject that to Zanzibar had become of acute interest.

Harris filled the two glasses, and began to pace the room. When he spoke it was in the aggrieved tone of one who feels himself placed in a false position.

"There's no one," he complained suddenly, "so popularly unpopular as the man who butts in. I know that, but still I've always taken his side. I've always been for him." He halted, straddling with legs apart and hands deep in his trousers pockets, and frowned down upon his guest.

"Suppose," he began aggressively, "I see a man driving his car over a cliff. If I tell him that road will take him over a cliff, the worst that can happen to me is to be told to mind my own business, and I can always answer back: 'I was only trying to help you.' If I don't speak, the man breaks his neck. Between the two, it seems to me, sooner than have any one's life on my hands, I'd rather be told to mind my own business."

Hemingway stared into his glass. His expression was distinctly disapproving, but, undismayed, the consul continued.

"Now, we all know that this morning you gave that polo pony to Lady Firth, and one of us guesses that you first offered it to some one else, who refused it. One of us thinks that very soon, to−morrow, or even to−night, at this party you may offer that same person something else, something worth more than a polo pony, and that if she refuses that, it is going to break you all up, is going to hurt you for the rest of your life."

Lifting his eyes from his glass, Hemingway shot at his friend a glance of warning. In haste, Harris continued:

"I know," he protested, answering the look, "I know that this is where Mr. Buttinsky is told to mind his business. But I'm going right on. I'm going to state a hypothetical case with no names mentioned and no questions asked, or answered. I'm going to state a theory, and let you draw your own deductions."

He slid into a chair, and across the table fastened his eyes on those of his friend. Confidently and undisturbed, but with a wry smile of dislike, Hemingway stared fixedly back at him.

"What," demanded Harris, "is the first rule in detective work?"

Hemingway started. He was prepared for something unpleasant, but not for that particular form of unpleasantness. But his faith was unshaken, and he smiled confidently. He let the consul answer his own question.

"It is to follow the woman," declared Harris. "And, accordingly, what should be the first precaution of a man making his get−away? To see that the woman does not follow. But suppose we are dealing with a fugitive of especial intelligence, with a criminal who has imagination and brains? He might fix it so that the woman could follow him without giving him away, he might plan it so that no one would suspect. She might arrive at his hiding−place only after many months, only after each had made separately a long circuit of the globe, only after a journey with a plausible and legitimate object. She would arrive disguised in every way, and they would meet as total strangers. And, as strangers under the eyes of others, they would become acquainted, would gradually grow more friendly, would be seen more frequently together, until at last people would say: 'Those two mean to make a match of it.' And then, one day, openly, in the sight of all men, with the aid of the law and the church, they would resume those relations that existed before the man ran away and the woman followed."

There was a short silence.

Hemingway broke it in a tone that would accept no denial.

"You can't talk like that to me," he cried. "What do you mean?"

Without resentment, the consul regarded him with grave solicitude. His look was one of real affection, and, although his tone held the absolute finality of the family physician who delivers a sentence of death, he spoke with gentleness and regret.

"I mean," he said, "that Mrs. Adair is not a widow, that the man she speaks of as her late husband is not dead; that that man is Fearing!"

Hemingway felt afraid. A month before a rhinoceros had charged him and had dropped at his feet. At another time a wounded lioness had leaped into his path and crouched to spring. Then he had not been afraid. Then he had aimed as confidently as though he were firing at a straw target. But now he felt real fear: fear of something he did not comprehend, of a situation he could not master, of an adversary as strong as Fate. By a word something had been snatched from him that he now knew was as dear to him as life, that was life, that was what made it worth continuing. And he could do nothing to prevent it; he could not help himself. He was as impotent as the prisoner who hears the judge banish him into exile. He tried to adjust his mind to the calamity. But his mind refused. As easily as with his finger a man can block the swing of a pendulum and halt the progress of the clock, Harris with a word had brought the entire world to a full stop.

And then, above his head, Hemingway heard the lazy whisper of the punka, and from the harbor the raucous whistle of the Crown Prince Eitel, signalling her entrance. The world had not stopped; for the punka−boy, for the captain of the German steamer, for Harris seated with face averted, the world was still going gayly and busily

forward. Only for him had it stopped.

In spite of the confident tone in which Harris had spoken, in spite of the fact that unless he knew it was the truth, he would not have spoken, Hemingway tried to urge himself to believe there had been some hideous, absurd error. But in answer came back to him snatches of talk or phrases the girl had last addressed to him: "You can command the future, but you cannot change the past. I cannot marry you, or any one! I am not free!"

And then to comfort himself, he called up the look he had surprised in her eyes when he stood holding her hands in his. He clung to it, as a drowning man will clutch even at a piece of floating seaweed.

When he tried to speak he found his voice choked and stifled, and that his distress was evident, he knew from the pity he read in the eyes of Harris.

In a voice strange to him, he heard himself saying: "Why do you think that? You've got to tell me. I have a right to know. This morning I asked Mrs. Adair to marry me."

The consul exclaimed with dismay and squirmed unhappily. "I didn't know," he protested. "I thought I was in time. I ought to have told you days ago, but−−"

"Tell me now," commanded Hemingway.

"I know it in a thousand ways," began Harris.

Hemingway raised his eyes hopefully.

But the consul shook his head. "But to convince you," he went on, "I need tell you only one. The thousand other proofs are looks they have exchanged, sentences I have chanced to overhear, and that each of them unknown to the other has told me of little happenings and incidents which I found were common to both. Each has described the house in which he or she lived, and it was the same house. They claim to come from different cities in New England, they came from the same city. They claim−−"

"That is no proof," cried Hemingway, "either that they are married, or that the man is a criminal."

For a moment Harris regarded the other in silence. Then he said: "You're making it very hard for me. I see I've got to show you. It's kindest, after all, to cut quick." He leaned farther forward, and his voice dropped. Speaking quickly, he said:

"Last summer I lived outside the town in a bungalow on the Pearl Road. Fearing's house was next to mine. This was before Mrs. Adair went to live at the agency, and while she was alone in another bungalow farther down the road. I was ill that summer; my nerves went back on me. I couldn't sleep. I used to sit all night on my veranda and pray for the sun to rise. From where I sat it was dark and no one could see me, but I could see the veranda of Fearing's house and into his garden. And night after night I saw Mrs. Adair creep out of Fearing's house, saw him walk with her to the gate, saw him in the shadow of the bushes take her in his arms, and saw them kiss." The voice of the consul rose sharply. "No one knows that but you and I, and," he cried defiantly, "it is impossible for us to believe ill of Polly Adair. The easy explanation we refuse. It is intolerable. And so you must believe as I believe; that when she visited Fearing by night she went to him because she had the right to go to him, because already she was his wife. And now when every one here believes they met for the first time in Zanzibar, when no one will be surprised if they should marry, they will go through the ceremony again, and live as man and wife, as they are, as they were before he fled from America!"

Hemingway was seated with his elbows on the table and his face in his hands. He was so long silent that Harris struck the table roughly with his palm.

"Well," he demanded, "why don't you speak? Do you doubt her? Don't you believe she is his wife?"

"I refuse to believe anything else!" said Hemingway. He rose, and slowly and heavily moved toward the door. "And I will not trouble them any more," he added. "I'll leave at sunrise on the Eitel."

Harris exclaimed in dismay, but Hemingway did not hear him. In the doorway he halted and turned back. From his voice all trace of emotion had departed. "Why," he asked dully, "do you think Fearing is a fugitive? Not that it matters to her, since she loves him, or that it matters to me. Only I would like to think you were wrong. I want her to have only the best."

Again the consul moved unhappily.

"I oughtn't to tell you," he protested, "and if I do I ought to tell the State Department, and a detective agency first. They have the call. They want him, or a man damned like him." His voice dropped to a whisper. "The man wanted is Henry Brownell, a cashier of a bank in Waltham, Mass., thirty−five years of age, smooth−shaven, college−bred, speaking with a marked New England accent, and−−and with other marks that fit Fearing like the cover on a book. The department and the Pinkertons have been devilling the life out of me about it for nine months. They are positive he is on the coast of Africa. I put them off. I wasn't sure."

"You've been protecting them," said Hemingway.

"I wasn't sure," reiterated Harris. "And if I were, the Pinkertons can do their own sleuthing. The man's living honestly now, anyway, isn't he?" he demanded; "and she loves him. At least she's stuck by him. Why should I punish her?"

His tone seemed to challenge and upbraid.

"Good God!" cried the other, "I'm not blaming you! I'd be proud of the chance to do as much. I asked because I'd like to go away thinking she's content, thinking she's happy with him."

"Doesn't it look as though she were?" Harris protested. "She's followed him−−followed him half around the globe. If she'd been happier away from him, she'd have stayed away from him."

So intent had been the men upon their talk that neither had noted the passing of the minutes or, what at other times was an event of moment, that the mail steamer had distributed her mail and passengers; and when a servant entered bearing lamps, and from the office the consul's clerk appeared with a bundle of letters from the Eitel, both were taken by surprise.

"So late?" exclaimed Hemingway. "I must go. If I'm to sail with the Eitel at daybreak, I've little time!"

But he did not go.

As he advanced toward Harris with his hand outstretched in adieu, the face of the consul halted him. With the letters, the clerk had placed upon the table a visiting−card, and as it lay in the circle of light from the lamp the consul, as though it were alive and menacing, stared at it in fascination. Moving stiffly, he turned it so that Hemingway could see. On it Hemingway read, "George S. Sheyer," and, on a lower line, "Representing William L. Pinkerton."

To the woman he loved the calamity they dreaded had come, and Hemingway, with a groan of dismay, exclaimed aloud:

"It is the end!"

From the darkness of the outer office a man stepped softly into the circle of the lamp. They could see his figure only from the waist down; the rest of him was blurred in shadows.

"'It is the end'?" he repeated inquiringly. He spoke the phrase with peculiar emphasis, as though to impress it upon the memory of the two others. His voice was cool, alert, authoritative. "The end of what?" he demanded sharply.

The question was most difficult. In the silence the detective moved into the light. He was tall and strongly built, his face was shrewd and intelligent. He might have been a prosperous man of business.

"Which of you is the consul?" he asked. But he did not take his eyes from Hemingway.

"I am the consul," said Harris. But still the detective did not turn from Hemingway.

"Why," he asked, "did this gentleman, when he read my card, say, 'It is the end'? The end of what? Has anything been going on here that came to an end when he saw my card?"

Disconcerted, in deep embarrassment, Harris struggled for a word. But his distress was not observed by the detective. His eyes, suspicious and accusing, still were fixed upon Hemingway, and under their scrutiny Harris saw his friend slowly retreat, slowly crumple up into a chair, slowly raise his hands to cover his face. As though in a nightmare, he heard him saying savagely:

"It is the end of two years of hell, it is the end of two years of fear and agony! Now I shall have peace. Now I shall sleep! I thank God you've come! I thank God I can go back!"

Harris broke the spell by leaping to his feet. He sprang between the two men.

"What does this mean?" he commanded.

Hemingway raised his eyes and surveyed him steadily.

"It means," he said, "that I have deceived you, Harris−−that I am the man you told me of, I am the man they want." He turned to the officer.

"I fooled him for four months," he said. "I couldn't fool you for five minutes."

The eyes of the detective danced with sudden excitement, joy, and triumph. He shot an eager glance from Hemingway to the consul.

"This man," he demanded; "who is he?"

With an impatient gesture Hemingway signified Harris.

"He doesn't know who I am," he said. "He knows me as Hemingway. I am Henry Brownell, of Waltham, Mass." Again his face sank into the palms of his hands. "And I'm tired−−tired," he moaned. "I am sick of not knowing, sick of running away. I give myself up."

The detective breathed a sigh of relief that seemed to issue from his soul.

"My God," he sighed, "you've given me a long chase! I've had eleven months of you, and I'm as sick of this as you are." He recovered himself sharply. As though reciting an incantation, he addressed Hemingway in crisp, emotionless notes.

"Henry Brownell," he chanted, "I arrest you in the name of the commonwealth of Massachusetts for the robbery, on October the eleventh, nineteen hundred and nine, of the Waltham Title and Trust Company. I understand," he added, "you waive extradition and return with me of your own free will?"

With his face still in his hands, Hemingway murmured assent. The detective stepped briskly and uninvited to the table and seated himself. He was beaming with triumph, with pleasurable excitement.

"I want to send a message home, Mr. Consul," he said. "May I use your cable blanks?"

Harris was still standing in the centre of the room looking down upon the bowed head and shoulders of Hemingway. Since, in amazement, he had sprung toward him, he had not spoken. And he was still silent.

Inside the skull of Wilbur Harris, of Iowa, U. S. A., American consul to Zanzibar, East Africa, there was going forward a mighty struggle that was not fit to put into words. For Harris and his conscience had met and were at odds. One way or the other the fight must be settled at once, and whatever he decided must be for all time. This he understood, and as his sympathies and conscience struggled for the mastery the pen of the detective, scratching at racing speed across the paper, warned him that only a few seconds were left him in which to protest or else to forever after hold his peace.

So realistic had been the acting of Hemingway that for an instant Harris himself had been deceived. But only for an instant. With his knowledge of the circumstances he saw that Hemingway was not confessing to a crime of his own, but drawing across the trail of the real criminal the convenient and useful red herring. He knew that already Hemingway had determined to sail the next morning. In leaving Zanzibar he was making no sacrifice. He merely was carrying out his original plan, and by taking away with him the detective was giving Brownell and his wife at least a month in which to again lose themselves.

What was his own duty he could not determine. That of Hemingway he knew nothing, he could truthfully testify. And if now Hemingway claimed to be Henry Brownell, he had no certain knowledge to the contrary. That through his adventure Hemingway would come to harm did not greatly disturb him. He foresaw that his friend need only send a wireless from Nantucket and at the wharf witnesses would swarm to establish his identity and make it evident the detective had blundered. And in the meanwhile Brownell and his wife, in some settlement still further removed from observation, would for the second time have fortified themselves against pursuit and capture. He saw the eyes of Hemingway fixed upon him in appeal and warning.

The brisk voice of the detective broke the silence.

"You will testify, if need be, Mr. Consul," he said, "that you heard the prisoner admit he was Henry Brownell and that he surrendered himself of his own free will?"

For an instant the consul hesitated, then he nodded stiffly.

"I heard him," he said.

Three hours later, at ten o' clock of the same evening, the detective and Hemingway leaned together on the rail of the Crown Prince Eitel. Forward, in the glare of her cargo lights, to the puffing and creaking of derricks and

donkey engines, bundles of beeswax, of rawhides, and precious tusks of ivory were being hurled into the hold; from the shore−boats clinging to the ship's sides came the shrieks of the Zanzibar boys, from the smoking−room the blare of the steward's band and the clink of glasses. Those of the youth of Zanzibar who were on board, the German and English clerks and agents, saw in the presence of Hemingway only a purpose similar to their own; the desire of a homesick exile to gaze upon the mirrored glories of the Eitel's saloon, at the faces of white men and women, to listen to home−made music, to drink home−brewed beer. As he passed the smoking−room they called to him, and to the stranger at his elbow, but he only nodded smiling and, avoiding them, ascended to the shadow of the deserted boat−deck.

"You are sure," he said, "you told no one?"

"No one," the detective answered. "Of course your hotel proprietor knows you're sailing, but he doesn't know why. And, by sunrise, we'll be well out at sea."

The words caught Hemingway by the throat. He turned his eyes to the town lying like a field of snow in the moonlight. Somewhere on one of its flat roofs a merry dinner−party was laughing, drinking, perhaps regretting his absence, wondering at his excuse of sudden illness. She was there, and he with the detective like a shadow at his elbow, was sailing out of her life forever. He had seen her for the last time: that morning for the last time had looked into her eyes, had held her hands in his. He saw the white beach, the white fortress−like walls, the hanging gardens, the courtesying palms, dimly. It was among those that he who had thought himself content, had found happiness, and had then seen it desert him and take out of his life pleasure in all other things. With a pain that seemed impossible to support, he turned his back upon Zanzibar and all it meant to him. And, as he turned, he faced, coming toward him, across the moonlit deck, Fearing.

His instinct was to cry out to the man in warning, but his second thought showed him that through his very effort to protect the other, he might bring about his undoing. So, helpless to prevent, in agitation and alarm, he waited in silence. Of the two men, Fearing appeared the least disturbed. With a polite but authoritative gesture he turned to the detective. "I have something to say to this gentleman before he sails," he said; "would you kindly stand over there?"

He pointed across the empty deck at the other rail.

In the alert, confident young man in the English mess−jacket, clean−shaven and bronzed by the suns of the equator, the detective saw no likeness to the pale, bearded bank clerk of the New England city. This, he guessed, must be some English official, some friend of Brownell's who generously had come to bid the unfortunate fugitive Godspeed.

Assured of this, the detective also bowed politely, and, out of hearing, but with his prisoner in full view, took up a position against the rail opposite.

Turning his back upon the detective, and facing Hemingway with his eyes close to his, Fearing began abruptly. His voice was sunk to a whisper, but he spoke without the slightest sign of trepidation, without the hesitation of an instant.

"Two years ago, when I was indicted," he whispered, "and ran away, Polly paid back half of the sum I stole. That left her without a penny; that's why she took to this typewriting. Since then, I have paid back nearly all the rest. But Polly was not satisfied. She wanted me to take my punishment and start fresh. She knew they were watching her so she couldn't write this to me, but she came to me by a roundabout way, taking a year to get here. And all the time she's been here, she's been begging me to go back and give myself up. I couldn't see it. I knew in a few months I'd have paid back all I took, and I thought that was enough. I wanted to keep out of jail. But she said I must take my medicine in our own country, and start square with a clean slate. She's done a lot for me, and

whether I'd have done that for her or not, I don't know. But now, I must! What you did to−night to save me, leaves me no choice. So, I'll sail−−"

With an exclamation of anger, Hemingway caught the other by the shoulder and dragged him closer.

"To save you!" he whispered. "No one's thinking of you. I didn't do it for you. I did it, that you both could escape together, to give you time−−"

"But I tell you," protested Fearing, "she doesn't want me to escape. And maybe she's right. Anyway, we're sailing with you at−−"

"We?" echoed Hemingway.

That again he was to see the woman he loved, that for six weeks through summer seas he would travel in her company, filled him with alarm, with distress, with a wonderful happiness.

"We?" he whispered, steadying his voice. "Then−−then your wife is going with you?"

Fearing gazed at him as though the other had suddenly gone mad.

"My wife!" he exclaimed. "I haven't got a wife!" If you mean Polly−−Mrs. Adair, she is my sister! And she wants to thank you. She's below−−"

He was not allowed to finish. Hemingway had flung him to one side, and was racing down the deck.

The detective sprang in pursuit.

"One moment, there!" he shouted.

But the man in the white mess−jacket barred his way.

In the moonlight the detective saw that the alert, bronzed young man was smiling.

"That's all right," said Fearing. "He'll be back in a minute. Besides, you don't want him. I'm the man you want."

THE LONG ARM

The safe was an old one that opened with a key. As adjutant, Captain Swanson had charge of certain funds of the regiment and kept in the safe about five thousand dollars. No one but himself and Rueff, his first sergeant, had access to it. And as Rueff proved an alibi, the money might have been removed by an outsider. The court−martial gave Swanson the benefit of the doubt, and a reprimand for not taking greater care of the keys, and Swanson made good the five thousand.

Swanson did not think it was a burglar who had robbed the safe. He thought Rueff had robbed it, but he could not possibly prove that. At the time of the robbery Rueff was outside the Presidio, in uniform, at a moving−picture show in San Francisco. A dozen people saw him there. Besides, Rueff held an excellent record. He was a silent, clerk−like young man, better at "paper work" than campaigning, but even as a soldier he had never come upon the books. And he had seen service in two campaigns, and was supposed to cherish ambitions toward a commission. But, as he kept much to himself, his fellow non−coms could only guess that.

On his captain's account he was loyally distressed over the court−martial, and in his testimony tried to shield Swanson, by agreeing heartily that through his own carelessness the keys might have fallen into the hands of some one outside the post. But his loyalty could not save his superior officer from what was a verdict virtually of "not proven."

It was a most distressing affair, and, on account of the social prominence of Swanson's people, his own popularity, and the name he had made at Batangas and in the Boxer business, was much commented upon, not only in the services, but by the newspapers all over the United States.

Every one who knew Swanson knew the court−martial was only a matter of form. Even his enemies ventured only to suggest that overnight he might have borrowed the money, meaning to replace it the next morning. And the only reason for considering this explanation was that Swanson was known to be in debt. For he was a persistent gambler. Just as at Pekin he had gambled with death for his number, in times of peace he gambled for money. It was always his own money.

From the start Swanson's own attitude toward the affair was one of blind, unreasoning rage. In it he saw no necessary routine of discipline, only crass, ignorant stupidity. That any one should suspect him was so preposterous, so unintelligent, as to be nearly comic. And when, instantly, he demanded a court of inquiry, he could not believe it when he was summoned before a court−martial. It sickened, wounded, deeply affronted him; turned him quite savage.

On his stand his attitude and answers were so insolent that his old friend and classmate, Captain Copley, who was acting as his counsel, would gladly have kicked him. The findings of the court−martial, that neither cleared nor condemned, and the reprimand, were an intolerable insult to his feelings, and, in a fit of bitter disgust with the service and every one in it, Swanson resigned. Of course, the moment he had done so he was sorry. Swanson's thought was that he could no longer associate with any one who could believe him capable of theft. It was his idea of showing his own opinion of himself and the army.

But no one saw it in that light. On the contrary, people said: "Swanson has been allowed to resign." I n the army, voluntarily resigning and being "allowed to resign" lest greater evils befall, are two vastly different things. And when it was too late no one than Swanson saw that more clearly. His anger gave way to extreme morbidness. He believed that in resigning he had assured every one of his guilt. In every friend and stranger he saw a man who doubted him. He imagined snubs, rebuffs, and coldnesses. His morbidness fastened upon his mind like a parasite upon a tree, and the brain sickened. When men and women glanced at his alert, well−set−up figure and shoulders, that even when he wore "cits" seemed to support epaulets, and smiled approvingly, Swanson thought they sneered. In a week he longed to be back in the army with a homesickness that made every one who belonged to it his enemy.

He left San Francisco, where he was known to all, and travelled south through Texas, and then to New Orleans and Florida. He never could recall this period with clearness. He remembered changing from one train to another, from one hotel to the next. Nothing impressed itself upon him. For what he had lost nothing could give consolation. Without honor life held no charm. And he believed that in the eyes of all men he was a thief, a pariah, and an outcast.

He had been in Cuba with the Army of Occupation, and of that beautiful island had grown foolishly fond. He was familiar with every part of it, and he believed in one or another of its pretty ports he could so completely hide himself that no one could intrude upon his misery. In the States, in the newspapers he seemed to read only of those places where he had seen service, of those places and friends and associates he most loved. In the little Cuban village in which he would bury himself he would cut himself off from all newspapers, from all who knew him; from those who had been his friends, and those who knew his name only to connect it with a scandal.

On his way from Port Tampa to Cuba the boat stopped at Key West, and for the hour in which she discharged cargo Swanson went ashore and wandered aimlessly. The little town, reared on a flat island of coral and limestone, did not long detain him. The main street of shops, eating−houses, and saloons, the pretty residences with overhanging balconies, set among gardens and magnolia−trees, were soon explored, and he was returning to the boat when the martial music of a band caused him to halt. A side street led to a great gateway surmounted by an anchor. Beyond it Swanson saw lawns of well−kept grass, regular paths, pretty cottages, the two−starred flag of an admiral, and, rising high above these, like four Eiffel towers, the gigantic masts of a wireless. He recognized that he was at the entrance to the Key West naval station, and turned quickly away.

He walked a few feet, the music of the band still in his ears. In an hour he would be steaming toward Cuba, and, should he hold to his present purpose, in many years this would be the last time he would stand on American soil, would see the uniform of his country, would hear a military band lull the sun to sleep. It would hurt, but he wondered if it were not worth the hurt. A smart sergeant of marines, in passing, cast one glance at the man who seemed always to wear epaulets, and brought his hand sharply to salute. The act determined Swanson. He had obtained the salute under false pretenses, but it had pleased, not hurt him. He turned back and passed into the gate of the naval station.

From the gate a grass−lined carriage drive led to the waters of the harbor and the wharfs. At its extreme end was the band−stand, flanked on one side by the cottage of the admiral, on the other by a sail−loft with iron−barred windows and whitewashed walls. Upon the turf were pyramids of cannon−balls and, laid out in rows as though awaiting burial, old−time muzzle−loading guns. Across the harbor the sun was sinking into the coral reefs, and the spring air, still warm from its caresses, was stirred by the music of the band into gentle, rhythmic waves. The scene was one of peace, order, and content.

But as Swanson advanced, the measure of the music was instantly shattered by a fierce volley of explosions. They came so suddenly and sharply as to make him start. It was as though from his flank a quick−firing gun in ambush had opened upon him. Swanson smiled at having been taken unawares. For in San Francisco he often had heard the roar and rattle of the wireless. But never before had he listened to an attack like this.

From a tiny white−and−green cottage, squatting among the four giant masts, came the roar of a forest fire. One could hear the crackle of the flames, the crash of the falling tree−trunks. The air about the cottage was torn into threads; beneath the shocks of the electricity the lawn seemed to heave and tremble. It was like some giant monster, bound and fettered, struggling to be free. Now it growled sullenly, now in impotent rage it spat and spluttered, now it lashed about with crashing, stunning blows. It seemed as though the wooden walls of the station could not contain it.

