The Perils of Pauline

Charles Goddard

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Transcribed by Sean Pobuda

CHAPTER I. THE BREATH OF DEAD CENTURIES

In one of the stateliest mansions on the lower Hudson, near New York, old Stanford Marvin, president of the Marvin Motors Company, dozed over his papers, while Owen, his confidential secretary, eyed him across the mahogany flat−topped desk. A soft purring sound floated in the open window and half−roused the aged manufacturer. It came from one of his own cars —six cylinders chanting in unison a litany of power to the great modem god of gasoline.

These things had been in his mind since the motor industry started. He had lived with them, wrestled with them during his meals and taken them to his dreams at night. Now they formed a rhythm, and he heard them in his brain just before the fainting spells, which had come so frequently of late. He glanced at the secretary and noted Owen's gaze with something of a start.

“What are you thinking about, Raymond?” he queried, with his customary directness.

“Your health, sir,” replied Owen, who, like all intelligent rascals, never lied when the truth would do equally well. As a matter of fact, Owen had wondered whether his employer would last a year or a month. He much preferred a month, for there was reason to believe that the Marvin will would contain a handsome bequest to “my faithful secretary.”

“Oh, bosh!” said the old man. “You and Dr. Stevens would make a mummy of me before I'm dead.”

“That reminds me, sir,” said Owen, smoothly, “that the International Express Company has delivered a large crate addressed to you from Cairo, Egypt. I presume it is the mummy you bought on your last trip. Where shall I place it?”

Mr. Marvin's eye coursed around the walls of the handsome library, which had been his office since the doctor had forbidden him to visit his automobile works and steel−stamping mills.

“Take out that bust of Pallas Athene,” he ordered, “and stand the mummy up in its place.”

Owen nodded, poised his pencil and prompted:

“You were just dictating about the new piston rings.”

Mr. Marvin drew his hand across his eyes and looked out the window. Within the range of his vision was one of the most charming sights in the world —a handsome youth and a pretty girl, arrayed in white flannels, playing tennis.

“Never mind the letters. Tell Harry and Pauline I wish to see them.”

Alone, the old man opened a drawer and took a dose of medicine, then he unfolded Dr. Stevens's letter and read its final paragraph, which prescribed a change of climate, together with complete and permanent rest or “I will not answer for the consequences.”

There was little doubt that no primer mover in a great industry was better able to leave its helm than Standford Marvin. His lieutenants were able, efficient and contented. The factories would go of their own momentum for a year or two at least, then his son, Harry, just out of college, should be able, perhaps, to help. His lieutenants had proved Marvin's unerring instinct in judging character. Not one single case came to the old employer's mind of a man who had failed to turn out exactly as he expected. Yet the most trusted man of all, Raymond Owen, the secretary, was disloyal and dishonest.

This one exception was easily enough explained. When Owen came to Marvin's attention, fifteen years before, he was a fine, honest, faithful man. It was born and bred in him to be straight. During the first five' or six years in the Marvin household the older man took pains to keep watch on this quiet, tactful youth until he knew all his ways and even his habits of thought. There was no doubt that Owen was as upright and clean as the old man himself.

At the age of forty the devil entered into Owen. It came in the form of insomnia. Loss of sleep will make any man irritable and unreasonable, but hardly dishonest. With the sleeplessness, however, came the temptation to take drugs. Owen shifted from one narcotic to another, finally, settling down upon morphine. Five years of the opiate had made him its slave. Every physician knows that morphine fiends become dishonest.

The secretary had speculated with his modest savings and lost them. He had borrowed and lost again, and now, for some time, had been betting on horse races. This last had made him acquainted with a certain

Montgomery Hicks, who lived well without visible source of income. Through Hicks, Owen had betrayed one of his employer's guarded secrets. Hicks, armed with this secret, promptly changed from a friendly creditor to a blackmailer.

Owen, on his way to summon Pauline and Harry, descended to the basement, where the butler, gardener and, a colored man were uncrating the Egyptian mummy. He told them to stand it in place of the bust of Pallas Athene in the library, and then went out, crossing the splendid lawns, and graveled roads to the tennis court. There was no design in Owen's mind against the two players, but of late the instinct of both the hunter and the hunted were showing in him, and it prompted him to approach quietly and under cover. So he passed along the edge of a hedge and stood a moment within earshot.

Pauline was about to “serve,” but paused to look down at the loosened laces of her small white shoe. She heard Harry's racquet drop and saw him hurdle the net. In another instant he was at her feet tying the tiny bow.

“You needn't have done that, Harry,” she said.

“Oh, no,!” Harry affirmed, as he vainly tried to make his bow as trim as its mate. “I suppose not. I don't suppose I need to, think, about you all the time either, or follow you around till that new cocker spaniel of yours thinks I'm part of your shadow. Perhaps I don't need to love you.”

“Harry, get up! Someone will see you and think you're proposing to me.”

“Think? They ought to know I'm proposing. But, Pauline, talking about 'need,' there isn't any need of your being so pretty. Your eyes are bigger and bluer than they really need to be. You could see just as well if you didn't have such long, curly lashes, and there isn't any real necessity for the way they group together in that starry effect, like Nell Brinkley's girls. Is there any need of fifteen different beautiful shades of light where the sun strikes your hair just back of your ear?”

“Harry, stop this! The score is forty−fifteen.”

“Yes, all these things are entirely unnecessary. I'm going to have old Mother Nature indicted by the Grand jury for willful, wasteful, wanton extravagance unless—unless” Harry paused.

“Now, Harry, don't use up your whole vocabulary —promise what?”

“Promise to marry me at once.”

“No, Harry, I can't do that —that is, right away. I must have time.”

“Why time? Pauline, don't you love me?”

“Yes, I think I do love you, Harry, and you know' there is nobody else in the world.”

“Then what do you want time for?”

“Why, to see life and to know what life really is.”

“All right. Marry me, and I'll show you life. I'll lead you any kind of a life you want.”

“No, that won't do. As an old, settled−down, married woman I couldn't really do what I want. I must see life in its great moments. I must have thrills, adventures, see people, do daring things, watch battles. It might be best for me even to see someone killed, if that were possible. As I was telling Harley St. John last night—”

“Harley St. John? Well, if I catch that fop taking you motoring again you'll get your wish and see a real nice aristocratic murder. He ought to be put out of his misery, anyway; but where did you get all these sudden notions about wild and strenuous life?”

Pauline did not answer. They both heard a discreet cough, and Owen rounded the corner of the hedge. He delivered his message, and the three walked slowly toward the house.

Advancing to meet them came a dashy checked suit. Above it was a large Panama hat with a gaudy ribbon. A red necktie was also visible, even at a considerable distance. Between the hat and the necktie a face several degrees darker in color than the tie came into view as the distance lessened. It was Mr. Montgomery Hicks, whose first name was usually pronounced “Mugumry” and thence degenerated into “Mug.” Mug's inflamed and scowling face and bulging eyes usually conveyed the general impression that he was about to burst into profanity —a conjecture which frequently proved correct. In this case he merely remarked in a sort of “newsboy” voice:

“Mr. Raymond Owen, I believe?”

The secretary's sallow face flushed a little as he stepped aside and let Harry and Pauline pass out of earshot.

“See here, Mug,” complained Owen, “I haven't a cent for you. You will get me discharged if you come around here like this.”

“Well, I'll get you fired right now,” growled Mug, “if you don't come across with the money.” And he started

toward the front steps. Owen led him out of sight of the house and finally got rid of him. For a blackmailer knows he can strike but once, and, having struck, he loses all power over his victim. So Hicks withheld the blow, collected a paltry thirty dollars, and consented to wait a little while for Marvin to die.

Harry and Pauline passed on into the house. He had the straight backbone and well poised head of the West Pointer, but without the unnatural stiffness of the soldier's carriage; the shoulders of the “halfback,” and the lean hips of a runner were his, and he had earned them in four years on his varsity football and track teams. The girl beside him, half a head shorter, tripped along with the easy action of a thoroughbred. Both bore the name of Marvin, yet there was no relationship.

Harry's mother, long dead, had adopted this girl on Mr. Marvin's first trip to Egypt. Pauline was the daughter of an English father and a native mother.

Mrs. Marvin first saw her as a blue−eyed baby, too young to understand that its parents had just been drowned in the Nile. As brother and sister they grew up together until college separated the two. After four years Pauline's dainty prettiness struck Harry with a distinct shock, the delightful sort of shock known as love at first sight. It was really Harry's first sight of her as a woman. Every sense and instinct in him shouted, “Get that girl,” and nothing in him answered “No.”

Mr. Marvin looked unusually pale as those two very vital young persons stepped into the library. He read their thoughts and said quietly.

“Harry, I've been placed in the hands of a receiver.”

“Receiver?” echoed Harry, with amazement, for he knew that Marvin enterprises were financed magnificently.

“Yes, Dr. Stevens is the receiver. He says I have exhausted my entire stock of nervous capital, that my account at the bank of physical endurance is overdrawn, nature has called her loans, and you might say that I am a nervous bankrupt.”

“So All you need is rest,” cried Pauline, “and you will be as strong as ever.”

“Well, before I rest I want to assure myself about you children. Harry, you love Pauline, don't you?

“You bet I do, father.”

“Pauline, you love Harry, don't you?”

“Yes,” answered Pauline slowly.

“And you will marry right away?”

“This very minute, if she would have me,” said Harry.

“And you, Pauline?” queried the old man.

“Yes, father,” for she loved him and felt toward him as if she were indeed his daughter. “Perhaps some time I'll marry Harry, but not for a year or two. I couldn't marry him now, it wouldn't be right.”

“Wouldn't be right?? Well, I'd like to know why not.”

Pauline was silent a moment. She hated to oppose this fine old man, but her will was as firm as his, and well he knew it. Harry spoke for her:

“Oh, she wants to see life before she settles down —wild life, sin and iniquity, battle, murder and sudden death and all that sort of stuff. I don't know what has gotten into women these days, anyway.”

Then Polly, prettily, daintily, as she did all things, and with charming little blushes and hesitations, confessed her secret. In short, it was her ambition to be a writer, a writer of something worth while —a great writer. To be a great writer one must know life, and to know life one must see it —see the world. She ended by asking the two men if this were not so.

They looked at each other and coughed with evident relief it the comparative harmlessness of her whim.

“Yes, Polly,” said old man Marvin, “a great writer ought to see life in order to know what he is writing about. But what makes you suspect that you have the ability to be even an ordinary writer?”

Marvin sire winked at Marvin son and Marvin son winked back, for no man is too old or too young to enjoy teasing a pretty and serious girl.

Pauline saw the wink, and her foot ceased tracing a pattern in the carpet and stamped on it instead.

“I'll show you what reason I have to think I can write. My first story has just been published in the biggest magazine in the country. I have had a copy of it lying around here for days with my story in it, and nobody has even looked at it.”

Out she flashed, and Harry after her, almost upsetting the butler and gardener, who appeared in the library doorway. These two worthies advanced upon the statue of Pallas without noticing the master of the house sitting behind his big desk. The butler did notice that a large hound from the stable had followed the gardener into the room.

“That's what one gets for letting outdoor servants into the house,” muttered the butler, as he hustled the big dog to the front door and ejected him.

“Is he addressing himself to me or to the pup, I wonder?” asked the gardener, a fat, good−natured Irishman, as he placed himself in front of the statue.

He read the name “Pallas,” forced his rusty derby hat down over his ears in imitation of the statue's helmet, and mimicked the pose.

Together they staggered out with their burden. A moment later they returned, carrying, with the help of two other men, the mummy in its big case. Owen also entered, and Marvin, with the joy of an Egyptologist, grasped a magnifying glass and examined the case.

The old man's bobby had been Egypt, his liberal checks had assisted in many an excavation, and his knowledge of her relics was remarkable. Inserting a steel paper cutter in a crack he deftly pried open the upper half of the mummy's front. Beneath lay the mass of wrappings in which thousands of years ago the priests of the Nile had swathed some lady of wealth and rank. It was a woman, Marvin was sure, from the inscriptions on her tomb, and he believed her to be a princess.

The secretary excused himself and went to his room, where his precious morphine pills were hidden. The old man, left alone, deftly opened the many layers of cloth which bound the ancient form. A faint scent that was almost like a presence came forth from the unwrapped folds. Long lost balms they were, ancient spices, forgotten antiseptics of a great race that blossomed and Fell —thousands of years before its time.

“I smell the dead centuries,” whispered Marvin to himself, “I can almost feel their weight. The world was young when this woman breathed. Perhaps she was pretty and foolish like my Polly —yes, and maybe as stubborn, too. Manetho says they had a good deal to say in those days. Ah, now we shall see her face.”

He had uncovered a bit of the mummy's forehead when out of the bandages fell a tiny vial. Marvin quickly picked it up. The vial was carved from some sort of green crystal in the shape of a two−headed Egyptian bird god. Without effort the stopper came out and Marvin held the small bottle to his nostrils, only to drop it at the mummy's feet. It exhaled the odor of the mummy which the reek of the centuries intensified a thousand times.

It was too much for the old man. He had overtaxed his feeble vitality and felt his senses leaving him. With the entire force of his will he was able to get to a chair, into which he sank. The odor of the vial was still in his nostrils. His eyes were fixed and stared straight ahead, but he could see, in a faint, unnatural yellow light that bathed the room.

From the vial, lying at the mummy's feet a vapor appeared to rise. It floated toward the swathed figure, enveloped it and seemed to be absorbed by it.

“Perhaps this is death,” thought Marvin, “for I cannot move or speak.”

But something else moved. There was a flutter among the bandages of the mummy. The commotion increased. Something was moving inside. The bandages were becoming loosened. They fell away from the face, and then was Marvin amazed indeed. Instead of the tight, brown parchment−like skin one always finds in these ancient relics appeared a smooth, olive−tinted complexion. It was the face of a young and beautiful woman. The features were serene as if in death, but there was no sunken nose or mummy's hollow eyes.

A strand of black hair fell down, and the movement beneath the bandages increased. Out of the folds came an arm, a woman's arm, slender, yet rounded, an arm with light bones and fine sinews, clearly an arm and hand that had never known work. Marvin was well aware that a mummy's arm is invariably a black skeleton claw.

At this point the old man made a mental note that he was not dead, for he could feel his own breathing. The arm rapidly and gracefully loosened and removed wrappings from the neck and breast. On the wrist gashed a bracelet made of linked scarabs. The arm now cast away the last covering of the bosom, neck and shoulders.

She freed her left hand, lifted out the bottom half of the case and slid the wrappings from her limbs. Barefooted and bare−ankled, clothed only in a shimmering white gown that scarcely covered bare knees, and a white head−dress with a green serpent head in front, she stepped somewhat stiffly into the room. Slowly she made several movements of limbs and body like the first steps of a dance. She rose on her toes, looked down at herself

and swayed her lithe hips. It occurred to Marvin that all this was by way of a graceful little stretch after a few thousand years of sleep.

Marvin now observed that she was Pauline's height, and age, as well as general size and form. Slightly shorter she might have been, but then she lacked Pauline's high heels. The general resemblance was striking except in the color of the eyes and hair. Pauline's tresses were a light golden yellow, while this girl's hair was black as the hollow of the sphinx. Pauline's eyes were blue, but she who stood before him gazed through eyes too dark to guess their color.

The Egyptian had found a little mirror. She patted her hair, adjusted the head−dress, but Marvin waited in vain for the powder puff. From the mirror the girl's eyes wandered to a painting hanging above the desk. It was an excellent likeness of Pauline. The resemblance between the two was obvious, not only to Marvin but evidently to the black−haired girl. She turned to the old man and addressed him in a strange language. Not one word did he recognize, yet the syllables were so clearly and carefully pronounced that he felt he was listening to an educated woman. Some of the tones were like Pauline's, some were not, but all were soft, sweet, modulated.

The meaning was clear enough. She wished Marvin to see the resemblance, and she frowned slightly because the rigid, staring figure did not respond. Why should she be impatient, this woman of the Pharaohs who had lain stiff and unresponsive while Babylon and Greece and Rome and Spain had risen and fallen?

Soon she resorted to pantomime, pointed to herself and the picture, touched her eyes and nose and mouth and then the corresponding painted features. She felt of her own jet hair, shook her head and looked questioningly at the light coiffure of Pauline. She turned to the old man, evidently asking if the painting were true in this respect. Then she smiled a smile like Pauline's. Perhaps she was asking if Pauline had changed the color of her hair.

Now she became interested in a book on the corner of the desk. With little musical exclamations of delight she turned the printed pages and appreciated that the shelves contained hundreds more of these treasures. The typewritten letters lying about excited her admiration and then the pen and ink. She quickly guessed the use of the pen and ran eagerly to the mummy case. A moment's search brought forth a long roll of papyrus. Before Marvin's eyes she unrolled a scroll covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics.

There were footsteps in the hall and the Egyptian looked toward the door. Owen entered, looked at Marvin searchingly, placed him in a more comfortable position in the chair, spoke his name and walked out. What seemed most surprising to the sick, man was his secretary's oversight of the girl. He passed in front of her, almost brushing her white robe and yet it was clear that he did not see her.

But the Egyptian had seen him and the sight had excited her. She seemed desperately anxious to say something to Marvin, something about Pauline.

The mummy had a secret to reveal!

She tore the bracelet from her right wrist and tried to force it into Marvin's nerveless grasp. Try as she would, his muscles did not respond. There were voices in the hallway. Harry and Pauline were running downstairs. The Princess gave one last imploring glance at the paralyzed figure, passed her hand gently over his forehead; then she stepped quickly back to the case.

Harry and Pauline rushed in, followed less hastily by Owen. They grasped the old man's hands, and Harry, seizing the telephone, called Dr. Stevens. But to the surprise of everybody Marvin suddenly shook off the paralysis, spoke, moved and seemed none the worse for his seizure.

CHAPTER II. THE WILL

Old Mr. Marvin's faculties returned with a snap. There was the library just as it had been before his peculiar seizure. His son Harry was summoning on the telephone Dr. Stevens, the heart specialist, and Pauline, his adopted daughter, was on her knees chafing his hands and anxiously watching his face, while Owen, the secretary, was pouring out a dose of his medicine. But the peculiar yellow light had gone. And what about the mummy? It stood just as he had left it, the lower half of the case was in place, the upper half was out, revealing the loosened bandages and just a glimpse of the forehead.

One strand of jet black hair hung down. All was just as it was when the little vial had fallen out.

"I'm all right, I'm all right," protested Mr. Marvin, somewhat testily, as he twisted about in his chair to get a good view of the mummy. "Look out, Harry, don't step on that little bottle."

Harry looked down and picked up the tiny vial which had fallen from the bandages wrapped about the ancient form.