From the road Swanson watched, through the open windows of the cottage, the electric bolts flash and flare and disappear. The thing appealed to his imagination. Its power, its capabilities fascinated him. In it he saw a hungry monster reaching out to every corner of the continent and devouring the news of the world; feeding upon tales of shipwreck and disaster, lingering over some dainty morsel of scandal, snatching from ships and cities two thousand miles away the thrice−told tale of a conflagration, the score of a baseball match, the fall of a cabinet, the assassination of a king.

In a sudden access of fierceness, as though in an ecstasy over some fresh horror just received, it shrieked and chortled. And then, as suddenly as it had broken forth, it sank to silence, and from the end of the carriage drive again rose, undisturbed, the music of the band.

The musicians were playing to a select audience. On benches around the band−stand sat a half dozen nurse−maids with knitting in their hands, the baby−carriages within arm's length. On the turf older children of the officers were at play, and up and down the paths bareheaded girls, and matrons, and officers in uniform strolled leisurely. From the vine−covered cottage of Admiral Preble, set in a garden of flowering plants and bending palmettos, came the

tinkle of tea−cups and the ripple of laughter, and at a respectful distance, seated on the dismantled cannon, were marines in khaki and bluejackets in glistening white.

It was a family group, and had not Swanson recognized among the little audience others of the passengers from the steamer and natives of the town who, like himself, had been attracted by the music, he would have felt that he intruded. He now wished to remain. He wanted to carry with him into his exile a memory of the men in uniform, of the music, and pretty women, of the gorgeous crimson sunset. But, though he wished to remain, he did not wish to be recognized.

From the glances already turned toward him, he saw that in this little family gathering the presence of a stranger was an event, and he was aware that during the trial the newspapers had made his face conspicuous. Also it might be that stationed at the post was some officer or enlisted man who had served with him in Cuba, China, or the Philippines, and who might point him out to others. Fearing this, Swanson made a detour and approached the band−stand from the wharf, and with his back to a hawser−post seated himself upon the string−piece.

He was overcome with an intolerable melancholy. From where he sat he could see, softened into shadows by the wire screens of the veranda, Admiral Preble and his wife and their guests at tea. A month before, he would have reported to the admiral as the commandant of the station, and paid his respects. Now he could not do that; at least not without inviting a rebuff. A month before, he need only have shown his card to the admiral's orderly, and the orderly and the guard and the officers' mess and the admiral himself would have turned the post upside down to do him honor. But of what avail now was his record in three campaigns? Of what avail now was his medal of honor? They now knew him as Swanson, who had been court−martialled, who had been allowed to resign, who had left the army for the army's good; they knew him as a civilian without rank or authority, as an ex−officer who had robbed his brother officers, as an outcast.

His position, as his morbid mind thus distorted it, tempted Swanson no longer. For being in this plight he did not feel that in any way he was to blame. But with a flaming anger he still blamed his brother officers of the court−martial who had not cleared his name and with a clean bill of health restored him to duty. Those were the men he blamed; not Rueff, the sergeant, who he believed had robbed him, nor himself, who, in a passion of wounded pride, had resigned and so had given reason for gossip; but the men who had not in tones like a bugle−call proclaimed his innocence, who, when they had handed him back his sword, had given it grudgingly, not with congratulation.

As he saw it, he stood in a perpetual pillory. When they had robbed him of his honor they had left him naked, and life without honor had lost its flavor. He could eat, he could drink, he could exist. He knew that in many corners of the world white arms would reach out to him and men would beckon him to a place at table.

But he could not cross that little strip of turf between him and the chattering group on the veranda and hand his card to the admiral's orderly. Swanson loved life. He loved it so that without help, money, or affection he could each morning have greeted it with a smile. But life without honor! He felt a sudden hot nausea of disgust. Why was he still clinging to what had lost its purpose, to what lacked the one thing needful?

"If life be an ill thing," he thought, "I can lay it down!"

The thought was not new to him, and during the two past weeks of aimless wandering he had carried with him his service automatic. To reassure himself he laid his fingers on its cold smooth surface. He would wait, he determined, until the musicians had finished their concert and the women and children had departed, and then−−

Then the orderly would find him where he was now seated, sunken against the hawser−post with a hole through his heart. To his disordered brain his decision appeared quite sane. He was sure he never had been more calm. And as he prepared himself for death he assured himself that for one of his standard no other choice was possible.

Thoughts of the active past, or of what distress in the future his act would bring to others, did not disturb him. The thing had to be, no one lost more heavily than himself, and regrets were cowardly.

He counted the money he had on his person and was pleased to find there was enough to pay for what services others soon must render him. In his pockets were letters, cards, a cigarette−case, each of which would tell his identity. He had no wish to conceal it, for of what he was about to do he was not ashamed. It was not his act. He would not have died "by his own hand." To his unbalanced brain the officers of the court−martial were responsible. It was they who had killed him. As he saw it, they had made his death as inevitable as though they had sentenced him to be shot at sunrise.

A line from "The Drums of the Fore and Aft" came back to him. Often he had quoted it, when some one in the service had suffered through the fault of others. It was the death−cry of the boy officer, Devlin. The knives of the Ghazi had cut him down, but it was his own people's abandoning him in terror that had killed him. And so, with a sob, he flung the line at the retreating backs of his comrades: "You've killed me, you cowards!"

Swanson, nursing his anger, repeated this savagely. He wished he could bring it home to those men of the court−martial. He wished he could make them know that his death lay at their door. He determined that they should know. On one of his visiting−cards he pencilled: "To the Officers of my Court−Martial: 'You've killed me, you cowards!'"

He placed the card in the pocket of his waistcoat. They would find it just above the place where the bullet would burn the cloth.

The band was playing "Auf Wiedersehen," and the waltz carried with it the sadness that had made people call the man who wrote it the waltz king. Swanson listened gratefully. He was glad that before he went out, his last mood had been of regret and gentleness. The sting of his anger had departed, the music soothed and sobered him. It had been a very good world. Until he had broken the spine of things it had treated him well, far better, he admitted, than he deserved. There were many in it who had been kind, to whom he was grateful. He wished there was some way by which he could let them know that. As though in answer to his wish, from across the parade−ground the wireless again began to crash and crackle; but now Swanson was at a greater distance from it, and the sighing rhythm of the waltz was not interrupted.

Swanson considered to whom he might send a farewell message, but as in his mind he passed from one friend to another, he saw that to each such a greeting could bring only distress. He decided it was the music that had led him astray. This was no moment for false sentiment. He let his hand close upon the pistol.

The audience now was dispersing. The nurse−maids had collected their charges, the musicians were taking apart their music−racks, and from the steps of the vine−covered veranda Admiral Preble was bidding the friends of his wife adieu. At his side his aide, young, alert, confident, with ill−concealed impatience awaited their departure. Swanson found that he resented the aide. He resented the manner in which he speeded the parting guests. Even if there were matters of importance he was anxious to communicate to his chief, he need not make it plain to the women folk that they were in the way.

When, a month before, he had been adjutant, in a like situation he would have shown more self−command. He disapproved of the aide entirely. He resented the fact that he was as young as himself, that he was in uniform, that he was an aide. Swanson certainly hoped that when he was in uniform he had not looked so much the conquering hero, so self−satisfied, so supercilious. With a smile he wondered why, at such a moment, a man he had never seen before, and never would see again, should so disturb him.

In his heart he knew. The aide was going forward just where he was leaving off. The ribbons on the tunic of the aide, the straps on his shoulders, told Swanson that they had served in the same campaigns, that they were of the

same relative rank, and that when he himself, had he remained in the service, would have been a brigadier−general the aide would command a battle−ship. The possible future of the young sailor filled Swanson with honorable envy and bitter regret. With all his soul he envied him the right to look his fellow man in the eye, his right to die for his country, to give his life, should it be required of him, for ninety million people, for a flag. Swanson saw the two officers dimly, with eyes of bitter self−pity. He was dying, but he was not dying gloriously for a flag. He had lost the right to die for it, and he was dying because he had lost that right.

The sun had sunk and the evening had grown chill. At the wharf where the steamer lay on which he had arrived, but on which he was not to depart, the electric cargo lights were already burning. But for what Swanson had to do there still was light enough. From his breast−pocket he took the card on which he had written his message to his brother officers, read and reread it, and replaced it.

Save for the admiral and his aide at the steps of the cottage, and a bareheaded bluejacket who was reporting to them, and the admiral's orderly, who was walking toward Swanson, no one was in sight. Still seated upon the stringpiece of the wharf, Swanson so moved that his back was toward the four men. The moment seemed propitious, almost as though it had been prearranged. For with such an audience, for his taking off no other person could be blamed. There would be no question but that death had been self−inflicted.

Approaching from behind him Swanson heard the brisk steps of the orderly drawing rapidly nearer. He wondered if the wharf were government property, if he were trespassing, and if for that reason the man had been sent to order him away. He considered bitterly that the government grudged him a place even in which to die. Well, he would not for long be a trespasser. His hand slipped into his pocket, with his thumb he lowered the safety−catch of the pistol.

But the hand with the pistol in it did not leave his pocket. The steps of the orderly had come to a sudden silence. Raising his head heavily, Swanson saw the man, with his eyes fixed upon him, standing at salute. They had first made his life unsupportable, Swanson thought, now they would not let him leave it.

"Captain Swanson, sir?" asked the orderly.

Swanson did not speak or move.

"The admiral's compliments, sir," snapped the orderly, "and will the captain please speak with him?"

Still Swanson did not move.

He felt that the breaking−point of his self−control had come. This impertinent interruption, this thrusting into the last few seconds of his life of a reminder of all that he had lost, this futile postponement of his end, was cruel, unhuman, unthinkable. The pistol was still in his hand. He had but to draw it and press it close, and before the marine could leap upon him he would have escaped.

From behind, approaching hurriedly, came the sound of impatient footsteps.

The orderly stiffened to attention. "The admiral!" he warned.

Twelve years of discipline, twelve years of recognition of authority, twelve years of deference to superior officers, dragged Swanson's hand from his pistol and lifted him to his feet. As he turned, Admiral Preble, the aide, and the bareheaded bluejacket were close upon him. The admiral's face beamed, his eyes were young with pleasurable excitement; with the eagerness of a boy he waved aside formal greetings.

"My dear Swanson," he cried, "I assure you it's a most astonishing, most curious coincidence! See this man?" He flung out his arm at the bluejacket. "He's my wireless chief. He was wireless operator on the transport that took you to Manila. When you came in here this afternoon he recognized you. Half an hour later he picks up a message−−picks it up two thousand miles from here−−from San Francisco−−Associated Press news−−it concerns you; that is, not really concerns you, but I thought, we thought"−as though signalling for help, the admiral glanced unhappily at his aide− "we thought you'd like to know. Of course, to us," he added hastily, "it's quite superfluous−−quite superfluous, but−−"

The aide coughed apologetically. "You might read, sir," he suggested.

"What? Exactly! Quite so!" cried the admiral.

In the fading light he held close to his eyes a piece of paper.

"San Francisco, April 20," he read. "Rueff, first sergeant, shot himself here to−day, leaving written confession theft of regimental funds for which Swanson, captain, lately court−martialled. Money found intact in Rueff's mattress. Innocence of Swanson never questioned, but dissatisfied with findings of court−martial has left army. Brother officers making every effort to find him and persuade return."

The admiral sighed happily. "And my wife," he added, with an impressiveness that was intended to show he had at last arrived at the important part of his message, "says you are to stay to dinner."

Abruptly, rudely, Swanson swung upon his heel and turned his face from the admiral. His head was thrown back, his arms held rigid at his sides. In slow, deep breaths, like one who had been dragged from drowning, he drank in the salt, chill air. After one glance the four men also turned, and in the falling darkness stood staring at nothing, and no one spoke.

The aide was the first to break the silence. In a polite tone, as though he were continuing a conversation which had not been interrupted, he addressed the admiral. "Of course, Rueff's written confession was not needed," he said.

"His shooting himself proved that he was guilty."

Swanson started as though across his naked shoulders the aide had drawn a whip.

In penitence and gratitude he raised his eyes to the stars. High above his head the strands of the wireless, swinging from the towering masts like the strings of a giant Aeolian harp, were swept by the wind from the ocean. To Swanson the sighing and whispering wires sang in praise and thanksgiving.

THE GOD OF COINCIDENCE

The God of Coincidence is fortunate in possessing innumerable press agents. They have made the length of his arm a proverb. How at exactly the right moment he extends it across continents and drags two and two together, thus causing four to result where but for him sixes and sevens would have obtained, they have made known to the readers of all of our best magazines. For instance, Holworthy is leaving for the Congo to find a cure for the sleeping sickness, and for himself any sickness from which one is warranted never to wake up. This is his condition because the beautiful million−heiress who is wintering at the Alexander Young Hotel in Honolulu has refused to answer his letters, cables, and appeals.

He is leaning upon the rail taking his last neck−breaking look at the Woolworth Building. The going−ashore bugle has sounded, pocket−handkerchiefs are waving; and Joe Hutton, the last visitor to leave the ship, is at the

gangway.

"Good−by, Holworthy!" he calls. "Where do you keep yourself? Haven't seen you at the club in a year!"

"Haven't been there in a year−−nor mean to!" is the ungracious reply of our hero.

"Then, for Heaven's sake," exclaims Hutton, "send some one to take your mail out of the H box! Every time I look for letters I wade through yours."

"Tear them up!" calls Holworthy. "They're bills."

Hutton now is half−way down the gangplank.

"Then your creditors," he shouts back, "must all live at the Alexander Young Hotel in Honolulu!"

That night an express train shrieking through the darkness carried with it toward San Francisco−−

In this how evident is the fine Italian hand of the God of Coincidence!

Had Hutton's name begun with an M; had the H in Hutton been silent; had he not carried to the Mauretania a steamer basket for his rich aunt; had he not resented the fact that since Holworthy's election to the Van Sturtevant Club he had ceased to visit the Grill Club−−a cure for sleeping sickness might have been discovered; but two loving hearts never would have been reunited and that story would not have been written.

Or, Mrs. Montclair, with a suit−case, is leaving her home forever to join handsome Harry Bellairs, who is at the corner with a racing−car and all the money of the bank of which he has been cashier. As the guilty woman places the farewell letter against the pin−cushion where her husband will be sure to find it, her infant son turns in his sleep and jabs himself with a pin. His howl of anguish resembles that of a puppy on a moonlight night. The mother recognizes her master's voice. She believes her child dying, flies to the bedside, tears up the letter, unpacks the suit−case. The next morning at breakfast her husband, reading the newspaper, exclaims aloud:

"Harry Bellairs," he cries, "has skipped with the bank's money! I always told you he was not a man you ought to know."

"His manner to me," she says severely, "always was that of a perfect gentleman."

Again coincidence gets the credit. Had not the child tossed−−had not at the critical moment the safety pin proved untrue to the man who invented it−−that happy family reunion would have been impossible.

Or, it might be told this way:

Old Man McCurdy, the Pig−Iron King, forbids his daughter Gwendolyn even to think of marrying poor but honest Beef Walters, the baseball pitcher, and denies him his house. The lovers plan an elopement. At midnight Beef is to stand at the tradesman's entrance and whistle "Waiting at the Church"; and down the silent stairs Gwendolyn is to steal into his arms. At the very same hour the butler has planned with the policeman on fixed post to steal Mother McCurdy's diamonds and pass them to a brother of the policeman, who is to wait at the tradesman's entrance and whistle "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee."

This sounds improbable−−especially that the policeman would allow even his brother to get the diamonds before he did; but, with the God of Coincidence on the job, you shall see that it will all come out right. Beef is first at the door. He whistles. The butler−−an English butler−−with no ear for music, shoves into his hands tiaras and

sunbursts. Honest Beef hands over the butler to the policeman and the tiaras to Mother McCurdy.

"How can I reward you?" exclaims the grateful woman.

"Your daughter's hand!"

Again the God of Coincidence scores and Beef Walters is credited with an assist. And for preventing the robbery McCurdy has the peg−post cop made a captain; thus enabling him to wear diamonds of his own and raising him above the need of taking them from others.

These examples of what the god can do are mere fiction; the story that comes now really happened. It also is a story of coincidence. It shows how this time the long arm was stretched out to make two young people happy; it again illustrates that, in the instruments he chooses, the God of Coincidence works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. This time the tool he used was a hat of green felt.

The story really should be called "The Man in the Green Hat."

At St. James's Palace the plenipotentiaries of the Allies and of Turkey were trying to bring peace to Europe; in Russell Square, Bloomsbury, Sam Lowell was trying to arrange a peace with Mrs. Wroxton, his landlady. The ultimatum of the Allies was: "Adrianople or fight!" The last words of Mrs. Wroxton were: "Five pounds or move out!"

Sam did not have five pounds. He was a stranger in London; he had lost his position in New York and that very morning had refused to marry the girl he loved−−Polly Seward, the young woman the Sunday papers called "The Richest Girl in America."

For any man−−for one day−−that would seem to be trouble enough; but to the Sultan of Turkey that day brought troubles far more serious. And, as his losses were Sam's gain, we must follow the troubles of the Sultan. Until, with the aid of a green felt hat, the God of Coincidence turns the misfortunes of the Sultan into a fortune for Sam, Sam must wait.

From the first days of the peace conference it was evident there was a leak. The negotiations had been opened under a most solemn oath of secrecy. As to the progress of the conference, only such information or misinformation−−if the diplomats considered it better− as was mutually agreed upon by the plenipotentiaries was given to a waiting world. But each morning, in addition to the official report of the proceedings of the day previous, one newspaper, the Times, published an account which differed from that in every other paper, and which undoubtedly came from the inside. In details it was far more generous than the official report; it gave names, speeches, arguments; it described the wordy battles of the diplomats, the concessions, bluffs, bargains.

After three days the matter became public scandal. At first, the plenipotentiaries declared the events described in the Times were invented each evening in the office of the Times; but the proceedings of the day following showed the public this was not so.

Some one actually present at the conference was telling tales out of school. These tales were cabled to Belgrade, Sofia, Athens, Constantinople; and hourly from those capitals the plenipotentiaries were assailed by advice, abuse, and threats. The whole world began to take part in their negotiations; from every side they were attacked; from home by the Young Turks, or the On to Constantinople Party; and from abroad by peace societies, religious bodies, and chambers of commerce. Even the armies in the field, instead of waiting for the result of their deliberations, told them what to do, and that unless they did it they would better remain in exile. To make matters worse, in every stock exchange gambling on the news furnished by the Times threatened the financial peace of Europe. To work under such conditions of publicity was impossible. The delegates appealed to their hosts of the

British Foreign Office.

Unless the chiel amang them takin' notes was discovered and the leak stopped, they declared the conference must end. Spurred on by questions in Parliament, by appeals from the great banking world, by criticisms not altogether unselfish from the other newspapers, the Foreign Office surrounded St. James's Palace and the office of the Times with an army of spies. Every secretary, stenographer, and attendant at the conference was under surveillance, his past record looked into, his present comings and goings noted. Even the plenipotentiaries themselves were watched; and employees of the Times were secretly urged to sell the government the man who was selling secrets to them. But those who were willing to be "urged" did not know the man; those who did know him refused to be bought.

By a process of elimination suspicion finally rested upon one Adolf Hertz, a young Hungarian scholar who spoke and wrote all the mongrel languages of the Balkans; who for years, as a copying clerk and translator, had been employed by the Foreign Office, and who now by it had been lent to the conference. For the reason that when he lived in Budapest he was a correspondent of the Times, the police, in seeking for the leak, centred their attention upon Hertz. But, though every moment he was watched, and though Hertz knew he was watched, no present link between him and the Times had been established− and this in spite of the fact that the hours during which it was necessary to keep him under closest observation were few. Those were the hours between the closing of the conference, and midnight, when the provincial edition of the Times went to press. For the remainder of the day, so far as the police cared, Hertz could go to the devil! But for those hours, except when on his return from the conference he locked himself in his lodgings in Jermyn Street, detectives were always at his elbow.

It was supposed that it was during this brief period when he was locked in his room that he wrote his report; but how, later, he conveyed it to the Times no one could discover. In his rooms there was no telephone; his doors and windows were openly watched; and after leaving his rooms his movements were−−as they always had been−−methodical, following a routine open to observation. His programme was invariably the same. Each night at seven from his front door he walked west. At Regent Street he stopped to buy an evening paper from the aged news−vender at the corner; he then crossed Piccadilly Circus into Coventry Street, skirted Leicester Square, and at the end of Green Street entered Pavoni's Italian restaurant. There he took his seat always at the same table, hung his hat always on the same brass peg, ordered the same Hungarian wine, and read the same evening paper. He spoke to no one; no one spoke to him.

When he had finished his coffee and his cigarette he returned to his lodgings, and there he remained until he rang for breakfast. From the time at which he left his home until his return to it he spoke to only two persons−−the news−vender to whom he handed a halfpenny; the waiter who served him the regular table d'hote dinner−−between whom and Hertz nothing passed but three and six for the dinner and sixpence for the waiter himself.

Each evening, the moment he moved into the street a plain−clothes man fell into step beside him; another followed at his heels; and from across the street more plain−clothes men kept their eyes on every one approaching him in front or from the rear. When he bought his evening paper six pairs of eyes watched him place a halfpenny in the hand of the news−vender, and during the entire time of his stay in Pavoni's every mouthful he ate was noted− − every direction he gave the waiter was overheard.

Of this surveillance Hertz was well aware. To have been ignorant of it would have argued him blind and imbecile. But he showed no resentment. With eyes grave and untroubled, he steadily regarded his escort; but not by the hastening of a footstep or the acceleration of a gesture did he admit that by his audience he was either distressed or embarrassed. That was the situation on the morning when the Treaty of London was to be signed and sealed.

In spite of the publicity given to the conference by the Times, however, what the terms of the treaty might be no one knew. If Adrianople were surrendered; if Salonika were given to Greece; if Servia obtained a right−of−way to

the Adriatic−−peace was assured; but, should the Young Turks refuse−−should Austria prove obstinate− not only would the war continue, but the Powers would be involved, and that greater, more awful war−−the war dreaded by all the Christian world−−might turn Europe into a slaughter−house.

Would Turkey and Austria consent and peace ensue? Would they refuse and war follow? That morning those were the questions on the lips of every man in London save one. He was Sam Lowell; and he was asking himself another and more personal question: "How can I find five pounds and pacify Mrs. Wroxton?"

He had friends in New York who would cable him money to pay his passage home; but he did not want to go home. He preferred to starve in London than be vulgarly rich anywhere else. That was not because he loved London, but because above everything in life he loved Polly Seward−−and Polly Seward was in London. He had begun to love her on class day of his senior year; and, after his father died and left him with no one else to care for, every day he had loved her more.

Until a month before he had been in the office of Wetmore & Hastings, a smart brokers' firm in Wall Street. He had obtained the position not because he was of any use to Wetmore &Hastings, but because the firm was the one through which his father had gambled the money that would otherwise have gone to Sam. In giving Sam a job the firm thought it was making restitution. Sam thought it was making the punishment fit the crime; for he knew nothing of the ways of Wall Street, and having to learn them bored him extremely. He wanted to write stories for the magazines. He wanted to bind them in a book and dedicate them to Polly. And in this wish editors humored him−−but not so many editors or with such enthusiasm as to warrant his turning his back on Wall Street.

That he did later when, after a tour of the world that had begun from the San Francisco side, Polly Seward and her mother and Senator Seward reached Naples. There Senator Seward bought old Italian furniture for his office on the twenty−fifth floor of the perfectly new Seward building. Mrs. Seward tried to buy for Polly a prince nearly as old as the furniture, and Polly bought picture post−cards which she sent to Sam.

Polly had been absent six months, and Sam's endurance had been so timed as just to last out the half−year. It was not guaranteed to withstand any change of schedule, and the two months' delay in Italy broke his heart. It could not run overtime on a starvation diet of post−cards; so when he received a cable reading, "Address London, Claridge's," his heart told him it could no longer wait− and he resigned his position and sailed.

On her trip round the world Polly had learned many things. She was observant, alert, intent on asking questions, hungering for facts. And a charming young woman who seeks facts rather than attention will never lack either. But of all the facts Polly collected, the one of surpassing interest, and which gave her the greatest happiness, was that she could not live without Sam Lowell. She had suspected this, and it was partly to make sure that she had consented to the trip round the world. Now that she had made sure, she could not too soon make up for the days lost. Sam had spent his money, and he either must return to New York and earn more or remain near Polly and starve. It was an embarrassing choice. Polly herself made the choice even more difficult.

One morning when they walked in St. James's Park to feed the ducks she said to him:

"Sam, when are we to be married?"

When for three years a man has been begging a girl to marry him, and she consents at the exact moment when, without capitulation to all that he holds honorable, he cannot marry anybody, his position deserves sympathy.

"My dear one," exclaimed the unhappy youth, "you make me the most miserable of men! I can't marry! I'm in an awful place! If I married you now I'd be a crook! It isn't a question of love in a cottage, with bread and cheese. If cottages were renting for a dollar a year I couldn't rent one for ten minutes. I haven't cheese enough to bait a mouse−trap. It's terrible! But we have got to wait."

"Wait!" cried Polly. "I thought you had been waiting! Have I been away too long? Do you love some one else?"

"Don't be ridiculous!" said Sam crossly. "Look at me," he commanded, "and tell me whom I love!"

Polly did not take time to look.

"But I," she protested, "have so much money!"

"It's not your money," explained Sam. "It's your mother's money or your father's, and both of them dislike me. They even have told me so. Your mother wants you to marry that Italian; and your father, having half the money in America, naturally wants to marry you to the other half. If I were selfish and married you I'd be all the things they think I am."

"You are selfish!" cried Polly. "You're thinking of yourself and of what people will say, instead of how to make me happy. What's the use of money if you can't buy what you want?"