"Smell of it," his father ordered. Harry sniffed it and remarked that it smelled musty and passed it to Pauline. The girl carried it to her nostrils spin and again. She looked perplexed.

"Well, what do you think it is?" asked the old man.

"Why —I can't remember, but I ought to know. I'm sure I do know."

"The devil you do," muttered her faster father.

"What makes you think you ought to know?"

"Why, it is so familiar. I'm certain I've smelled it often before. Haven't I?"

"Well, if you have, Polly, you are a lot older than I am, older than anything in this country, as old as the pyramids. That bottle fell out of the mummy, and I can assure you it has been there some three or four thousand years. When I smelled of that bottle it had a queer effect on me. I felt as if I were going to have one of my fainting spells and was glad to get back to the chair. It's funny about that mummy. I thought she came out and talked to me."

"Why, father, what a horrible thing!" sympathized Pauline.

"Not horrible at all. She was a beauty and a princess. She was interested in your picture, Polly, and she looked like you, too, except, let's see —yes, her hair was black, jet black, like that one lock you see hanging down."

"Oh," interrupted Pauline, "I wish my hair were black, and I often dream that it is, and that I am walking around in a pretty, white pleated dress and my feet are bare."

"And a bracelet on your wrist —your right wrist?" questioned Marvin eagerly.

"I don't remember," Pauline replied thoughtfully.

"Well, we'll see if you had one and also whether I was dreaming or not," announced the old man with a half ashamed look as he rose somewhat unsteadily to his feet. Harry and Pauline tried to keep him quiet. He brushed their warnings aside and walked unsteadily to the mummy.

"Let's see its face," suggested Harry carelessly.

"No," said his father. "I have an idea that this old but young lady would not care to have us look at her. But there is one thing I must find out. I want to know if she wears a bracelet of linked scarabs on her right wrist or not."

All of this was rather a bore to Harry, who lived intensely in the present, had no interest in Egypt, except that Pauline was born and adopted as an orphan baby there, and asked nothing of the future except that it allow him to marry this obstinate but fascinating little creature at the earliest possible moment. The question had been brought up half an hour before, and he wanted it settled at once. Harry wished they would decide about the marriage instead of fussing around with an old mummy.

"My son, I venture to say that you would have been interested in this young woman had you met her."

"Possibly," the youth admitted with a slight yawn.

"Yes," continued his father, busily searching for the mummy's right wrist, "she was probably what you would call a peach."

"She may have been a peach in her day," thought Harry, "but today she's a dried apricot."

The elder Marvin's searching fingers encountered a hard object. It proved to be a scarab, or sacred Egyptian beetle, carved in black stone.

"Did you ever dream about that?" asked Harry, chaffing.

"Yes, I have," replied Pauline. Both men looked at her to see if she were serious

"I dreamed that I was very sick and going to die, and an old man with a long, thin beard came in. He gave me a stone beetle like that. Then it seems to me they put it right on my chest and they said —let's see, what did they do that for? I think it was to cure me of something the matter with my heart."

"Polly," said Mr. Marvin, "I never knew you had dreams like this. But are you sure they said it would cure your heart? Wasn't it for some other reason?"

Pauline thought a moment, while Harry lit a cigarette and his father worked his fingers down toward the mummy's right wrist.

"No," said Pauline, "I remember now. It wasn't to cure it at all. It was to make it keep quiet."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Harry. "I never knew of any one making it flutter much. I guess that was no dream."

Harry's father silenced him with an impatient gesture and turned to Pauline, who was watching the wind make cat's paws on the polished surface of the Hudson River.

"Go on, girl, go on. This is remarkable. I have read of this custom in the Egyptian 'Book of the Dead'! Why did they want to keep your heart quiet?"

"They said," continued Pauline, dreamily, "that after I died my spirit was to be called before somebody —a God, I guess —who would judge whether I was good enough for Heaven or not. That stone beetle was placed on my heart to make it keep silent and not tell anything wicked I might have done in life. Aren't dreams crazy things? Say, Harry, there goes a hydroplane."

The two young people hung out the open window. The old man was absorbed, too. He had at last worked his fingers along the entire length of the mummy's right wrist. It was dry and hard as any mummy he had ever seen, but it bore neither bracelet nor any ornament whatever.

"Well," he said, reluctantly, "it was all a dream, interesting but not important. Like Polly's dream, it was just the echo of something I have read or seen."

"Oh, pshaw! What are dreams, anyway?" muttered Harry, with impatience.

"Dreams," said Pauline, authoritatively, "dreams are the bubbles which rise to the surface of the mind when it cools down in sleep."

"Now," observed Harry, quietly, "when you and father are through talking about mummies and dreams I wish you would consider something that I am interested in. I'd like to know how soon you are going to marry me?"

"Where did you get that definition of dreams, Polly?" asked the old man.

"From my story," said Pauline, proudly.

Both men at once remembered that she had gone to find the magazine and show them her first story. They eagerly demanded to see it.

Pauline picked up the Cosmopolitan from the floor. She had dropped it in her agitation at finding her foster father had fainted. Sure enough, there it was:

FIRE ON AN OCEAN LINER

By Pauline Marvin.

It was not the biggest feature by any means, but it was quite a little story, and there were several large stirring illustrations. Both men begged her to read it to them, but she modestly declined.

Mr. Marvin adjusted his spectacles and read it through from start to finish, frequently looking up to compliment the authoress on some point that pleased him. Harry looked over his father's shoulder, and there could be no doubt they were both held and even thrilled by the story.

Mr. Marvin clapped his hands and stated in a loud voice that he was proud of her. Harry expressed his appreciation by a bear−like hug and a kiss, all of which she accepted with blushes and protests.

"And —er —did they actually pay you something for this?" asked the old gentleman.

"Oh, yes," Pauline assured him. "They sent me a check at once. It paid for that frock you told me was too extravagant."

"A hundred dollars?" ventured Harry from the depths of his ignorance of things feminine.

Both Pauline and his father cast pitying glances at him.

“Look here, young man,” said the elder Marvin, “whoever led you to believe that you could buy dresses for a girl like Polly at a hundred dollars? If you contemplate matrimony on any such deluded basis as that you had better back out now before it's too late. Isn't that so, Polly?”

“Why, father,” protested the youth, “what do I care what her dresses cost? Polly knows everything I have or ever make is hers, and I can't think of a more satisfactory way of spending it than on her.”

“That's fine, Harry,” laughed the father, “you have just the ideal frame of mind and the proper sentiments for a modern husband. You will find, too, that women are very reasonable. If a man gives his wife all he makes, plus the vote, and lets her do just as she pleases —she'll usually let him live in the same house with her, and even get up early enough to see him at breakfast once in a while.”

“I agree to everything,” declared Harry, with the reckless abandon of youth in love. “But I want to know how soon Polly is going to marry me.”

Pauline, who had said nothing in answer to the preliminary skirmishes, now recognized the main attack and opened up in reply.

“I told you I would marry Harry some time, but not for a year or two. You admitted that a writer ought to see life in order to write well . So there you are. I must have a year or two of adventure. There are a thousand things I want to do and see before I settle down as Mrs. Harry Marvin. Suppose we say two years.”

Harry staggered back as if from a blow. Two years! How preposterous! He couldn't live that long without Pauline. In vain he hurled his protests and objections. She stood, sweet, unruffled, sympathetic, but as firm as the Rocky Mountains. The old man listened to the debate for some time without comment. Then he pressed a button on his desk.

In answer came Raymond Owen, the secretary. He had shown the good taste to retire from the library as soon as the conversation became personal. From the vantage point of a room across the hall he had been quietly listening, and decided it a rather unfruitful piece of eavesdropping. He appeared the faithful, deferent employee in every line as he entered.

“Come here, Raymond,” directed the old man, as sharply as a commanding officer, “and you, Harry, and you, Pauline.”

They obeyed and quickly lined up before his chair with rather surprised faces, for Mr. Marvin only called them Pauline and Harry when he was very serious.

“Raymond, this is the situation: My son loves Pauline and wants to marry her at once. I have no objection; in fact, I would like to see them united at once, but Pauline demurs. She loves Harry, but feels she ought to have two years to see life before settling down. Two years is too much.”

“I should say so,” growled Harry.

“But, as my old grandfather, who has been gone these forty years now, used to say: 'When a woman will, she will, and when she won't, she won't —and there's an end on't.' I don't blame her for wanting to have her own way. It's the only plan I've found to get along in this world, but you can't have all your own way. You have to compromise. So Polly is going to have one year —that's enough.

“During that year, Raymond, I'm going to put her in your care. You are older and more prudent than either Polly or Harry and will see that she comes to no harm. Take her anywhere she wants to go —around the world if she likes, to do anything within reason. Do you agree?”

Mr. Marvin looked at Owen, who accepted the duty as calmly as if it were an order to post a letter. Polly also consented after a moment's hesitation. Harry alone protested and argued. It was a hopeless case and he yielded to overwhelming odds.

This matter settled, Mr. Marvin's mind returned to the mummy and his curious delusion that it had come to life. While Owen perused Pauline's story and that willful young woman herself tried to cheer up her disconsolate lover, the old man returned to the mummy. He had searched for the bracelet on the right wrist, but, after all, perhaps the Egyptian might have slipped it onto her left wrist in her hurry to get back.

“There it is,” he shouted suddenly; “there it is—the bracelet. She wore it on her wrist and he told her to give it to Polly.”

Mr. Marvin held in his hand a bracelet of scarabs linked together. It looked to him to the very one the reincarnated mummy had worn. Harry and Pauline in wonder came to him, and it was well they did. The excitement and exertion had again overstrained his failing energies. He tottered, and they were just in time to save

him from a fall.

It was another of his fainting spells, and they lowered him gently into his chair. But the old man was not unconscious yet. Feebly he repeated to Pauline, “Wear this bracelet —wear it always —promise.”

Pauline promised, and slipped it on her wrist without more than glancing at it. The old man's eyes closed, and it was clear that this faint was more serious than his others. Harry, about to telephone for Dr. Stevens again, was greatly relieved to see the physician stride into the room. There was hardly need of the stethoscope to tell him the end was near.

Even before the old man was undressed and in bed, Dr. Stevens had prepared and administered a hypodermic. The patient's eyelids fluttered and Dr. Stevens listened to the faintly moving lips.

“The will,” called the doctor, “what about the will?”

He glanced at every one, but nobody knew.

A shadow of anxiety passed over the features of the dying millionaire. Dr. Stevens could see that something of serious importance was on the old man's mind —something of importance about his vast property.

Once more he listened and then hastily drawing out his prescription pad and fountain pen he wrote a few sentences at the dying man's dictation, while the patient rallied and opened his eyes. The physician held the blank before his patient, who read it through and nodded. Dr. Stevens then placed the pen in the trembling fingers and guided his signature. A moment more and the physician had signed it as a witness and the butler had done the same.

The old manufacturer died as he had lived.

The will written on Dr. Stevens's prescription pad was given to Owen. He went to his room and examined it. It read:

“Bodley Stevens, M.D. Rx: I bequeath half my estate to my son, Harry, the remainder to my adopted daughter, Pauline, to be held in trust, until her marriage, by my secretary, Raymond Owen.”

Then followed the signature of the deceased and that of the two witnesses. In vain Owen looked for the handsome bequest to “the faithful secretary.” This was a bitter disappointment, and he considered for a moment the advisability of destroying the will. This would make valid one of the earlier wills in which he knew he had not been forgotten.

The folly of such a course became evident after a few moments thought. Dr. Stevens, the butler, and several others knew the contents of the document. It was so simple that its meaning could hardly be confused or forgotten, and every one knew it was in his keeping. It occurred to Owen that quite likely such a hasty death−bed will written by a doctor unskilled in law might not be accepted by the courts.

Early the next morning Owen suspended his work of answering telegrams of condolence long enough to make a hurried trip to lower Manhattan, where the late Stanford Marvin's lawyers had offices.

In vain the great lawyer cudgeled his brains for some flaw. The will ought to be wrong, but it wasn't. The meaning was so clear that even a court couldn't misunderstand it, and the fortune was left to his natural beneficiaries. The lawyer heaved a sigh and said plaintively:

“Too bad, too bad. Why didn't they call me?”

“Then this will is not valid?” asked Owen.

“Oh, no, it will hold; but what a pity that such a great man's last will and testament should be such an —well, so —well, this instrument is not worthy of conveying such a great estate.”

He contemptuously slipped the simple document into an envelope and placed it in his safe. Owen picked up his hat, but hesitated at the door. A question was forming in his mind and with it a hope.

“Mr. Wilmerding,” he asked finally, “in case Miss Marvin does not marry who would have charge of the estate?”

“I should say,” replied the lawyer, “in reply to your question that the estate would be held in trust by you.”

Returning to the house and entering the library Owen was confronted by the unwelcome spectacle of Montgomery Hicks, generally known as Mug. Hicks, with his gaudy attire, and ugly face, was always an affront to the eye, but to Owen he was a terror, for he held the power of blackmail over the secretary. Owen shrank at the sight of his enemy, but immediately took courage. Though Marvin's death had left the secretary no legacy it had also robbed the blackmailer of his power.

Hicks advanced with what he intended to be a winning smile and extended a hot, fat hand.

“I see the old man has croaked and I was just dropping in to talk business,” Hicks's newsboy voice growled out.

“Hicks,” said Owen, keeping his hand in his pocket, “if you came here to get your money out of the legacy old man Marvin was to leave me. Well, you won't get it and you never will get it. Marvin didn't leave me a cent, so there is nothing for you to get. He did leave me a job in his will, a job that will last for a year, and neither you nor any one else can force me out of that job. You can't blackmail me any more.”

“At the end of the year what becomes of you?” asked Hicks.

“Then I get a position somewhere else; but that is none of your business.”

“You don't want a position, Owen. A position calls for work. You don't like hard work any more then I do. You can't stand work much longer, either. Look at your eyes and your skin, how many grains do you take a day, anyway?”

“I haven't touched a grain of morphine in six months,” lied Owen. “But get out of my way —you can't get anything out of me and you can't blackmail me. If you come to this house again I'll have you thrown out.”

“Just a minute,” said Hicks, as pleasantly as he could, straining his coarse features into the unaccustomed position of a smile. “I didn't come to get money out of you. I know all about the will. What I came for was to help you and give you a tip. You and I can make a lot of easy money together. You've got the opportunity and I've got the brains. Now, to show you I'm your friend, look at this!”

Hicks handed him a paper which Owen read with surprise. It was a receipt in full for all Owen owed. Owen put it in his pocket.

“That's right, keep it. You and I are going to be so rich before long that a matter of a thousand or two wouldn't be worth talking about between friends.”

Owen had been under the thumb of this man, had feared and hated him and hoped for the day when he might sneer in his face and defy him. This was the time, and yet he felt Hicks had something to offer. He was in temporary charge of millions. There should be, there must be, some way to make this control permanent or else to delve into these millions while they were in his care. As Hicks hinted, this was an opportunity and he needed not brains, but rather experience and advice. Owen had been a rascal on a short time, why not take a partner like this man Hicks? He would prevent mistakes, and mistakes are all a criminal need fear.

Owen fingered uneasily the paper Hicks had put in his hand. He drew it out of his pocket —yes, it was a receipt in full for all that Owen owed the scoundrel. What could be Hicks's scheme? Owen turned a puzzled and worried gaze upon his companion.

Hicks observed him closely, read the misgivings in Owen's mind and, drawing close, whispered something in the latter's ear.

But Owen's drug−saturated nerves trembled at the thought. He pushed Hicks aside and walked rapidly out of the room, calling over his shoulder:

“I won't have anything to do with you. I don't want you to come near me or speak to me again. I'm done with you.”

“When you want me you know where to find me,” was Hicks's parting answer.

CHAPTER III. PAULINE TAXES THE FIRST TRICK

“All right, I'll do it,” growled Harry Marvin, with the air of a martyr going to the stake. “I'll do it for your sake, Polly.”

“Well, you'd better begin to get ready,” said Pauline blithely.

“I'll climb into a frock coat and endure an hour or two of this afternoon tea chatter,” promised Harry, “but first you must talk sense with me for a few minutes.”

“Oh, Harry,” spoke Pauline, softly, “I know what 'talking sense' means. You want to argue about my year of adventure. Now, lets not argue. Let's just be happy. You know I love you and I know you love me, and that ought to be enough. This year will be gone before you know it. I'm going to begin it right away just to please you. The sooner it starts the sooner it will be over.”

“Begin it?” said Harry. “Why, a month of it is gone now. But it's all nonsense. Polly, if you love me you are going to give up this crazy idea.”

A maid, bringing the card of Miss Lucille Hamlin, interrupted Harry. She was the first of the afternoon tea party. Polly hurried Harry off to dress, and, of course, he had no further chance to “talk sense “until the door had closed on the last guest. Then he pounced upon her. But Pauline, sweetly stubborn, cheerfully unyielding, insisted on carrying out her father's promise to the letter.

Raymond Owen, the secretary of the late Mr. Marvin, had thought it important to overhear this argument, and finally to walk into the library where the debate was going on. If the adventures were to start he had an idea for a beginning. The words of Hicks, the blackmailer, had been in his mind for some thirty days and were beginning to bear fruit. He had soon reached the point of hoping, almost praying, something would happen to Pauline that he might be left in control of her, estate. During the last few days Owen had progressed, from merely hoping to readiness to help his wish to come true.

Harry instantly appealed to the secretary to dissuade Pauline. There was no doubt that Owen had some influence over the girl. In years gone by, before Owen had taken to the drug, Pauline had sought him out in many a time of perplexity and learned to rely on his tactful, well−considered advice.

To the surprise of the young master of the house, Owen made no attempt to dissuade. Very unobtrusively he pointed out that for many years he had been accustomed to carry out the wishes of Harry's father, and that he was bound to fulfill his last wish in the same way.

“Raymond, you're a dear,” laughed Pauline; “let's think of something thrilling to do right off. Have you any idea?

“No,” lied Owen, “I hadn't given the matter any thought . We might look at a newspaper and see what's happening.”

Owen had a paper with him and the three examined it together.

Owen pretended to discover that an aviation meet was about to be held. His idea, for which Harry promptly hated him, was to induce some aviator to take Pauline as a passenger. Many of the races called for carrying a passenger. Harry made a few objections, but the speed with which they were overruled showed that he had no standing in this court. So Harry subsided, but he thought very hard.

Several things were becoming evident to Harry.

One was that this year to see life and have adventures was actually going to take place and no opposition on his part would stop it. It was also clear that if he hoped to control Pauline's adventures in any way it would be by the use of his wits, matching them against Pauline and the secretary.

When Pauline and Owen decided upon the aeroplane ride, Harry contented himself with remarking that he would have to see about it. Both chuckled when he said it, Pauline outwardly and Owen inwardly.

Then they had dinner under the round glassy eye of Aunt Cornelia. Aunt Cornelia was an elderly maiden relative of Harry, who had arrived with others for the funeral and made the brilliant discovery that since Mr. Marvin's death the “social situation,” as she termed it, at the Marvin house had become impossible.

It seemed, according to Aunt Cornelia, that a young man and a young woman of impressionable age living in the same house unchaperoned constituted an “impossible social situation,” Either Pauline or Harry must move out

or someone must be installed as chaperon. Of course, the chaperon was the least of the three evils and Aunt Cornelia, being the discoverer of the job, was elected to fill it.

Harry ordered a bottle of wine with his dinner. Though he actually drank very little, this unusual event created no little consternation.

“Harry, I didn't know you drank?” said Pauline.

“I am just beginning. You see, now that I must take over father's affairs and mix with men of the world I ought to get a little experience in things. See life and know what's what.”

After dinner Harry casually asked if Pauline thought her adventures would lead her to Paris. Pauline thought it likely, whereat Harry remarked that he might see her over there.

“I haven't been to Paris since I was a kid, and I really ought to see it, don't you think?”

“Yes,” agreed Pauline, without enthusiasm, “but wait until we are married and we'll do Paris together.”

“No, Polly, that won't do. I'm sorry, but as you say, you can't see life after you're married and settled down, so I'll have to do Paris alone.”

“Harry, are you sure you love me?” Pauline whispered.

“Polly, I know it, and everybody else knows it except you. Get Owen, he's a notary public, and I'll take an oath before him that you have been the only girl in all the world, are now and ever will be, world without end, amen.”

“And I love you, Harry,” said Pauline, lowering her eyes until he saw only the silky lashes.

“Why, Polly, that's the first time you ever volunteered that information.”

“Yes, Harry, I love you too much to let you go to Paris.”

“Paris can't hurt me unless I let it hurt me.”

“Harry, you won't be quite the same sort of boy when you come back from Paris. Will you promise not to go until we are married?”

“Will you promise not to go on this trip of adventure?”

“Why should I?” demanded Pauline.

“Because you won't ever be quite the same sort of girl when you come back.”

After breakfast the next morning when the big touring car rolled up to the front door to got Pauline and Owen, Harry was hurt that he had not been consulted. Pauline's belated invitation to go with them to the aviation field in the automobile was declined. Away went the big car to the fine stretch of roads, where it made short work of the distance to the aviation grounds.

Owen made a complete canvass of the “hangars” and soon accounted for every machine entered in the race for the next day. From all but one of the aviators he obtained a flat refusal. Not for money or any other consideration would they take a strange woman as a passenger. The only exception was a Frenchman, whose hesitation in declining led Owen to further argument. At the last moment Pauline, impatient at the suspense, entered the Frenchman's “hangar” and added her blandishments to Owen's financial inducements. The gallant foreigner succumbed and a bargain was struck. He exhibited his tame bird of steel and wood and cloth with the utter pride of a mother showing off her only child.

The aviator's fingers touched one of the wires and the easy smile left his face. He turned to his mechanics and sharp words followed. A moment later one of his assistants was at work tightening the wire. Owen's eyes scarcely left the wire, and when the opportunity arose he questioned the mechanic as, to what would happen if that particular steel strand should fail during flight. The foreigner explained frankly that the aeroplane would capsize and plunge to the earth. But he assured Owen that no such thing would happen, as he had just tightened the wire in question and would make another inspection after the practice flight that afternoon.

All the way home Owen's thoughts were of that wire and what it would mean to him. In the meanwhile Harry, after watching the car depart toward Hempstead, concluded to follow. He went to the picturesque private garage behind the Marvin mansion and soon was, following in the tracks of the bigger car.

Arrived on the field, he recognized Pauline's car and awaited patiently until he saw it drive away. Then he interviewed the aviator and learned of the proposed trip on the morrow. Harry's French was nothing to boast of, nor was the Frenchman's English. But they managed to have a long and in the end a heated argument. The birdman said given his word to a beautiful lady, and that settled it. Besides, there was no danger in his wonderful machine. Had he not flown upside down and done all the things the great Pegoud himself had done?”

“As you Americans say —let's see, what is your idiom?”

One of his mechanics prompted him:

“Ah, yes,” he said, with a smile. “I believe the proper expression is, 'I should worry.'”

Harry threw up his hands and went home. As he buzzed his horn outside the garage the door was opened by the Marvin chauffeur with a telegram in his hand. The chauffeur's wife was sick and he wanted a couple of days' leave of absence. Harry granted it instantly. That evening he made no mention of either the chauffeur's absence or his trip to the field. Pauline thought she was teasing Harry by saying nothing of her plans. She was sure he was eaten up with curiosity to know the result of her visit and admired his ability, as she thought, to conceal it.

Owen spent a nervous evening. He walked out soon after dinner and from a drug−store telephone booth called up a friend in the insurance business. To the secretary's surprise and disappointment he learned that the percentage of accidents to aviators had become comparatively small. Passengers were particularly fortunate. The friend even agreed to obtain accident insurance for any one at a reasonable premium.

If aeroplanes had become reasonably safe the chance of Pauline's being killed during the flight on the following day was insignificant. He must give up all hope of wealth from the permanent control of her estate. As the evening wore on Owen began to feel how he had unconsciously relied on this hope. He doubled his evening dose of morphine, but it neither soothed his disappointment nor brought him sleep.

Hour after hour, during the night, his sleepless eyes seemed to see that loose wire which the mechanic had explained to be so vitally important. He could see in imagination the machine flying off into the clouds with Pauline in it. He could see it suddenly waver, dip and plunge to the earth. In his mind's eye he saw himself rushing to, the wreck, lifting out the girl's crushed form, wildly calling for a doctor, and exulting all the time that she was beyond human aid.

About two o'clock Owen fell into a doze, and in that doze came one of his vivid opium dreams. He beheld Hicks enter his bedroom. It was not Hicks, the blackmailer, but Hicks, the counselor, who had told Owen how he might become rich. Hicks was speaking to him in a sort of noiseless voice, very different from his usual tones. He spoke in a sort of shells or husks of words. The consonants were there, but the vowels were lacking. Yet he heard as plainly as if the red−faced man had shouted. Hicks advised him to be a man, to show courage for once, to risk something, and then reap the reward forever afterward. “Take your motorcycle, ride to the aviation field before daylight, file that wire half through, and fate will take care of the rest.”

But Owen lacked the nerve. He feared that he would be seen sneaking onto the field at night or at daybreak. Hicks replied that the field was deserted at this hour. Owen then insisted that the aeroplane would be guarded, and even if it were not locked in its hangar the first rasp of a file on the wire would call the attention of some one on guard. No, it was too much, Owen could not do it. Instead, he made a counter suggestion that Hicks should undertake the task, since he was so certain of its success. For his part the secretary agreed to divide all that the estate might be made to yield him.

Owen, like everybody else, had seen many strange things in dreams, but never had he known of any character in a dream admitting or even suggesting that he was a dream. Yet this was just what Hicks did.

“I would, Owen. I would do it in a minute if I were talking to you. But this isn't me at all. I'm only a dream, in, reality I'm sound asleep in a hotel on upper Broadway, where I am dreaming that I am talking to you. Tomorrow morning I'll remember enough of this dream to make me go down to the aviation field with a sort of premonition that Pauline is going to be killed in an aeroplane.”

“How did you know about that wire and that she is going to fly tomorrow,” asked Owen.

“I don't know that,” said the phantom Hicks frankly in his empty voice. “There is a third party in this and I don't know who he is or much about him, except that he is not a living being. He seems to be somebody from the past, a priest of some old religion I ought to have studied about when I was at school. I don't know what his motive is, but he is with us. He wants her killed for some reason. He brought this dream of me to you so I could explain.

“You needn't worry about the man on guard over the aeroplanes. That man won't wake up, no matter how much noise you make.”

“How do you know?” Owen asked.

“He knows,” replied Hicks, “because he has transferred the effects of your morphine from your astral body to his. That's how he knows. You ought to know, too, because you have taken almost enough of the drug to kill you

tonight, and yet this is the first time you have even closed your eyes. You'd better let him help us and file that wire as he advises. I'm going now, you will wake up in a moment. This priest man told me after I had given you the message to drop this out of my hand and the dream would end. So here goes. Goodbye."

Owen saw Hicks hold his hand over a table and drop a small black shiny object upon it. As it dropped Hicks vanished and Owen awoke. He heard a sharp snap and saw something black and shiny on the table. For a moment the secretary sat quietly in his chair staring at the table and making sure that he was no longer dreaming. Then he examined the black object. It was the scarab which old Mr. Marvin had removed from the folds of the mummy. An image of the beetle which Egypt held sacred, carved in black stone. Owen had not noticed the scarab before his short nap and he could not account for its presence in his room anyway.

A little later he donned his motor−cycling suit, tip−toed downstairs, noiselessly went out by a back door and was soon trundling his big two−cylinder motorcycle from the garage. He was careful to push it out of the Marvin premises onto the highway before lighting his lamp and starting.

Arriving at the field just at dawn Owen found it as deserted as the spectral Hicks had promised. From the tool kit of his motor−cycle he took two files of different shapes and a pair of pliers and walked briskly and fearlessly over the uneven ground to the hangars. All were closed except one, and that one contained the French machine in which Pauline was to ascend. The secretary knew that this hangar would be open. He knew in advance that he would find a mechanic on guard and sound asleep.

Whether real or unreal, awake or asleep, the business of the moment was the filing of that wire. Owen recognized it readily and found it not to be a single wire, as he supposed, but a slender cable composed of many strands. These strands resisted his file and even the clipper attached to his pliers. After what seemed an hour's work he had weakened or broken enough of the metal threads so that the cable stretched perceptibly at that point to do more might cause the cable to break at once and betray what had been done.

Owen hurriedly, returned to his machine had dashed back through the beautiful morning air to the Marvin home. Servants were stirring in their rooms and the gardener was engaged in shaking some sort of powder from a can onto a bare spot on the front lawn. He glanced up at Owen without surprise, for these early rides were known to be an old habit of the secretary.

Owen took the machine to the garage, satisfied that there was nothing guilty in his appearance or the gardener would have noted it. Stepping out of the garage he met Harry and could not help starting perceptibly. Harry looked him in the eye, and there was nothing for Owen to do but stare steadily back.

"You are up very early, Owen, said Harry, looking at the dust on the motor.

"Yes, I've been for a long ride. I think the morning air does me good."

"You don't look well, Owen. Why don't you go to bed today. I'll take Polly to the meet."

"No, thanks. I wouldn't miss seeing Miss Pauline fly," said Owen firmly.

CHAPTER IV. OWEN WINS THE FIRST GAME

Harry Marvin entered the little private garage back of the Marvin mansion, locked the door and drew the shades of the small windows. There were only two automobiles in the garage. One was the big six cylinder touring car in which Pauline and Owen had made their trip the day before to the aviation field. The other was the two−seated runabout that Harry had driven over the same ground just behind them.

Having made sure that nobody was about, Harry lifted up the hood of the touring car and without the slightest provocation attacked it with a wrench. He removed the carburetor, took it to pieces, lifted out the hollow metal float and deliberately made two punctures in it. Then he tossed the dismembered parts upon a work bench and was about to operate on the runabout when he heard voices outside.

He was barely in time to unlock the door and be found busily working on the car when Pauline entered. She had just learned of the chauffeur's absence. Harry volunteered the additional bad news that the big car was out of order. Like every disappointed woman, she insisted on knowing exactly what was wrong. Harry told her, with many long technical details, and, not knowing at all what he was talking about, she had to be satisfied.

Could he fix it in time to get her to the aviation field before the race?

Well, that depended partly on whether she would go away and not bother him until breakfast.

Pauline could, and she certainly would refrain from bothering him. Never before had Harry found her a bother, nor, for that matter, had any other man in her recollection. Out she went, with more color than usual in her pink cheeks and the light of battle in her eyes.

“By George, I've got to play my cards carefully,” thought Harry, as he contemplated the runabout. It was evident that he had designs on the health of the two−seater also. But he felt the necessity of subtlety in this case. He could not assassinate it boldly by tearing out a vital organ as he had done to the bigger car. This runabout must die a slow, lingering death. How was he to do it? His first idea was to weaken the tires and invite “blowouts” on the road. But this could not be done with certainty, and some kind friend might supply him with new tires.

A more promising idea was to drain the engine of its oil, knowing that sooner or later the pistons would run dry and stick. Such a proceeding would ruin the engine, and Harry was too good a mechanic to spoil a first rate engine, especially one built by his father. He would as soon think of hamstringing a faithful horse. A better plan soon came to him and put him into action. It soon had him flat on his back under the car, boring a hole in the bottom of the gasoline tank. When the life−blood of the car began to trickle out in a stream he stopped the hole with a small wooden peg.

The young man now frowned at the only remaining vehicle which had, not received his attention, Owen's motorcycle.

Harry went to the hose used for washing down the cards and collected a little water in the palm of his hand. With the other hand he removed the cap from the motorcycle's tank and allowed two or three drops of water to mingle with the gasoline.

This done, Harry let down his sleeves, washed his hands, and sauntered in to breakfast, with the unwelcome announcement that the big car was, for the day at least, beyond human aid.

There was a flicker of suspicion in Owen's sallow face at the news. He wondered if Harry had disabled the touring car that he might ride alone with Pauline.

“I am afraid,” said Harry, quietly, “that you will have to ride in the runabout alone with me, Polly. It's rather hard on Raymond, but I guess he must go on his motorcycle or by train.”

“Oh, I think you wrecked it on purpose,” said Pauline, without the slightest suspicion that she was stating the truth.

Owen, worried by vague misgivings about Harry, looked into the tank of the runabout to make sure that it was full, and then scurried away on his two wheeled mount. He considered waiting until the runabout was ready to start and keeping the machine in sight, but it seemed wiser to be on the field where he could make sure the Frenchman would not forget his bargain nor start before Pauline arrived.

Pauline was ready with such record−breaking suddenness that it gave her the novel experience of waiting for Harry.

She bad not forgotten that her lover had asked her not to bother him while he worked on the car. After that slight to her pride the young lady would rather die than go near the garage while he was in it. During the next five minutes unpleasant doubts entered her mind. What could this indifference and neglect mean? She had looked upon Harry ever since his return from college as a personal possession. Of course, technically he wasn't hers until she married him. But if he were not her property, at least she had an option on the handsome youth until such time as she saw fit to either take his name or relinquish him to some one else. In that case she wondered to whom she would like to turn him over. There was her schoolmate and chum, Miss Hamlin. How lucky any man would be to get her, and Harry —how would he feel about it? Then, like a cold draught in her brain came the recollection that Lucille and Harry had corresponded all the four years he was at college.

Could it be that she, Pauline, had been too willful and headstrong with Harry? If so, was it possible that the keen edge of his adoration was wearing dull? Pauline had just succeeded in stamping these unpleasant questions deep down into the subconscious parts of her mind when the young man whisked up in the runabout.

Pauline's wrath melted rapidly. Harry drove, as he did everything out in the open air, magnificently. His judgment of distances and openings was precise, and his skill in weaving his way through heavy traffic was startling. A good looking young man is seldom seen to better advantage, especially by a girl, than when driving a powerful car. Pauline loved to drive with Harry. Besides his spectacular tricks he had a guileless manner of getting the better of arguments with crossing policemen.

Harry was not driving as fast as usual. This fact was impressed on her by shouts and waving of hands from a car which passed them from behind.

“That's Lucille,” cried Pauline, waving.

“Yes, and, confound it, that's Billy Madison taking her to the races.”

“Well, why shouldn't he?” asked Pauline. “Isn't it all right?”

“Yes but it seems to me he is paying deal of attention to Lucille and —say, Polly, you don't suppose she'd be silly enough to care for him, do, you?”

That sensation of a cold wave in the back of her brain came again.

“I'm sure I don't know,” she replied, a little coldly. “Why —does it matter very much to you?”

Harry hesitated, even stammered a little, in denying that it did. He stammered, as Pauline well understood, because he was not telling her his true thoughts. It did matter, and she knew it. In reality it mattered because Harry knew too much about young Madison to want him to win the affection of any friend of his, but Harry did not wish to explain.

“So Harry does care for Lucille and always has cared,” thought Pauline. The sense of possession of the youth beside her faded and he seemed far away. If a man fears he is losing his grip on a girl he redoubles his attentions and racks his brains to be more interesting and attractive to her. A girl in the same situation reverses the tactics.

Just as Harry felt the absolute zero which scientists talk about settling upon him, he remembered a very important duty.

“Seems to me we don't drift the way we ought to,” said Harry, pressing on his clutch pedal and trying to took concerned.

“I think we have been a long time getting to the aviation field,” was Pauline's chilly answer.

Harry stopped the car, went back and pulled out the little wooden plug in the gasoline tank. Then away they went again, leaving a little wet line in the dust of the road. Pauline stared straight ahead. Harry's attempts at conversation fell on the stony ground of silence, or at best brought forth only the briefest and most colorless answers. Soon Harry's practiced ear caught the preliminary warning of waning gasoline, and a moment later, half way up a gentle hill, with a sob from all its six cylinders the car gave up the ghost.

A few miles ahead Owen also was in difficulties. He had been sailing along merrily until he stopped at : little roadhouse for a drink. The machine had been all right when he got off and he knew nobody had touched it, yet now it acted as if possessed by the evil one. With great difficulty he was able to start it, and once started it coughed, bucked and showed all the symptoms of bronchitis and pneumonia. By dint of strenuous pedaling Owen helped the asthmatic motor to the top of the next hill. It ran as smoothly as a watch all the way down the other side and then imitated a bunch of cannon crackers on the following rise.

Owen was a good motorcycle rider, but a very poor mechanic. His machine had been adjusted, cleaned and kept in repair by the Marvin chauffeur, and the secretary had seldom, cause to investigate it on the road. He had

always used the carefully filtered gasoline from the garage, so that he neither understood the present alarming symptoms nor knew their simple cure. His motor was protesting at a drop of water which had entered the needle valve of his carburetor and, being heavier than gasoline, had lodged there and stopped its flow. It would have been an easy, matter to drain the carburetor, but instead Owen with nervous fingers adjusted everything he could get his hands on, and after two hours' work trundled it into a farmhouse and hired the farmer to drive him the short remaining distance to the aviation field.

Several machines were in the air, but not the Frenchman's, when the farmer drove up. The roads and the edges of the field were alive with cars and spectators as the secretary hastened to the “hangars.” The French aviator welcomed Owen and inquired for the mademoiselle. This confirmed Owen's fears that something had happened to her on the way. It had troubled him a little that the runabout had not passed him on the road, but Harry might have made a detour to avoid some section of bad road.