"Are you suggesting you can buy me?" demanded Sam.

"Surely," said Polly−−"if I can't get you any other way. And you may name your own price, too."

"When I am making enough to support myself without sponging on you," explained Sam, "you can have as many millions as you like; but I must first make enough to keep me alive. A man who can't do that isn't fit to marry."

"How much," demanded Polly, "do you need to keep you alive? Maybe I could lend it to you."

Sam was entirely serious.

"Three thousand a year," he said.

Polly exclaimed indignantly.

"I call that extremely extravagant!" she cried. "If we wait until you earn three thousand a year we may be dead. Do you expect to earn that writing stories?"

"I can try," said Sam−−"or I will rob a bank."

Polly smiled upon him appealingly.

"You know how I love your stories," she said, "and I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world; but, Sam dear, I think you had better rob a bank!"

Addressing an imaginary audience, supposedly of men, Sam exclaimed:

"Isn't that just like a woman? She wouldn't care," he protested, "how I got the money!"

Polly smiled cheerfully.

"Not if I got you!" she said. In extenuation, also, she addressed an imaginary audience, presumably of women. "That's how I love him!" she exclaimed. "And he asks me to wait! Isn't that just like a man? Seriously," she went on, "if we just go ahead and get married father would have to help us. He'd make you a vice−president or something."

At this suggestion Sam expressed his extreme displeasure.

"The last time I talked to your father," he said, "I was in a position to marry, and I told him I wanted to marry you. What he said to that was: 'Don't be an ass!' Then I told him he was unintelligent−− and I told him why. First, because he could not see that a man might want to marry his daughter in spite of her money; and second, because he couldn't see that her money wouldn't make up to a man for having him for a father−in−law."

"Did you have to tell him that?" asked Polly.

"Some one had to tell him," said Sam gloomily. "Anyway, as a source of revenue father is eliminated. I have still one chance in London. If that fails I must go home. I've been promised a job in New York reporting for a Wall Street paper−−and I'll write stories on the side. I've cabled for money, and if the London job falls through I shall sail Wednesday."

"Wednesday!" cried Polly. "When you say things like 'Wednesday' you make the world so dark! You must stay here! It has been such a long six months; and before you earn three thousand dollars I shall be an old, old maid. But if you get work here we could see each other every day."

They were in the Sewards' sitting−room at Claridge's. Sam took up the desk telephone.

"In London," he said, "my one best and only bet is a man named Forsythe, who helps edit the Pall Mall. I'll telephone him now. If he can promise me even a shilling a day I'll stay on and starve−− but I'll be near you. If Forsythe fails me I shall sail Wednesday."

The telephone call found Forsythe at the Pall Mall office. He would be charmed to advise Mr. Lowell on a matter of business. Would he that night dine with Mr. Lowell? He would. And might he suggest that they dine at Pavoni's? He had a special reason for going there, and the dinner would cost only three and six.

"That's reason enough!" Sam told him.

"And don't forget," said Polly when, for the fifth time, Sam rose to go, "that after your dinner you are to look for me at the Duchess of Deptford's dance. I asked her for a card and you will find it at your lodgings. Everybody will be there; but it is a big place−full of dark corners where we can hide."

"Don't hide until I arrive," said Sam. "I shall be very late, as I shall have to walk. After I pay for Forsythe's dinner and for white gloves for your dance I shall not be in a position to hire a taxi. But maybe I shall bring good news. Maybe Forsythe will give me the job. If he does we will celebrate in champagne. "

"You will let me at least pay for the champagne?" begged Polly.

"No," said Sam firmly−−"the duchess will furnish that."

When Sam reached his lodgings in Russell Square, which he approached with considerable trepidation, he found Mrs. Wroxton awaiting him. But her attitude no longer was hostile. On the contrary, as she handed him a large, square envelope, decorated with the strawberry leaves of a duke, her manner was humble.

Sam opened the envelope and, with apparent carelessness, stuck it over the fireplace.

"About that back rent," he said; "I have cabled for money, and as soon−−"

"I know," said Mrs. Wroxton. "I read the cable." She was reading the card of invitation also. "There's no hurry, sir," protested Mrs. Wroxton. "Any of my young gentlemen who is made welcome at Deptford House is made welcome here!"

"Credit, Mrs. Wroxton," observed Sam, "is better than cash. If you have only cash you spend it and nothing remains. But with credit you can continue indefinitely to−to−"

"So you can!" exclaimed Mrs. Wroxton enthusiastically. "Stay as long as you like, Mr. Lowell."

At Pavoni's Sam found Forsythe already seated and, with evident interest, observing the scene of gayety before him. The place was new to Sam, and after the darkness and snow of the streets it appeared both cheerful and resplendent. It was brilliantly lighted; a ceiling of gay panels picked out with gold, and red plush sofas, backed against walls hung with mirrors and faced by rows of marble−topped tables, gave it an air of the Continent.

Sam surrendered his hat and coat to the waiter. The hat was a soft Alpine one of green felt. The waiter hung it where Sam could see it, on one of many hooks that encircled a gilded pillar.

After two courses had been served Forsythe said:

"I hope you don't object to this place. I had a special reason for wishing to be here on this particular night. I wanted to be in at the death!"

"Whose death?" asked Sam. "Is the dinner as bad as that?"

Forsythe leaned back against the mirror behind them and, bringing his shoulder close to Sam's, spoke in a whisper.

"As you know," he said, "to−day the delegates sign the Treaty of London. It still must receive the signatures of the Sultan and the three kings; and they will sign it. But until they do, what the terms of the treaty are no one can find out."

"I'll bet the Times finds out!" said Sam.

"That's it!" returned Forsythe. "Hertz, the man who is supposed to be selling the secrets of the conference to the Times, dines here. To−night is his last chance. If to−night he can slip the Times a copy of the Treaty of London without being caught, and the Times has the courage to publish it, it will be the biggest newspaper sensation of modern times; and it will either cause a financial panic all over Europe−−or prevent one. The man they suspect is facing us. Don't look now, but in a minute you will see him sitting alone at a table on the right of the middle pillar. The people at the tables nearest him−−even the women−−are detectives. His waiter is in the employ of Scotland Yard. The maitre d'hotel, whom you will see always hovering round his table, is a police agent lent by Bulgaria. For the Allies are even more anxious to stop the leak than we are. We are interested only as their hosts; with them it is a matter of national life or death. A week ago one of our own inspectors tipped me off to what is going on, and every night since then I've dined here, hoping to see something suspicious."

"Have you?" asked Sam.

"Only this," whispered Forsythe−−"on four different nights I've recognized men I know are on the staff of the Times, and on the other nights men I don't know may have been here. But after all that proves nothing, for this place is a resort of newspaper writers and editors−−and the Times men's being here may have been only a coincidence."

"And Hertz?" asked Sam−−"what does he do?"

The Englishman exclaimed with irritation.

"Just what you see him doing now!" he protested. "He eats his dinner! Look at him!" he commanded. "Of all in the room he's the least concerned."

Sam looked and saw the suspected Adolf Hertz dangling a mass of macaroni on the end of his fork. Sam watched him until it disappeared.

"Maybe that's a signal!" suggested Sam. "Maybe everything he does is part of a cipher code! He gives the signals and the Times men read them and write them down."

"A man would have a fine chance to write anything down in this room!" said Forsythe.

"But maybe," persisted Sam, "when he makes those strange movements with his lips he is talking to a confederate who can read the lip language. The confederate writes it down at the office and−−"

"Fantastic and extremely improbable!" commented Forsythe. "But, nevertheless, the fact remains, the fellow does communicate with some one from the Times; and the police are positive he does it here and that he is doing it now!"

The problem that so greatly disturbed his friend would have more deeply interested Sam had the solving of his own trouble been less imperative. That alone filled his mind. And when the coffee was served and the cigars lit, without beating about the bush Sam asked Forsythe bluntly if on his paper a rising and impecunious genius could find a place. With even less beating about the bush Forsythe assured him he could not. The answer was final, and the disappointment was so keen that Sam soon begged his friend to excuse him, paid his bill, and rose to depart.

"Better wait!" urged Forsythe. "You'll find nothing so good out at a music−hall. This is Houdini getting out of his handcuffs before an audience entirely composed of policemen."

Sam shook his head gloomily.

"I have a few handcuffs of my own to get rid of," he said, "and it makes me poor company."

He bade his friend good night and, picking his way among the tables, moved toward the pillar on which the waiter had hung his hat. The pillar was the one beside which Hertz was sitting, and as Sam approached the man he satisfied his curiosity by a long look. Under the glance Hertz lowered his eyes and fixed them upon his newspaper. Sam retrieved his hat and left the restaurant.

His mind immediately was overcast. He remembered his disappointment and that the parting between himself and Polly was now inevitable. Without considering his direction he turned toward Charing Cross Road. But he was not long allowed to meditate undisturbed.

He had only crossed the little street that runs beside the restaurant and passed into the shadow of the National Gallery when, at the base of the Irving Memorial, from each side he was fiercely attacked. A young man of eminently respectable appearance kicked his legs from under him, and another of equally impeccable exterior made an honest effort to knock off his head.

Sam plunged heavily to the sidewalk. As he sprawled forward his hat fell under him and in his struggle to rise was hidden by the skirts of his greatcoat. That, also, he had fallen heavily upon his hat with both knees Sam did not

know. The strange actions of his assailants enlightened him. To his surprise, instead of continuing their assault or attempting a raid upon his pockets, he found them engaged solely in tugging at the hat. And so preoccupied were they in this that, though still on his knees, Sam was able to land some lusty blows before a rush of feet caused the young men to leap to their own and, pursued by several burly forms, disappear in the heart of the traffic.

Sam rose and stood unsteadily. He found himself surrounded by all of those who but a moment before he had left contentedly dining at Pavoni's. In an excited circle waiters and patrons of the restaurant, both men and women, stood in the falling snow, bareheaded, coatless, and cloakless, staring at him. Forsythe pushed them aside and took Sam by the arm.

"What happened?" demanded Sam.

"You ought to know," protested Forsythe. "You started it! The moment you left the restaurant two men grabbed their hats and jumped after you; a dozen other men, without waiting for hats, jumped after them. The rest of us got out just as the two men and the detectives dived into the traffic."

A big man, with an air of authority, drew Sam to one side.

"Did they take anything from you, sir?" he asked.

"I've nothing they could take," said Sam. "And they didn't try to find out. They just knocked me down."

Forsythe turned to the big man.

"This gentleman is a friend of mine, inspector," he said. "He is a stranger in town and was at Pavoni's only by accident."

"We might need his testimony," suggested the official.

Sam gave his card to the inspector and then sought refuge in a taxicab. For the second time he bade his friend good night.

"And when next we dine," he called to him in parting, "choose a restaurant where the detective service is quicker!"

Three hours later, brushed and repaired by Mrs. Wroxton, and again resplendent, Sam sat in a secluded corner of Deptford House and bade Polly a long farewell. It was especially long, owing to the unusual number of interruptions; for it was evident that Polly had many friends in London, and that not to know the Richest One in America and her absurd mother, and the pompous, self−satisfied father, argued oneself nobody. But finally the duchess carried Polly off to sup with her; and as the duchess did not include Sam in her invitation−−at least not in such a way that any one could notice it−− Sam said good−night−−but not before he had arranged a meeting with Polly for eleven that same morning. If it was clear, the meeting was to be at the duck pond in St. James's Park; if it snowed, at the National Gallery in front of the "Age of Innocence."

After robbing the duchess of three suppers, Sam descended to the hall and from an attendant received his coat and hat, which latter the attendant offered him with the inside of the hat showing. Sam saw in it the trademark of a foreign maker.

"That's not my hat," said Sam.

The man expressed polite disbelief.

"I found it rolled up in the pocket of your greatcoat, sir," he protested.

The words reminded Sam that on arriving at Deptford House he had twisted the hat into a roll and stuffed it into his overcoat pocket.

"Quite right," said Sam. But it was not his hat; and with some hope of still recovering his property he made way for other departing guests and at one side waited.

For some clew to the person he believed was now wearing his hat, Sam examined the one in his hand. Just showing above the inside band was something white. Thinking it might be the card of the owner, Sam removed it. It was not a card, but a long sheet of thin paper, covered with typewriting, and many times folded. Sam read the opening paragraph. Then he backed suddenly toward a great chair of gold and velvet, and fell into it.

He was conscious the attendants in pink stockings were regarding him askance; that, as they waited in the drafty hall for cars and taxis, the noble lords in stars and ribbons, the noble ladies in tiaras and showing much−fur−lined galoshes, were discussing his strange appearance. They might well believe the youth was ill; they might easily have considered him intoxicated. Outside rose the voices of servants and police calling the carriages. Inside other servants echoed them.

"The Duchess of Sutherland's car!" they chanted. "Mrs. Trevor Hill's carriage! The French ambassador's carriage! Baron Haussmann's car!"

Like one emerging from a trance, Sam sprang upright. A little fat man, with mild blue eyes and curly red hair, was shyly and with murmured apologies pushing toward the exit. Before he gained it Sam had wriggled a way to his elbow.

"Baron Haussmann!" he stammered. "I must speak to you. It's a matter of gravest importance. Send away your car," he begged, "and give me five minutes."

The eyes of the little fat man opened wide in surprise, almost in alarm. He stared at Sam reprovingly.

"Impossible!" he murmured. "I−−I do not know you."

"This is a letter of introduction," said Sam. Into the unwilling fingers of the banker he thrust the folded paper. Bending over him, he whispered in his ear. "That," said Sam, "is the Treaty of London!"

The alarm of Baron Haussmann increased to a panic.

"Impossible!" he gasped. And, with reproach, he repeated: "I do not know you, sir! I do not know you!"

At that moment, towering above the crush, appeared the tall figure of Senator Seward. The rich man of the New World and the rich man of Europe knew each other only by sight. But, upon seeing Sam in earnest converse with the great banker, the senator believed that without appearing to seek it he might through Sam effect a meeting. With a hearty slap on the shoulder he greeted his fellow countryman.

"Halloo, Sam!" he cried genially. "You walking home with me?"

Sam did not even turn his head.

"No!" he snapped. "I'm busy. Go 'way!"

Crimson, the senator disappeared. Baron Haussmann regarded the young stranger with amazed interest.

"You know him!" he protested. "He called you Sam!"

"Know him?" cried Sam impatiently. "I've got to know him! He's going to be my father−in−law."

The fingers of the rich man clutched the folded paper as the claws of a parrot cling to the bars of his cage. He let his sable coat slip into the hands of a servant; he turned back toward the marble staircase.

"Come!" he commanded.

Sam led him to the secluded corner Polly and he had left vacant and told his story.

"So, it is evident," concluded Sam, "that each night some one in the service of the Times dined at Pavoni's, and that his hat was the same sort of hat as the one worn by Hertz; and each night, inside the lining of his hat, Hertz hid the report of that day's proceedings. And when the Times man left the restaurant he exchanged hats with Hertz. But to−night−−I got Hertz's hat and with it the treaty!"

In perplexity the blue eyes of the little great man frowned.

"It is a remarkable story," he said.

"You mean you don't believe me!" retorted Sam. "If I had financial standing−−if I had credit−−if I were not a stranger− you would not hesitate."

Baron Haussmann neither agreed nor contradicted. He made a polite and deprecatory gesture. Still in doubt, he stared at the piece of white paper. Still deep in thought, he twisted and creased between his fingers the Treaty of London!

Returning with the duchess from supper, Polly caught sight of Sam and, with a happy laugh, ran toward him. Seeing he was not alone, she halted and waved her hand.

"Don't forget!" she called. "At eleven!"

She made a sweet and lovely picture. Sam rose and bowed.

"I'll be there at ten," he answered.

With his mild blue eyes the baron followed Polly until she had disappeared. Then he turned and smiled at Sam.

"Permit me," he said, "to offer you my felicitations. Your young lady is very beautiful and very good." Sam bowed his head. "If she trusts you," murmured the baron, "I think I can trust you too."

"How wonderful is credit!" exclaimed Sam. "I was just saying so to my landlady. If you have only cash you spend it and nothing remains. But with credit you can−−"

"How much," interrupted the banker, "do you want for this?"

Sam returned briskly to the business of the moment.

"To be your partner," he said−−"to get half of what you make out of it."

The astonished eyes of the baron were large with wonder. Again he reproved Sam.

"What I shall make out of it?" he demanded incredulously. "Do you know how much I shall make out of it?"

"I cannot even guess," said Sam; "but I want half."

The baron smiled tolerantly.

"And how," he asked, "could you possibly know what I give you is really half?"

In his turn, Sam made a deprecatory gesture.

"Your credit," said Sam, "is good!"

That morning, after the walk in St. James's Park, when Sam returned with Polly to Claridge's, they encountered her father in the hall. Mindful of the affront of the night before, he greeted Sam only with a scowl.

"Senator," cried Sam happily, "you must be the first to hear the news! Polly and I are going into partnership. We are to be married."

This time Senator Seward did not trouble himself even to tell Sam he was an ass. He merely grinned cynically.

"Is that all your news?" he demanded with sarcasm.

"No," said Sam−−"I am going into partnership with Baron Haussmann too!"

THE BURIED TREASURE OF COBRE

Young Everett at last was a minister plenipotentiary. In London as third secretary he had splashed around in the rain to find the ambassador's carriage. In Rome as a second secretary he had served as a clearing−house for the Embassy's visiting−cards; and in Madrid as first secretary he had acted as interpreter for a minister who, though valuable as a national chairman, had much to learn of even his own language. But although surrounded by all the wonders and delights of Europe, although he walked, talked, wined, and dined with statesmen and court beauties, Everett was not happy. He was never his own master. Always he answered the button pressed by the man higher up. Always over him loomed his chief; always, for his diligence and zeal, his chief received credit.

As His Majesty's naval attache put it sympathetically, "Better be a top−side man on a sampan than First Luff on the Dreadnought. Don't be another man's right hand. Be your own right hand." Accordingly when the State Department offered to make him minister to the Republic of Amapala, Everett gladly deserted the flesh−pots of Europe, and, on mule−back over trails in the living rock, through mountain torrents that had never known the shadow of a bridge, through swamp and jungle, rode sunburnt and saddle−sore into his inheritance.

When giving him his farewell instructions, the Secretary of State had not attempted to deceive him.

"Of all the smaller republics of Central America," he frankly told him, "Amapala is the least desirable, least civilized, least acceptable. It offers an ambitious young diplomat no chance. But once a minister, always a minister. Having lifted you out of the secretary class we can't demote you. Your days of deciphering cablegrams are over, and if you don't die of fever, of boredom, or brandy, call us up in a year or two and we will see what we can do."

Everett regarded the Secretary blankly.

"Has the department no interest in Amapala?" he begged. "Is there nothing you want there?"

"There is one thing we very much want," returned the Secretary, "but we can't get it. We want a treaty to extradite criminals."

The young minister laughed confidently.

"Why!" he exclaimed, "that should be easy."

The Secretary smiled.

"You have our full permission to get it," he said. "This department," he explained, "under three administrations has instructed four ministers to arrange such a treaty. The Bankers' Association wants it; the Merchants' Protective Alliance wants it. Amapala is the only place within striking distance of our country where a fugitive is safe. It is the only place where a dishonest cashier, swindler, or felon can find refuge. Sometimes it seems almost as though when a man planned a crime he timed it exactly so as to catch the boat for Amapala. And, once there, we can't lay our hands on him; and, what's more, we can't lay our hands on the money he takes with him. I have no right to make a promise," said the great man, "but the day that treaty is signed you can sail for a legation in Europe. Do I make myself clear?"

"So clear, sir," cried Everett, laughing, "that if I don't arrange that treaty I will remain in Amapala until I do."

"Four of your predecessors," remarked the Secretary, "made exactly the same promise, but none of them got us the treaty."

"Probably none of them remained in Amapala, either," retorted Everett.

"Two did," corrected the Secretary; "as you ride into Camaguay you see their tombstones."

Everett found the nine−day mule−ride from the coast to the capital arduous, but full of interest. After a week at his post he appreciated that until he left it and made the return journey nothing of equal interest was again likely to occur. For life in Camaguay, the capital of Amapala, proved to be one long, dreamless slumber. In the morning each of the inhabitants engaged in a struggle to get awake; after the second breakfast he ceased struggling, and for a siesta sank into his hammock. After dinner, at nine o'clock, he was prepared to sleep in earnest, and went to bed. The official life as explained to Everett by Garland, the American consul, was equally monotonous. When President Mendoza was not in the mountains deer−hunting, or suppressing a revolution, each Sunday he invited the American minister to dine at the palace. In return His Excellency expected once a week to be invited to breakfast with the minister. He preferred that the activities of that gentleman should go no further. Life in the diplomatic circle was even less strenuous. Everett was the doyen of the diplomatic corps because he was the only diplomat. All other countries were represented by consuls who were commission merchants and shopkeepers. They were delighted at having among them a minister plenipotentiary. When he took pity on them and invited them to tea, which invitations he delivered in person to each consul at the door of each shop, the entire diplomatic corps, as the consuls were pleased to describe themselves, put up the shutters, put on their official full−dress uniforms and arrived in a body. The first week at his post Everett spent in reading the archives of the legation. They were most discouraging. He found that for the sixteen years prior to his arrival the only events reported to the department by his predecessors were revolutions and the refusals of successive presidents to consent to a treaty of extradition. On that point all Amapalans were in accord. Though overnight the government changed hands, though presidents gave way to dictators, and dictators to military governors, the national policy of Amapala continued to be "No extradition!" The ill success of those who had preceded him appalled Everett. He had promised himself by a brilliant assault to secure the treaty and claim the legation in Europe. But the record of sixteen years of failure caused him to alter his strategy. Instead of an attack he prepared for a siege. He unpacked

his books, placed the portrait of his own President over the office desk, and proceeded to make friends with his fellow exiles.

Of the foreign colony in Camaguay some fifty were Americans, and from the rest of the world they were as hopelessly separated as the crew of a light−ship. From the Pacific they were cut off by the Cordilleras, from the Caribbean by a nine−day mule−ride. To the north and south, jungle, forests, swamp−lands, and mountains hemmed them in.

Of the fifty Americans, one−half were constantly on the trail; riding to the coast to visit their plantations, or into the mountains to inspect their mines. When Everett arrived, of those absent the two most important were Chester Ward and Colonel Goddard. Indeed, so important were these gentlemen that Everett was made to understand that, until they approved, his recognition as the American minister was in a manner temporary.

Chester Ward, or "Chet," as the exiles referred to him, was one of the richest men in Amapala, and was engaged in exploring the ruins of the lost city of Cobre, which was a one−hour ride from the capital. Ward possessed the exclusive right to excavate that buried city and had held it against all comers. The offers of American universities, of archaeological and geographical societies that also wished to dig up the ancient city and decipher the hieroglyphs on her walls, were met with a curt rebuff. That work, the government of Amapala would reply, was in the trained hands of Senor Chester Ward. In his chosen effort the government would not disturb him, nor would it permit others coming in at the eleventh hour to rob him of his glory. This Everett learned from the consul, Garland.

"Ward and Colonel Goddard," the consul explained, "are two of five countrymen of ours who run the American colony, and, some say, run the government. The others are Mellen, who has the asphalt monopoly; Jackson, who is building the railroads, and Major Feiberger, of the San Jose silver−mines. They hold monopolies and pay President Mendoza ten per cent of the earnings, and, on the side, help him run the country. Of the five, the Amapalans love Goddard best, because he's not trying to rob them. Instead, he wants to boost Amapala. His ideas are perfectly impracticable, but he doesn't know that, and neither do they. He's a kind of Colonel Mulberry Sellers and a Southerner. Not the professional sort, that fight elevator−boys because they're colored, and let off rebel yells in rathskellers when a Hungarian band plays 'Dixie,' but the sort you read about and so seldom see. He was once State Treasurer of Alabama."

"What's he doing down here?" asked the minister.

"Never the same thing two months together," the consul told him; "railroads, mines, rubber. He says all Amapala needs is developing."

As men who can see a joke even when it is against themselves, the two exiles smiled ruefully.

"That's all it needs," said Everett.

For a moment the consul regarded him thoughtfully.

"I might as well tell you," he said, "you'll learn it soon enough anyway, that the men who will keep you from getting your treaty are these five, especially old man Goddard and Ward."

Everett exclaimed indignantly:

"Why should they interfere?"

"Because," explained the consul, "they are fugitives from justice, and they don't want to go home. Ward is wanted for forgery or some polite crime, I don't know which. And Colonel Goddard for appropriating the State funds of Alabama. Ward knew what he was doing and made a lot out of it. He's still rich. No one's weeping over him. Goddard's case is different. He was imposed on and made a catspaw. When he was State treasurer the men who appointed him came to him one night and said they must have some of the State's funds to show a bank examiner in the morning. They appealed to him on the ground of friendship, as the men who'd given him his job. They would return the money the next evening. Goddard believed they would. They didn't, and when some one called for a show−down the colonel was shy about fifty thousand dollars of the State's money. He lost his head, took the boat out of Mobile to Porto Cortez, and hid here. He's been here twenty years and all the Amapalans love him. He's the adopted father of their country. They're so afraid he'll be taken back and punished that they'll never consent to an extradition treaty even if the other Americans, Mellen, Jackson, and Feiberger, weren't paying them big money not to consent. President Mendoza himself told me that as long as Colonel Goddard honored his country by remaining in it, he was his guest, and he would never agree to extradition. 'I could as soon,' he said, 'sign his death−warrant.'"

Everett grinned dismally.

"That's rather nice of them," he said, "but it's hard on me. But," he demanded, "why Ward? What has he done for Amapala? Is it because of Cobre, because of his services as an archaeologist?"