Owen lost another hour in watching and worrying before he made up his mind to go to the rescue. There were plenty of idle cars, but it was not easy to hire one, as they were mostly guarded by chauffeurs with no right to rent or lend them. At last a man was found who was willing to pick up $10 and take a chance that his master would not know about it.

The rescue car found them just where they had stopped, half way up the hill. Pauline had run the scale of feminine annoyance, from silence to sarcasm, to tears. The tears produced almost the same effect on Harry's determination to keep Pauline from flying that the drops of water had in Owen's carburetor. The spectacle of the girl he loved weeping had almost broken up his resolve when Owen dashed by, shouted, turned around and drew up alongside.

Harry asked for help, and the chauffeur who had never had the pleasure of tinkering with a “Marvin Six,” was inclined to dismount and aid at least in diagnosing the car's ailment. While he was thinking about it and surveying the parts which Harry had taken out and strewn about the running board in his pretended trouble hunt Pauline had dashed away her tears and transferred her pretty self to the new car. Pauline and Owen both knew there was barely time to reach the field before the Frenchman's ascent. So with scanty farewells Harry was left to reassemble his car. When he had set up the last nut he replaced the little plug in the tank, produced a can of gasoline from the locker behind the seats, emptied it into his tank and drove at reckless speed for the aviation grounds.

He was just in time to see a tiny speck on the edge of the horizon. This, he learned, was the Frenchman's machine. He was told that it carried a passenger. The speck grew rapidly in size, developed the insect shape of a biplane and soon seemed to be over the other end of the aviation field. The young man's joy at seeing the aeroplane returning in safety was dampened by a little feeling of shame that by such devious means he had almost spoiled Pauline's pleasure.

“I act like an old woman worrying Polly this way,” he decided. “No wonder she is cross to me lately. She must think I would be a tyrant of a —

Harry's last words were choked by a spasm of the throat.

There were shouts and gestures from the spectators.

A light gust of wind had struck the aeroplane on the right wing. It wavered an instant, like a dragon fly about to alight, and then instead of responding to the aviator's levers turned on its left side and plunged to the ground. A cloud of dust arose, half hiding the wreck, and then the crash of impact came to his ears.

There was a second of silence, broken by a groan. Harry heard the groan and didn't even know it came from his own throat. He was in motion now, forcing people to the right and left and running down the field. It seemed miles to the other end, and he was gratefully conscious that others nearer were hurrying to the rescue, if rescue it might be called.

The aeroplane had dropped like a stone from a height that forbade hope of escape. Would she be conscious and would he be in time to give and receive a last message of love before her splendid young life was quenched in the black blot of death? Besides grief there was fury in the runner's heart, wrath against Owen for encouraging this foolish and dangerous caprice, against the unfortunate driver who had failed to preserve his precious freight, and against nature who condemns every living thing by one means or another to that same final failure and wreck death.

Gasping for breath from his exertions, he was at last within a hundred feet of the ruin, and saw people lifting

up the engine and removing a limp figure. Just then two people stepped in his way. He did not turn out but rushed straight at them, rather glad to have something to burl aside in his blind anger, nor did he notice that one was a woman. Harry's plunge carried him between them and knocked both down, just as he had often bowled over the “interference “in his football games. On he lurched, wondering vaguely at hearing his name called. He heard it again and it sounded like Pauline's voice.

He turned, and it was Pauline.

After all Pauline had arrived too late —had missed that fatal adventure.

Owen watched Harry lift Pauline up and wrap her in his arms with a squeeze that hurt. But it was a hurt she loved and though she sobbed as if her heart would break they were sobs of relief and happiness.

Owen watched a moment and then slunk away; his schemes had been for nothing. Pauline was alive and happy in her lover's arms, and the secretary was no nearer his goal of permanent control of her estate than before. He walked to the entrance of' the tent and tried to learn from the nurses and doctors who were hurrying in and out whether the French aviator would live or die. Nobody would stop to give him a satisfactory answer. There was a flap in the back of the tent, and through this Owen cautiously peered. He saw a nurse with something that looked like wet absorbent cotton dabbing at a round black object

Presently he saw that the round object was the head of a man blackened by fire. Just then the nurse looked up, saw Owen's guilty face and gave a little exclamation of dismay. At the same instant Owen felt a hand grasp his elbow. Withdrawing his head from the tent, he turned quickly and was confronted by the red face of Hicks, the blackmailer, counselor and dream messenger.

The secretary backed away from Hicks with a face of terror.

“Don't be scared,” said Hicks in a hoarse whisper.

I feel as if I were in this thing as deep as you are.”

“In what thing? “asked Owen.

“Don't bluff, old man,” said Hicks. “Didn't you dream about me last night?”

“Well, what have my dreams to do with you?”

“Stop bluffing,” replied Hicks. “Didn't you see me in a dream last night? And didn't I leave a black, shining stone on the table when I left?”

Owen did not deny these questions, and the red−visaged man went on:

“I see you took my advice —that is, his advice, whoever he is, and you fixed the wire.”

“Look here, Hicks, in heaven's name, tell me what this means. I did dream about you; you told me to do the thing, and it's your fault. You admit you are in it. Now, what is it?”

“Owen,” said Hicks, “you and I are a couple of pikers in a big game — bigger than we understand. We hold the cards, but somebody else is playing the hand for us. He is an old guy and a wise one, four thousand years old, he tells me, and, though it scares me out of my boots to think who I am trailing along with, I'm going to stick and you'd better stick, too, and let him play our hand to the end.”

“Who is it?” asked Owen, wondering if the morphine had gotten the better of him again or if Hicks were playing some uncanny deceit on him.

“I don't know,” replied Hicks. “He's somebody who has been dead 4,000 years, and he wants to have this girl Pauline killed so he can get her back. I suppose he's some kind of ghostly white slaver. It isn't our business what he is as long as he takes care of us. If we'll help him he'll help us.”

“Well, he didn't manage very well today,” objected Owen.

“He planned all right,” rejoined Hicks. “The machine fell, and if she'd been in it she'd have been killed. But the other side played a card. I don't know what the card was, but it took the trick and she didn't go up in the machine. That's all. But don't worry, we'll have better luck some other time.”

Owen shook his head. He could make nothing of this battle of unseen forces. It was clear to him that he had grasped at the one big chance to get Pauline's estate and had missed it. He told Hicks so frankly.

“That's where you're wrong again,” insisted Hicks. “If that girl had been killed today it would have been a big blunder.”

“A blunder?” queried Owen. “Didn't you say that Pauline must be put out of the way before we can get hold of her fortune?”

“Listen,” said Hicks glancing cautiously about, “come over here away from these people.”

“What do you mean by saying that it would have been a big blunder if Pauline had been killed in that flying machine?” demanded Owen.

“Yes, an almighty big blunder —that's what I said, and I can tell you why. We were pretty stupid not to think of it before. Now here's what's got to happen to Miss Pauline —”

Hicks placed his mouth close to Owen's car and whispered.

CHAPTER V. THE PIRATE AND PAULINE

A sort of false quiet, like the calm that broods between storms, kept all serene at the Marvin mansion for a week after the aeroplane catastrophe. Little had been seen of Harry, who was busy with directors' meetings and visits to the factories. Owen had read with alarm of rumors that some one had tampered with a wire of the wrecked biplane. But if the authorities were investigating he saw no signs of it, and suspicion pointed no finger at him.

What puzzled and worried Owen more than anything else was his own mind and behavior. Having no belief in the supernatural, he could not account for the dream which had thrown him into a criminal partnership with Hicks. Hicks had blackmailed him in the past, and there was nobody he had feared and hated more than this vulgar and disreputable race track man. Yet Hicks had appeared to him in a dream, and Owen had promptly done his bidding, involving himself in what would probably turn out to be murder. The newspapers reported the French aviator as barely living from day to day.

Owen suffered the torment of a lost soul, but, at least he had no more dreams, or spectral visitations. Hicks called him on the telephone once or twice, but the secretary refused to talk.

Pauline, too, had a busy week. Besides her usual social activities, she rewrote and finished her new story. It seemed to her even better than the one in the Cosmopolitan Magazine.

“This will surely be taken,” Pauline thought with a little sigh of regret, “and that means the end of my year of adventures —”

She had determined on this course the night after the accident. It was after midnight, and Pauline was trying to marshal the exciting recollections of the day into the orderly mental procession that leads to sleep. Very faintly she heard what sounded like the music of a distant mandolin. Pauline knew it was Harry, went to the open window and looked down on the dark lawn. There he was playing with a bit of straw instead of a pick that his music might not disturb the sleepers in the house.

Pauline wanted to throw her arms around him and promise not to cause any more worry. But she didn't, because she couldn't reach him from the window. After Harry had gone Pauline decided to finish her story, send it to a publisher and let his decision be hers.

“If they accept it, you stay home and marry Harry,” she told the pretty face under the filmy night cap which smiled at her from the mirror. “But if they dare reject it, Harry will have to worry, dear boy though he is.”

So Pauline lost no time in finishing and submitting her manuscript, inclosing a special delivery stamp and a request please to let her know at once.

On Saturday Pauline received a bulky letter in the morning's mail. It was her neatly typed manuscript and a short letter declining her story. The editor thought it charming, showed wonderful imagination, gave great promise of future success, but there was a lack of experience evident throughout —a little unreal, he added. He ventured to suggest that the author would do well to travel around and see the world from different angles. During the afternoon Harvey Schieffelin dropped in for a call. He had found her story in the Cosmopolitan and complimented her then he began to laugh.

“Polly, that's a bully story of yours, but you ought to have gone down and watched some stokers do work before you described that scene.”

“What was wrong in my description?” demanded the young authoress.

“Well, you told of a stoker laying his grimy hand on the fire door and pulling it open to rake the fire.”

“Well, couldn't he do that?”

“Oh, yes,” laughed Harvey, “he could, but he wouldn't do it more than once. Those doors are almost red hot and would bum the flesh off the stoker's hand, whether it were grimy or not. I'll show you on my yacht some time. What you need is —?”

“Harvey, don't you dare tell me I need experience,” interrupted Pauline with unexpected heat. Young Schieffelin saw that tears were almost in her eyes.

“Well,” thought Schieffelin, “this vein leads too close to water,” and he hurried to shift the course of the conversation.

But the damage was done. Pauline took her story to the little open fireplace in her room and destroyed it. At the same time she destroyed, her resolution to give up the year of adventure. There could be no question, she needed experience. Her adopted father had admitted it, the editor had said it, and even an empty−headed young man like Schieffelin could see it. She was sorry for Harry, but it couldn't be helped. She picked up a copy of “Treasure Island” and soon wished fervently that the days of pirates were back again.

Owen gave up his fight against morphine late Friday night. Saturday he was at peace with the world. Gone were all the nerve clamorings and with them went his scruples. All day he kept a furtive watch upon Pauline, and even heard her envious remarks about pirates to Harry when he returned for a weekend at home. Owen sympathized with Pauline in her regret that pirates were extinct. A pirate would have been very useful to the secretary just then.

However, there were other cut−throats, plenty of them, and perhaps some other kind would do. There were gunmen, for instance, but, an honest District Attorney had lately made these murderous gentlemen of the underworld almost as quiet as pirates. He was still pondering when Hicks called again on the telephone. This time the secretary responded and made an immediate appointment in a cafe near Forty−second street.

Owen related the events of the week, ending with Pauline's hankering for pirates. The two men got their heads together and rapidly evolved a plan.

From the cafe they took a taxi and rode along the water front, first on one side of the island of Manhattan and then on the other. The cab stopped near the worst−looking saloons, while the two schemers entered and looked over the sailors and longshoremen refreshing themselves at the bars. After covering several miles of water front they had collected as many as a dozen abominable barroom cigars and a few equally dubious drinks, but had not yet found what they were looking for.

On Front Street they saw a man, and both cried out:

“Look, there he is.”

The man was a wild−looking specimen. He had the rolling gait of the deep sea . A squinting eye gave him a villainous leer, while a bristly beard and long gray hair made him a ferocious spectacle. His age was doubtful, as the lines in his ruddy skin might have been cut by dissipation as much as age. The most prominent feature of his unlovely countenance was a nose, fiery red from prolonged exposure to sunburn, or rum−bum.

“If he isn't a pirate he ought to be one,” said Owen.

The man carried the top of a ship's binnacle, as the round brass case which holds a ship's compass is called. He entered the dismal portal of a marine junk shop. The taxi was stopped discreetly a block away. As Owen and Hicks approached the shop they heard a loud argument going on inside.

“How much do you want for it?”

“Ten dollars. It's a brand−new Negus.”

“Ten nothing. You stole it, you son of a sea cook. I'll give you a dime for it.”

“I did not steal it, so help me ————!” The captain of that 'lime juicer' over in the North River gave it to me for saving his little gal's life. He begged me to take anything I wanted, but I fancied this. I'll tell you about it.”

Then Owen and Hicks, listening just outside, heard a fearful and wonderful tale. To relate it in the sailor's own words, stripped of the long deep−sea oaths, would be as impossible as to pick the green specks out of a sage cheese.

In brief, the gentleman with the binnacle, sauntering innocently along the docks Friday night, had heard a commotion on the British tramp which he referred to as a “lime juicer.” Some fifteen or more long−shoremen had invaded the ship, overcome the captain, tied him down and were about to kidnap his daughter. The teller of the story had walked in and thrashed them all single−handed, driven them off into the darkness, rescued the little girl and released the captain. In gratitude the commander had made him a present of the binnacle head.

At the conclusion of the story there was a pause, then the other voice answered:

“You're a wonder. As I said before, I'll give you ten cents for the binnacle and ninety cents for the story. Now you can take it or I'll have you pinched for swiping it.”

“Gimme the dollar,” said the hero of the tale, and a moment later he passed down the street with the two eavesdroppers at his heels.

The sailor man, proceeding at a rapid pace, suddenly turned a comer like a yacht jibing around a buoy and plunged into a dingy saloon. Owen and Hicks went in after him.

Owen ordered and invited the sailor to join them. They learned that his name was Nelson Cromwell Boyd, that he had deserted from the British navy at a tender age, and since then had been through a series of incredible adventures and injustices, which disproved the old adage that you can't keep a good man down.

At last Owen intimated that he had a business proposition to discuss, and they adjourned to the sidewalk.

“Do you want to earn some money? ” asked Hicks.

“Well, that depends,” said Boyd, doubtfully.

“Easy money,” suggested Owen.

“That's the only kind worth going after,” commented the sailor.

“That's where we agree with you, my friend “said Hicks. “We are after easy money and plenty of it. Plenty for us and plenty for you, too, if you can keep quiet about it.”

“That's the kind of talk I like to hear. But as honest man to honest man, I want to warn you that there mustn't be too much work to it. I don't believe in the nobility of labor. I believe that work is the crowning shame and humiliation of the human race. It's all right for a horse or a dog or an ox to work, but a man ought to be above it. It's degrading, interferes with his pleasures and wastes his time.”

“I feel the same way, “agreed Owen, “but somebody has got to work to make shoes and food for us.”

“Yes,” admitted the sailor, “regretfully there will always have to be some work done, and I'm sorry for the poor guys that must do it. But there's been too much work done.”

“Those sentiments are very noble,” said Owen.

“It's all very fine to worry about your fellow man. But you would like to have plenty of money even if the rest of the world is fool enough to keep on working.”

“I suppose so,” said the sailor, “but I'm a reformer and my business is to talk, not work.”

“That's just what we want you to do,” said Owen and Hicks in answer.

Then they found a table in the rear of a saloon where they could unfold their plan.

Boyd was to be introduced to a foolish young girl who had a barrel of money. He was to tell her a deep−sea yam along certain lines, and Owen and Hicks would take care of the rest.

“The question is,” said Owen, “whether you can talk and act like a sort of reformed pirate.”

“Leave that to me,” he assured them, and led the way out of the saloon and into still another grimy and disreputable place. It was Axel Olofsens pawnshop and second−hand general supply and clothing store.

After much pawing over ancient, worn and rusty weapons, Boyd was at last fitted out. Ole was paid about sixty per cent of what he asked and left to the enjoyment of his Scandinavian melancholy.

“You look like a pirate now, sure enough,” said Owen, observing Boyd's effect on the driver of the taxicab.

“I look it, but I don't quite feel it yet,” said Boyd, with deep meaning. “There is something lacking.”

“What can it be?” asked Hicks.

“About three fingers of red−eye,” the sailor explained, pointing to a saloon. “That will make my disguise just perfect.”

In the saloon Hicks and Owen made a little map, wrinkled it and soiled it on the floor, then gave it to the pirate.

“Tell her,” said Owen as he called for a taxi, “that it is only a copy of your original, which is all worn out.”

The nearer they approached to the house the more talkative became the “pirate.” He demanded to know more details of what was to be done, and finally assumed an air of authority.

“You say that rich girl is crazy to see something worth writin' about? Now, I know something better than pirates and buried treasure,” shouted the pirate confidently.

“Yes, no doubt,” Owen replied soothingly and with some alarm at the man's bravado. “But it's pirates she is interested in just now.”

“Never mind, I say I know something better,” insisted the “pirate. “If she will go and do what I'm goin' ter tell yer she'll sure see something like she never dreamed of. Now listen to me sharp!”

It was an extraordinary proposition the “pirate” made.

Owen laughed a gentle discouragement and shook his head, but Hicks fixed his eyes keenly on the man and was evidently turning the suggestion over in his mind.

Owen's key admitted the three to the front hall without ringing, but a maid happened to cross the hall and caught sight of Boyd. With a scream and a flutter she retreated. Owen seated his two confederates in the hall and

went in search of Pauline.

Owen found Pauline alone in the library. Never did a villain propose a scheme to a beautiful girl at a more favorable moment. Half the afternoon and a little while after dinner she had been absorbing “Treasure Island,” and now came Owen asking her if she would like to meet a reformed pirate and go on a thrilling and adventurous expedition.

“Owen, you are a perfect angel . Bring in your pirate. I'm sorry, though, that he has reformed.”

Pauline shook hands with Hicks, but hardly noticed him. She had eyes only for the “pirate,” who impressed her mightily. With awe and admiration she saw his scowling and squinting eye run over her and then travel about the room. Pauline approved of the “pirate,” but the “pirate” did not approve of Pauline, and he almost told her so.

But he met the warning eyes of his confederates and restrained himself. He had his story to tell and he would do it. After all, that was the best way to attack this girl and her fortune.

“Tell us about the treasure,” said Pauline eagerly.

“Hush!” he shouted in a voice that made the girl jump.

“I'll tell you, but, by the blood of Morgan, if one of you ever tells a living soul I'll cut his liver out,” said the “pirate.” Pauline gasped, and the secretary told him that it wasn't considered good manners to point with a sharp knife But they all swore to secrecy and the “pirate” proceeded:

“I was but a slip of a lad when I ran away and sailed from Liverpool in the good brig Nancy Lee with as villainous a crew as I ever seen. Where we was bound for and why is none of your business. Them that planned that voyage has cashed in their souls to their Maker and —ah, well, as I was saying, they was a villainous crew, low and vile and bloody−minded. I was the cabin boy and slept on the transoms in the captain's cabin. The weather was awful and the grub was worse.

“But all went well till we reached the roarin' forties. The skipper knew how to handle sailors, you bet he did. When they came aft to kick about the grub he knocked 'em down before they said two words.”

Pauline gave a little exclamation of dismay at this point and the “pirate” turned to her in explanation:

“You see, knockin' 'em down quick like that avoids a lot of cross words and unpleasant arguments such as makes hard feelin's on long voyages.

“Yes, as I was saying', all went well until the second mate got to knockin' 'em out with his left hand, which the same was all right, too, but he was heard to pass a remark one day that he only hit landlubbers with his left hand.

“The crew they was insulted, and that very night the second mate went overboard. Who done it nobody knows, leastways the captain couldn't find out. It made the old man peevish like and he got to arguin' with them sailors instead of wallopin' 'em the way he oughter done, and one day they turned on him.

“It was all over in a minute. They had the old man thrown and tied. The first mate came runnin'in, firin' his pistols, but they downed him, too. I took the wheel while they decided what to do. 'Bloody Mike,' their leader, had about persuaded the men to send the captain and mate to Davy Jones's locker and the carpenter was riggin' the plank for 'em to walk when I up and puts in a word.

“I pleaded for their lives and, though Mike was dead agin' the idea, they voted to let them live. The last we saw of 'em they was driftin' off in the jolly boat with a jug of water and a loaf of bread.”

The mariner paused and Pauline suggested delightedly:

“And as soon as they had cooled down they were grateful to you and made you their leader?”

“They did not,” answered the “pirate.” “They broached a cask of rum in the forward hold, and I overheard 'em plotting to throw me to the sharks.”

“How awful,” said Pauline.

“Yes, miss,” agreed the “pirate.” It was awkward and embarrassing like for a mere slip of a lad. So I up and goes into the captain's cabin and gets all the pistols and knives and cutlasses there was and brings 'em out on deck.

“Pretty soon them drunken devils come a−tumblin' out of the fore hatch, picks up half a dozen capstan bars and some belyin' pins and a marlin spike or two and runs aft a−hollerin' and yellin'. I gives 'em one warnin' and then fires.”

The “pirate” stopped, coughed and looked around.

“Oh, please go on,” begged Pauline.

“Yes, miss,” replied the sailor, “but this talking affects my throat. Could you possibly —?”

“Why, certainly,” interrupted Owen, “I'll get you a drink.”

After the sailor had swallowed the biggest drink ever poured out in that house he continued:

“Yes, that was as neat a fight as I ever was in. There was some twenty of 'em all told.”

“And what happened then?” demanded Pauline.

“Well, Miss, it come on to blow, and there was the old ship staggerin' along under full sail. It was all I could do to keep the old hulk from foundering', at that, but I stuck to the wheel day after day and night after night. To keep from freezin' I had to drink a lot of grog. Oh, a powerful lot of grog. So much grog that I've been dependent on it ever since —and I'll take a little now, if it's agreeable.” It wasn't exactly agreeable, but he got it and continued. “Finally we fetched up, ker−smack, on the rocks of a desert island. All the boats had been smashed and carried away by the storm, so I had to build a raft. The first two loads was all provisions, and then I took the treasure ashore —”

“What treasure?” asked Pauline.

“Oh, bless your heart, didn't I tell you about the treasure?”

“No,” said Hicks, with a scowl, “and that's the part we want to hear about.”

“Oh, money ain't everything,” rebuked the “pirate” in a lordly manner. “There was a matter of a million dollars or so in good British gold, and what it was on the ' Nancy Lee' for is nobody's business. I took it all ashore, an' buried it on the island. Here's a copy of the chart I made, and you three is the first to lay human eyes on it.”

While Pauline examined reverently the dingy bit of paper the “pirate” concluded his yarn.

“After I'd buried the last f it, I rigged a mast on the raft and fetched up on one of the Bahamas.”

“And you have never been back to get the gold?” queried Pauline.

“No, miss; though I've started many's the time. But a poor seafarin' man like me finds it hard to fit out a proper expedition. If you fancy the notion and want to go along with me and pay all the expenses I'll divvy up half and half with you. What do you say?”

Pauline looked at Owen and Hicks, who nodded approvingly. She had no great faith in finding any gold. Old Mr. Marvin had said that treasure bunts rarely produce any results. But he had also remarked that they were very thrilling, and here, surely, was adventure well worth a little time and money. Pauline agreed, and the “pirate” was in the midst of imposing a blood−curdling oath of secrecy when Harry demanded admittance.

Nobody, least of all the sailor, would tell him what was in the wind, except that they were going off on a trip of adventure. The young man disapproved of both Hicks and the “pirate,” and the latter showed his dislike of Harry. It was with regret that the man of the sea recollected Owen's stipulation that Harry must on no account be allowed to go with the party. Nothing would have pleased the “pirate” better than to have got these two happy and innocent representatives of “ill−gotten gains “alone with him on the high seas. Pauline, too, wished to have Harry who was frowning and suspiciously demanding information. But she had sworn the oath of a buccaneer, and far be it from her to break faith with the confiding freebooter.

So, once more Harry was kept out of Pauline's councils. He was a little provoked at her this time, for her willfulness seemed almost perverse after the lesson she should have learned from the aeroplane wreck.

CHAPTER VI. THE TREASURE HUNTERS

Excitement and activity pervaded the house. Sunday and Monday every one, including Harry, soon knew that Pauline was to take Tuesday's steamer to Old Nassau, in the Bahamas. Harry intended to quietly board the steamer a little earlier than Pauline and surprise the party by appearing after the ship was well out to sea. His plans were' shattered by the young lady's unexpected “early arrival.” Harry, with a suitcase in each hand, met her face to face on the pier. There was nothing for him to do but confess, kiss her goodbye and go. It was with a pang of regret that she saw him toss his two suitcases covered with college team labels into a taxicab and depart.

An hour later the four treasure hunters stood looking over the rail watching the last passengers come aboard. The “pirate,” in a new blue suit, huge Panama hat and light pink necktie, though a rather unusual sight, had been toned down in appearance to a degree that permitted him to walk about among people without causing a crowd to collect. Hicks, too, at Owen's suggestion, had adopted quieter attire.

Just as the gangplank was about to be pulled in the deckhands waited to permit a very feeble and bent old man to hobble aboard. He had long, white hair, and his face was mostly gray whiskers, except a pair of dark spectacles. A porter followed him bearing two brand new suitcases.

The adventurous four were soon comfortably perched in steamer chairs watching New York harbor slip by them. They had barely reached the Statue of Liberty when the “pirate” launched forth on one of his Munchausen−like tales of the sea.

Highly colored, picturesque, untrue and absurd as a stained glass window, nevertheless these yams took on a semblance of reality from the character of the narrator himself. In all his stories the “pirate” was the hero. Nobody noticed that a steward had placed a fifth steamer chair beside the sailor until that worthy reached one of the main climaxes of his narrative. At that point he felt a hand on his shoulder and looked around into the whiskers and black spectacles of the old passenger. The cackling voice remarked:

“It's a lie. It's a lie. It's a lie.”

Every one was astonished, but even the “pirate” had a trace of respect for such great age, and said nothing in reply. After a while he continued, only to be interrupted by the same words.

This was too much to endure, and though the if “pirate” held his tongue they rebuked the old dotard by walking away and leaning over the rail. The conversation wandered to the subject of sharks, and Pauline asked if they were as stupid as they looked.

“Don't you believe it,” the “pirate” assured her. “Them sharks look stupid just to fool you. Why, I remember a time not so long ago down in Choco Bay, on the coast of Colombia, there was an old devil who used to sneak up alongside sailin' vessels in a fog. He carried in his mouth the big iron shank of an anchor he'd picked up from the wreck.”

“What did he do that for?” asked Hicks.

“So the iron would deflect the compass and make them run the ship onto the Kelp Ledges, off the Pinudas, Islands. If a ship went down he stood a good chance of eating one or two o' the passengers. But I don't mind sharks. If you want to know what really annoys me, it's them killer whales in the Antarctic that come a crowdin' and buttin' up against ye.”

“It's an internal, monumental, epoch−making lie,” cackled a voice behind him. Every one looked, and there was the old man.

The “pirate” was now thoroughly exasperated. If he couldn't tell a story without being interrupted in this manner life wasn't worth living. He announced that he would find the old man and thrash him. Owen and Hicks were annoyed, but they feared the result of the sailor's fury. They might all be arrested on arriving at Nassau. This would interfere with plans, and must not be thought of. to appease the wrathful “pirate” Owen offered to have the old man thrashed so soundly that he would probably be glad to stay out of sight the rest of the voyage.

There were some rascally looking men of Spanish blood among the second cabin passengers who, as Owen and Hicks observed, looked needy and unscrupulous.

The secretary found no great embarrassment in explaining that he wished the old man thrashed quietly and privately. The Spaniards agreed to beat him thoroughly for the trifling consideration of ten dollars. They would

even throw him overboard for a very reasonable sum additional. But the bargain was struck at ten dollars for a moderate beating, and the foreigners were warned that as he was delicate they must be careful not to kill him.

During the next hour or two the old man passed the four treasure hunters in their steamer chairs, but each time the “pirate” ceased talking before he came within earshot.

At last the old man stopped in front of Pauline and gazed long at the “pirate.” He studied the rascal's face, apparently trying to remember the identity of the man. Slowly the aged head nodded as if he was saying to himself. “Yes, he is the same man.”

Then, turning to Pauline and shaking a warning finger, the old man delivered a surprising message.

Pauline was startled. The three men leaped to their feet. It was with the utmost difficulty that she was able to prevent violence.. Owen excused himself to hunt up his Spaniards and demand an explanation for their slowness. To his surprise they declared that they had tackled him and that he was as quick and powerful as a gorilla. He had thrashed them both and they were glad to escape with their lives.

The ex−secretary was incredulous, but they showed cuts and bruises and demanded their money, saying that a joke had been played on them. When Owen refused one of them drew a stiletto and the ten dollars was forthcoming.

Returning, ruefully, he related the failure of the Spaniards. The “pirate” at once said:

“Now, let me handle him.”

A few moments later Boyd cornered his ancient adversary on a deserted and wind−swept piece of deck.

“Old man,” snarled the “pirate,” “you say all my stories are lies. Only your gray hairs have saved you from a thrashing before this.”

“If it's my gray hairs that stop you, I'll remove that obstacle.”

The “pirate” was amazed to see the aged person take off his hat and remove a gray wig with his left hand while his right fist collided with the “pirate's” eye. When consciousness returned he was lying on the deck with no living thing in sight but a seagull aeroplaning on slanted wings over his head. His return to the party was more rueful than Owen's.

“What is the matter with your eye, Mr. Boyd?” asked Pauline innocently.

“Why, you see,” said the “pirate,” “I was looking at a girl with one of these new slit skirts and I stumbled and bumped against a ventilator.”

“I see,” commented Owen to help him out. “You sort of slipped on a sex−appeal, so to speak.”

“Yes,” said the sailor, gratefully. “It was just like that.”

“It's a lie,” said a high, thin voice from somewhere, and they noticed that a porthole behind them was open.

Pauline found conversation difficult. Hicks, as a man of few words, which gave him an undeserved reputation for wisdom. The “pirate” had given up spinning yams on account of the old man's unfailing interruption. Owen's mind, too, was preoccupied with a growing suspicion. So the adventurous young lady went to her stateroom and wrote a letter to Harry.

The sailor intimated that he had important news which could be only told in the privacy of Owen's stateroom. The secretary suspected this to be only a maneuver on the “pirate's” part to get acquainted with the whiskey he knew Owen kept with him. But the seafarer unfolded the tale of his black eye not truthfully nor accurately, except in that he had recognized Harry under the disguise of the old man.

“I more than half suspected it,” said Owen, “and I have been watching his stateroom. But there is no way any one can see into his room unless by getting a look in through the porthole.”

“And there's where you get a good idea,” said the “pirate.”

“But there's no good having a peep' at him without his disguise now that it's Harry,” objected Hicks.

“No,” said the “pirate,” turning on Owen his lusterless sea−green eyes, faded by much grog to a dimness that reminded one of the faint lights set in ships' decks and known as “dead−eyes.” “No, but your porthole idea is just the scheme to get at him and get rid of him. I can slip down a rope tonight when all is quiet and the fool passengers are over on the other side looking at the bloody moon.”

“And then what?” said Owen.

“I goes down the rope and shoots the old fool! I mean the young fool —through the porthole.”

“Why, that's murder!” cried Owen. “We'd all swing for it.”

“No, it ain't murder; it's suicide, 'cause I'll throw the gun in there where they'll find it when they break the door

in, and everybody'll think he shot himself."

"It's practical," commented Hicks, but Owen protested. At last it was decided that a fourth man was necessary to do the shooting, and the "pirate" volunteered to produce him.

"There's an old shipmate o' mine down in the stoke hole working like a nigger. He'll be glad to do the trick for ten dollars, but we'll make it fifty because the poor fellow has a wife and children and needs the money. I'll go get him."

Owen and Hicks went on deck while Boyd descended to the fiery vitals of the steamer. It is not an easy matter to smuggle a grimy stoker from his furnace to the upper passenger decks, but the "pirate" managed it.

Meanwhile Harry was not losing time. He had taken a dictograph from his baggage, borrowed a few dry batteries and a coil of wire from the wireless operator. He carefully installed the instrument in his stateroom, and led the wires out under his door to the passageway. From there it was an easy task to carry them along the edge of the carpet to the door of Owen's stateroom. Arrived at the point, he was compelled to leave pliers, wire and the receiving instrument under a chair.

Like many another stateroom door, Owen's could not be locked easily from the outside, so when the three conspirators went out they left it unlocked. The old man slipped in a moment later and quickly placed the dictograph under the lower bunk.

Returning to his own room, the old man took up his instrument and listened. But he was not a very expert electrician and the dictograph for a long time failed to give anything but roars and crackling sounds, though he was convinced there were several persons talking. A last he got the thing adjusted in time to catch the last sentences of the conversation. He recognized the voice of the "pirate." It said:.

"An then we lowers you down the rope to his porthole. You sticks your gun in and shoot the old fool. Don't forget to throw the gun in afterward, so they'll think he killed himself. See?"

"Sure, I got yer, matey," replied a strange voice.

After this the dictograph must have got out of order as nothing further came over the wire.

After closing the porthole Harry started to take off his disguise with a view of revealing himself and having Owen, Hicks and the "pirate" arrested. Then it occurred to him that he had not heard Owen or Hicks talking and very likely they were not in the room at all.

It was probably a crazy, drunken scheme of the old sailor whom he had tormented. Neither Owen nor Hicks had any suspicion, so far as he knew, that behind the whiskers and eyeglasses was Harry. Owen could have no object in shooting him.

"Can it be that I am jealous of this man Owen?" he wondered. "Polly has been taking his advice against mine lately. What can that mean?"

Peace reigned during the evening while the old liner plunged and rolled past wicked Cape Hatteras. While the passengers listened to the sad orchestra in the saloon Harry, still in his whiskered disguise, sent a wireless to a lawyer in New York requesting him to telegraph Pauline at Nassau something that would make her come home. Then he went back to his stateroom and locked the door.

As he stepped in he caught sight of the unbeautiful countenance of Mr. Boyd squinting wickedly at him from far down the passageway.

"Just for that evil grin of yours, Mr. Pirate," thought Harry, "I am not going to let you or your friend shoot me until after daylight." So Harry kept his porthole closed tight that night, sleeping rather restlessly without his accustomed ventilation.

Twice he heard a faint scraping sound on the outside of his cabin, and a dark shadow eclipsed the faint nimbus of light which the foggy night sent through his porthole. On the deck directly over his head three dark figures sat in deck chairs, while a fourth paced the deck, his cigar glowing like the tail lamp of a distant automobile.

The fog began to lift just before dawn, and the stoker, making another trip down his rope, found the porthole open. A hasty inspection of the decks indicated that it was safe to go ahead.

Owen, Hicks and the "pirate" quickly lowered the stoker, sitting in a little swing known on the sea as a "bo'sun's chair." In his hand he carried a pistol which Hicks had provided. Each of the three conspirators had revolvers, but the racetrack man's weapon was chosen because he had obtained it from a source to which it could not be traced. Down went the stoker, his bare feet clinging to the gently swaying side of the ship.

The porthole was open, and there in the dim interior of the cabin the light was reflected from a pair of

spectacles. There, too, were the whiskers and gray hair. The old man seemed to be asleep in his chair right near the porthole. The stoker cocked his revolver and held it ready for instant action.

The steamer's fog horn blew a blast at the fast thinning fog. This noise was just what the stoker wanted. He quickly plunged his pistol into the porthole and fired it point blank in the very face of the old man. There could be no question of missing. He looked up at the three eager faces and nodded that all was well.

“I've got him,” he called out, and was about to hurl the pistol into the stateroom when an unpleasant and unexpected thing happened. A brawny fist shot out of the porthole and collided with the stoker's coal−blackened jaw.

More from surprise than the force of the blow, the stoker fell backward into the sea. The three watchers on deck saw the proceeding, and only one, the “pirate,” had presence of mind to hurl a lifebuoy. No alarm was sounded. The steamer went on into the sparkling morning sea, leaving behind her a profane and disgusted stoker. This unfortunate had only a lifebuoy to aid him on a fifteen−mile swim to shore.

“Never mind,” said the “pirate” after the conspirators had gotten over their first fright at the dashing of their plans. “I have an idea; it's a corking idea, and you'll all like it.”

“What is it?” asked Owen nervously. “Here is your drink now; what's your idea?”

But the “pirate” wouldn't tell . He objected that it was too startling for them to carry in their timid brains. He would unfold it when the time came, and he promised them that it would be the greatest and most daring project they had ever heard. A murderous glare lit up the faded eyes and he chuckled to himself, but no offers nor threats would induce him to part with his secret.

CHAPTER VII. A FLIRTY BUCCANEER

Arrived at Nassua, the party proceeded to the King Edward House, where Pauline found a telegram from Philip Carpenter, the lawyer, advising her to return as soon as possible to attend the signing of certain important papers. On account of the message all hands made haste to hunt for a small steamer or launch to complete the trip.