The consul glanced around the patio and dragged his chair nearer to Everett.

"This is my own dope," he whispered; "it may be wrong. Anyway, it's only for your private information."

He waited until, with a smile, Everett agreed to secrecy.

"Chet Ward," protested the consul, "is no more an archaeologist than I am! He talks well about Cobre, and he ought to, because every word he speaks is cribbed straight from Hauptmann's monograph, published in 1855. And he has dug up something at Cobre; something worth a darned sight more than stone monkeys and carved altars. But his explorations are a bluff. They're a blind to cover up what he's really after; what I think he's found!"

As though wishing to be urged, the young man paused, and Everett nodded for him to continue. He was wondering whether life in Amapala might not turn out to be more interesting than at first it had appeared, or whether Garland was not a most charming liar.

"Ward visits the ruins every month," continued Garland. "But he takes with him only two mule−drivers to cook and look after the pack−train, and he doesn't let even the drivers inside the ruins. He remains at Cobre three or four days and, to make a show, fills his saddle−bags with broken tiles and copper ornaments. He turns them over to the government, and it dumps them in the back yard of the palace. You can't persuade me that he holds his concession with that junk. He's found something else at Cobre and he shares it with Mendoza, and I believe it's gold."

The minister smiled delightedly.

"What kind of gold?

"Maybe in the rough," said the consul. "But I prefer to think it's treasure. The place is full of secret chambers, tombs, and passage−ways cut through the rock, deep under the surface. I believe Ward has stumbled on some vault where the priests used to hide their loot. I believe he's getting it out bit by bit and going shares with Mendoza."

"If that were so," ventured Everett, "why wouldn't Mendoza take it all?"

"Because Ward," explained the consul, "is the only one who knows where it is. The ruins cover two square miles. You might search for years. They tried to follow and spy on him, but Ward was too clever for them. He turned back at once. If they don't take what he gives, they get nothing. So they protect him from real explorers and from extradition. The whole thing is unfair. A real archaeologist turned up here a month ago. He had letters from the Smithsonian Institute and several big officials at Washington, but do you suppose they would let him so much as smell of Cobre? Not they! Not even when I spoke for him as consul. Then he appealed to Ward, and Ward turned him down hard. You were arriving, so he's hung on here hoping you may have more influence. His name is Peabody; he's a professor, but he's young and full of 'get there,' and he knows more about the ruins of Cobre now than Ward does after having them all to himself for two years. He's good people and I hope you'll help him."

Everett shook his head doubtfully.

"If the government has given the concession to him," he pointed out, "no matter who Ward may be, or what its motives were for giving it to him, I can't ask it to break its promise. As an American citizen Ward is as much entitled to my help−− officially−−as Professor Peabody, whatever his standing."

"Ward's a forger," protested Garland, "a fugitive from justice; and Peabody is a scholar and a gentleman. I'm not keen about dead cities myself−−this one we're in now is dead enough for me−−but if civilization is demanding to know what Cobre was like eight hundred years ago, civilization is entitled to find out, and Peabody seems the man for the job. It's a shame to turn him down for a gang of grafters."

"Tell him to come and talk to me," said the minister.

"He rode over to the ruins of Copan last week," explained Garland, "where the Harvard expedition is. But he's coming back to−morrow on purpose to see you."

The consul had started toward the door when he suddenly returned.

"And there's some one else coming to see you," he said. "Some one," he added anxiously, "you want to treat right. That's Monica Ward. She's Chester Ward's sister, and you mustn't get her mixed up with anything I told you about her brother. She's coming to ask you to help start a Red Cross Society. She was a volunteer nurse in the hospital in the last two revolutions, and what she saw makes her want to be sure she won't see it again. She's taught the native ladies the 'first aid' drill, and they expect you to be honorary president of the society. You'd better accept."

Shaking his head, Garland smiled pityingly upon the new minister.

"You've got a swell chance to get your treaty," he declared. "Monica is another one who will prevent it."

Everett sighed patiently.

"What," he demanded, "might her particular crime be; murder, shoplifting, treason−−"

"If her brother had to leave this country," interrupted Garland, "she'd leave with him. And the people don't want that. Her pull is the same as old man Goddard's. Everybody loves him and everybody loves her. I love her," exclaimed the consul cheerfully; "the President loves her, the sisters in the hospital, the chain−gang in the street, the washerwomen in the river, the palace guard, everybody in this flea−bitten, God−forsaken country loves Monica Ward−−and when you meet her you will, too."

Garland had again reached the door to the outer hall before Everett called him back.

"If it is not a leading question," asked the minister, "what little indiscretion in your life brought you to Amapala?"

Garland grinned appreciatively.

"I know they sound a queer lot," he assented, "but when you get to know 'em, you like 'em. My own trouble," he added, "was a horse. I never could see why they made such a fuss about him. He was lame when I took him."

Disregarding Garland's pleasantry, for some time His Excellency sat with his hands clasped behind his head, frowning up from the open patio into the hot, cloudless sky. On the ridge of his tiled roof a foul buzzard blinked at him from red−rimmed eyes, across the yellow wall a lizard ran for shelter, at his elbow a macaw compassing the circle of its tin prison muttered dreadful oaths. Outside, as the washerwomen beat their linen clubs upon the flat rocks of the river, the hot, stale air was spanked with sharp reports. In Camaguay theirs was the only industry, the only sign of cleanliness; and recognizing that another shirt had been thrashed into subjection and rags, Everett winced. No less visibly did his own thoughts cause him to wince. Garland he had forgotten, and he was sunk deep in self−pity. His thoughts were of London, with its world politics, its splendid traditions, its great and gracious ladies; of Paris in the spring sunshine, when he cantered through the Bois; of Madrid, with its pomp and royalty, and the gray walls of its galleries proclaiming Murillo and Velasquez. These things he had forsaken because he believed he was ambitious; and behold into what a cul−de−sac his ambition had led him! A comic−opera country that was not comic, but dead and buried from the world; a savage people, unread, unenlightened, unclean; and for society of his countrymen, pitiful derelicts in hiding from the law. In his soul he rebelled. In words he exploded bitterly.

"This is one hell of a hole, Garland," cried the diplomat. His jaws and his eyes hardened. "I'm going back to Europe. And the only way I can go is to get that treaty. I was sent here to get it. Those were my orders. And I'll get it if I have to bribe them out of my own pocket; if I have to outbid Mr. Ward, and send him and your good Colonel Goddard and all the rest of the crew to the jails where they belong!"

Garland heard him without emotion. From long residence near the equator he diagnosed the outbreak as a case of tropic choler, aggravated by nostalgia and fleas.

"I'll bet you don't," he said.

"I'll bet you your passage−money home," shouted Everett, "against my passage−money to Europe."

"Done!" said Garland. "How much time do you want−−two years?"

The diplomat exclaimed mockingly:

"Two months!"

"I win now, "said the consul. "I'll go home and pack."

The next morning his clerk told Everett that in the outer office Monica Ward awaited him.

Overnight Everett had developed a prejudice against Miss Ward. What Garland had said in her favor had only driven him the wrong way. Her universal popularity he disliked. He argued that to gain popularity one must concede and capitulate. He felt that the sister of an acknowledged crook, no matter how innocent she might be, were she a sensitive woman, would wish to efface herself. And he had found that, as a rule, women who worked in hospitals and organized societies bored him. He did not admire the militant, executive sister. He pictured Miss Ward as probably pretty, but with the coquettish effrontery of the village belle and with the pushing, "good−fellow" manners of the new school. He was prepared either to have her slap him on the back or, from

behind tilted eye−glasses, make eyes at him. He was sure she wore eye−glasses, and was large, plump, and Junoesque. With reluctance he entered the outer office. He saw, all in white, a girl so young that she was hardly more than a child, but with the tall, slim figure of a boy. Her face was lovely as the face of a violet, and her eyes were as shy. But shy not through lack of confidence in Everett, nor in any human being, but in herself. They seemed to say, "I am a very unworthy, somewhat frightened young person; but you, who are so big and generous, will overlook that, and you are going to be my friend. Indeed, I see you are my friend."

Everett stood quite still. He nodded gloomily.

"Garland was right," he exclaimed; "I do!"

The young lady was plainly distressed.

"Do what?" she stammered.

"Some day I will tell you," said the young man. "Yes," he added, without shame, "I am afraid I will." He bowed her into the inner office.

"I am sorry," apologized Monica, "but I am come to ask a favor−− two favors; one of you and one of the American minister."

Everett drew his armchair from his desk and waved Monica into it.

"I was sent here," he said, "to do exactly what you want. The last words the President addressed to me were, 'On arriving at your post report to Miss Monica Ward.'"

Fearfully, Monica perched herself on the edge of the armchair; as though for protection she clasped the broad table before her.

"The favor I want," she hastily assured him, "is not for myself."

"I am sorry," said Everett, "for it is already granted."

"You are very good," protested Monica.

"No," replied Everett, "I am only powerful. I represent ninety−five million Americans, and they are all entirely at your service. So is the army and navy."

Monica smiled and shook her head. The awe she felt was due an American minister was rapidly disappearing, and in Mr. Everett himself her confidence was increasing. The other ministers plenipotentiary she had seen at Camaguay had been old, with beards like mountain−goats, and had worn linen dusters. They always were very red in the face and very damp. Monica decided Mr. Everett also was old; she was sure he must be at least thirty−five; but in his silk pongee and pipe−clayed tennis−shoes he was a refreshing spectacle. Just to look at him turned one quite cool.

"We have a very fine line of battle−ships this morning at Guantanamo," urged Everett; "if you want one I'll cable for it."

Monica laughed softly. It was good to hear nonsense spoken. The Amapalans had never learned it, and her brother said just what he meant and no more.

"Our sailors were here once," Monica volunteered. She wanted Mr. Everett to know he was not entirely cut off from the world. "During the revolution," she explained. "We were so glad to see them; they made us all feel nearer home. They set up our flag in the plaza, and the color−guard let me photograph it, with them guarding it. And when they marched away the archbishop stood on the cathedral steps and blessed them, and we rode out along the trail to where it comes to the jungle. And then we waved good−by, and they cheered us. We all cried."

For a moment, quite unconsciously, Monica gave an imitation of how they all cried. It made the appeal of the violet eyes even more disturbing. "Don't you love our sailors?" begged Monica.

Fearful of hurting the feelings of others, she added hastily, "And, of course, our marines, too."

Everett assured her if there was one thing that meant more to him than all else, it was an American bluejacket, and next to him an American leatherneck.

It took a long time to arrange the details of the Red Cross Society. In spite of his reputation for brilliancy, it seemed to Monica Mr. Everett had a mind that plodded. For his benefit it was necessary several times to repeat the most simple proposition. She was sure his inability to fasten his attention on her League of Mercy was because his brain was occupied with problems of state. It made her feel selfish and guilty. When his visitor decided that to explain further was but to waste his valuable time and had made her third effort to go, Everett went with her. He suggested that she take him to the hospital and introduce him to the sisters. He wanted to talk to them about the Red Cross League. It was a charming walk. Every one lifted his hat to Monica; the beggars, the cab−drivers, the barefooted policemen, and the social lights of Camaguay on the sidewalks in front of the cafes rose and bowed.

"It is like walking with royalty!" exclaimed Everett.

While at the hospital he talked to the Mother Superior−−his eyes followed Monica. As she moved from cot to cot he noted how the younger sisters fluttered happily around her, like bridesmaids around a bride, and how as she passed, the eyes of those in the cots followed her jealously, and after she had spoken with them smiled in content.

"She is good," the Mother Superior was saying, "and her brother, too, is very good."

Everett had forgotten the brother. With a start he lifted his eyes and found the Mother Superior regarding him.

"He is very good," she repeated. "For us, he built this wing of the hospital. It was his money. We should be very sorry if any harm came to Mr. Ward. Without his help we would starve." She smiled, and with a gesture signified the sick. "I mean they would starve; they would die of disease and fever." The woman fixed upon him grave, inscrutable eyes. "Will Your Excellency remember?" she said. It was less of a question than a command. "Where the church can forgive−−" she paused.

Like a real diplomat Everett sought refuge in mere words.

"The church is all−powerful, Mother," he said. "Her power to forgive is her strongest weapon. I have no such power. It lies beyond my authority. I am just a messenger−boy carrying the wishes of the government of one country to the government of another."

The face of the Mother Superior remained grave, but undisturbed.

"Then, as regards our Mr. Ward," she said, "the wishes of your government are−−"

Again she paused; again it was less of a question than a command. With interest Everett gazed at the whitewashed ceiling.

"I have not yet," he said, "communicated them to any one."

That night, after dinner in the patio, he reported to Garland the words of the Mother Superior.

"That was my dream, 0 Prophet," concluded Everett; "you who can read this land of lotus−eaters, interpret! What does it mean?"

"It only means what I've been telling you," said the consul. "It means that if you're going after that treaty, you've only got to fight the Catholic Church. That's all it means!"

Later in the evening Garland said: "I saw you this morning crossing the plaza with Monica. When I told you everybody in this town loved her, was I right?"

"Absolutely!" assented Everett. "But why didn't you tell me she was a flapper?"

"I don't know what a flapper is," promptly retorted Garland. "And if I did, I wouldn't call Monica one."

"A flapper is a very charming person," protested Everett. "I used the term in its most complimentary sense. It means a girl between fourteen and eighteen. It's English slang, and in England at the present the flapper is very popular. She is driving her sophisticated elder sister, who has been out two or three seasons, and the predatory married woman to the wall. To men of my years the flapper is really at the dangerous age."

In his bamboo chair Garland tossed violently and snorted.

"I sized you up," he cried, "as a man of the finest perceptions. I was wrong. You don't appreciate Monica! Dangerous! You might as well say God's sunshine is dangerous, or a beautiful flower is dangerous."

Everett shook his head at the other man reproachfully:

"Did you ever hear of a sunstroke?" he demanded. "Don't you know if you smell certain beautiful flowers you die? Can't you grasp any other kind of danger than being run down by a trolley−car? Is the danger of losing one's peace of mind nothing, of being unfaithful to duty, nothing! Is−−"

Garland raised his arms.

"Don't shoot!" he begged. "I apologize. You do appreciate Monica. You have your consul's permission to walk with her again."

The next day young Professor Peabody called and presented his letters. He was a forceful young man to whom the delays of diplomacy did not appeal, and one apparently accustomed to riding off whatever came in his way. He seemed to consider any one who opposed him, or who even disagreed with his conclusions, as offering a personal affront. With indignation he launched into his grievance.

"These people," he declared, "are dogs in the manger, and Ward is the worst of the lot. He knows no more of archaeology than a congressman. The man's a faker! He showed me a spear−head of obsidian and called it flint; and he said the Aztecs borrowed from the Mayas, and that the Toltecs were a myth. And he got the Aztec solar calendar mixed with the Ahau. He's as ignorant as that."

"I can't believe it!" exclaimed Everett.

"You may laugh," protested the professor, "but the ruins of Cobre hold secrets the students of two continents are trying to solve. They hide the history of a lost race, and I submit it's not proper one man should keep that knowledge from the world, certainly not for a few gold armlets!"

Everett raised his eyes.

"What makes you say that?"' he demanded.

"I've been kicking my heels in this town for a month," Peabody told him, "and I've talked to the people here, and to the Harvard expedition at Copan, and everybody tells me this fellow has found treasure." The archaeologist exclaimed with indignation: "What's gold," he snorted, "compared to the discovery of a lost race?"

"I applaud your point of view," Everett assured him. "I am to see the President tomorrow, and I will lay the matter before him. I'll ask him to give you a look in."

To urge his treaty of extradition was the reason for the audience with the President, and with all the courtesy that a bad case demanded Mendoza protested against it. He pointed out that governments entered into treaties only when the ensuing benefits were mutual. For Amapala in a treaty of extradition he saw no benefit. Amapala was not so far "advanced" as to produce defaulting bank presidents, get−rich−quick promoters, counterfeiters, and thieving cashiers. Her fugitives were revolutionists who had fought and lost, and every one was glad to have them go, and no one wanted them back.

"Or," suggested the President, "suppose I am turned out by a revolution, and I seek asylum in your country? My enemies desire my life. They would ask for my extradition−−"

"If the offense were political," Everett corrected, "my government would surrender no one."

"But my enemies would charge me with murder," explained the President. "Remember Castro. And by the terms of the treaty your government would be forced to surrender me. And I am shot against the wall." The President shrugged his shoulders. "That treaty would not be nice for me!"

"Consider the matter as a patriot," said the diplomat. "Is it good that the criminals of my country should make their home in yours? When you are so fortunate as to have no dishonest men of your own, why import ours? We don't seek the individual. We want to punish him only as a warning to others. And we want the money he takes with him. Often it is the savings of the very poor."

The President frowned. It was apparent that both the subject and Everett bored him.

"I name no names," exclaimed Mendoza, "but to those who come here we owe the little railroads we possess. They develop our mines and our coffee plantations. In time they will make this country very modern, very rich. And some you call criminals we have learned to love. Their past does not concern us. We shut our ears. We do not spy. They have come to us as to a sanctuary, and so long as they claim the right of sanctuary, I will not violate it."

As Everett emerged from the cool, dark halls of the palace into the glare of the plaza he was scowling; and he acknowledged the salute of the palace guard as though those gentlemen had offered him an insult.

Garland was waiting in front of a cafe and greeted him with a mocking grin.

"Congratulations," he shouted.

"I have still twenty−two days," said Everett .

The aristocracy of Camaguay invited the new minister to formal dinners of eighteen courses, and to picnics less formal. These latter Everett greatly enjoyed, because while Monica Ward was too young to attend the state dinners, she was exactly the proper age for the all−day excursions to the waterfalls, the coffee plantations, and the asphalt lakes. The native belles of Camaguay took no pleasure in riding farther afield than the military parade−ground. Climbing a trail so steep that you viewed the sky between the ears of your pony, or where with both hands you forced a way through hanging vines and creepers, did not appeal. But to Monica, with the seat and balance of a cowboy, riding astride, with her leg straight and the ball of her foot just feeling the stirrup, these expeditions were the happiest moments in her exile. So were they to Everett; and that on the trail one could ride only in single file was a most poignant regret. In the column the place of honor was next to whoever rode at the head, but Everett relinquished this position in favor of Monica. By this manoeuvre she always was in his sight, and he could call upon her to act as his guide and to explain what lay on either hand. His delight and wonder in her grew daily. He found that her mind leaped instantly and with gratitude to whatever was most fair. Just out of reach of her pony's hoofs he pressed his own pony forward, and she pointed out to him what in the tropic abundance about them she found most beautiful. Sometimes it was the tumbling waters of a cataract; sometimes, high in the topmost branches of a ceiba−tree, a gorgeous orchid; sometimes a shaft of sunshine as rigid as a search−light, piercing the shadow of the jungle. At first she would turn in the saddle and call to him, but as each day they grew to know each other better she need only point with her whip−hand and he would answer, "Yes," and each knew the other understood.

As a body, the exiles resented Everett. They knew his purpose in regard to the treaty, and for them he always must be the enemy. Even though as a man they might like him, they could not forget that his presence threatened their peace and safety. Chester Ward treated him with impeccable politeness; but, although his house was the show−place of Camaguay, he never invited the American minister to cross the threshold. On account of Monica, Everett regretted this and tried to keep the relations of her brother and himself outwardly pleasant. But Ward made it difficult. To no one was his manner effusive, and for Monica only he seemed to hold any real feeling. The two were alone in the world; he was her only relative, and to the orphan he had been father and mother. When she was a child he had bought her toys and dolls; now, had the sisters permitted, he would have dressed her in imported frocks, and with jewels killed her loveliness. He seemed to understand how to spend his money as little as did the gossips of Camaguay understand from whence it came.

That Monica knew why her brother lived in Camaguay Everett was uncertain. She did not complain of living there, but she was not at rest, and constantly she was asking Everett of foreign lands. As Everett was homesick for them, he was most eloquent.

"I should like to see them for myself," said Monica, "but until my brother's work here is finished we must wait. And I am young, and after a few years Europe will be just as old. When my brother leaves Amapala, he promises to take me wherever I ask to go: to London, to Paris, to Rome. So I read and read of them; books of history, books about painting, books about the cathedrals. But the more I read the more I want to go at once, and that is disloyal."

"Disloyal?" asked Everett.

"To my brother," explained Monica. "He does so much for me. I should think only of his work. That is all that really counts. For the world is waiting to learn what he has discovered. It is like having a brother go in search of the North Pole. You are proud of what he is doing, but you want him back to keep him to yourself. Is that selfish?"

Everett was a trained diplomat, but with his opinion of Chester Ward he could not think of the answer. Instead, he was thinking of Monica in Europe; of taking her through the churches and galleries which she had seen only in black and white. He imagined himself at her side facing the altar of some great cathedral, or some painting in the Louvre, and watching her face lighten and the tears come to her eyes, as they did now, when things that were beautiful hurt her. Or he imagined her rid of her half−mourning and accompanying him through a cyclonic diplomatic career that carried them to Japan, China, Persia; to Berlin, Paris, and London. In these imaginings Monica appeared in pongee and a sun−hat riding an elephant, in pearls and satin receiving royalty, in tweed knickerbockers and a woollen jersey coasting around the hairpin curve at Saint Moritz.

Of course he recognized that except as his wife Monica could not accompany him to all these strange lands and high diplomatic posts. And of course that was ridiculous. He had made up his mind for the success of what he called his career, that he was too young to marry; but he was sure, should he propose to marry Monica, every one would say he was too old. And there was another consideration. What of the brother? Would his government send him to a foreign post when his wife was the sister of a man they had just sent to the penitentiary?

He could hear them say in London, "We know your first secretary, but who is Mrs. Everett?" And the American visitor would explain: "She is the sister of 'Inky Dink,' the forger. He is bookkeeping in Sing Sing."

Certainly it would be a handicap. He tried to persuade himself that Monica so entirely filled his thoughts because in Camaguay there was no one else; it was a case of propinquity; her loneliness and the fact that she lay under a shadow for which she was not to blame appealed to his chivalry. So, he told himself, in thinking of Monica except as a charming companion, he was an ass. And then, arguing that in calling himself an ass he had shown his saneness and impartiality, he felt justified in seeing her daily.

One morning Garland came to the legation to tell Everett that Peabody was in danger of bringing about international complications by having himself thrust into the cartel.

"If he qualifies for this local jail," said Garland, "you will have a lot of trouble setting him free. You'd better warn him it's easier to keep out than to get out."

"What has he been doing?" asked the minister.

"Poaching on Ward's ruins," said the consul. "He certainly is a hustler. He pretends to go to Copan, but really goes to Cobre. Ward had him followed and threatened to have him arrested. Peabody claims any tourist has a right to visit the ruins so long as he does no excavating. Ward accused him of exploring the place by night and taking photographs by flash−light of the hieroglyphs. He's put an armed guard at the ruins, and he told Peabody they are to shoot on sight. So Peabody went to Mendoza and said if anybody took a shot at him he'd bring warships down here and blow Amapala off the map."

"A militant archaeologist," said Everett, "is something new. Peabody is too enthusiastic. He and his hieroglyphs are becoming a bore."

He sent for Peabody and told him unless he curbed his spirit his minister could not promise to keep him out of a very damp and dirty dungeon.

"I am too enthusiastic," Peabody admitted, "but to me this fellow Ward is like a red flag to the bull. His private graft is holding up the whole scientific world. He won't let us learn the truth, and he's too ignorant to learn it himself. Why, he told me Cobre dated from 1578, when Palacio wrote of it to Philip the Second, not knowing that in that very letter Palacio states that he found Cobre in ruins. Is it right a man as ignorant−−"

Everett interrupted by levelling his finger.

"You," he commanded, "keep out of those ruins! My dear professor," he continued reproachfully, "you are a student, a man of peace. Don't try to wage war on these Amapalans. They're lawless, they're unscrupulous. So is Ward. Besides, you are in the wrong, and if they turn ugly, your minister cannot help you." He shook his head and smiled doubtfully. "I can't understand," he exclaimed, "why you're so keen. It's only a heap of broken pottery. Sometimes I wonder if your interest in Cobre is that only of the archaeologist."

"What other interest−−" demanded Peabody.

"Doesn't Ward's buried treasure appeal at all?" asked the minister. "I mean, of course, to your imagination. It does to mine."

The young professor laughed tolerantly.

"Buried treasure!" he exclaimed. "If Ward has found treasure, and I think he has, he's welcome to it. What we want is what you call the broken pottery. It means nothing to you, but to men like myself, who live eight hundred years behind the times, it is much more precious than gold."

A few moments later Professor Peabody took his leave, and it was not until he had turned the corner of the Calle Morazan that he halted and, like a man emerging from water, drew a deep breath.

"Gee!" muttered the distinguished archeologist, "that was a close call!"

One or two women had loved Everett, and after five weeks, in which almost daily he had seen Monica, he knew she cared for him. This discovery made him entirely happy and filled him with dismay. It was a complication he had not foreseen. It left him at the parting of two ways, one of which he must choose. For his career he was willing to renounce marriage, but now that Monica loved him, even though he had consciously not tried to make her love him, had he the right to renounce it for her also? He knew that the difference between Monica and his career lay in the fact that he loved Monica and was in love with his career. Which should he surrender? Of this he thought long and deeply, until one night, without thinking at all, he chose.

Colonel Goddard had given a dance, and, as all invited were Americans, the etiquette was less formal than at the gatherings of the Amapalans. For one thing, the minister and Monica were able to sit on the veranda overlooking the garden without his having to fight a duel in the morning.