Though none of the four saw him, the old man was at the hotel. He lost no time in assuming another and very different disguise, observing to himself that the most valuable part of his college education might prove to be the secrets of “make up” he had learned in his college dramatic club.

Owen, with his usual forethought, had arranged in advance to be put in touch at once with all available boats. As a result a gasoline launch, with a cabin and stateroom, about 100 feet long, which had once been a yacht, was chartered. The “pirate's” stipulation that no stranger should see his island made it necessary for Pauline to deposit a check for $2,500 for its safe return.

The next morning provisions were brought aboard, the “pirate” declaring that he could run the engine, and all was ready when a difficulty arose. Who was to cook? Pauline volunteered, but Owen objected, and finally the “pirate's” objections to a stranger were overcome.

A dark−skinned half−breed, with long, black hair, who had earned half a dollar by helping carry things on board, volunteered in a gruff voice.

“I'se fine cook. Best cook on the island. I cook very cheap.”

Time was too valuable to investigate the man's ability, so he was hired. Off went the white launch. Owen steering under instructions from the “pirate,” who soon proved he knew gasoline engines. Out of the harbor they went, and then coasted along the beautiful shores of the island. The sea was calm and the cruise uneventful for some time, when the “pirate” called every one's attention to the fact that it was a long time since breakfast. He went below and addressed the cook, who had shut himself up in his tiny galley, as sailors call a boat's kitchen.

“What's your name?” demanded Boyd.

“Filipo.”

“Are you a nigger?”

“I guess so; I dunno.”

“Well, what were your father and mother?”

“I dunno.”

“That's funny; but what I want to know is how soon grub will be ready?”

“Right away, senor.”

“All right, Filipo; see that there is plenty of it.”

“Dod foul my hawser, if this ain't what yer might call pleasant,” declared the “pirate,” showing his few teeth in a smile that reminded Pauline of the spiles of an abandoned pier.

Pauline was pacing the deck apart from the others, in a pleasant dreaminess scanning the endless azure of the hashed waters. Her thoughts roamed forward and backward —forward to the vague magic land of adventure, where she was to win treasure and delight, fortune and fame; backward to a big, lovely, splendid house in New York City, where a certain tall young man, with brown, unruly hair and shoulders broad as a sheltering wall, must be pining for her.

Some one began whistling in the cabin. Pauline paid no attention to it at first, but as the tune suddenly shifted to the very latest musical comedy air she became interested. Owen never whistled, and Hicks, she imagined, seldom went to the theatres.

The song shifted from whistle to words:

“I'm a greatly wicked person. If there's anybody worse on This terrestrial circumference of guile (Though I very broadly doubt it) I should like to know about it, For I want to be the blackest thing on file.

“I'm a bad−mad−man, my dear, I'm a liar and a flyer and flirty buccaneer. I've done everything that's awful that a human being can I'm a bad—ma−a−d man.”

“The song from 'Polly Peek−a−boo.' Harry and I heard it only two weeks ago,” mused Pauline.

Moved by a sudden whimsy, she entered the cabin. There was no one there but the cook. In his dingy linen

suit he was standing at the table peeling potatoes and whistling. He stopped as Pauline entered, a tall powerful man, though of slouching posture, he bowed deferentially.

“No like me sing —no sing,” he suggested.

“On the contrary, I like it very much. You sing very well indeed, Filipo. Would you mind telling me where you heard the song you were just singing?”

“Big American man, up Nassau —he sing'um. Very fine man —big fool daughter,” replied Filipo.

“You speak very good English when you sing,” remarked Pauline. “Why don't you do it all the time?”

The cook hesitated.

“Speak good English all time —bad English when sing!”

Pauline began to scrutinize half suspiciously this remarkable menial, but he kept stolidly at work at the potatoes, and his dark skin, his scraggly beard, his bagging trousers upturned over bare feet, his general dilapidation of appearance, proved him nothing but one of the common derelicts of the languid islands.

“If you could peel potatoes instead of butchering them, there would be a little more to eat in case we run out of supplies, Filipo,” suggested Pauline.

He turned on her a frank American grin. For an instant the twinkle in the keen blue eyes upset her.

It was so, like the twinkle in a pair of keen blue eyes that were supposed to be figuratively weeping for her fate in far−off New York. But instantly he changed his attitude.

“No like cook —cook quit,” he grumbled.

“'Oh, no, indeed, Filipo, you must not be offended. I was just speaking to Mr. Owen this morning about raising your salary.”

A thick voice came to them from the cabin door.

“I begs to report, Miss,” said Blinky Boyd, the pirate, reeling in, “that there be mut'ny in yer crew. Mr. Hicks and Mr. Owen, Miss, has rebelled against me authority and has refused me drink.”

“That is an outrage, Mr. Boyd. They do not realize how your nerve−racking adventures have shattered your strength. I will attend to it myself,” said Pauline sympathetically. “Filipo, give Mr. Boyd a drink.”

“Drink? Yes, meem,” replied Filipo, with such unwonted alacrity that Pauline turned in surprise.

She saw the slouching figure of the cook suddenly stiffen to his full stalwart height. She saw an ill clad, but majestic giant stride toward the pirate, bowl him over with a gentle tap, pinion his arms and legs in a lifting grasp and carry him toward the door of the cabin.

Cries of rage came stuffily from the thick throat of Boyd.

“Lemme go, ye scum, lemme go,” he yelled.

“Filipo! Filipo! Stop this instant! How dare you treat Mr. Boyd in such a manner?” cried the indignant girl.

“You say, 'Give—him drink.' He say, ' Lemme go,” answered Filipo, pausing with his squirming burden.

“Drink! Ye fool, drink! She is felling ye ter gimme a drink,” screamed the hero of desperate encounters.

“Big, fat drink,” agreed the cook, as he strode toward the rail.

Pauline rushed upon him. The peril of her precious pirate stirred all her courage. She saw her dreams vanishing —the chief narrator, navigator and guide of the treasure voyage suspended in two strong arms over the blue deep. Forgetting that he was accustomed to conquer twenty men single handed, she felt only pity for his plight. Her soft but determined hand gripped the cook's.

“Filipo, obey my orders!” she commanded.

“Yes, Mem. Let 'um go. Give 'um drink. Big liar need big drink.”

He lifted the struggling but utterly helpless form of the pirate over his shoulders, then, with a sudden stooping movement, he made as if to plunge it into the sea.

“Help! Help!” cried Pauline, running up the deck.

Hicks and Owen rushed from their staterooms. Blinky Boyd was quivering, gasping beside the rail. They found a slouching, uncommunicative cook stolidly washing dishes in the galley.

Some hours later while Boyd was sleeping off his potations and Hicks and Owen were deep in conference on deck, Pauline slipped down into the galley ostensibly to explain the rudiments of the culinary art to the cook.

“The trouble is you have no respect for a potato, Filipo. You slash the poor thing to pieces, and then you boil it only long enough to hurt its feelings.”

“Peel potato nice, good,” he apologized. “Then peel 'um pirate. Filipo want to peel pirate; boil him just

half−hurt him feelings. That's how."

"Oh, I see. But I think you do Mr. Boyd a great injustice, Filipo. He has consented to come all the way from New York with us and take command of our boat and find the buried treasure, and —"

"Buried potatoes," snapped Filipo with a sudden reversion to his unimpaired English.

"Well, at least you understand about tomorrow's breakfast now, don't you?"

"Yes, mem. Boil 'um eggs to death; no peel 'um."

"No, no, no, Filipo —boil them two minutes and a half. Here, take my watch and go by that. You must be very careful of it, Filipo."

"Yes, mem; boil 'um long time; stick fork in, see when soft."

"No!"

Pauline caught the watch from him. "You don't boil the watch at all, Filipo. You boil the eggs and watch the watch. Can you tell time, Filipo?"

"Yes, Mem."

"How long is an hour? Peel potatoes —hour is ver' ver' long. Talk to ship's lady—whist! —hour is no time," answered Filipo with upcast hands.

Again she eyed him through her long lashes a little askance. He was rather subtle, this half−breed cook, for one who could not even boil an egg.

"I will let you have the watch, Filipo," she said gravely, "but you must give it back to me. It is one of the most precious things I have . It was given to me by —Filipo, were you ever in love with a girl?"

"Su−u−ure, mem!" replied the cook with sudden enthusiasm. "Love daughter big American —no love me. Big American daughter start from Nassau —get buried treasure —not!"

"Filipo, where do you get all your New York slang?"

"Big American daughter, she sling slang−good," said Filipo.

"Why did you fall in love with her?"

"Nice girl —no eat much, no scold cook, no talk about potatoes — just big fool 'bout buried treasure."

"What do you think love is?"

"Love−huh!" grunted the cook. "I like girl; girl no like me. Chase all 'round world —no good."

"That watch was given to me by the man I love, Filipo," said Pauline. "You won't−boil it —or anything, will you?"

As Filipo took the tiny diamond−scarred timepiece from Pauline's hand there was a sound as of some one choking at the top of the steps.

The cook sprang to the deck, but there was no one in sight. He returned to Pauline, while Blinky Boyd, gasping more from astonishment than fear, reeled up to Owen and Hicks on the forward deck.

"She's gone clean crazy," he panted. "She treats that there cook as if he was a nat'ral human man instid of a sea−rovin' gorilla, worse'n the one I beat In Afriky."

"No more gorillas for a while, Blinky," commanded Hicks. "What's happened now?"

"She's gone an' guv him her jooled watch to boil eggs by," said the pirate.

"By George, we will have to do something with that fellow," muttered Hicks to Owen as they walked away.

"Do suthin' to him!" Blinky Boyd was fuming in the wake of Owen and Hicks on their stroll up deck. "Do everythin' to him; make 'im walk the old board; draw'n quarter 'im. Didn't he attempt me life an' ain't he at present engaged in stealin' the fambly jewels?"

"Well, have you got any ideas?" asked Owen.

"The first thing," whispered Blinky, "is to git him under the in−floo−ence of licker. They never was no cook could stand up agin' the disgraceful habit o' takin' too much and doin' too little. Get 'im under the in−floo−ence."

"And then what?"

"Then —well, ain't they a lot o' good blue water floatin' around atop the fishes? Ain't they some accommodatin' sharks swimmin' atop the water?"

"That's a bit crude —just to throw a man overboard for nothing," said Owen, willing to arouse Boyd's anger.

"Fer nothin'?" Didn't he insult the master o' this ship. Ain't he tried to starve us to death? Fer wot kind o' nothin', says I." Boyd smote his caving chest in emphasis of his accusations.

"And he would have the diamond watch on him in case he should be picked up," suggested Hicks quietly.

“That's so,” said Owen. “He would have been swimming to shore with the stolen watch and drowned.”

“But, of course, he would swim to shore, unless —well, it's a case of making sure beforehand. We could persuade him to go in and try to kill Blinky here while Blinky's asleep —then rush in and finish him. Even Pauline was a witness to the attack he made on Blinky this afternoon.”

The pirate's glowing countenance suddenly, went white.

“Not this trip,” he said fervently. “I ain't goin' to kill no man in a trap like that. I'm goin' to see it done fair and square in the open —with plenty o' drink in 'im an' 'is conscience clear. I wouldn't see no man die with murder in 'is heart fer me.”

“I don't like it,” said Owen nervously. “I don't like the idea of doing too much. We've got one big piece of work to do that concerns her.” He nodded in the direction of the cabin. “Dye mean to say we can't get a poor half−breed cook off this boat without killing him? Why not discharge him?”

Hicks uttered a grim chuckle. “I must say I never thought of that. Get a boat manned, will you, Boyd, and we'll put him ashore within half an hour.”

“All hands for'ard,” bellowed the pirate's voice. The “all hands “were Owen, Hicks, the pirate and Pauline.

“Why all hands? Can't you handle the cook yourself?” said Owen.

“Not to put that cook ashore —ye need a navy,” said Boyd.

Backed by Owen and Hicks, he moved to the cabin.

“You, cook, there —ye're fired. Get off the boat. Yer kerriage waits,” he cried down at the busy Filipo.

Filipo shuffled almost meekly toward the speaker. He saw the skiff alongside and Hicks and Owen nearby.

“Grab 'im,” ordered the pirate. “Here's the irons.” He produced a pair of rusty handcuffs that had been brought along, among other ominous−looking junk, to impress Pauline.

But Filipo was not “fired” yet. With a sudden long−distance lunge he knocked down the pirate, who, thought he was at a safe distance. But Hicks, who had been well schooled in street−fight tactics, thoughtfully stuck out a leg and tripped the cook, who fell upon the groaning Boyd. Boyd, though down, was by no means “out,” and held Filipo tight while Owen and Hicks slipped on the handcuffs.

“Now to the boat with 'im an' dump 'im ashore wherever It looks hottest an' hungriest.”

“Yah,” he snarled in the face of the prostrate cook, “ye don't interfere no more with the capting of this here vessel. I hopes ye ”

But his sentence was cut short, or rather it ended in a shriek of pain and fright, as the cook, suddenly swinging himself from his shoulders, landed a terrifically propelled right foot in the pirate's middle.

He was pinned down again the next moment, but Boyd's yell had penetrated to the cabin.

“What is the matter —who is hurt?” cried Pauline, rushing to the group on deck.

“We have had to order this fellow put ashore. He has twice attacked Boyd, and besides he is useless as a cook,” explained Owen.

“You will assuredly do nothing of the sort,” announced Pauline. “You will take those horrid iron things right off and set him free.”

“But, my dear Miss Marvin, he is a desperate man. It is dangerous.”

“What did we come here for but to get into danger?” cried Pauline. “Besides, Filipo is the most interesting person on the ship. I have just devoted a chapter to him in my book, and if you think I'm going to spoil my book because Mr. Boyd gets hurt, or the potatoes aren't done, you're much mistaken.”

Owen obediently knelt and unlocked the clumsy handcuffs.

“You are free, Filipo,” said Pauline with the air of a proud princess releasing a serf.

“No fired?” grunted Filipo. “Too bad. Bum job.”

“Now go back to the kitchen, and promise not to strike Mr. Boyd any more.”

“No hit 'um. Boil 'um. three minutes; stick fork in hum,” said the cook with a cannibal glare at the still writhing pirate.

He shuffled off to his pots and pans. Blinky scrambled to his bunk, and Pauline retired to elaborate the fascinating character of Filipo in another chapter of her book of adventure.

She did not realize how late it was when at last she put down her pen and moved with soft, slippered steps to the door of the cabin.

Over the great vault of the heavens the stars were sprinkled like silver dust. The boat rolled softly, dreamily on

the listless waters. A cool breeze scented with the fragrance of the spicy land cooled her brow. She realized that her little stateroom had been very stuffy. It was beautiful here in the hushed night alone. She moved out on deck.

They had come to anchor for the night off St. Andrew, and the few faint lights of the town tinged the scene with life.

Pauline was thinking of Harry. It would have been nice if he were here now, in the moonlight just for this evening. Of course if he were a regular member of the party, he would spoil the trip by his grumpiness, and probably prevent them from finding any treasure at all. But Harry was a good companion —usually, and Pauline was getting a little tired of the company on the yacht.

The night was so still that even her light footstep could be heard on the deck. And she was surprised to hear a muffled hail from some invisible craft astern.

As she moved to the rail —her tall form in the yachting suit standing out plainly in the moonlight —she saw a small boat scurry away. She thought she recognized their own small boat —the one the yacht towed —and she quickly made sure that this was true.

Pauline turned toward the cabin to rouse the others for a real pirate chase, when she was silenced and stunned by the sight of Filipo, the cook, staggering out of the galley, with his bearded chin drooping on his breast, his knees swaying under him, his arms weaving cubist caricatures in the air and his voice raised in unintelligible song.

He was quickly followed by the Pirate, who, to Pauline's amazement, actually presented a picture of sobriety in contrast to Filipo.

But on seeing her, Boyd looked frightened.

“They have stolen the skiff,” cried Pauline.

“No, Miss,” said Boyd; “they was four of 'em come aboard in one boat, an' we let 'em take ourn ashore to bring a double load o' supplies.”

Pauline was grievously disappointed. She turned her wrath upon the musical and meandering Filipo.

“Filipo!” she demanded. “Go to bed at once.”

For answer he reeled toward her.

“Cook boiled —boiled three minute,” he said.

Then with a lurch he fell sprawling at her feet.

Boyd had started back to the cabin in haste and excitement. Pauline's first instinct was to leave the inebriated man, but pity mastered her and she stooped to lift him.

He sprang to his feet without her aid. His blue eyes looked clearly into hers. His body towered again to its commanding height as it had done when he was about to finish the Pirate.

He stooped and spoke rapidly, sharply in her ear. There was no pigeon chatter. It was straight English.

But as the door of the cabin opened again and Boyd came out, the tall form sank into itself, the knees began to rock, the arms to weave and, staggering back up the deck, he disappeared in the cabin.

Pauline stood stupefied. She had been so startled by the sudden transformation of the man that she had hardly understood his strident words.

Only one thing she could remember. He had commanded her to go to bed and bar her door. She obeyed but she could not sleep at first. It seemed that hours had passed when a sound outside her door brought her to her feet.

She moved to the door and softly opened it. Across the threshold lay Filipo, wide awake.

“Go to bed,” he said. Again she obeyed and this time she slept.

The next morning everything seemed outwardly as usual, the skiff had been restored to its place astern. The Pirate was intoxicated; the cook sober. But there was the threat of trouble in the air, Pauline felt it in the attitude of all the men, even of Owen and Hicks.

The Pirate showed a strange new tendency to make friends with Filipo.

“Can you steer, cook?” he asked after the latter had announced that dinner was ready.

“Yes,” said Filipo.

“All right, take the wheel and keep her as she's going till we round that point ahead there.”

Filipo took the wheel and the others descended to find the cabin table set. There was a prodigious amount of fried steak and boiled potatoes as the main part of the meal. To their dismay they found the steak was as tough as leather. A wail of sorrow arose when the potatoes proved to be so hard that Pauline doubted if they had been

boiled more than three minutes.

The “Pirate,” whose table manners savored of the forecastle, tried a biscuit and found it as hard as stone and almost as heavy. In his anger he hurled it at the side of the cabin and was horrified to see it go through the boat's side. He did not know that the biscuit happened to strike a hole that had been temporarily stopped up with putty and paint. He turned speechless to the others and saw Hicks lift a biscuit on high about to dash it onto the cabin floor.

With instant presence of mind he seized the arm of Hicks, and in a hoarse voice shouted:

“Don't do that, you'll sink the ship. Look what mine did.”

They all gazed in amazement at the ragged aperture in the side of the cabin through which the sparkling waters of the Atlantic could be seen dancing past.

Events moved swiftly that afternoon. Owen, peering in the galley porthole beheld the disguised cook remove his wig to wash his face and recognized the curly light hair of Harry. About four o'clock the launch tied up to the landing at the small village of St. Andrew. There Owen had opportunity to reveal his discovery of Harry's presence to the other two conspirators . They were frightened at first but soon agreed that it was a fine chance to get rid of both at the same time.

The pirate confided to them that he had brought a clock−work bomb along and had it in his bag. A few minutes' discussion produced a simple plan.

Owen sent the disguised Harry with a bucket, in search of a spring and Pauline was already hunting strange flowers among the palms and creepers. This left the conspirators free to place the bomb under the cabin floor boards, a matter which Owen attended to himself. It was set to explode two hours later. Pauline and Filipo were then summoned and told that there were comfortable lodgings and a good meal obtainable at a village just the other side of the long narrow point of land. If Pauline and Boyd and Filipo would go around in the launch Owen and Hicks would climb through the jungle and get there in time to have a meal already upon the boat's arrival. The two parties separated and all was quiet for some time. Pauline sat on deck with the pirate endeavoring to engage him in conversation. But he grew surlier and surlier in his answers, looking frequently at his watch and often stopping below for a drink.

After about an hour and three−quarter, Pauline became a little frightened at his behavior and descended to the cabin. There was the cook reading a cook book, evidently his own. The moment Pauline was out of sight the pirate heaved a sigh of relief and abandoned the wheel. Stepping softly to the stern he pulled in the small boat which was towing astern, leaped in adroitly and cut it adrift.

“Filipo,” said Pauline, “you told us you were a good cook.”

“Yes, senorita, I thought I was.”

“Have you ever cooked before?”

“No, but I have a cook book which tells you how every one may be a cook. I thought —”

Filipo, did not finish his sentence. His eyes were roving around the cabin in search of something and Pauline was looking very hard at him.

“What's that ticking sound?” inquired the cook. He went to the cabin clock and listened. No, it wasn't that. Pauline could hear it, too, and it wasn't her tiny watch. Filipo made a search of the cabin and finally located the sound under the floor. A moment more and he had laid bare the pirate's bomb. He leaped on deck and took in at a glance that the pirate had left in the only boat.

In another instant he was below again, tearing off his wig.

“Polly, it's I. There's an infernal machine ticking here ready to blow us up.”

He tried to lift up the bomb, but it was wedged fast.

“Harry, for Heaven sake, what do you mean?”

“I'll tell you in a minute in the water as soon as we have jumped overboard. Come.”

He seized Pauline, carried her up on deck.

“Where's Mr. Boyd?”

“Gone. Take this,” answered Harry, putting a life preserver around her.

“Now, will you jump or shall I throw you overboard? One, two, three.”

“I'll jump,” said Pauline and with arms around each other they leaped into the warm ocean. On went the white launch serene and unruffled by the desertion of its crew. In answer to Pauline's demand for explanation Harry

only answered:

“Wait.”

Finally it came.

A belch of flame shot up from the launch driving a column of smoke far into the sky, where it spread out and formed a majestic ring, which floated and curled for many moments. A concussion reached them through the water and another in the air smote their ears.

The after part of the launch rode on the waters for a moment and then disappeared. Finally a succession of waves tossed them and passed on.

“What does it mean?” gasped the girl.

“Insanity —sheer, downright insanity. That wretch of a 'pirate' was a crazy man.

“He placed that bomb, intending to kill all of us. And Owen deserves a sound thrashing for having anything to do with such a murderous lunatic.”

“I think you're rather hard on Owen, Harry,” said Pauline. “Of course, we all know that pirates aren't nice persons —but nobody could foresee that the man was crazy.”

“Well, perhaps. But don't talk, we have a mile and a half swim to shore.”

They were spared that ordeal by the Silurian liner Caradoc. Arrayed in borrowed clothes they were notified of a second rescue and came out on deck in time to behold in the dusk of evening the “pirate.” He was relating to an admiring throng how he had stuck by the burning ship till it exploded. He had actually been blown into the air and had fallen by good luck into the little boat.

“It's a lie,” said Harry in the old man's cackling voice. The “pirate” heard the voice of the old man and saw the face and the blond hair of Harry.

It was too much for his evil and murderous mind to bear. With a shriek he hurled himself over the rail into the sea. The Caradoc stopped and searched, but no trace of the “pirate” could be found.

CHAPTER VIII. THE COURTELYOU RECEPTION

Two weeks later Pauline and Harry were sitting in the library. Through the half−closed blinds a soft breeze bore to them the fragrance of carnations and roses.

For the first few days after their return Pauline was so thankful they had not lost their lives that she was reconciled to not having found the treasure. But only for the first few days. She was already growing restless.

“You're wasting time, Harry,” she said impatiently. “I'd rather face anything than be bored to death.”

“Polly, it's got to stop; it isn't safe, it isn't sensible, it isn't even fun any more. Won't you drop the whole freakish thing and marry me?”

Harry was holding Pauline by the hand as she drew her dainty way out of the library. In laughing rebellion she looked over her shoulder and jeered at him.

“Oh, I thought it was I who was going to be afraid,” she said.

“Well, if you aren't, who is going to be?”

“You,” she tittered.

He drew her back with a gentle but firm grasp.

“Honestly, Polly, aren't you satisfied yet? Adventure is all right for breakfast or for luncheon once a month, but as a regular unremitting diet it gets on my nerves.”

“Still thinking of your own perils?” she volleyed.

Harry's fine keen face took on a look of earnest appeal. He let go her hand, but as she started to run up the stairs he held her with his eyes.

“You dear, silly boy,” she cried, returning a step and clasping him in an impetuous embrace. “You are the nicest brother in all the world − sometimes —but just now I think that adventure is nicer than brothers —or husbands. I'm having the time of my life, Harry boy, and I'm going on and on, and on with it until I've seen all the wild and wicked people and places in the world.”

Harry caught her hand and smiled down at her in surrender.

A ring at the door bell and the entrance of the maid caused Pauline to flutter up the stairs. They were preparing to attend the Courtelyou's reception that evening to the great Baskinelli, whose musical achievements had been equaled only by his social successes during this, his first New York season.

“Anyway,” she twinkled from the top of the stairs, “you needn't be frightened for tonight. Nothing so meek and mild as a pianist can hurt you.”

Harry tossed up his hands in mimic despair and started back to the library.

“Yes, I know she is always at home to you, Miss Hamlin,” the maid was saying at the door.

“What a privileged person I am,” laughed Lucille Hamlin.

She was Pauline's chum−in−chief, a dark, still tempered girl, in perfect contrast to the adventurous Polly. She greeted Harry with the easy grace of old acquaintanceship.

“Still nursing the precious broken heart?” she queried.

“For the love of Michael, me and humanity,” he pleaded, “can't you do something? She won't listen to me. I'm honestly, deucedly worried, Lucille.”

“You know very well that nobody could ever do anything with Polly. She always had to have her own way —and that's why you love her, though you don't know it, Harry. Shall I run upstairs, Margaret?” she added, turning to the maid.

“No, you're going to stay here,” commanded Harry, seizing her hands. “You've got to do something with Pauline. You're the only one who can. She wants a new adventure every day, and a more dangerous one every time. Talk to her, won't you? Tell her it isn't right for her to risk her life when her life is so precious to so many people. No, wait a minute; sit down here. I'm not half through yet.”

He drew her, under laughing protest, to a seat beside him on the stairs. She realized suddenly how serious he was. She let her hand rest comradely in his pleading grasp.

“Why, Harry, yes, if it is really dangerous, you know, I'll do anything I can,” she said gravely.

They did not see the cold gray face of Raymond Owen appear at the top of the stairs. The face vanished as

quickly as it had appeared.

In her boudoir Polly was laying out her finery of the evening. There came a soft rap at the door.

“Come in,” she called, and looked up brightly in Owen's furtive eyes as he opened the door and motioned to her.

“Don't say anything, please, Miss Marvin,” he whispered, “just come with me for a moment.”

Bewildered by his manner, she followed to the top of the stairs. He directed her gaze to the two young people in earnest conversation below.

It was a picture that might well have startled a less impetuous heart than Pauline's. Harry's hand still clasped Lucille's, and he was leaning toward her in the eagerness of his appeal.

“You, will? You promise? Lucille, you've made me happy,” Pauline heard him say.

Through mist−dimmed eyes, dizzily, she saw the two arise. She saw the man she loved clasp Lucille's other hand. She saw the girl who had been her friend and confidante since childhood draw herself away from him with a lingering withdrawal that could mean —ah, what could it not mean? Polly fled to her room.

In Owen's subtle secret battle to retain control of the Marvin millions fate had never so befriended him. None of all the weapons or ruses that he had used to prevent the faithful attachment of Harry and Pauline was as potent as this little seed of jealousy.

Pauline rang for her maid.

“Tell Miss Hamlin that I am not at home,” she said in a voice that started haughtily but ended in a sob.

“But, Miss Marvin —” Margaret tried to demur.

“Tell Miss Hamlin that I am not at home,” repeated Pauline.

Lucille had just started up the stairs, leaving Harry with a sympathetic pat on the shoulder.

“Well, even if I caret do anything with that wild woman,” she laughed back at him, “you know Pauline bears a charmed life. Nothing has ever happened to her yet. Guardian angels surround her —as well as heroes.”

Harry walked into the library. The agitated Margaret met Lucille on the stairs.

“Miss Marvin is —Miss Marvin is not at home,” the girl said, flushing crimson.

Lucille paused, dumfounded.

“But, Margaret, you know I thought —I really thought she was, at home, Miss Hamlin. I hope you won't be offended with me.”

“I insist upon seeing her,” cried Lucille. “I don't believe you are telling me the truth. I'm going right up to her room.”

Margaret burst into tears.

Lucille quickly reconsidered. Indignation took the place of astonishment. She hurried down the stairs and rushed through the door without waiting for Margaret to open it.

Pauline, back in her own room, vented her first rage in tears. With her hot face pressed against the pillow, she sobbed out the agony of what she thought her betrayal —her double betrayal, by courtier and comrade at once. But the tears passed. Too vital was the spirit in her, too red flowing in her veins was the blood of fighting ancestors, too strong the fortress of self−command within the blossoming gardens of her youth and beauty for the word surrender ever to come to her mind.

True, she had found an adventure that stirred her more deeply than the peril of land or sea or sky could have done. Here was a thrill that had never been listed among her intended tremors. She sent for Owen.

Masked as ever in his suave exterior and his manner of mingled obsequiousness and fatherliness, he came instantly.

“Mr. Owen, have you known —have you known that this was going on?”

“I feel that it is my duty to know what concerns you —even what concerns your happiness, Miss Marvin,” he answered.

“You mean?”

“I mean that I have long had my suspicions.”

But again the very perfection of his deceit brought Pauline that feeling that she had had since childhood that sense of an insidious influence always surrounding her, always menacing and yet never revealed. This influence, which Owen seemed to embody, was the antagonist of that other mysterious power, so real and yet so inexplicable, that warded and protected her —the spirit of the girl that had stepped from the mummy.

But Pauline had seen with her own eyes; she did not need any word of Owen's to convince her of the falsity of her lover.

She was quite calm now. She dressed with the utmost care. Margaret, who had seen her in such anger only a short time before, was surprised at her sprightliness and graciousness. A slightly heightened color that only added to the luster of her loveliness, was the single sign of her inward thoughts. She summoned her own car and left the house alone.

The drawing room of the Clarence Courtelyou mansion was ablaze with light. There was a little too much light. The Clarence Courtelyou always had a little too much of everything.

There was a little too much money; there was a little too much gold leaf decoration in the drawing room, a little too much diamond decoration of Mrs. Courtelyou, and, if you were so fastidiously impolite as to say so, a little too much of Mrs. Courtelyou herself.

But Mrs. Courtelyou was struggling toward gentility in such an amiable way that better people liked her. The motherliness and sweet sincerity of her —the fact that she loved her frankly illiterate husband and worshipped, almost from afar, her cultured daughters was the thing that brought her down from the base height of the “climbers “and lifted her kindly, harmless personality to the high simplicities of the elite.

She made the natural mistake that other wealthy mendicants at the outer portals of society have made the mistake of pounding at the gates. Instead of letting the splendor of her charitable gifts, the gracefulness of her simplicity, carry her through, she went in for the gorgeous and the costly.

As a sort of crowning glory she began to “take up” artists and actors and musicians. She gained the good graces of the best of them, and in her kindly innocence she won the worship of the worst.

It was thus that she came to the point of holding a reception for Baskinelli.

Not that any one had heard anything black, or even shadowy, against Baskinelli. He had arrived recently from abroad, his foreign fame preceding him, his prospective conquests of America fulsomely foretold, his low brow decorated in advance with laurel.

Mrs. Courtelyou added him to her collection with the swiftness and directness of the entomologist discovering a new bug. She herself loved music —without understanding it very deeply —and Baskinelli, whatever might be his other gifts, could summon all the cadences of love from the machines that people call a piano —engine of torture or instrument of joy.

For half an hour Harry paced at the foot of the stairs.

“I wonder if she's ever coming,” he fumed to himself. “It takes 'em so long to do it that they drive you crazy, and when it's done they're so wonderful that they drive you crazy.”

“Did you —did you wish anything, sir?” asked the butler, entering.

“No —just waiting for Miss Pauline, Jenkins —just waiting,” sighed Harry.

“Why —if I may presume to tell you, sir —Miss, Marvin has gone to the reception,” said Jenkins.

“Gone!” Harry cried abruptly, hotly, then remembered that he was speaking to a servant and swung into the reception room.

He put on his hat and coat and rang for Jenkins again.

“How long ago was it that Miss Pauline went out?”

“Almost an hour ago, sir.”

Harry slammed his way out of the door. It was not until he was in the car on his way to the Courtelyous that he began to think —began to think with utterly wrong deductions, as lovers always do.

“I must have said too much,” he told himself. “She's crazy about these wild pranks and she thinks I'm a stupid goody−goody. What a fool I was to try to prevent her!”

“You aren't very nice, Mr. Marvin, to snub my pet musician —my very newest pet musician,” Mrs. Courtelyou rebuked him, as he entered.

“I didn't mean it. I was waiting for —why, my car went to pieces,” he explained. “Is Pauline here?”

“Here? She is the only person present. Baskinelli hasn't spoken a word to any one else. He won't play anything unless she suggests the subject. I am glad Mr. Owen is here to protect her.”

From the scintillant, filmy mist of women around the piano Lucille emerged. She came swiftly to Harry's side.

“What is the matter?” she asked.

“What is? Tell me.” he replied. “What did you say to her? ”

“I didn't see her, Harry. She sent word that she was not at home.”

“You don't mean —not after you started upstairs.”

“Yes —and she hasn't spoken to me all evening.”

“And she left me waiting at home for half an hour. It's outrageous.”

Harry strode across the floor just as the music ceased, and Baskinelli arose, bowing to the applause of his feminine admirers.

“May I ask the honor to show to you Madame Courtelyou's portrait of myself? It is called 'The Glorification of Imbecility,'“ he said as he proffered his arm to Pauline.

He was a small man, with sharp features shadowed by a mass of flowing, curling hair —the kind of hair that has come to be called “musical “by the irreverent. The sweep of an abnormal brow gave emphasis to the sudden jut of deep eye sockets, and a dull, sallow skin gave emphasis to the subtle sinister light, of the eyes themselves.

Pauline accepted the proffered arm of the artist, but daintily, laughingly, she turned him back to the piano.

“You haven't yet escaped, Signor Baskinelli,” she said. “We have not yet heard 'Tivoli,' you know.”

“Tivoli,” he cried, with hands upraised in mock disdain. “Why, I wrote the thing myself. Am I to violate even my own masterpieces?”

There was a twitter of mocking protest from the women. Baskinelli began to play again.

“Pauline, may I speak to you —just a moment?” Harry's vexed voice reached her ear as she stood beside the piano. She turned slowly and looked into his bewildered, angry eyes.

“A little later —possibly,” she answered, and instantly turned back to Baskinelli.

From her no mask of music, no glamour of others' admiration could hide the predatory obsequiousness of Baskinelli. She was not in the least interested in Baskinelli. She had loathed him from the moment when she had looked down on his little oily curls. But if Baskinelli had been Beelzebub he would have enjoyed the favor of Pauline that evening —at least, after Harry had arrived.

The glowing piquant beauty of Pauline enthralled Baskinelli. He had never before seen a woman like her —innocent but astute, daring but demure, brilliant but opalescent. When at last they strolled away together into the conservatory his drawing room obeisances became direct declarations of love.

Pauline began to be frightened.

She fluttered to the door of the conservatory. But there she paused. Voices sounded from the end of a little rose−rimmed alley. They were the voices of Harry and Lucille.

Baskinelli was at her side again.

“If I have said anything —done anything to offend,” he said, with affected contrition, “you will let me make my lowliest apologies, won't you?”

Pauline hardly heard him. She was intently listening to the low pitched voices.

“I —I think I will run back to the others,” she cried suddenly. Baskinelli was left alone.

“I congratulate you, Signor, on the success of the evening,” said a voice at his shoulder. “There are few among the famous who can conquer drawing rooms as well as auditoriums.”

The musician turned to face the ingratiating smile of Raymond Owen.

“I thank you —I thank you, sir. But I do not believe you. My 'conquest' has turned to catastrophe. I have lost everything.”

“You mean that you are dissatisfied with the applause?” asked Owen.

“No! No! Applause is nothing from the many. There is always one in his audience to whom he plays from his soul.”

“And that one —tonight?”

“The lovely Miss —what, now, is her name —Marvin. She bewitches me —and she scorns me.”

“Signor Baskinelli, there are other places than drawing rooms, or even conservatories, in which to capture those who captivate.”

“I —do I quite grasp your meaning, Mistaire Owen?” He tried to disguise the suspicion under an accentuated accent.

“I think so, Monsieur Picquot.”

At the name Baskinelli turned livid. He made a movement as if he would lunge at the throat of Owen, but his fury withered under the glassy smile.

“So —we met in Paris?”

“Once upon a time —a little incident in the Rue St. Jeanne. A young woman was concerned in that incident —and was not heard of afterward.”

“And you are trying to blackmail me for the death of Marie Disart! Ha! That is a jest,” cried Baskinelli.

“I am trying to do nothing of the kind. I simply reminded you of the little affair. I know as well as you that it was all beautifully cleared up, and a man is still in prison for it. I know you are as safe here as that man is in jail, Signor Baskinelli.”

“What are you talking about, then?”

“The little woman that so charmed you here. I remarked merely that those who are captivated can capture.”

“Not in this country —not among the Puritans. One must be good — and unhappy.”

“You haven't forgotten your little friends, Mario, and Di Palma and Vitrio? They are all respected residents of New York. We know, where they might be found.”

“At Cagliacci's?”