It was not the moonlight, or the music, or the palms that made Everett speak. It was simply the knowledge that it was written, that it had to be. And he heard himself, without prelude or introduction, talking easily and assuredly of the life they would lead as man and wife. From this dream Monica woke him. The violet eyes were smiling at him through tears.

"When you came," said the girl, "and I loved you, I thought that was the greatest happiness. Now that I know you love me I ask nothing more. And I can bear it."

Everett felt as though an icy finger had moved swiftly down his spine. He pretended not to understand.

"Bear what?" he demanded roughly.

"That I cannot marry you," said the girl. "Even had you not asked me, in loving you I would have been happy. Now that I know you thought of me as your wife, I am proud. I am grateful. And the obstacle−−"

Everett laughed scornfully.

"There is no obstacle."

Monica shook her head. Unafraid, she looked into his eyes, her own filled with her love for him.

"Don't make it harder," she said. "My brother is hiding from the law. What he did I don't know. When it happened I was at the convent, and he did not send for me until he had reached Amapala. I never asked why we came, but were I to marry you, with your name and your position, every one else would ask. And the scandal would follow you; wherever you went it would follow; it would put an end to your career."

His career, now that Monica urged it as her rival, seemed to Everett particularly trivial.

"I don't know what your brother did either," he said. "His sins are on his own head. They're not on yours, nor on mine. I don't judge him; neither do I intend to let him spoil my happiness. Now that I have found you I will never let you go."

Sadly Monica shook her head and smiled.

"When you leave here," she said, "for some new post, you won't forget me, but you'll be grateful that I let you go alone; that I was not a drag on you. When you go back to your great people and your proud and beautiful princesses, all this will seem a strange dream, and you will be glad you are awake−−and free."

"The idea of marrying you, Monica," said Everett, "is not new. It did not occur to me only since we moved out here into the moonlight. Since I first saw you I've thought of you, and only of you. I've thought of you with me in every corner of the globe, as my wife, my sweetheart, my partner, riding through jungles as we ride here, sitting opposite me at our own table, putting the proud and beautiful princesses at their ease. And in all places, at all moments, you make all other women tawdry and absurd. And I don't think you are the most wonderful person I ever met because I love you, but I love you because you are the most wonderful person I ever met."

"I am young," said Monica, "but since I began to love you I am very old. And I see clearly that it cannot be."

"Dear heart," cried Everett, "that is quite morbid. What the devil do I care what your brother has done! I am not marrying your brother."

For a long time, leaning forward with her elbows on her knees and her face buried in her hands, the girl sat silent. It was as though she were praying. Everett knew it was not of him, but of her brother, she was thinking, and his heart ached for her. For him to cut the brother out of his life was not difficult; what it meant to her he could guess.

When the girl raised her eyes they were eloquent with distress.

"He has been so good to me," she said; "always so gentle. He has been mother and father to me. He is the first person I can remember. When I was a child he put me to bed, he dressed me, and comforted me. When we became rich there was nothing he did not wish to give me. I cannot leave him. He needs me more than ever I needed him. I am all he has. And there is this besides. Were I to marry, of all the men in the world it would be harder for him if I married you. For if you succeed in what you came here to do, the law will punish him, and he will know it was through you he was punished. And even between you and me there always would be that knowledge, that feeling."

"That is not fair," cried Everett. "I am not an individual fighting less fortunate individuals. I am an insignificant wheel in a great machine. You must not blame me because I−"

With an exclamation the girl reproached him.

"Because you do your duty!" she protested. "Is that fair to me? If for my sake or my brother you failed in your duty, if you were less vigilant, less eager, even though we suffer, I could not love you."

Everett sighed happily.

"As long as you love me," he said, "neither your brother nor any one else can keep us apart."

"My brother," said the girl, as though she were pronouncing a sentence, "always will keep us apart, and I will always love you."

It was a week before he again saw her, and then the feeling he had read in her eyes was gone−−or rigorously concealed. Now her manner was that of a friend, of a young girl addressing a man older than herself, one to whom she looked up with respect and liking, but with no sign of any feeling deeper or more intimate.

It upset Everett completely. When he pleaded with her, she asked:

"Do you think it is easy for me? But−−" she protested, "I know I am doing right. I am doing it to make you happy."

"You are succeeding," Everett assured her, "in making us both damned miserable."

For Everett, in the second month of his stay in Amapala, events began to move quickly. Following the example of two of his predecessors, the Secretary of State of the United States was about to make a grand tour of Central America. He came on a mission of peace and brotherly love, to foster confidence and good−will, and it was secretly hoped that, in the wake of his escort of battle−ships, trade would follow fast. There would be salutes and visits of ceremony, speeches, banquets, reviews. But in these rejoicings Amapala would have no part.

For, so Everett was informed by cable, unless, previous to the visit of the Secretary, Amapala fell into line with her sister republics and signed a treaty of extradition, from the itinerary of the great man Amapala would find herself pointedly excluded. It would be a humiliation. In the eyes of her sister republics it would place her outside the pale. Everett saw that in his hands his friend the Secretary had placed a powerful weapon; and lost no time in using it. He caught the President alone, sitting late at his dinner, surrounded by bottles, and read to him the Secretary's ultimatum. General Mendoza did not at once surrender. Before he threw over the men who fed him the golden eggs that made him rich, and for whom he had sworn never to violate the right of sanctuary, he first, for fully half an hour, raged and swore. During that time, while Everett sat anxiously expectant, the President paced and repaced the length of the dining−hall. When to relight his cigar, or to gulp brandy from a tumbler, he halted at the table, his great bulk loomed large in the flickering candle−flames, and when he continued his march, he would disappear into the shadows, and only his scabbard clanking on the stone floor told of his presence. At last he halted and shrugged his shoulders so that the tassels of his epaulets tossed like wheat.

"You drive a hard bargain, sir," he said. "And I have no choice. To−morrow bring the treaty and I will sign."

Everett at once produced it and a fountain pen.

"I should like to cable to−night," he urged, "that you have signed. They are holding back the public announcement of the Secretary's route until hearing from Your Excellency. This is only tentative," he pointed out; "the Senate must ratify. But our Senate will ratify it, and when you sign now, it is a thing accomplished."

Over the place at which Everett pointed, the pen scratched harshly; and then, throwing it from him, the President sat in silence. With eyes inflamed by anger and brandy he regarded the treaty venomously. As though loath to let it go, his hands played with it, as a cat plays with the mouse between her paws. Watching him breathlessly,

Everett feared the end was not yet. He felt a depressing premonition that if ever the treaty were to reach Washington he best had snatch it and run. Even as he waited, the end came. An orderly, appearing suddenly in the light of the candles, announced the arrival, in the room adjoining, of "the Colonel Goddard and Senor Mellen." They desired an immediate audience. Their business with the President was most urgent. Whether from Washington their agents had warned them, whether in Camaguay they had deciphered the cablegram from the State Department, Everett could only guess, but he was certain the cause of their visit was the treaty. That Mendoza also believed this was most evident.

Into the darkness, from which the two exiles might emerge, he peered guiltily. With an oath he tore the treaty in half. Crushing the pieces of paper into a ball, he threw it at Everett's feet. His voice rose to a shriek. It was apparent he intended his words to carry to the men outside. Like an actor on a stage he waved his arms.

"That is my answer!" he shouted. "Tell your Secretary the choice he offers is an insult! It is blackmail. We will not sign his treaty. We do not desire his visit to our country." Thrilled by his own bravado, his voice rose higher. "Nor," he shouted, "do we desire the presence of his representative. Your usefulness is at an end. You will receive your passports in the morning."

As he might discharge a cook, he waved Everett away. His hand, trembling with excitement, closed around the neck of the brandy− bottle. Everett stooped and secured the treaty. On his return to Washington, torn and rumpled as it was, it would be his justification. It was his "Exhibit A."

As he approached the legation he saw drawn up in front of it three ponies ready saddled. For an instant he wondered if Mendoza intended further to insult him, if he planned that night to send him under guard to the coast. He determined hotly sooner than submit to such an indignity he would fortify the legation, and defend himself. But no such heroics were required of him. As he reached the door, Garland, with an exclamation of relief, hailed him, and Monica, stepping from the shadow, laid an appealing hand upon his sleeve.

"My brother!" she exclaimed. "The guard at Cobre has just sent word that they found Peabody prowling in the ruins and fired on him. He fired back, and he is still there hiding. My brother and others have gone to take him. I don't know what may happen if he resists. Chester is armed, and he is furious; he is beside himself; he would not listen to me. But he must listen to you. Will you go," the girl begged, "and speak to him; speak to him, I mean," she added, "as the American minister?"

Everett already had his foot in the stirrup. "I'm the American minister only until to−morrow," he said. "I've got my walking−papers. But I'll do all I can to stop this to−night. Garland," he asked, "will you take Miss Ward home, and then follow me?"

"If I do not go with you," said Monica, "I will go alone."

Her tone was final. With a clatter of hoofs that woke alarmed echoes in the sleeping streets the three horses galloped abreast toward Cobre. In an hour they left the main trail and at a walk picked their way to where the blocks of stone, broken columns, and crumbling temples of the half−buried city checked the jungle.

The moon made it possible to move in safety, and at different distances the lights of torches told them the man−hunt still was in progress.

"Thank God," breathed Monica, "we are in time."

Everett gave the ponies in care of one of the guards. He turned to Garland.

"Catch up with those lights ahead of us," he said, "and we will join this party to the right. If you find Ward, tell him I forbid him taking the law into his own hands; tell him I will protect his interests. If you meet Peabody, make him give up his gun, and see that the others don't harm him!"

Everett and the girl did not overtake the lights they had seen flashing below them. Before they were within hailing distance, that searching party had disappeared, and still farther away other torches beckoned.

Stumbling and falling, now in pursuit of one will−o'−the−wisp, now of another, they scrambled forward. But always the lights eluded them. From their exertions and the moist heat they were breathless, and their bodies dripped with water. Panting, they halted at the entrance of what once had been a tomb. From its black interior came a damp mist; above them, alarmed by their intrusion, the vampire bats whirled blindly in circles. Monica, who by day possessed some slight knowledge of the ruins, had, in the moonlight, lost all sense of direction.

"We're lost," said Monica, in a low tone. Unconsciously both were speaking in whispers. "I thought we were following what used to be the main thoroughfare of the city; but I have never seen this place before. From what I have read I think we must be among the tombs of the kings."

She was silenced by Everett placing one hand quickly on her arm, and with the other pointing. In the uncertain moonlight she saw moving cautiously away from them, and unconscious of their presence, a white, ghostlike figure.

"Peabody," whispered Everett.

"Call him," commanded Monica.

"The others might hear," objected Everett. "We must overtake him. If we're with him when they meet, they wouldn't dare−−"

With a gasp of astonishment, his words ceased.

Like a ghost, the ghostlike figure had vanished.

"He walked through that rock!" cried Monica.

Everett caught her by the wrist. "Come!" he commanded.

Over the face of the rock, into which Peabody had dived as into water, hung a curtain of vines. Everett tore it apart. Concealed by the vines was the narrow mouth to a tunnel; and from it they heard, rapidly lessening in the distance, the patter of footsteps.

"Will you wait," demanded Everett, "or come with me?"

With a shudder of distaste, Monica answered by seizing his hand.

With his free arm Everett swept aside the vines, and, Monica following, they entered the tunnel. It was a passageway cleanly cut through the solid rock and sufficiently wide to permit of their moving freely. At the farther end, at a distance of a hundred yards, it opened into a great vault, also hollowed from the rock and, as they saw to their surprise, brilliantly lighted.

For an instant, in black silhouette, the figure of Peabody blocked the entrance to this vault, and then, turning to the right, again vanished. Monica felt an untimely desire to laugh. Now that they were on the track of Peabody she no

longer feared the outcome of the adventure. In the presence of the American minister and of herself there would be no violence; and as they trailed the archaeologist through the tunnel she was reminded of Alice and her pursuit of the white rabbit. This thought, and her sense of relief that the danger was over, caused her to laugh aloud.

They had gained the farther end of the tunnel and the entrance to the vault, when at once her amusement turned to wonder. For the vault showed every evidence of use and of recent occupation. In brackets, and burning brightly, were lamps of modern make; on the stone floor stood a canvas cot, saddle−bags, camp−chairs, and in the centre of the vault a collapsible table. On this were bottles filled with chemicals, trays, and presses such as are used in developing photographs, and apparently hung there to dry,

swinging from strings, the proofs of many negatives.

Loyal to her brother, Monica exclaimed indignantly. At the proofs she pointed an accusing finger.

"Look!" she whispered. "This is Peabody's darkroom, where he develops the flash−lights he takes of the hieroglyphs! Chester has a right to be furious!"

Impulsively she would have pushed past Everett; but with an exclamation he sprang in front of her.

"No!" he commanded, "come away!"

He had fallen into a sudden panic. His tone spoke of some catastrophe, imminent and overwhelming. Monica followed the direction of his eyes. They were staring in fear at the proofs.

The girl leaned forward; and now saw them clearly.

Each was a United States Treasury note for five hundred dollars.

Around the turn of the tunnel, approaching the vault apparently from another passage, they heard hurrying footsteps; and then, close to them from the vault itself, the voice of Professor Peabody.

It was harsh, sharp, peremptory.

"Hands up!" it commanded. "Drop that gun!"

As though halted by a precipice, the footsteps fell into instant silence. There was a pause, and then the ring of steel upon the stone floor. There was another pause, and Monica heard the voice of her brother. Broken, as though with running, it still retained its level accent, its note of insolence.

"So," it said, "I have caught you?"

Monica struggled toward the lighted vault, but around her Everett threw his arm.

"Come away!" he begged.

Monica fought against the terror of something unknown. She could not understand. They had come only to prevent a meeting between her brother and Peabody; and now that they had met, Everett was endeavoring to escape.

It was incomprehensible.

And the money in the vault, the yellow bills hanging from a cobweb of strings; why should they terrify her; what did they threaten? Dully, and from a distance, Monica heard the voice of Peabody.

"No," he answered; "I have caught you! And I've had a hell of a time doing it!"

Monica tried to call out, to assure her brother of her presence. But, as though in a nightmare, she could make no sound. Fingers of fear gripped at her throat. To struggle was no longer possible.

The voice of Peabody continued:

"Six months ago we traced these bills to New Orleans. So we guessed the plant was in Central America. We knew only one man who could make them. When I found you were in Amapala and they said you had struck 'buried treasure'−−the rest was easy."

Monica heard the voice of her brother answer with a laugh.

"Easy?" he mocked. "There's no extradition. You can't touch me. You're lucky if you get out of here alive. I've only to raise my voice−−"

"And, I'll kill you!"

This was danger Monica could understand.

Freed from the nightmare of doubt, with a cry she ran forward. She saw Peabody, his back against a wall, a levelled automatic in his hand; her brother at the entrance to a tunnel like the one from which she had just appeared. His arms were raised above his head. At his feet lay a revolver. For an instant, with disbelief, he stared at Monica, and then, as though assured that it was she, his eyes dilated. In them were fear and horror. So genuine was the agony in the face of the counterfeiter that Everett, who had followed, turned his own away. But the eyes of the brother and sister remained fixed upon each other, hers, appealingly; his, with despair. He tried to speak, but the words did not come. When he did break the silence his tone was singularly wistful, most tenderly kind.

"Did you hear?" he asked.

Monica slowly bowed her head. With the same note of gentleness her brother persisted:

"Did you understand?"

Between them stretched the cobweb of strings hung with yellow certificates; each calling for five hundred dollars, payable in gold. Stirred by the night air from the open tunnels, they fluttered and flaunted.

Against the sight of them, Monica closed her eyes. Heavily, as though with a great physical effort, again she bowed her head.

The eyes of her brother searched about him wildly. They rested on the mouth of the tunnel.

With his lowered arm he pointed.

"Who is that?" he cried.

Instinctively the others turned.

It was for an instant. The instant sufficed.

Monica saw her brother throw himself upon the floor, felt herself flung aside as Everett and the detective leaped upon him; saw her brother press his hands against his heart, the two men dragging at his arms.

The cavelike room was shaken with a report, an acrid smoke assailed her nostrils. The men ceased struggling. Her brother lay still.

Monica sprang toward the body, but a black wave rose and submerged her. As she fainted, to save herself she threw out her arms, and as she fell she dragged down with her the buried treasure of Cobre.

Stretched upon the stone floor beside her brother, she lay motionless. Beneath her, and wrapped about and covering her, as the leaves covered the babes in the wood, was a vast cobweb of yellow bills, each for five hundred dollars, payable in gold.

A month later the harbor of Porto Cortez in Honduras was shaken with the roar of cannon. In comparison, the roaring of all the cannon of all the revolutions that that distressful country ever had known, were like fire−crackers under a barrel.

Faithful to his itinerary, the Secretary of State of the United States was paying his formal visit to Honduras, and the President of that republic, waiting upon the Fruit Company's wharf to greet him, was receiving the salute of the American battle−ships. Back of him, on the wharf, his own barefooted artillerymen in their turn were saluting, excitedly and spasmodically, the distinguished visitor. As an honor he had at last learned to accept without putting a finger in each ear, the Secretary of State smiled with gracious calm. Less calm was the President of Honduras. He knew something the Secretary did not know. He knew that at any moment a gun of his saluting battery might turn turtle, or blow into the harbor himself, his cabinet, and the larger part of his standing army.

Made fast to the wharf on the side opposite to the one at which the Secretary had landed was one of the Fruit Company's steamers. She was on her way north, and Porto Cortez was a port of call. That her passengers might not intrude upon the ceremonies, her side of the wharf was roped off and guarded by the standing army. But from her decks and from behind the ropes the passengers, with a battery of cameras, were perpetuating the historic scene.

Among them, close to the ropes, viewing the ceremony with the cynical eye of one who in Europe had seen kings and emperors meet upon the Field of the Cloth of Gold, was Everett. He made no effort to bring himself to the attention of his former chief. But when the introductions were over, the Secretary of State turned his eyes to his fellow countrymen crowding the rails of the American steamer. They greeted him with cheers. The great man raised his hat, and his eyes fell upon Everett. The Secretary advanced quickly, his hand extended, brushing to one side the standing army.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"On my way home, sir," said Everett. "I couldn't leave sooner; there were−−personal reasons. But I cabled the department my resignation the day Mendoza gave me my walking−papers. You may remember," Everett added dryly, "the department accepted by cable."

The great man showed embarrassment.

"It was most unfortunate," he sympathized. "We wanted that treaty, and while, no doubt, you made every effort−−"

He became aware of the fact that Everett's attention was not exclusively his own. Following the direction of the young man's eyes the Secretary saw on the deck just above them, leaning upon the rail, a girl in deep mourning.

She was very beautiful. Her face was as lovely as a violet and as shy. To the Secretary a beautiful woman was always a beautiful woman. But he had read the papers. Who had not? He was sure there must be some mistake. This could not be the sister of a criminal; the woman for whom Everett had smashed his career.

The Secretary masked his astonishment, but not his admiration.

"Mrs. Everett?" he asked. His very tone conveyed congratulations.

"Yes," said the ex−diplomat. "Some day I shall be glad to present you."

The Secretary did not wait for an introduction. Raising his eyes to the ship's rail, he made a deep and courtly bow. With a gesture worthy of d'Artagnan, his high hat swept the wharf. The members of his staff, the officers from the war−ships, the President of Honduras and the members of his staff endeavored to imitate his act of homage, and in confusion Mrs. Everett blushed becomingly.

"When I return to Washington," said the Secretary hastily, "come and see me. You are too valuable to lose. Your career−−"

Again Everett was looking at his wife. Her distress at having been so suddenly drawn into the lime−light amused him, and he was smiling. Then, as though aware of the Secretary's meaning, he laughed.

"My dear sir!" he protested. His tone suggested he was about to add "mind your own business," or "go to the devil."

Instead he said: "I'm not worrying about my career. My career has just begun."

THE BOY SCOUT

A rule of the Boy Scouts is every day to do some one a good turn. Not because the copybooks tell you it deserves another, but in spite of that pleasing possibility. If you are a true scout, until you have performed your act of kindness your day is dark. You are as unhappy as is the grown−up who has begun his day without shaving or reading the New York Sun. But as soon as you have proved yourself you may, with a clear conscience, look the world in the face and untie the knot in your kerchief.

Jimmie Reeder untied the accusing knot in his scarf at just ten minutes past eight on a hot August morning after he had given one dime to his sister Sadie. With that she could either witness the first−run films at the Palace, or by dividing her fortune patronize two of the nickel shows on Lenox Avenue. The choice Jimmie left to her. He was setting out for the annual encampment of the Boy Scouts at Hunter's Island, and in the excitement of that adventure even the movies ceased to thrill. But Sadie also could be unselfish. With a heroism of a camp−fire maiden she made a gesture which might have been interpreted to mean she was returning the money.

"I can't, Jimmie!" she gasped. "I can't take it off you. You saved it, and you ought to get the fun of it."

"I haven't saved it yet," said Jimmie. "I'm going to cut it out of the railroad fare. I'm going to get off at City Island instead of at Pelham Manor and walk the difference. That's ten cents cheaper."

Sadie exclaimed with admiration:

"An' you carryin' that heavy grip!"

"Aw, that's nothin'," said the man of the family.

"Good−by, mother. So long, Sadie."

To ward off further expressions of gratitude he hurriedly advised Sadie to take in "The Curse of Cain" rather than "The Mohawk's Last Stand," and fled down the front steps.

He wore his khaki uniform. On his shoulders was his knapsack, from his hands swung his suit−case, and between his heavy stockings and his "shorts" his kneecaps, unkissed by the sun, as yet unscathed by blackberry vines, showed as white and fragile as the wrists of a girl. As he moved toward the "L" station at the corner, Sadie and his mother waved to him; in the street, boys too small to be scouts hailed him enviously; even the policeman glancing over the newspapers on the news−stand nodded approval.

"You a scout, Jimmie?" he asked.

"No," retorted Jimmie, for was not he also in uniform? "I'm Santa Claus out filling Christmas stockings."

The patrolman also possessed a ready wit.

"Then get yourself a pair," he advised. "If a dog was to see your legs−−"

Jimmie escaped the insult by fleeing up the steps of the Elevated.

An hour later, with his valise in one hand and staff in the other, he was tramping up the Boston Post Road and breathing heavily. The day was cruelly hot. Before his eyes, over an interminable stretch of asphalt, the heat waves danced and flickered. Already the knapsack on his shoulders pressed upon him like an Old Man of the Sea; the linen in the valise had turned to pig iron, his pipe− stem legs were wabbling, his eyes smarted with salt sweat, and the fingers supporting the valise belonged to some other boy, and were giving that boy much pain. But as the motor−cars flashed past with raucous warnings, or, that those who rode might better see the boy with bare knees, passed at "half speed," Jimmie stiffened his shoulders and stepped jauntily forward. Even when the joy−riders mocked with "Oh, you scout!" he smiled at them. He was willing to admit to those who rode that the laugh was on the one who walked. And he regretted−− oh, so bitterly−−having left the train. He was indignant that for his "one good turn a day" he had not selected one less strenuous−−that, for instance, he had not assisted a frightened old lady through the traffic. To refuse the dime she might have offered, as all true scouts refuse all tips, would have been easier than to earn it by walking five miles, with the sun at ninety−nine degrees, and carrying excess baggage. Twenty times James shifted the valise to the other hand, twenty times he let it drop and sat upon it.

And then, as again he took up his burden, the good Samaritan drew near. He drew near in a low gray racing−car at the rate of forty miles an hour, and within a hundred feet of Jimmie suddenly stopped and backed toward him. The good Samaritan was a young man with white hair. He wore a suit of blue, a golf cap; the hands that held the wheel were disguised in large yellow gloves. He brought the car to a halt and surveyed the dripping figure in the road with tired and uncurious eyes.

"You a Boy Scout?" he asked.

With alacrity for the twenty−first time Jimmie dropped the valise, forced his cramped fingers into straight lines, and saluted.

The young man in the car nodded toward the seat beside him.

"Get in," he commanded.

When James sat panting happily at his elbow the old young man, to Jimmie's disappointment, did not continue to shatter the speed limit. Instead, he seemed inclined for conversation, and the car, growling indignantly, crawled.

"I never saw a Boy Scout before," announced the old young man. "Tell me about it. First, tell me what you do when you're not scouting."

Jimmie explained volubly. When not in uniform he was an office boy, and from peddlers and beggars guarded the gates of Carroll and Hastings, stock−brokers. He spoke the names of his employers with awe. It was a firm distinguished, conservative, and long established. The white−haired young man seemed to nod in assent.

"Do you know them?" demanded Jimmie suspiciously. "Are you a customer of ours?"

"I know them," said the young man. "They are customers of mine."

Jimmie wondered in what way Carroll and Hastings were customers of the white−haired young man. Judging him by his outer garments, Jimmie guessed he was a Fifth Avenue tailor; he might be even a haberdasher. Jimmie continued. He lived, he explained, with his mother at One Hundred and Forty−sixth Street; Sadie, his sister, attended the public school; he helped support them both, and he now was about to enjoy a well−earned vacation camping out on Hunter's Island, where he would cook his own meals, and, if the mosquitoes permitted, sleep in a tent.

"And you like that?" demanded the young man. "You call that fun?"

"Sure!" protested Jimmie. "Don't you go camping out?"

"I go camping out," said the good Samaritan, "whenever I leave New York."

Jimmie had not for three years lived in Wall Street not to understand that the young man spoke in metaphor.

"You don't look," objected the young man critically, "as though you were built for the strenuous life."

Jimmie glanced guiltily at his white knees.

"You ought ter see me two weeks from now," he protested. "I get all sunburnt and hard− −hard as anything!"

The young man was incredulous.

"You were near getting sunstruck when I picked you up," he laughed. "If you're going to Hunter's Island, why didn't you go to Pelham Manor?"

"That's right!" assented Jimmie eagerly. "But I wanted to save the ten cents so's to send Sadie to the movies. So I walked."

The young man looked his embarrassment.

"I beg your pardon," he murmured.

But Jimmie did not hear him. From the back of the car he was dragging excitedly at the hated suit−case.

"Stop!" he commanded. "I got ter get out. I got ter walk."

The young man showed his surprise.

"Walk!" he exclaimed. "What is it−−a bet?"

Jimmie dropped the valise and followed it into the roadway. It took some time to explain to the young man. First, he had to be told about the scout law and the one good turn a day, and that it must involve some personal sacrifice. And, as Jimmie pointed out, changing from a slow suburban train to a racing−car could not be listed as a sacrifice. He had not earned the money, Jimmie argued; he had only avoided paying it to the railroad. If he did not walk he would be obtaining the gratitude of Sadie by a falsehood. Therefore, he must walk.

"Not at all," protested the young man. "You've got it wrong. What good will it do your sister to have you sunstruck? I think you are sunstruck. You're crazy with the heat. You get in here, and we'll talk it over as we go along."

Hastily Jimmie backed away. "I'd rather walk," he said.

The young man shifted his legs irritably.

"Then how'll this suit you?" he called. "We'll declare that first 'one good turn' a failure and start afresh. Do me a good turn."

Jimmie halted in his tracks and looked back suspiciously.

"I'm going to Hunter's Island Inn," called the young man, "and I've lost my way. You get in here and guide me. That'll be doing me a good turn."

On either side of the road, blotting out the landscape, giant hands picked out in electric−light bulbs pointed the way to Hunter's Island Inn. Jimmie grinned and nodded toward them.

"Much obliged," he called. "I got ter walk." Turning his back upon temptation, he waddled forward into the flickering heat waves.

The young man did not attempt to pursue. At the side of the road, under the shade of a giant elm, he had brought the car to a halt and with his arms crossed upon the wheel sat motionless, following with frowning eyes the retreating figure of Jimmie. But the narrow−chested and knock−kneed boy staggering over the sun−baked asphalt no longer concerned him. It was not Jimmie, but the code preached by Jimmie, and not only preached but before his eyes put into practice, that interested him. The young man with white hair had been running away from temptation. At forty miles an hour he had been running away from the temptation to do a fellow mortal "a good turn." That morning, to the appeal of a drowning Caesar to "Help me, Cassius, or I sink," he had answered: "Sink!" That answer he had no wish to reconsider. That he might not reconsider he had sought to escape. It was his experience that a sixty−horse−power racing−machine is a jealous mistress. For retrospective, sentimental, or philanthropic thoughts she grants no leave of absence. But he had not escaped. Jimmie had halted him, tripped him by the heels, and set him again to thinking. Within the half−hour that followed those who rolled past saw at the side of the road a car with her engine running, and leaning upon the wheel, as unconscious of his surroundings as though he sat at his own fireplace, a young man who frowned and stared at nothing. The half−hour passed and the young man swung his car back toward the city. But at the first road−house that showed a blue−and−white telephone sign he left it, and into the iron box at the end of the bar dropped a nickel. He wished to communicate with Mr. Carroll, of Carroll and Hastings; and when he learned Mr. Carroll had just issued orders that he must not be disturbed, the young man gave his name.

The effect upon the barkeeper was instantaneous. With the aggrieved air of one who feels he is the victim of a jest he laughed scornfully.

"What are you putting over?" he demanded.

The young man smiled reassuringly. He had begun to speak and, though apparently engaged with the beer−glass he was polishing, the barkeeper listened.

Down in Wall Street the senior member of Carroll and Hastings also listened. He was alone in the most private of all his private offices, and when interrupted had been engaged in what, of all undertakings, is the most momentous. On the desk before him lay letters to his lawyer, to the coroner, to his wife; and hidden by a mass of papers, but within reach of his hand, was an automatic pistol. The promise it offered of swift release had made the writing of the letters simple, had given him a feeling of complete detachment, had released him, at least in thought, from all responsibilities. And when at his elbow the telephone coughed discreetly, it was as though some one had called him from a world from which already he had made his exit.

Mechanically, through mere habit, he lifted the receiver.

The voice over the telephone came in brisk, staccato sentences.

"That letter I sent this morning? Forget it. Tear it up. I've been thinking and I'm going to take a chance. I've decided to back you boys, and I know you'll make good. I'm speaking from a road−house in the Bronx; going straight from here to the bank. So you can begin to draw against us within an hour. And−−hello!−−will three millions see you through?"

From Wall Street there came no answer, but from the hands of the barkeeper a glass crashed to the floor.

The young man regarded the barkeeper with puzzled eyes.

"He doesn't answer," he exclaimed. "He must have hung up."

"He must have fainted!" said the barkeeper.

The white−haired one pushed a bill across the counter. "To pay for breakage," he said, and disappeared down Pelham Parkway.

Throughout the day, with the bill, for evidence, pasted against the mirror, the barkeeper told and retold the wondrous tale.

"He stood just where you're standing now," he related, "blowing in million−dollar bills like you'd blow suds off a beer. If I'd knowed it was him, I'd have hit him once and hid him in the cellar for the reward. Who'd I think he was? I thought he was a wire−tapper, working a con game!"

Mr. Carroll had not "hung up," but when in the Bronx the beer−glass crashed, in Wall Street the receiver had slipped from the hand of the man who held it, and the man himself had fallen forward. His desk hit him in the face and woke him−−woke him to the wonderful fact that he still lived; that at forty he had been born again; that before him stretched many more years in which, as the young man with the white hair had pointed out, he still could make good.

The afternoon was far advanced when the staff of Carroll and Hastings were allowed to depart, and, even late as was the hour, two of them were asked to remain. Into the most private of the private offices Carroll invited

Gaskell, the head clerk; in the main office Hastings had asked young Thorne, the bond clerk, to be seated.

Until the senior partner has finished with Gaskell young Thorne must remain seated.

"Gaskell," said Mr. Carroll, "if we had listened to you, if we'd run this place as it was when father was alive, this never would have happened. It hasn't happened, but we've had our lesson. And after this we're going slow and going straight. And we don't need you to tell us how to do that. We want you to go away−−on a month's vacation. When I thought we were going under I planned to send the children on a sea voyage with the governess−−so they wouldn't see the newspapers. But now that I can look them in the eye again, I need them, I can't let them go. So, if you'd like to take your wife on an ocean trip to Nova Scotia and Quebec, here are the cabins I reserved for the kids. They call it the royal suite−−whatever that is−−and the trip lasts a month. The boat sails to−morrow morning. Don't sleep too late or you may miss her."

The head clerk was secreting the tickets in the inside pocket of his waistcoat. His fingers trembled, and when he laughed his voice trembled.

"Miss the boat!" the head clerk exclaimed. "If she gets away from Millie and me she's got to start now. We'll go on board to−night!"

A half−hour later Millie was on her knees packing a trunk, and her husband was telephoning to the drug−store for a sponge−bag and a cure for seasickness.

Owing to the joy in her heart and to the fact that she was on her knees, Millie was alternately weeping into the trunk−tray and offering up incoherent prayers of thanksgiving. Suddenly she sank back upon the floor.

"John!" she cried, "doesn't it seem sinful to sail away in a 'royal suite' and leave this beautiful flat empty?"

Over the telephone John was having trouble with the drug clerk.

"No!" he explained, "I'm not seasick now. The medicine I want is to be taken later. I know I'm speaking from the Pavonia; but the Pavonia isn't a ship; it's an apartment−house."

He turned to Millie. "We can't be in two places at the same time," he suggested.

"But, think," insisted Millie, "of all the poor people stifling to−night in this heat, trying to sleep on the roofs and fire−escapes; and our flat so cool and big and pretty−−and no one in it."

John nodded his head proudly.

"I know it's big," he said, "but it isn't big enough to hold all the people who are sleeping to−night on the roofs and in the parks."

"I was thinking of your brother−−and Grace," said Millie. "They've been married only two weeks now, and they're in a stuffy hall bedroom and eating with all the other boarders. Think what our flat would mean to them; to be by themselves, with eight rooms and their own kitchen and bath, and our new refrigerator and the gramophone! It would be heaven! It would be a real honeymoon!"

Abandoning the drug clerk, John lifted Millie in his arms and kissed her, for, next to his wife, nearest his heart was the younger brother.

The younger brother and Grace were sitting on the stoop of the boarding−house. On the upper steps, in their shirt−sleeves, were the other boarders; so the bride and bridegroom spoke in whispers. The air of the cross street was stale and stagnant; from it rose exhalations of rotting fruit, the gases of an open subway, the smoke of passing taxicabs. But between the street and the hall bedroom, with its odors of a gas−stove and a kitchen, the choice was difficult.

"We've got to cool off somehow," the young husband was saying, "or you won't sleep. Shall we treat ourselves to ice−cream sodas or a trip on the Weehawken ferry−boat?"

"The ferry−boat!" begged the girl, "where we can get away from all these people."

A taxicab with a trunk in front whirled into the street, kicked itself to a stop, and the head clerk and Millie spilled out upon the pavement. They talked so fast, and the younger brother and Grace talked so fast, that the boarders, although they listened intently, could make nothing of it.

They distinguished only the concluding sentences:

"Why don't you drive down to the wharf with us," they heard the elder brother ask, "and see our royal suite?"

But the younger brother laughed him to scorn.

"What's your royal suite," he mocked, "to our royal palace?"

An hour later, had the boarders listened outside the flat of the head clerk, they would have heard issuing from his bathroom the cooling murmur of running water and from his gramophone the jubilant notes of "Alexander's Rag−time Band."

When in his private office Carroll was making a present of the royal suite to the head clerk, in the main office Hastings, the junior partner, was addressing "Champ" Thorne, the bond clerk. He addressed him familiarly and affectionately as "Champ." This was due partly to the fact that twenty−six years before Thorne had been christened Champneys and to the coincidence that he had captained the football eleven of one of the Big Three to the championship.

"Champ," said Mr. Hastings, "last month, when you asked me to raise your salary, the reason I didn't do it was not because you didn't deserve it, but because I believed if we gave you a raise you'd immediately get married."

The shoulders of the ex−football captain rose aggressively; he snorted with indignation.

"And why should I not get married?" he demanded. "You're a fine one to talk! You're the most offensively happy married man I ever met."

"Perhaps I know I am happy better than you do," reproved the junior partner; "but I know also that it takes money to support a wife."

"You raise me to a hundred a week," urged Champ, "and I'll make it support a wife whether it supports me or not."

"A month ago," continued Hastings, "we could have promised you a hundred, but we didn't know how long we could pay it. We didn't want you to rush off and marry some fine girl−−"

"Some fine girl!" muttered Mr. Thorne. "The finest girl!"

"The finer the girl," Hastings pointed out, "the harder it would have been for you if we had failed and you had lost your job."

The eyes of the young man opened with sympathy and concern.

"Is it as bad as that?" he murmured.

Hastings sighed happily.

"It was," he said, "but this morning the Young Man of Wall Street did us a good turn−−saved us−−saved our creditors, saved our homes, saved our honor. We're going to start fresh and pay our debts, and we agreed the first debt we paid would be the small one we owe you. You've brought us more than we've given, and if you'll stay with us we're going to 'see' your fifty and raise it a hundred. What do you say?"

Young Mr. Thorne leaped to his feet. What he said was: "Where'n hell's my hat?"

But by the time he had found the hat and the door he mended his manners.

"I say, 'Thank you a thousand times,'" he shouted over his shoulder. "Excuse me, but I've got to go. I've got to break the news to−−"

He did not explain to whom he was going to break the news; but Hastings must have guessed, for again he sighed happily and then, a little hysterically laughed aloud. Several months had passed since he had laughed aloud.

In his anxiety to break the news Champ Thorne almost broke his neck. In his excitement he could not remember whether the red flash meant the elevator was going down or coming up, and sooner than wait to find out he started to race down eighteen flights of stairs when fortunately the elevator−door swung open.

"You get five dollars," he announced to the elevator man, "if you drop to the street without a stop. Beat the speed limit! Act like the building is on fire and you're trying to save me before the roof falls."

Senator Barnes and his entire family, which was his daughter Barbara, were at the Ritz−Carlton. They were in town in August because there was a meeting of the directors of the Brazil and Cuyaba Rubber Company, of which company Senator Barnes was president. It was a secret meeting. Those directors who were keeping cool at the edge of the ocean had been summoned by telegraph; those who were steaming across the ocean, by wireless.

Up from the equator had drifted the threat of a scandal, sickening, grim, terrible. As yet it burned beneath the surface, giving out only an odor, but an odor as rank as burning rubber itself. At any moment it might break into flame. For the directors, was it the better wisdom to let the scandal smoulder, and take a chance, or to be the first to give the alarm, the first to lead the way to the horror and stamp it out?

It was to decide this that, in the heat of August, the directors and the president had foregathered.

Champ Thorne knew nothing of this; he knew only that by a miracle Barbara Barnes was in town; that at last he was in a position to ask her to marry him; that she would certainly say she would. That was all he cared to know.

A year before he had issued his declaration of independence. Before he could marry, he told her, he must be able to support a wife on what he earned, without her having to accept money from her father, and until he received "a minimum wage" of five thousand dollars they must wait.

"What is the matter with my father's money?" Barbara had demanded.

Thorne had evaded the direct question.

"There is too much of it," he said.

"Do you object to the way he makes it?" insisted Barbara. "Because rubber is most useful. You put it in golf balls and auto tires and galoshes. There is nothing so perfectly respectable as galoshes. And what is there 'tainted' about a raincoat?"

Thorne shook his head unhappily.

"It's not the finished product to which I refer," he stammered; "it's the way they get the raw material."

"They get it out of trees," said Barbara. Then she exclaimed with enlightenment−−"Oh!" she cried, "you are thinking of the Congo. There it is terrible! That is slavery. But there are no slaves on the Amazon. The natives are free and the work is easy. They just tap the trees the way the farmers gather sugar in Vermont. Father has told me about it often."

Thorne had made no comment. He could abuse a friend, if the friend were among those present, but denouncing any one he disliked as heartily as he disliked Senator Barnes was a public service he preferred to leave to others. And he knew besides that if the father she loved and the man she loved distrusted each other, Barbara would not rest until she learned the reason why.

One day, in a newspaper, Barbara read of the Puju Mayo atrocities, of the Indian slaves in the jungles and backwaters of the Amazon, who are offered up as sacrifices to "red rubber." She carried the paper to her father. What it said, her father told her, was untrue, and if it were true it was the first he had heard of it.

Senator Barnes loved the good things of life, but the thing he loved most was his daughter; the thing he valued the highest was her good opinion. So when for the first time she looked at him in doubt, he assured her he at once would order an investigation.

"But, of course," he added, "it will be many months before our agents can report. On the Amazon news travels very slowly."

In the eyes of his daughter the doubt still lingered.

"I am afraid," she said, "that that is true."

That was six months before the directors of the Brazil and Cuyaba Rubber Company were summoned to meet their president at his rooms in the Ritz−Carlton. They were due to arrive in half an hour, and while Senator Barnes awaited their coming Barbara came to him. In her eyes was a light that helped to tell the great news. It gave him a sharp, jealous pang. He wanted at once to play a part in her happiness, to make her grateful to him, not alone to this stranger who was taking her away. So fearful was he that she would shut him out of her life that had she asked for half his kingdom he would have parted with it.

"And besides giving my consent," said the rubber king, "for which no one seems to have asked, what can I give my little girl to make her remember her old father? Some diamonds to put on her head, or pearls to hang around her neck, or does she want a vacant lot on Fifth Avenue?"

The lovely hands of Barbara rested upon his shoulders; her lovely face was raised to his; her lovely eyes were appealing, and a little frightened.

"What would one of those things cost?" asked Barbara.

The question was eminently practical. It came within the scope of the senator's understanding. After all, he was not to be cast into outer darkness. His smile was complacent. He answered airily:

"Anything you like," he said; "a million dollars?"

The fingers closed upon his shoulders. The eyes, still frightened, still searched his in appeal.

"Then, for my wedding−present," said the girl, "I want you to take that million dollars and send an expedition to the Amazon. And I will choose the men. Men unafraid; men not afraid of fever or sudden death; not afraid to tell the truth−−even to you. And all the world will know. And they−−I mean you−−will set those people free!"

Senator Barnes received the directors with an embarrassment which he concealed under a manner of just indignation.

"My mind is made up," he told them. "Existing conditions cannot continue. And to that end, at my own expense, I am sending an expedition across South America. It will investigate, punish, and establish reforms. I suggest, on account of this damned heat, we do now adjourn."

That night, over on Long Island, Carroll told his wife all, or nearly all. He did not tell her about the automatic pistol. And together on tiptoe they crept to the nursery and looked down at their sleeping children. When she rose from her knees the mother said: "But how can I thank him?"

By "him" she meant the Young Man of Wall Street.

"You never can thank him," said Carroll; "that's the worst of it."

But after a long silence the mother said: "I will send him a photograph of the children. Do you think he will understand?"

Down at Seabright, Hastings and his wife walked in the sunken garden. The moon was so bright that the roses still held their color.

"I would like to thank him," said the young wife. She meant the Young Man of Wall Street. "But for him we would have lost this."

Her eyes caressed the garden, the fruit−trees, the house with wide, hospitable verandas. "To−morrow I will send him some of these roses," said the young wife. "Will he understand that they mean our home?"

At a scandalously late hour, in a scandalous spirit of independence, Champ Thorne and Barbara were driving around Central Park in a taxicab.

"How strangely the Lord moves, his wonders to perform," misquoted Barbara. "Had not the Young Man of Wall Street saved Mr. Hastings, Mr. Hastings could not have raised your salary; you would not have asked me to marry you, and had you not asked me to marry you, father would not have given me a wedding−present, and−−"

"And," said Champ, taking up the tale, "thousands of slaves would still be buried in the jungles, hidden away from their wives and children and the light of the sun and their fellow men. They still would be dying of fever, starvation, tortures."

He took her hand in both of his and held her finger−tips against his lips.

"And they will never know," he whispered, "when their freedom comes, that they owe it all to you."

On Hunter's Island, Jimmie Reeder and his bunkie, Sam Sturges, each on his canvas cot, tossed and twisted. The heat, the moonlight, and the mosquitoes would not let them even think of sleep.

"That was bully," said Jimmie, "what you did to−day about saving that dog. If it hadn't been for you he'd ha' drownded."

"He would not!" said Sammy with punctilious regard for the truth; "it wasn't deep enough."

"Well, the scout−master ought to know," argued Jimmie; "he said it was the best 'one good turn' of the day!"

Modestly Sam shifted the lime−light so that it fell upon his bunkie.

"I'll bet," he declared loyally, "your 'one good turn' was a better one!"

Jimmie yawned, and then laughed scornfully.

"Me!" he scoffed. "I didn't do nothing. I sent my sister to the movies."

"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

Marie Gessler, known as Marie Chaumontel, Jeanne d'Avrechy, the Countess d'Aurillac, was German. Her father, who served through the Franco−Prussian War, was a German spy. It was from her mother she learned to speak French sufficiently well to satisfy even an Academician and, among Parisians, to pass as one. Both her parents were dead. Before they departed, knowing they could leave their daughter nothing save their debts, they had had her trained as a nurse. But when they were gone, Marie in the Berlin hospitals played politics, intrigued, indiscriminately misused the appealing, violet eyes. There was a scandal; several scandals. At the age of twenty−five she was dismissed from the Municipal Hospital, and as now−save for the violet eyes−−she was without resources, as a compagnon de voyage with a German doctor she travelled to Monte Carlo. There she abandoned the doctor for Henri Ravignac, a captain in the French Aviation Corps, who, when his leave ended, escorted her to Paris.

The duties of Captain Ravignac kept him in barracks near the aviation field, but Marie he established in his apartments on the Boulevard Haussmann. One day he brought from the barracks a roll of blue−prints, and as he was locking them in a drawer, said: "The Germans would pay through the nose for those!" The remark was indiscreet, but then Marie had told him she was French, and any one would have believed her.

The next morning the same spirit of adventure that had exiled her from the Berlin hospitals carried her with the blue−prints to the German embassy. There, greatly shocked, they first wrote down her name and address, and then, indignant at her proposition, ordered her out. But the day following a strange young German who was not at all indignant, but, on the contrary, quite charming, called upon Marie. For the blue−prints he offered her a very large sum, and that same hour with them and Marie departed for Berlin. Marie did not need the money. Nor did the argument that she was serving her country greatly impress her. It was rather that she loved intrigue. And so she became a spy.

Henri Ravignac, the man she had robbed of the blue−prints, was tried by court−martial. The charge was treason, but Charles Ravignac, his younger brother, promised to prove that the guilty one was the girl, and to that end obtained leave of absence and spent much time and money. At the trial he was able to show the record of Marie in

Berlin and Monte Carlo; that she was the daughter of a German secret agent; that on the afternoon the prints disappeared Marie, with an agent of the German embassy, had left Paris for Berlin. In consequence of this the charge of selling military secrets was altered to one of "gross neglect," and Henri Ravignac was sentenced to two years in the military prison at Tours. But he was of an ancient and noble family, and when they came to take him from his cell in the Cherche−Midi, he was dead. Charles, his brother, disappeared. It was said he also had killed himself; that he had been appointed a military attache in South America; that to revenge his brother he had entered the secret service; but whatever became of him no one knew. All that was certain was that, thanks to the act of Marie Gessler, on the rolls of the French army the ancient and noble name of Ravignac no longer appeared.

In her chosen profession Marie Gessler found nothing discreditable. Of herself her opinion was not high, and her opinion of men was lower. For her smiles she had watched several sacrifice honor, duty, loyalty; and she held them and their kind in contempt. To lie, to cajole, to rob men of secrets they thought important, and of secrets the importance of which they did not even guess, was to her merely an intricate and exciting game.

She played it very well. So well that in the service her advance was rapid. On important missions she was sent to Russia, through the Balkans; even to the United States. There, with credentials as an army nurse, she inspected our military hospitals and unobtrusively asked many innocent questions.

When she begged to be allowed to work in her beloved Paris, "they" told her when war came "they" intended to plant her inside that city, and that, until then, the less Paris knew of her the better.

But just before the great war broke, to report on which way Italy might jump, she was sent to Rome, and it was not until September she was recalled. The telegram informed her that her Aunt Elizabeth was ill, and that at once she must return to Berlin. This, she learned from the code book wrapped under the cover of her thermos bottle, meant that she was to report to the general commanding the German forces at Soissons.

From Italy she passed through Switzerland, and, after leaving Basle, on military trains was rushed north to Luxemburg, and then west to Laon. She was accompanied by her companion, Bertha, an elderly and respectable, even distinguished−looking female. In the secret service her number was 528. Their passes from the war office described them as nurses of the German Red Cross. Only the Intelligence Department knew their real mission. With her, also, as her chauffeur, was a young Italian soldier of fortune, Paul Anfossi. He had served in the Belgian Congo, in the French Foreign Legion in Algiers, and spoke all the European languages. In Rome, where as a wireless operator he was serving a commercial company, in selling Marie copies of messages he had memorized, Marie had found him useful, and when war came she obtained for him, from the Wilhelmstrasse, the number 292. From Laon, in one of the automobiles of the General Staff, the three spies were driven first to Soissons, and then along the road to Meaux and Paris, to the village of Neufchelles. They arrived at midnight, and in a chateau of one of the Champagne princes, found the colonel commanding the Intelligence Bureau. He accepted their credentials, destroyed them, and replaced them with a laissez− passer signed by the mayor of Laon. That dignitary, the colonel explained, to citizens of Laon fleeing to Paris and the coast had issued many passes. But as now between Laon and Paris there were three German armies, the refugees had been turned back and their passes confiscated.

"From among them," said the officer, "we have selected one for you. It is issued to the wife of Count d'Aurillac, a captain of reserves, and her aunt, Madame Benet. It asks for those ladies and their chauffeur, Briand, a safe−conduct through the French military lines. If it gets you into Paris you will destroy it and assume another name. The Count d'Aurillac is now with his regiment in that city. If he learned of the presence there of his wife, he would seek her, and that would not be good for you. So, if you reach Paris, you will become a Belgian refugee. You are high−born and rich. Your chateau has been destroyed. But you have money. You will give liberally to the Red Cross. You will volunteer to nurse in the hospitals. With your sad story of ill treatment by us, with your high birth, and your knowledge of nursing, which you acquired, of course, only as an amateur, you should not find it difficult to join the Ladies of France, or the American Ambulance. What you learn from the wounded English and French officers and the French doctors you will send us through the usual channels."

"When do I start?" asked the woman.

"For a few days," explained the officer, "you remain in this chateau. You will keep us informed of what is going forward after we withdraw."

"Withdraw?" It was more of an exclamation than a question. Marie was too well trained to ask questions.

"We are taking up a new position," said the officer, "on the Aisne."

The woman, incredulous, stared.

"And we do not enter Paris?"

"You do," returned the officer. "That is all that concerns you. We will join you later−−in the spring. Meanwhile, for the winter we intrench ourselves along the Aisne. In a chimney of this chateau we have set up a wireless outfit. We are leaving it intact. The chauffeur Briand−−who, you must explain to the French, you brought with you from Laon, and who has been long in your service−−will transmit whatever you discover. We wish especially to know of any movement toward our left. If they attack in front from Soissons, we are prepared; but of any attempt to cross the Oise and take us in flank you must warn us."

The officer rose and hung upon himself his field−glasses, map−cases, and side−arms.

"We leave you now," he said. "When the French arrive you will tell them your reason for halting at this chateau was that the owner, Monsieur Iverney, and his family are friends of your husband. You found us here, and we detained you. And so long as you can use the wireless, make excuses to remain. If they offer to send you on to Paris, tell them your aunt is too ill to travel."

"But they will find the wireless," said the woman. "They are sure to use the towers for observation, and they will find it."

"In that case," said the officer, "you will suggest to them that we fled in such haste we had no time to dismantle it. Of course, you had no knowledge that it existed, or, as a loyal French woman, you would have at once told them." To emphasize his next words the officer pointed at her: "Under no circumstances," he continued, "must you be suspected. If they should take Briand in the act, should they have even the least doubt concerning him, you must repudiate him entirely. If necessary, to keep your own skirts clear, it would be your duty yourself to denounce him as a spy."

"Your first orders," said the woman, "were to tell them Briand had been long in my service; that I brought him from my home in Laon."

"He might be in your service for years," returned the colonel, "and you not know he was a German agent."

"If to save myself I inform upon him," said Marie, "of course you know you will lose him."

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "A wireless operator," he retorted, "we can replace. But for you, and for the service you are to render in Paris, we have no substitute. You must not be found out. You are invaluable."

The spy inclined her head. "I thank you," she said.

The officer sputtered indignantly.

"It is not a compliment," he exclaimed; "it is an order. You must not be found out!"

Withdrawn some two hundred yards from the Paris road, the chateau stood upon a wooded hill. Except directly in front, trees of great height surrounded it. The tips of their branches brushed the windows; interlacing, they continued until they overhung the wall of the estate. Where it ran with the road the wall gave way to a lofty gate and iron fence, through which those passing could see a stretch of noble turf, as wide as a polo−field, borders of flowers disappearing under the shadows of the trees; and the chateau itself, with its terrace, its many windows, its high−pitched, sloping roof, broken by towers and turrets.

Through the remainder of the night there came from the road to those in the chateau the roar and rumbling of the army in retreat. It moved without panic, disorder, or haste, but unceasingly. Not for an instant was there a breathing−spell. And when the sun rose, the three spies−−the two women and the chauffeur−−who in the great chateau were now alone, could see as well as hear the gray column of steel rolling past below them.

The spies knew that the gray column had reached Claye, had stood within fifteen miles of Paris, and then upon Paris had turned its back. They knew also that the reverberations from the direction of Meaux, that each moment grew more loud and savage, were the French "seventy−fives" whipping the gray column forward. Of what they felt the Germans did not speak. In silence they looked at each other, and in the eyes of Marie was bitterness and resolve.

Toward noon Marie met Anfossi in the great drawing−room that stretched the length of the terrace and from the windows of which, through the park gates, they could see the Paris road.

"This, that is passing now," said Marie, "is the last of our rear−guard. Go to your tower," she ordered, "and send word that except for stragglers and the wounded our column has just passed through NeufchelIes, and that any moment we expect the French." She raised her hand impressively. "From now," she warned, "we speak French, we think French, we are French!"

Anfossi, or Briand, as now he called himself, addressed her in that language. His tone was bitter. "Pardon my lese−majesty," he said, "but this chief of your Intelligence Department is a dummer Mensch. He is throwing away a valuable life."

Marie exclaimed in dismay. She placed her hand upon his arm, and the violet eyes filled with concern.

"Not yours!" she protested.

"Absolutely!" returned the Italian. "I can send nothing by this knapsack wireless that they will not learn from others; from airmen, Uhlans, the peasants in the fields. And certainly I will be caught. Dead I am dead, but alive and in Paris the opportunities are unending. From the French Legion Etranger I have my honorable discharge. I am an expert wireless operator and in their Signal Corps I can easily find a place. Imagine me, then, on the Eiffel Tower. From the air I snatch news from all of France, from the Channel, the North Sea. You and I could work together, as in Rome. But here, between the lines, with a pass from a village sous−prefet, it is ridiculous. I am not afraid to die. But to die because some one else is stupid, that is hard."

Marie clasped his hand in both of hers.

"You must not speak of death," she cried; "you know I must carry out my orders, that I must force you to take this risk. And you know that thought of harm to you tortures me!"

Quickly the young man disengaged his hand. The woman exclaimed with anger.

"Why do you doubt me?" she cried.

Briand protested vehemently.

"I do not doubt you."

"My affection, then?" In a whisper that carried with it the feeling of a caress Marie added softly: "My love?"

The young man protested miserably. "You make it very hard, mademoiselle," he cried. "You are my superior officer, I am your servant. Who am I that I should share with others−−"

The woman interrupted eagerly.

"Ah, you are jealous!" she cried. "Is that why you are so cruel? But when I tell you I love you, and only you, can you not feel it is the truth?"

The young man frowned unhappily.

"My duty, mademoiselle!" he stammered.

With an exclamation of anger Marie left him. As the door slammed behind her, the young man drew a deep breath. On his face was the expression of ineffable relief.

In the hall Marie met her elderly companion, Bertha, now her aunt, Madame Benet.

"I heard you quarrelling," Bertha protested. "It is most indiscreet. It is not in the part of the Countess d'Aurillac that she makes love to her chauffeur."

Marie laughed noiselessly and drew her farther down the hall. "He is imbecile!" she exclaimed. "He will kill me with his solemn face and his conceit. I make love to him−−yes−−that he may work the more willingly. But he will have none of it. He is jealous of the others."

Madame Benet frowned.

"He resents the others," she corrected. "I do not blame him. He is a gentleman!"

"And the others," demanded Marie; "were they not of the most noble families of Rome?"

"I am old and I am ugly," said Bertha, "but to me Anfossi is always as considerate as he is to you who are so beautiful."

"An Italian gentleman," returned Marie, "does not serve in Belgian Congo unless it is−−the choice of that or the marble quarries."

"I do not know what his past may be," sighed Madame Benet, "nor do I ask. He is only a number, as you and I are only numbers. And I beg you to let us work in harmony. At such a time your love−affairs threaten our safety. You must wait."

Marie laughed insolently. "With the Du Barry," she protested, "I can boast that I wait for no man."

"No," replied the older woman; "you pursue him!"

Marie would have answered sharply, but on the instant her interest was diverted. For one week, by day and night, she had lived in a world peopled only by German soldiers. Beside her in the railroad carriage, on the station platforms, at the windows of the trains that passed the one in which she rode, at the grade crossings, on the bridges, in the roads that paralleled the tracks, choking the streets of the villages and spread over the fields of grain, she had seen only the gray−green uniforms. Even her professional eye no longer distinguished regiment from regiment, dragoon from grenadier, Uhlan from Hussar or Landsturm. Stripes, insignia, numerals, badges of rank, had lost their meaning. Those who wore them no longer were individuals. They were not even human. During the three last days the automobile, like a motor−boat fighting the tide, had crept through a gray−green river of men, stained, as though from the banks, by mud and yellow clay. And for hours, while the car was blocked, and in fury the engine raced and purred, the gray−green river had rolled past her, slowly but as inevitably as lava down the slope of a volcano, bearing on its surface faces with staring eyes, thousands and thousands of eyes, some fierce and bloodshot, others filled with weariness, homesickness, pain. At night she still saw them: the white faces under the sweat and dust, the eyes dumb, inarticulate, asking the answer. She had been suffocated by German soldiers, by the mass of them, engulfed and smothered; she had stifled in a land inhabited only by gray−green ghosts.

And suddenly, as though a miracle had been wrought, she saw upon the lawn, riding toward her, a man in scarlet, blue, and silver. One man riding alone.

Approaching with confidence, but alert; his reins fallen, his hands nursing his carbine, his eyes searched the shadows of the trees, the empty windows, even the sun−swept sky. His was the new face at the door, the new step on the floor. And the spy knew had she beheld an army corps it would have been no more significant, no more menacing, than the solitary chasseur a cheval scouting in advance of the enemy.

"We are saved!" exclaimed Marie, with irony. "Go quickly," she commanded, "to the bedroom on the second floor that opens upon the staircase, so that you can see all who pass. You are too ill to travel. They must find you in bed."

"And you?" said Bertha.

"I," cried Marie rapturously, "hasten to welcome our preserver!"

The preserver was a peasant lad. Under the white dust his cheeks were burned a brown−red, his eyes, honest and blue, through much staring at the skies and at horizon lines, were puckered and encircled with tiny wrinkles. Responsibility had made him older than his years, and in speech brief. With the beautiful lady who with tears of joy ran to greet him, and who in an ecstasy of happiness pressed her cheek against the nose of his horse, he was unimpressed. He returned to her her papers and gravely echoed her answers to his questions. "This chateau," he repeated, "was occupied by their General Staff; they have left no wounded here; you saw the last of them pass a half−hour since." He gathered up his reins.

Marie shrieked in alarm. "You will not leave us?" she cried.

For the first time the young man permitted himself to smile. "Others arrive soon," he said.

He touched his shako, wheeled his horse in the direction from which he had come, and a minute later Marie heard the hoofs echoing through the empty village.

When they came, the others were more sympathetic. Even in times of war a beautiful woman is still a beautiful woman. And the staff officers who moved into the quarters so lately occupied by the enemy found in the presence of the Countess d'Aurillac nothing to distress them. In the absence of her dear friend, Madame Iverney, the chatelaine of the chateau, she acted as their hostess. Her chauffeur showed the company cooks the way to the

kitchen, the larder, and the charcoal−box. She, herself, in the hands of General Andre placed the keys of the famous wine−cellar, and to the surgeon, that the wounded might be freshly bandaged, intrusted those of the linen−closet. After the indignities she had suffered while "detained" by les Boches, her delight and relief at again finding herself under the protection of her own people would have touched a heart of stone. And the hearts of the staff were not of stone. It was with regret they gave the countess permission to continue on her way. At this she exclaimed with gratitude. She assured them, were her aunt able to travel, she would immediately depart.

"In Paris she will be more comfortable than here," said the kind surgeon. He was a reservist, and in times of peace a fashionable physician and as much at his ease in a boudoir as in a field hospital. "Perhaps if I saw Madam Benet?"

At the suggestion the countess was overjoyed. But they found Madame Benet in a state of complete collapse. The conduct of the Germans had brought about a nervous breakdown.

"Though the bridges are destroyed at Meaux," urged the surgeon, "even with a detour, you can be in Paris in four hours. I think it is worth the effort."

But the mere thought of the journey threw Madame Benet into hysterics. She asked only to rest, she begged for an opiate to make her sleep. She begged also that they would leave the door open, so that when she dreamed she was still in the hands of the Germans, and woke in terror, the sound of the dear French voices and the sight of the beloved French uniforms might reassure her. She played her part well. Concerning her Marie felt not the least anxiety. But toward Briand, the chauffeur, the new arrivals were less easily satisfied.

The general sent his adjutant for the countess. When the adjutant had closed the door General Andre began abruptly:

"The chauffeur Briand," he asked, "you know him; you can vouch for him?"

"But, certainly!" protested Marie. "He is an Italian."

As though with sudden enlightenment, Marie laughed. It was as if now in the suspicion of the officer she saw a certain reasonableness. "Briand was so long in the Foreign Legion in Algiers," she explained, "where my husband found him, that we have come to think of him as French. As much French as ourselves, I assure you."

The general and his adjutant were regarding each other questioningly.

"Perhaps I should tell the countess," began the general, "that we have learned−−"

The signal from the adjutant was so slight, so swift, that Marie barely intercepted it.

The lips of the general shut together like the leaves of a book. To show the interview was at an end, he reached for a pen.

"I thank you," he said.

"Of course," prompted the adjutant, "Madame d'Aurillac understands the man must not know we inquired concerning him."

General Andre frowned at Marie.

"Certainly not!" he commanded. "The honest fellow must not know that even for a moment he was doubted."

Marie raised the violet eyes reprovingly.

"I trust," she said with reproach, "I too well understand the feelings of a French soldier to let him know his loyalty is questioned."

With a murmur of appreciation the officers bowed and with a gesture of gracious pardon Marie left them.

Outside in the hall, with none but orderlies to observe, like a cloak the graciousness fell from her. She was drawn two ways. In her work Anfossi was valuable. But Anfossi suspected was less than of no value; he became a menace, a death−warrant.

General Andre had said, "We have learned−−" and the adjutant had halted him. What had he learned? To know that, Marie would have given much. Still, one important fact comforted her. Anfossi alone was suspected. Had there been concerning herself the slightest doubt, they certainly would not have allowed her to guess her companion was under surveillance; they would not have asked one who was herself suspected to vouch for the innocence of a fellow conspirator. Marie found the course to follow difficult. With Anfossi under suspicion his usefulness was for the moment at an end; and to accept the chance offered her to continue on to Paris seemed most wise. On the other hand, if, concerning Anfossi, she had succeeded in allaying their doubts, the results most to be desired could be attained only by remaining where they were.

Their position inside the lines was of the greatest strategic value. The rooms of the servants were under the roof, and that Briand should sleep in one of them was natural. That to reach or leave his room he should constantly be ascending or descending the stairs also was natural. The field−wireless outfit, or, as he had disdainfully described it, the "knapsack" wireless, was situated not in the bedroom he had selected for himself, but in one adjoining. At other times this was occupied by the maid of Madame Iverney. To summon her maid Madame Iverney, from her apartment on the second floor, had but to press a button. And it was in the apartment of Madame Iverney, and on the bed of that lady, that Madame Benet now reclined. When through the open door she saw an officer or soldier mount the stairs, she pressed the button that rang a bell in the room of the maid. In this way, long before whoever was ascending the stairs could reach the top floor, warning of his approach came to Anfossi. It gave him time to replace the dustboard over the fireplace in which the wireless was concealed and to escape into his own bedroom. The arrangement was ideal. And already information picked up in the halls below by Marie had been conveyed to Anfossi to relay in a French cipher to the German General Staff at Rheims.

Marie made an alert and charming hostess. To all who saw her it was evident that her mind was intent only upon the comfort of her guests. Throughout the day many came and went, but each she made welcome; to each as he departed she called "bonne chance." Efficient, tireless, tactful, she was everywhere: in the dining−room, in the kitchen, in the bedrooms, for the wounded finding mattresses to spread in the gorgeous salons of the Champagne prince; for the soldier−chauffeurs carrying wine into the courtyard, where the automobiles panted and growled, and the arriving and departing shrieked for right of way. At all times an alluring person, now the one woman in a tumult of men, her smart frock covered by an apron, her head and arms bare, undismayed by the sight of the wounded or by the distant rumble of the guns, the Countess d'Aurillac was an inspiring and beautiful picture. The eyes of the officers, young and old, informed her of that fact, one of which already she was well aware. By the morning of the next day she was accepted as the owner of the chateau.

And though continually she reminded the staff she was present only as the friend of her schoolmate, Madame Iverney, they deferred to her as to a hostess. Many of them she already saluted by name, and to those who with messages were constantly motoring to and from the front at Soissons she was particularly kind. Overnight the legend of her charm, of her devotion to the soldiers of all ranks, had spread from Soissons to Meaux, and from Meaux to Paris. It was noon of that day when from the window of the second story Marie saw an armored automobile sweep into the courtyard. It was driven by an officer, young and appallingly good−looking, and, as was obvious by the way he spun his car, one who held in contempt both the law of gravity and death. That he was

some one of importance seemed evident. Before he could alight the adjutant had raced to meet him. With her eye for detail Marie observed that the young officer, instead of imparting information, received it. He must, she guessed, have just arrived from Paris, and his brother officer either was telling him the news or giving him his orders. Whichever it might be, in what was told him the new arrival was greatly interested. One instant in indignation his gauntleted fist beat upon the steering−wheel, the next he smiled with pleasure. To interpret this pantomime was difficult; and, the better to inform herself, Marie descended the stairs.

As she reached the lower hall the two officers entered. To the spy the man last to arrive was always the one of greatest importance; and Marie assured herself that through her friend, the adjutant, to meet with this one would prove easy.

But the chauffeur−commander of the armored car made it most difficult. At sight of Marie, much to her alarm, as though greeting a dear friend, he snatched his kepi from his head and sprang toward her.

"The major," he cried, "told me you were here, that you are Madame d'Aurillac." His eyes spoke his admiration. In delight he beamed upon her. "I might have known it!" he murmured. With the confidence of one who is sure he brings good news, he laughed happily. "And I," he cried, "am 'Pierrot'!"

Who the devil "Pierrot" might be the spy could not guess. She knew only that she wished by a German shell "Pierrot" and his car had been blown to tiny fragments. Was it a trap, she asked herself, or was the handsome youth really some one the Countess d'Aurillac should know. But, as from his introducing himself it was evident he could not know that lady very well, Marie took courage and smiled.

"Which 'Pierrot'?" she parried.

"Pierre Thierry!" cried the youth.

To the relief of Marie he turned upon the adjutant and to him explained who Pierre Thierry might be.

"Paul d'Aurillac," he said, "is my dearest friend. When he married this charming lady I was stationed in Algiers, and but for the war I might never have met her."

To Marie, with his hand on his heart in a most charming manner, he bowed. His admiration he made no effort to conceal.

"And so," he said, "I know why there is war!"

The adjutant smiled indulgently, and departed on his duties, leaving them alone. The handsome eyes of Captain Thierry were raised to the violet eyes of Marie. They appraised her boldly and as boldly expressed their approval.

In burlesque the young man exclaimed indignantly: "Paul deceived me!" he cried. "He told me he had married the most beautiful woman in Laon. He has married the most beautiful woman in France!"

To Marie this was not impertinence, but gallantry.

This was a language she understood, and this was the type of man, because he was the least difficult to manage, she held most in contempt.

"But about you Paul did not deceive me," she retorted. In apparent confusion her eyes refused to meet his. "He told me 'Pierrot' was a most dangerous man!"

She continued hurriedly. With wifely solicitude she asked concerning Paul. She explained that for a week she had been a prisoner in the chateau, and, since the mobilization, of her husband save that he was with his regiment in Paris she had heard nothing. Captain Thierry was able to give her later news. Only the day previous, on the boulevards, he had met Count d'Aurillac. He was at the Grand Hotel, and as Thierry was at once motoring back to Paris he would give Paul news of their meeting. He hoped he might tell him that soon his wife also would be in Paris. Marie explained that only the illness of her aunt prevented her from that same day joining her husband. Her manner became serious.

"And what other news have you?" she asked. "Here on the firing−line we know less of what is going forward than you in Paris."

So Pierre Thierry told her all he knew. They were preparing despatches he was at once to carry back to the General Staff, and, for the moment, his time was his own. How could he better employ it than in talking of the war with a patriotic and charming French woman?

In consequence Marie acquired a mass of facts, gossip, and guesses. From these she mentally selected such information as, to her employers across the Aisne, would be of vital interest.

And to rid herself of Thierry and on the fourth floor seek Anfossi was now her only wish. But, in attempting this, by the return of the adjutant she was delayed. To Thierry the adjutant gave a sealed envelope.

"Thirty−one, Boulevard des Invalides," he said. With a smile he turned to Marie. "And you will accompany him!"

"I!" exclaimed Marie. She was sick with sudden terror.

But the tolerant smile of the adjutant reassured her.

"The count, your husband," he explained, "has learned of your detention here by the enemy, and he has besieged the General Staff to have you convoyed safely to Paris." The adjutant glanced at a field telegram he held open in his hand. "He asks," he continued, "that you be permitted to return in the car of his friend, Captain Thierry, and that on arriving you join him at the Grand Hotel."

Thierry exclaimed with delight.

"But how charming!" he cried. "To−night you must both dine with me at La Rue's." He saluted his superior officer. "Some petrol, sir," he said. "And I am ready." To Marie he added: "The car will be at the steps in five minutes." He turned and left them.

The thoughts of Marie, snatching at an excuse for delay, raced madly. The danger of meeting the Count d'Aurillac, her supposed husband, did not alarm her. The Grand Hotel has many exits, and, even before they reached it, for leaving the car she could invent an excuse that the gallant Thierry would not suspect. But what now concerned her was how, before she was whisked away to Paris, she could convey to Anfossi the information she had gathered from Thierry. First, of a woman overcome with delight at being reunited with her husband she gave an excellent imitation; then she exclaimed in distress: "But my aunt, Madame Benet!" she cried. "I cannot leave her!"

"The Sisters of St. Francis," said the adjutant, "arrive within an hour to nurse the wounded. They will care also for your aunt."

Marie concealed her chagrin. "Then I will at once prepare to go," she said.

The adjutant handed her a slip of paper. "Your laissez−passer to Paris," he said. "You leave in five minutes, madame!"

As temporary hostess of the chateau Marie was free to visit any part of it, and as she passed her door a signal from Madame Benet told her that Anfossi was on the fourth floor, that he was at work, and that the coast was clear. Softly, in the felt slippers she always wore, as she explained, in order not to disturb the wounded, she mounted the staircase. In her hand she carried the housekeeper's keys, and as an excuse it was her plan to return with an armful of linen for the arriving Sisters. But Marie never reached the top of the stairs. When her eyes rose to the level of the fourth floor she came to a sudden halt. At what she saw terror gripped her, bound her hand and foot, and turned her blood to ice.

At her post for an instant Madame Benet had slept, and an officer of the staff, led by curiosity, chance, or suspicion, had, unobserved and unannounced, mounted to the fourth floor. When Marie saw him he was in front of the room that held the wireless. His back was toward her, but she saw that he was holding the door to the room ajar, that his eye was pressed to the opening, and that through it he had pushed the muzzle of his automatic. What would be the fate of Anfossi Marie knew. Nor did she for an instant consider it. Her thoughts were of her own safety; that she might live.

Not that she might still serve the Wilhelmstrasse, the Kaiser, or the Fatherland; but that she might live. In a moment Anfossi would be denounced, the chateau would ring with the alarm, and, though she knew Anfossi would not betray her, by others she might be accused. To avert suspicion from herself she saw only one way open. She must be the first to denounce Anfossi.

Like a deer, she leaped down the marble stairs and, in a panic she had no need to assume, burst into the presence of the staff.

"Gentlemen!" she gasped, "my servant−−the chauffeur−−Briand is a spy! There is a German wireless in the chateau. He is using it! I have seen him." With exclamations, the officers rose to their feet. General Andre alone remained seated. General Andre was a veteran of many Colonial wars: Cochin−China, Algiers, Morocco. The great war, when it came, found him on duty in the Intelligence Department. His aquiline nose, bristling white eyebrows, and flashing, restless eyes gave him his nickname of l'Aigle.

In amazement, the flashing eyes were now turned upon Marie. He glared at her as though he thought she suddenly had flown mad.

"A German wireless!" he protested. "It is impossible!"

"I was on the fourth floor," panted Marie, "collecting linen for the Sisters. In the room next to the linen−closet I heard a strange buzzing sound. I opened the door softly. I saw Briand with his back to me seated by an instrument. There were receivers clamped to his ears! My God! The disgrace! The disgrace to my husband and to me, who vouched for him to you!" Apparently in an agony of remorse, the fingers of the woman laced and interlaced. "I cannot forgive myself!"

The officers moved toward the door, but General Andre halted them. Still in a tone of incredulity, he demanded: "When did you see this?"

Marie knew the question was coming, knew she must explain how she saw Briand, and yet did not see the staff officer who, with his prisoner, might now at any instant appear. She must make it plain she had discovered the spy and left the upper part of the house before the officer had visited it. When that was she could not know, but the chance was that he had preceded her by only a few minutes.

"When did you see this?" repeated the general.

"But just now," cried Marie; "not ten minutes since."

"Why did you not come to me at once?"

"I was afraid," replied Marie. "If I moved I was afraid he might hear me, and he, knowing I would expose him, would kill me−and so escape you!" There was an eager whisper of approval. For silence, General Andre slapped his hand upon the table.

"Then," continued Marie, "I understood with the receivers on his ears he could not have heard me open the door, nor could he hear me leave, and I ran to my aunt. The thought that we had harbored such an animal sickened me, and I was weak enough to feel faint. But only for an instant. Then I came here." She moved swiftly to the door. "Let me show you the room," she begged; "you can take him in the act." Her eyes, wild with the excitement of the chase, swept the circle. "Will you come?" she begged.

Unconscious of the crisis he interrupted, the orderly on duty opened the door.

"Captain Thierry's compliments," he recited mechanically, "and is he to delay longer for Madame d'Aurillac?"

With a sharp gesture General Andre waved Marie toward the door. Without rising, he inclined his head. "Adieu, madame," he said. "We act at once upon your information. I thank you!"

As she crossed from the hall to the terrace, the ears of the spy were assaulted by a sudden tumult of voices. They were raised in threats and curses. Looking back, she saw Anfossi descending the stairs. His hands were held above his head; behind him, with his automatic, the staff officer she had surprised on the fourth floor was driving him forward. Above the clinched fists of the soldiers that ran to meet him, the eyes of Anfossi were turned toward her. His face was expressionless. His eyes neither accused nor reproached. And with the joy of one who has looked upon and then escaped the guillotine, Marie ran down the steps to the waiting automobile. With a pretty cry of pleasure she leaped into the seat beside Thierry. Gayly she threw out her arms. "To Paris!" she commanded. The handsome eyes of Thierry, eloquent with admiration, looked back into hers. He stooped, threw in the clutch, and the great gray car, with the machine gun and its crew of privates guarding the rear, plunged through the park.

"To Paris!" echoed Thierry.

In the order in which Marie had last seen them, Anfossi and the staff officer entered the room of General Andre, and upon the soldiers in the hall the door was shut. The face of the staff officer was grave, but his voice could not conceal his elation.

"My general," he reported, "I found this man in the act of giving information to the enemy. There is a wireless−"

General Andre rose slowly. He looked neither at the officer nor at his prisoner. With frowning eyes he stared down at the maps upon his table.

"I know," he interrupted. "Some one has already told me." He paused, and then, as though recalling his manners, but still without raising his eyes, he added: "You have done well, sir."

In silence the officers of the staff stood motionless. With surprise they noted that, as yet, neither in anger nor curiosity had General Andre glanced at the prisoner. But of the presence of the general the spy was most acutely conscious. He stood erect, his arms still raised, but his body strained forward, and on the averted eyes of the general his own were fixed.

In an agony of supplication they asked a question.

At last, as though against his wish, toward the spy the general turned his head, and their eyes met. And still General Andre was silent. Then the arms of the spy, like those of a runner who has finished his race and breasts the tape exhausted, fell to his sides. In a voice low and vibrant he spoke his question.

"It has been so long, sir," he pleaded. "May I not come home?"

General Andre turned to the astonished group surrounding him. His voice was hushed like that of one who speaks across an open grave.

"Gentlemen," he began, "my children," he added. "A German spy, a woman, involved in a scandal your brother in arms, Henri Ravignac. His honor, he thought, was concerned, and without honor he refused to live. To prove him guiltless his younger brother Charles asked leave to seek out the woman who had betrayed Henri, and by us was detailed on secret service. He gave up home, family, friends. He lived in exile, in poverty, at all times in danger of a swift and ignoble death. In the War Office we know him as one who has given to his country services she cannot hope to reward. For she cannot return to him the years he has lost. She cannot return to him his brother. But she can and will clear the name of Henri Ravignac, and upon his brother Charles bestow promotion and honors."

The general turned and embraced the spy. "My children," he said, "welcome your brother. He has come home."

Before the car had reached the fortifications, Marie Gessler had arranged her plan of escape. She had departed from the chateau without even a hand−bag, and she would say that before the shops closed she must make purchases.

Le Printemps lay in their way, and she asked that, when they reached it, for a moment she might alight. Captain Thierry readily gave permission.

From the department store it would be most easy to disappear, and in anticipation Marie smiled covertly. Nor was the picture of Captain Thierry impatiently waiting outside unamusing.

But before Le Printemps was approached, the car turned sharply down a narrow street. On one side, along its entire length, ran a high gray wall, grim and forbidding. In it was a green gate studded with iron bolts. Before this the automobile drew suddenly to a halt. The crew of the armored car tumbled off the rear seat, and one of them beat upon the green gate. Marie felt a hand of ice clutch at her throat. But she controlled herself.

"And what is this?" she cried gayly.

At her side Captain Thierry was smiling down at her, but his smile was hateful.

"It is the prison of St. Lazare," he said. "It is not becoming," he added sternly, "that the name of the Countess d'Aurillac should be made common as the Paris road!"

Fighting for her life, Marie thrust herself against him; her arm that throughout the journey had rested on the back of the driving−seat caressed his shoulders; her lips and the violet eyes were close to his.

"Why should you care?" she whispered fiercely. "You have me! Let the Count d'Aurillac look after the honor of his wife himself."

The charming Thierry laughed at her mockingly.

"He means to," he said. "I am the Count d'Aurillac!"

THE DESERTER

In Salonika, the American consul, the Standard Oil man, and the war correspondents formed the American colony. The correspondents were waiting to go to the front. Incidentally, as we waited, the front was coming rapidly toward us. There was "Uncle" Jim, the veteran of many wars, and of all the correspondents, in experience the oldest and in spirit the youngest, and there was the Kid, and the Artist. The Kid jeered at us, and proudly described himself as the only Boy Reporter who jumped from a City Hall assignment to cover a European War. "I don't know strategy," he would boast; "neither does the Man at Home. He wants 'human interest' stuff, and I give him what he wants. I write exclusively for the subway guard and the farmers in the wheat belt. When you fellows write about the 'Situation,' they don't understand it. Neither do you. Neither does Venizelos or the King. I don't understand it myself. So, I write my people heart−to−heart talks about refugees and wounded, and what kind of ploughs the Servian peasants use, and that St. Paul wrote his letters to the Thessalonians from the same hotel where I write mine; and I tell 'em to pronounce Salonika 'eeka,' and not put the accent on the 'on.' This morning at the refugee camp I found all the little Servians of the Frothingham unit in American Boy Scout uniforms. That's my meat. That's 'home week' stuff. You fellows write for the editorial page; and nobody reads it. I write for the man that turns first to Mutt and Jeff, and then looks to see where they are running the new Charlie Chaplin release. When that man has to choose between 'our military correspondent' and the City Hall Reporter, he chooses me!"

The third man was John, "Our Special Artist." John could write a news story, too, but it was the cartoons that had made him famous. They were not comic page, but front page cartoons, and before making up their minds what they thought, people waited to see what their Artist thought. So, it was fortunate his thoughts were as brave and clean as they were clever. He was the original Little Brother to the Poor. He was always giving away money. When we caught him, he would prevaricate. He would say the man was a college chum, that he had borrowed the money from him, and that this was the first chance he had had to pay it back. The Kid suggested it was strange that so many of his college chums should at the same moment turn up, dead broke, in Salonika, and that half of them should be women.

John smiled disarmingly. "It was a large college," he explained, "and coeducational." There were other Americans; Red Cross doctors and nurses just escaped through the snow from the Bulgars, and hyphenated Americans who said they had taken out their first papers. They thought hyphenated citizens were so popular with us, that we would pay their passage to New York. In Salonika they were transients. They had no local standing. They had no local lying−down place, either, or place to eat, or to wash, although they did not look as though that worried them, or place to change their clothes. Or clothes to change. It was because we had clothes to change, and a hotel bedroom, instead of a bench in a cafe, that we were ranked as residents and from the Greek police held a "permission to sojourn." Our American colony was a very close corporation. We were only six Americans against 300,000 British, French, Greek, and Servian soldiers, and 120,000 civilian Turks, Spanish Jews, Armenians, Persians, Egyptians, Albanians, and Arabs, and some twenty more other races that are not listed. We had arrived in Salonika before the rush, and at the Hotel Hermes on the water−front had secured a vast room. The edge of the stone quay was not forty feet from us, the only landing steps directly opposite our balcony. Everybody who arrived on the Greek passenger boats from Naples or the Piraeus, or who had shore leave from a man−of−war, transport, or hospital ship, was raked by our cameras. There were four windows−−one for each of us and his work table. It was not easy to work. What was the use? The pictures and stories outside the windows fascinated us, but when we sketched them or wrote about them, they only proved us inadequate. All day long the pinnaces, cutters, gigs, steam launches shoved and bumped against the stone steps, marines came ashore for the mail, stewards for fruit and fish, Red Cross nurses to shop, tiny midshipmen to visit the movies, and the sailors and officers of the Russian, French, British, Italian, and Greek war−ships to stretch their legs in the park of the Tour Blanche, or to cramp them under a cafe table. Sometimes the ambulances blocked the quay and the wounded and frost−bitten were lifted into the motor−boats, and sometimes a squad of marines lined the landing stage, and as a coffin under

a French or English flag was borne up the stone steps stood at salute. So crowded was the harbor that the oars of the boatmen interlocked.

Close to the stone quay, stretched along the three−mile circle, were the fishing smacks, beyond them, so near that the anchor chains fouled, were the passenger ships with gigantic Greek flags painted on their sides, and beyond them transports from Marseilles, Malta, and Suvla Bay, black colliers, white hospital ships, burning green electric lights, red−bellied tramps and freighters, and, hemming them in, the grim, mouse−colored destroyers, submarines, cruisers, dreadnaughts. At times, like a wall, the cold fog rose between us and the harbor, and again the curtain would suddenly be ripped asunder, and the sun would flash on the brass work of the fleet, on the white wings of the aeroplanes, on the snow−draped shoulders of Mount Olympus. We often speculated as to how in the early days the gods and goddesses, dressed as they were, or as they were not, survived the snows of Mount Olympus. Or was it only their resort for the summer?

It got about that we had a vast room to ourselves, where one might obtain a drink, or a sofa for the night, or even money to cable for money. So, we had many strange visitors, some half starved, half frozen, with terrible tales of the Albanian trail, of the Austrian prisoners fallen by the wayside, of the mountain passes heaped with dead, of the doctors and nurses wading waist−high in snow−drifts and for food killing the ponies. Some of our visitors wanted to get their names in the American papers so that the folks at home would know they were still alive, others wanted us to keep their names out of the papers, hoping the police would think them dead; another, convinced it was of pressing news value, desired us to advertise the fact that he had invented a poisonous gas for use in the trenches. With difficulty we prevented him from casting it adrift in our room. Or, he had for sale a second−hand motor−cycle, or he would accept a position as barkeeper, or for five francs would sell a state secret that, once made public, in a month would end the war. It seemed cheap at the price.

Each of us had his "scouts" to bring him the bazaar rumor, the Turkish bath rumor, the cafe rumor. Some of our scouts journeyed as far afield as Monastir and Doiran, returning to drip snow on the floor, and to tell us tales, one−half of which we refused to believe, and the other half the censor refused to pass. With each other's visitors it was etiquette not to interfere. It would have been like tapping a private wire. When we found John sketching a giant stranger in a cap and coat of wolf skin we did not seek to know if he were an Albanian brigand, or a Servian prince incognito, and when a dark Levantine sat close to the Kid, whispering, and the Kid banged on his typewriter, we did not listen.

So, when I came in one afternoon and found a strange American youth writing at John's table, and no one introduced us, I took it for granted he had sold the Artist an "exclusive" story, and asked no questions. But I could not help hearing what they said. Even though I tried to drown their voices by beating on the Kid's typewriter. I was taking my third lesson, and I had printed, "I Amm 5w writjng This, 5wjth my own lilly w?ite handS," when I heard the Kid saying:

"You can beat the game this way. Let John buy you a ticket to the Piraeus. If you go from one Greek port to another you don't need a vise. But, if you book from here to Italy, you must get a permit from the Italian consul, and our consul, and the police. The plot is to get out of the war zone, isn't it? Well, then, my dope is to get out quick, and map the rest of your trip when you're safe in Athens."

It was no business of mine, but I had to look up. The stranger was now pacing the floor. I noticed that while his face was almost black with tan, his upper lip was quite white. I noticed also that he had his hands in the pockets of one of John's blue serge suits, and that the pink silk shirt he wore was one that once had belonged to the Kid. Except for the pink shirt, in the appearance of the young man there was nothing unusual. He was of a familiar type. He looked like a young business man from our Middle West, matter−of−fact and unimaginative, but capable and self−reliant. If he had had a fountain pen in his upper waistcoat pocket, I would have guessed he was an insurance agent, or the publicity man for a new automobile. John picked up his hat, and said, "That's good advice. Give me your steamer ticket, Fred, and I'll have them change it." He went out; but he did not ask Fred to go with

him.

Uncle Jim rose, and murmured something about the Cafe Roma, and tea. But neither did he invite Fred to go with him. Instead, he told him to make himself at home, and if he wanted anything the waiter would bring it from the cafe downstairs. Then the Kid, as though he also was uncomfortable at being left alone with us, hurried to the door. "Going to get you a suit−case," he explained. "Back in five minutes."

The stranger made no answer. Probably he did not hear him. Not a hundred feet from our windows three Greek steamers were huddled together, and the eyes of the American were fixed on them. The one for which John had gone to buy him a new ticket lay nearest. She was to sail in two hours. Impatiently, in short quick steps, the stranger paced the length of the room, but when he turned and so could see the harbor, he walked slowly, devouring it with his eyes. For some time, in silence, he repeated this manoeuvre; and then the complaints of the typewriter disturbed him. He halted and observed my struggles. Under his scornful eye, in my embarrassment I frequently hit the right letter. "You a newspaper man, too?" he asked. I boasted I was, but begged not to be judged by my typewriting.

"I got some great stories to write when I get back to God's country," he announced. "I was a reporter for two years in Kansas City before the war, and now I'm going back to lecture and write. I got enough material to keep me at work for five years. All kinds of stuff−− specials, fiction, stories, personal experiences, maybe a novel."

I regarded him with envy. For the correspondents in the greatest of all wars the pickings had been meagre. "You are to be congratulated," I said. He brushed aside my congratulations. "For what?" he demanded. "I didn't go after the stories; they came to me. The things I saw I had to see. Couldn't get away from them. I've been with the British, serving in the R. A. M. C. Been hospital steward, stretcher bearer, ambulance driver. I've been sixteen months at the front, and all the time on the firing−line. I was in the retreat from Mons, with French on the Marne, at Ypres, all through the winter fighting along the Canal, on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and, just lately, in Servia. I've seen more of this war than any soldier. Because, sometimes, they give the soldier a rest; they never give the medical corps a rest. The only rest I got was when I was wounded."

He seemed no worse for his wounds, so again I tendered congratulations. This time he accepted them. The recollection of the things he had seen, things incredible, terrible, unique in human experience, had stirred him. He talked on, not boastfully, but in a tone, rather, of awe and disbelief, as though assuring himself that it was really he to whom such things had happened.

"I don't believe there's any kind of fighting I haven't seen," he declared; "hand−to−hand fighting with bayonets, grenades, gun butts. I've seen 'em on their knees in the mud choking each other, beating each other with their bare fists. I've seen every kind of airship, bomb, shell, poison gas, every kind of wound. Seen whole villages turned into a brickyard in twenty minutes; in Servia seen bodies of women frozen to death, bodies of babies starved to death, seen men in Belgium swinging from trees; along the Yzer for three months I saw the bodies of men I'd known sticking out of the mud, or hung up on the barb wire, with the crows picking them.

"I've seen some of the nerviest stunts that ever were pulled off in history. I've seen real heroes. Time and time again I've seen a man throw away his life for his officer, or for a chap he didn't know, just as though it was a cigarette butt. I've seen the women nurses of our corps steer a car into a village and yank out a wounded man while shells were breaking under the wheels and the houses were pitching into the streets." He stopped and laughed consciously.

"Understand," he warned me, "I'm not talking about myself, only of things I've seen. The things I'm going to put in my book. It ought to be a pretty good book−what?"

My envy had been washed clean in admiration.

"It will make a wonderful book," I agreed. "Are you going to syndicate it first?"

Young Mr. Hamlin frowned importantly.

"I was thinking," he said, "of asking John for letters to the magazine editors. So, they'll know I'm not faking, that I've really been through it all. Letters from John would help a lot." Then he asked anxiously: "They would, wouldn't they?"

I reassured him. Remembering the Kid's gibes at John and his numerous dependents, I said: "You another college chum of John's?" The young man answered my question quite seriously. "No," he said; "John graduated before I entered; but we belong to the same fraternity. It was the luckiest chance in the world my finding him here. There was a month−old copy of the Balkan News blowing around camp, and his name was in the list of arrivals. The moment I found he was in Salonika, I asked for twelve hours leave, and came down in an ambulance. I made straight for John; gave him the grip, and put it up to him to help me."

"I don't understand," I said. "I thought you were sailing on the Adriaticus?"

The young man was again pacing the floor. He halted and faced the harbor.

"You bet I'm sailing on the Adriaticus," he said. He looked out at that vessel, at the Blue Peter flying from her foremast, and grinned. "In just two hours!"

It was stupid of me, but I still was unenlightened. "But your twelve hours' leave?" I asked.

The young man laughed. "They can take my twelve hours' leave," he said deliberately, "and feed it to the chickens. I'm beating it."

"What d'you mean, you're beating it?"

"What do you suppose I mean?" he demanded. "What do you suppose I'm doing out of uniform, what do you suppose I'm lying low in the room for? So's I won't catch cold?"

"If you're leaving the army without a discharge, and without permission," I said, "I suppose you know it's desertion."

Mr. Hamlin laughed easily. "It's not my army," he said. "I'm an American."

"It's your desertion," I suggested.

The door opened and closed noiselessly, and Billy, entering, placed a new travelling bag on the floor. He must have heard my last words, for he looked inquiringly at each of us. But he did not speak and, walking to the window, stood with his hands in his pockets, staring out at the harbor. His presence seemed to encourage the young man. "Who knows I'm deserting?" he demanded. "No one's ever seen me in Salonika before, and in these 'cits' I can get on board all right. And then they can't touch me. What do the folks at home care how I left the British army? They'll be so darned glad to get me back alive that they won't ask if I walked out or was kicked out. I should worry!"

"It's none of my business," I began, but I was interrupted. In his restless pacings the young man turned quickly.

"As you say," he remarked icily, "it is none of your business. It's none of your business whether I get shot as a deserter, or go home, or−−"

"You can go to the devil for all I care," I assured him. "I wasn't considering you at all. I was only sorry that I'll never be able to read your book."

For a moment Mr. Hamlin remained silent, then he burst forth with a jeer.

"No British firing squad," he boasted, "will ever stand me up."

"Maybe not," I agreed, "but you will never write that book."

Again there was silence, and this time it was broken by the Kid. He turned from the window and looked toward Hamlin. "That's right!" he said.

He sat down on the edge of the table, and at the deserter pointed his forefinger.

"Son," he said, "this war is some war. It's the biggest war in history, and folks will be talking about nothing else for the next ninety years; folks that never were nearer it than Bay City, Mich. But you won't talk about it. And you've been all through it. You've been to hell and back again. Compared with what you know about hell, Dante is in the same class with Dr. Cook. But you won't be able to talk about this war, or lecture, or write a book about it."

"I won't?" demanded Hamlin. "And why won't I?"

"Because of what you're doing now," said Billy. "Because you're queering yourself. Now, you've got everything." The Kid was very much in earnest. His tone was intimate, kind, and friendly. "You've seen everything, done everything. We'd give our eye−teeth to see what you've seen, and to write the things you can write. You've got a record now that'll last you until you're dead, and your grandchildren are dead−and then some. When you talk the table will have to sit up and listen. You can say 'I was there.' 'I was in it.' 'I saw.' 'I know.' When this war is over you'll have everything out of it that's worth getting−all the experiences, all the inside knowledge, all the 'nosebag' news; you'll have wounds, honors, medals, money, reputation. And you're throwing all that away!"

Mr. Hamlin interrupted savagely.

"To hell with their medals," he said. "They can take their medals and hang 'em on Christmas trees. I don't owe the British army anything. It owes me. I've done my bit. I've earned what I've got, and there's no one can take it away from me."

"You can," said the Kid. Before Hamlin could reply the door opened and John came in, followed by Uncle Jim. The older man was looking very grave, and John very unhappy. Hamlin turned quickly to John.

"I thought these men were friends of yours," he began, "and Americans. They're fine Americans. They're as full of human kindness and red blood as a kippered herring!"

John looked inquiringly at the Kid.

"He wants to hang himself," explained Billy, "and because we tried to cut him down, he's sore."

"They talked to me," protested Hamlin, "as though I was a yellow dog. As though I was a quitter. I'm no quitter! But, if I'm ready to quit, who's got a better right? I'm not an Englishman, but there are several million Englishmen haven't done as much for England in this was as I have. What do you fellows know about it? You write about it, about the 'brave lads in the trenches'; but what do you know about the trenches? What you've seen from automobiles. That's all. That's where you get off! I've lived in the trenches for fifteen months, froze in 'em, starved

in 'em, risked my life in 'em, and I've saved other lives, too, by hauling men out of the trenches. And that's no airy persiflage, either!"

He ran to the wardrobe where John's clothes hung, and from the bottom of it dragged a khaki uniform. It was still so caked with mud and snow that when he flung it on the floor it splashed like a wet bathing suit. "How would you like to wear one of those?" he Demanded. "Stinking with lice and sweat and blood; the blood of other men, the men you've helped off the field, and your own blood."

As though committing hara−kiri, he slashed his hand across his stomach, and then drew it up from his waist to his chin. "I'm scraped with shrapnel from there to there," said Mr. Hamlin. "And another time I got a ball in the shoulder. That would have been a 'blighty' for a fighting man−−they're always giving them leave−−but all I got was six weeks at Havre in hospital. Then it was the Dardanelles, and sunstroke and sand; sleeping in sand, eating sand, sand in your boots, sand in your teeth; hiding in holes in the sand like a dirty prairie dog. And then, 'Off to Servia!' And the next act opens in the snow and the mud! Cold? God, how cold it was! And most of us in sun helmets."

As though the cold still gnawed at his bones, he shivered.

"It isn't the danger," he protested. "It isn't that I'm getting away from. To hell with the danger! It's just the plain discomfort of it! It's the never being your own master, never being clean, never being warm." Again he shivered and rubbed one hand against the other. "There were no bridges over the streams," he went on, "and we had to break the ice and wade in, and then sleep in the open with the khaki frozen to us. There was no firewood; not enough to warm a pot of tea. There were no wounded; all our casualties were frost bite and Pneumonia. When we take them out of the blankets their toes fall off. We've been in camp for a month now near Doiran, and it's worse there than on the march. It's a frozen swamp. You can't sleep for the cold; can't eat; the only ration we get is bully beef, and our insides are frozen so damn tight we can't digest it. The cold gets into your blood, gets into your brains. It won't let you think; or else, you think crazy things. It makes you afraid." He shook himself like a man coming out of a bad dream.

So, I'm through," he said. In turn he scowled at each of us, as though defying us to contradict him. "That's why I'm quitting," he added. "Because I've done my bit. Because I'm damn well fed up on it." He kicked viciously at the water−logged uniform on the floor. "Any one who wants my job can have it!" He walked to the window, turned his back on us, and fixed his eyes hungrily on the Adriaticus. There was a long pause. For guidance we looked at John, but he was staring down at the desk blotter, scratching on it marks that he did not see.

Finally, where angels feared to tread, the Kid rushed in. "That's certainly a hard luck story," he said; "but," he added cheerfully, "it's nothing to the hard luck you'll strike when you can't tell why you left the army." Hamlin turned with an exclamation, but Billy held up his hand. "Now wait," he begged, "we haven't time to get mussy. At six o'clock your leave is up, and the troop train starts back to camp, and−−"

Mr. Hamlin interrupted sharply. "And the Adriaticus starts at five."

Billy did not heed him. "You've got two hours to change your mind," he said. "That's better than being sorry you didn't the rest of your life."

Mr. Hamlin threw back his head and laughed. It was a most unpleasant laugh. "You're a fine body of men," he jeered. "America must be proud of you!"

"If we weren't Americans," explained Billy patiently, "we wouldn't give a damn whether you deserted or not. You're drowning and you don't know it, and we're throwing you a rope. Try to see it that way. We'll cut out the fact that you took an oath, and that you're breaking it. That's up to you. We'll get down to results. When you reach

home, if you can't tell why you left the army, the folks will darned soon guess. And that will queer everything you've done. When you come to sell your stuff, it will queer you with the editors, queer you with the publishers. If they know you broke your word to the British army, how can they know you're keeping faith with them? How can they believe anything you tell them? Every 'story' you write, every statement of yours will make a noise like a fake. You won't come into court with clean hands. You'll be licked before you start.

"Of course, you're for the Allies. Well, all the Germans at home will fear that; and when you want to lecture on your 'Fifteen Months at the British Front,' they'll look up your record; and what will they do to you? This is what they'll do to you. When you've shown 'em your moving pictures and say, 'Does any gentleman in the audience want to ask a question?' a German agent will get up and say, 'Yes, I want to ask a question. Is it true that you deserted from the British army, and that if you return to it, they will shoot you?'"

I was scared. I expected the lean and muscular Mr. Hamlin to fall on Billy, and fling him where he had flung the soggy uniform. But instead he remained motionless, his arms pressed across his chest. His eyes, filled with anger and distress, returned to the Adriaticus.

"I'm sorry," muttered the Kid.

John rose and motioned to the door, and guiltily and only too gladly we escaped. John followed us into the hall. "Let me talk to him," he whispered. "The boat sails in an hour. Please don't come back until she's gone."

We went to the moving picture palace next door, but I doubt if the thoughts of any of us were on the pictures. For after an hour, when from across the quay there came the long−drawn warning of a steamer's whistle, we nudged each other and rose and went out.

Not a hundred yards from us the propeller blades of the Adriaticus were slowly churning, and the rowboats were falling away from her sides.

"Good−bye, Mr. Hamlin," called Billy. "You had everything and you chucked it away. I can spell your finish. It's 'check' for yours."

But when we entered our room, in the centre of it, under the bunch of electric lights, stood the deserter. He wore the water−logged uniform. The sun helmet was on his head.

"Good man!" shouted Billy.

He advanced, eagerly holding out his hand.

Mr. Hamlin brushed past him. At the door he turned and glared at us, even at John. He was not a good loser. "I hope you're satisfied," he snarled. He pointed at the four beds in a row. I felt guiltily conscious of them. At the moment they appeared so unnecessarily clean and warm and soft. The silk coverlets at the foot of each struck me as being disgracefully effeminate. They made me ashamed.

"I hope," said Mr. Hamlin, speaking slowly and picking his words, "when you turn into those beds to−night you'll think of me in the mud. I hope when you're having your five−course dinner and your champagne you'll remember my bully beef. I hope when a shell or Mr. Pneumonia gets me, you'll write a nice little sob story about the 'brave lads in the trenches.' "

He looked at us, standing like schoolboys, sheepish, embarrassed, and silent, and then threw open the door. "I hope," he added, "you all choke!"

With an unconvincing imitation of the college chum manner, John cleared his throat and said: "Don't forget, Fred, if there's anything I can do−−"

Hamlin stood in the doorway smiling at us.

"There's something you can all do," he said.

"Yes?" asked John heartily.

"You can all go to hell!" said Mr. Hamlin.

We heard the door slam, and his hobnailed boots pounding down the stairs. No one spoke. Instead, in unhappy silence, we stood staring at the floor. Where the uniform had lain was a pool of mud and melted snow and the darker stains of stale blood.