“Precisely. Dining upon the best of spaghetti and the richest of wines, and paying for it at the point of a stiletto.”

“But —ha! You are talking nonsense. We could not find them; they could not find us.”

“We might telephone and try,” suggested Owen. “Cagliacci, you know, is now up−to−date. He has a telephone. He considers it a sign of respectability.”

“And then what do you propose?”

“Picquot —I mean Signor Baskinelli, I propose nothing. Unless possibly there might be —after the reception —a little motor trip to Chinatown. It might amuse the ladies.”

“You are right. I will invite them all,” said Baskinelli.

“And how about calling up Marie at Cagliacci's just as an old friend?”

“It might be best.”

They moved together down the corridor and Owen directed their way to a little study secluded from all other apartments of the great house.

“You seem to be familiar with the home of our gracious hostess,” remarked Baskinelli.

“I make it a rule to be familiar with all homes in which Miss Marvin is entertained.”

“Miss Marvin? You are, then a relative?”

“I am her guardian.”

“Ah−h! You have control—perhaps —of certain small sums bequeathed to her?”

“Yes.”

“And you would like to have as few persons as possible in the Chinatown party?”

“As few as possible.”

In a place known only as Cagliacci's, in the dreg depths of Elizabeth street, the ringing of the telephone bell was much more startling, much more unusual than the crash of a pistol shot or the blast of a bomb.

The habitu's moved quietly to the door that leads to the roofs, while Pietro Cagliacci himself wiped the dust−covered receiver on his apron and put it to his ear.

He spoke softly, tersely. The conversation was very brief. Within a minute after he had hung up the receiver three grimy−clad, grim−visaged men left the place silently.

Harry and Lucille came out of the conservatory.

“I tell you there wasn't anything said between us that could have caused it,” he was saying. “I was fighting the whole thing hard, but I was fighting it like a beggar. I am always a beggar with Pauline.”

“But you told her it wasn't right that she was risking other people's lives?”

“No, I told you to tell her that.”

In spite of her distress over Pauline's coldness, Lucille burst into laughter.

They were just emerging into the music room. Pauline, like the others, turned at the unexpected sound. She gave one glance at the two and turned haughtily away.

Baskinelli was bustling about, making up an impromptu excursion party.

“Ha! You people of New York —you do not know what is in New York. All Europe is here —and you never cross Fourteenth street —I mean to say Fifth avenue.”

“It is more dangerous to cross Fifth avenue than to cross the ocean — that's probably the reason,” said Harry. “The traffic cops along the Gulf Stream are so careful.”

Pauline stopped Baskinelli's intended reply. She wanted Harry to be ignored utterly. Her anger had made him flippant. His flippancy had put the seal of completeness upon her anger.

CHAPTER IX. BASKINELLI'S QUARRY

A flutter of polite alarm attended Signor Baskinalli's invitation.

From the sheltered glitter of a Fifth avenue drawing room to Chinatown was a plunge a little too deep.

But Baskinelli was insistent and Pauline was his ardent and efficient recruiting officer. Quite a troop train of limousines carried the invaders to the uncelestial haunts of the Celestials.

Baskinelli rode in the car with Pauline and Owen. He had cast off the dignity of the master musician and assumed an air of whimsical recklessness. Harry and Lucille were in the following car.

“Oh, please stop fidgeting,” exclaimed Lucille.

“I'm as nervous as you are.”

“I know,” said Harry, “but I hate to have her alone with that little black snake for five minutes.”

“Owen is with them.”

“Owen is worse.”

The machines drew up in Chatham Square, and the little procession that moved across to Doyers street —dainty slippers on blackened cobblestones, light laughter tinkling under the thunder of the “L,” human brightness brushing past the human shadows from the midnight dens —made contrasts picturesque as a pageant in a catacomb.

Pauline, on the arm of the chattering Baskinelli, led the way.

“Isn't this splendid?” she exclaimed. “I am sure you won't disappoint me, Signor Baskinelli. I hope you aren't going to show us a happy Chinese family at supper. Only the most dreadful sights amuse me.”

“Ali, but we, must not take risks,” replied Baskinelli. “There are some beings in the world, Miss Marvin, so exquisitely precious that a man would commit sin if he placed them in peril.”

“But only the worst and wickedest places,” she admonished Baskinelli.

He leaned suddenly very near to her.

“Do you really mean that, Miss Marvin?” he asked.

“Indeed I do,” she answered.

“Very well. But first we shall go to the new restaurant. It is yet too early for the worst and wickedest to be abroad or rather to seek their lairs.”

They climbed a brightly lighted staircase into one of the ordinary Chinese restaurants of the better sort which are conducted almost entirely for Americans, and where Boston baked beans are as likely as not to nudge almond cakes on the bill of fare and champagne flow as commonly as tea.

They gathered around one of the larger of the cheaply inlaid tables, and Baskinelli took command of the feast.

Harry sat in grim silence, watching Pauline like a protecting dragon. Lucille was sick at heart and repentant of coming. The others chatted merrily among themselves. But by common consent Pauline seemed to have been surrendered to the attentions of the evening pest, who had become a midnight host.

He leaned toward her with an ardor that he did not even attempt to disguise. “You are the most wonderful woman in —”

“Please make it the universe,” pleaded Pauline. “There are so many most wonderful women in the world.”

“No, let us say chaos,” he whispered. “The chaos of a man's heart can be ruled only by the charming uncertainty of woman.”

The intensity of his words brought to Pauline again the twinge of alarm. Unconsciously she looked around for Harry. It was the last thing in the world she had meant to do. She was angry at herself in an instant, for his fixed, guarding gaze was upon her. She met his eyes and turned quickly to Baskinelli.

“Chaos? I've always loved that word,” she flashed. “There must be so many lovely adventures where there are no laws.”

“I said the chaos in a man's heart could be ruled by a woman,” said Baskinelli.

The impudence of this sudden love making moved her unexpectedly to defiance.

“Please let it be ruled, Signor Baskinelli,” she said, turning away from him.

Baskinelli had sense enough to see that he had gone too far. He turned to the others as the soft−footed

Orientals began to spread the mixed and mysterious viands on the table.

He glanced at Owen. By the slightest movement imaginable, by the least uplift of his black brows, Owen answered. For the first time Baskinelli knew that the lovely quarry he pursued had a protector — and no mean, no weak protector.

But the arrival of the repast quickly covered the general embarrassment. Everybody could see that Pauline and Harry had had a quarrel and that Pauline, was flirting outrageously with Baskenelli simply for revenge —that is, every one except Harry could see it.

“Pardon me, but is that what you call a graft investigation that you are making, Miss Hamlin?” inquired Baskinelli.

“No, but the food is so funny. There are so many queer things present, but unidentified,” laughed Lucille.

“Like a reception to a foreign artist,” interrupted Harry with a vindictive glare.

“Or shall we say like the conversation of an unhappy guest,” said Baskinelli, smilingly turning to note the entrance of a little party of newcomers at the further end of the restaurant.

A dashing, well−dressed, fiery−eyed foreigner, the tips of whose waxed mustachios turned up like black stalagmites from the comers of his cavernous mouth, was accompanied by two nondescript figures, who seemed to be embarrassed more by the fact that they had been recently cleansed and shaved than by their rough red shirts and mismatched coats and trousers.

The man of the tilted mustachios gave brief, imperative orders to the waiters, whose languid steps seemed to be quickened by his words as by an electric battery. The other two sat silent, like docile dogs in leash.

Only for an instant Baskinelli's eyes rested upon the group.

“And having tasted the food of the gods, how would you like to visit the gods themselves?” he asked.

Pauline agreed enthusiastically. “You mean a joss house —a Chinese church, don't you.”

“Yes.”

The joss house that most visitors see in Chinatown is the little one up under the roof at the meeting of Doyers and Pell streets —at the toe of the twisted horseshoe made by these tiny thoroughfares of black fame, where, in spite of all the modern magic of “reform,” men still die silently in the hush of secluded corridors and women vanish into the darkness that is worse than death.

The little joss house is interesting in the same way that an Indian village at a State fair is interesting. Behind its gaudy staginess and commercial appeal it still holds something of reality from which the imagination can draw a picture of an ancient worship that has held a race of millions in thrall for thousands of years.

But it was not to the little joss house that Signor Baskinelli guided the party. In the little joss house the bells are pounded without respite, the visitors come and go at all hours of the day and night — save the few set hours when the joss sacrifices profit to true prayer.

Baskinelli took his guests to the joss house of the Golden Screens.

Save for its greater size and more splendid accoutrement, it was little different from the other. But it was walled, in its back alley seclusion, deep behind the outer fronts of Mott street, by a secrecy almost sincerely sacred.

The motor cars remained far behind across the square as Baskinelli led the party through the dismal streets and stopped before a dark doorway.

A dim light flared behind the door and a Chinaman in American dress admitted them.

“I am beginning to be really bored,” said Pauline.

“Wait; give the wicked a chance,” said Baskinelli.

They climbed three flights of dingy, narrow stairs, lighted with flaring gas jets.

“Wonderful,” jeered Pauline. “Not even a secret passage or a subterranean den!”

The others followed her laughing lead up the stairs.

A Chinaman came out of the door on the second landing, stopped, started in innocent curiosity at the dazzling visitors and went down the stairs. Everything was as still and commonplace as if they had been in the hallway of a Harlem flat building.

The silence was not broken or the seeming safety disturbed in the slightest by the soft opening of the first landing door, after they had passed —that is, after all but Owen had passed. No one but Owen saw the piercing black eyes and the tilted mustachios of the face that appeared for an instant at the door.

There was a corridor, not so well lighted, at the top of the third flight of stairs. In the dim turns the women drew their skirts about them, a bit wary of the black, short walls.

The passage narrowed. They could move now only in single file, and even then their shoulders brushed the walls.

Only a far, dull glow from a red lamp over a door at the end of a passage lighted their way.

Baskinelli tapped lightly on the door.

It was opened by a venerable Chinaman in the flowing robes of a priest. He looked at them doubtfully. Baskinelli spoke three words that his companions did not hear. The priest vanished. Quickly the door was reopened and they stepped into the dim, smoky, stifling presence of the joss.

The choking scent of the punk always at the folded feet of the idol was almost suffocating. The place had other odors less noxious and less sweet. Chinamen were lounging in the room as if it had been a place of rest. Three priests were on their knees before the joss swaying forward till their foreheads almost touched the floor, their outstretched arms moving in mystic symmetry with their rocking bodies.

A great brass bell hung low beside the idol. But no priest touched the bell.

The joss itself was almost the least impressive thing in the room. It stood, or squatted, six feet high, on a block pedestal at the side of the room. The simple hideousness of the painted features served no impressive purpose, but as contrast to the exquisite decorations of the room.

Screens of carved wood, so delicately wrought that it seemed a touch would break the graven fibers, were flecked with inlay of pearl and covering of gold.

One of the peculiar features of the room was a suit of ancient Chinese armor —a relic that had been rusted and pit−marked by time, but now stood brightly polished beside the statue of the god. A huge two−edged sword was held upright in the steel glove.

By the dim light behind the idol the shadow of the sword was cast across the blank face of Baskinelli as he moved forward. He stepped back quickly. The shadow fell between him and Pauline.

Again the ancient priest answered a summons at the door. Again he parleyed for a moment —then opened it to the three swarthy foreigners who had been in the restaurant.

Baskinelli turned for just in instant to glance at the tall man with the tilted mustache, then resumed immediately his conversation with Pauline.

“Why do all the Chinamen run away like that?” she asked.

“It is the end of the service; you see the priests are going, too.”

There was a furtive haste about the departure of the Orientals. And there was a quavering in the manner of the oldest priest —the only one who remained —that seemed born of a hidden fear.

The old priest lifted one of the lamps from a wall bracket and set it on the floor beside the idol. He knelt near it and began to pray.

The three Italians waited only a moment, then followed the Chinese out of the room.

“It is late —we ought to be going,” pleaded Lucille.

Complete silence had fallen on the room and her words, a little tremulous, had instant effect on the other women.

“What about it, Baskinelli? Had we better be going?” asked one of the men.

“Yes —yes, I beg only a moment. I wish to show Miss Pauline the —”

“You mean Miss Marvin, do you not?” blazed Harry, striding to Baskinelli's side and glaring down at him.

“I was interrupted. I had not finished my words. They are, at best, awkward, I beg —”

“You beg nothing,” said Harry through clenched teeth. Then slowly, grimly:

“I want to tell you, you little leper, that if anything happens here tonight —it is going to happen to you.”

He was so near to the musician that the others did not hear.

Baskinelli backed away. Pauline, with the swift, inexplicable, yet unerring instinct of woman, moved as if to seek the shelter of Harry's towering frame.

He did not see her. He had whirled at the sound of the opening of a door —a peculiar door set diagonally across a corner of the room behind the joss.

Through the yellow silk curtains that hid the entrance came two Chinamen as fantastically hideous as the embroidered dragons on the tapestry.

"Put those men out; they cannot come in here; they are full of opium," commanded Baskinelli.

"Stop; let them come in; we are going," said the mild voice of Owen.

The understanding look of Baskinelli met his. Baskinelli frowned and Owen smiled. They were playing perfectly their roles.

The two Chinamen shuffled into the room. The priest arose in jabbering protest. They argued with him acridly. A few feet away one could see that their cheap linen robes covered the ordinary street garb of the Chinamen; that the ugly lines on their faces were painted, as on the face of the Joss.

Baskinelli was laughing. The others watched the argument in silence. Every one but the host, and Owen, and Pauline, seemed a little nervous.

Suddenly the lamp on the floor went out. There was another at the farther side of the room, but its dim light made the scene more weird than darkness could have made it.

"Well, I thought we were going," snapped Harry's strident voice.

"We are," replied Baskinelli. "Miss —er —I am afraid to speak — Miss Marvin, shall we go?"

Pauline took his arm.

"Ali, but I have forgotten the most precious sight of the evening," suddenly exclaimed the musician. Only a moment —look here."

Interested, Pauline did not notice that Owen softly shut the door upon the receding footsteps of the others. Baskinelli guided her back to the little door behind the screen —the door from which the Chinamen had entered.

Baskinelli drew aside the curtain.

"There —that is one form of adventure."

Pauline looked through the curtain. A suffocating, narcotic odor came to her. What she saw was stifling not only to the senses —but to the soul. She turned away.

"Polly!"

Harry's voice rang through the little choked room like a thunder blast.

"We are coming—we are quite safe," called Baskinelli, with the sneer tinge in his tone.

"Very well, then; hurry."

Harry's manner aroused Pauline's temper again. She purposely lingered.

The two Chinamen were arguing violently now with the priest.

Harry had closed the door and followed the others down the outer passage.

"Miss Marvin —Pauline!" called Baskinelli with sudden passion. "Have you a heart of stone? Can you not see me helpless in your presence? Do you know what love is?"

He stepped towards her and tried to take her in his arms. But she was stronger and far braver than he. She thrust him aside and fled through the door.

Baskinelli followed, protesting, pleading.

Strangely, as she fled through the narrow corridor, the low, flaring gas jets were extinguished one by one.

She groped in darkness.

Baskinelli's pleading voice became almost a consolation, a protection.

Her elbow struck something in the passageway. The something shrank at the touch. She heard a quick drawn breath that was not Baskinelli's. She tried to run. The tiny passageway chocked her flight. She plunged helplessly between invisible, but gripping walls. She reeled and screamed.

There was the sound of a struggle behind her. She heard Baskinelli crying for help —but, oh, so quietly! She reached the stairs. The stairs were blocked by a closed door. The door was barred. But there was a light left burning by the door.

Her weak hands beat upon the panels, helplessly, hopelessly. How should she know that there were two doors, locked and sealed beyond?

Her wild screams rang through the long passage, through the dark, above the shuffle and beat and cursing of the staged fight.

In the dim light she could see the three Italians grappling with the other men. Baskinelli's voice called to her reassuringly. It might well. Baskinelli was in no danger.

She placed her softly clothed shoulder to the door and strove to break it. She screamed again.

"Harry! Harry!"

Dull crashes answered. There was the crack and cleaving of splintered wood.

“Hold on! I'm here!” she heard.

She fell beside the door. Strong arms seized her. For an instant she felt that she was saved. But she looked up into the lowering face of a man with tilted mustachios. From the wide thick lips came threats and curses.

From the outer passageway sounded the crashing of the doors.

She let herself be lifted, then, with sudden exertion of her trained strength, she broke the grasp of the man.

The door fell open.

Harry, bloody and tattered, stood there —alone.

“Polly?”

“Oh—yes —where are the others? They'll kill you —run!” she cried.

He ran forward into the black corridor. A knife thrust, sheathed in silence, ripped his shoulder gave him his cue. He had one man down and trampled. But another was upon him and yet a third.

A sharp pain dulled the pulsing of his throat. He felt a tickle down his bared and swinging arm.

He fought blindly in the dark.

“Polly!” he panted.

There was no answer.

* * * * *

In the Joss House of the Golden Screens the two Chinamen, dazed with opium, set of purpose, were still arguing with the trembling priest.

The door fell open and a white woman —with bleeding hands —fell at their feet.

“Ha, she has come back!” cried one of the Chinese in his own tongue.

There was the sound of steps in the outer passage.

“Quick —inside!” breathed the Chinaman, pointing to the den.

They lifted Pauline. The old priest stopped them.

“Not there —not there!” he cried. “Any one would look in there.”

They dragged her back. The priest hurried to the outer door and locked it.

There was the blunt, battering thrust of a body against the door.

“Open, or I'll break it in!” yelled the voice of Harry.

The priest opened the door.

In deferential silence he saluted the battle grimed newcomer. Battered, panting, bleeding, Harry lunged at the man, gripped him.

“Quick —where is she? You'll die like a spiked rat. Where?” he roared.

The two other Chinamen were kneeling before the Joss.

There was a moment's silence, then a strange sound —like a cry heard afar off.

Harry strode to the little pedestal where the suit of armor stood.

“Where is she? —or I'll rip this place to cockles!” he thundered.

“We do not know what you mean,” said the priest.

The two Chinamen began to jabber.

Other figures reeled from the room behind the curtains. But over all their clamor sounded again the faint cry —distant, but near.

In a flash Harry caught from the mailed glove the haft of the sword. As he rushed across the room the Chinese withered away from him. There was a crash as the great sword fell upon one of the windows. Through the broken pane Harry shouted for help. His voice was like a clarion in the silent streets.

He turned in time. Three Chinamen, with drawn knives, were upon him. He swung the unwieldy sword above his head. Its sweep saved him. He dashed at the Joss. Again he lifted the sword. A grasp and then a wail of fear sounded through the room.

He struck. The head of the statue thudded to the floor.

The Chinese rushed upon him. They were desperate now in the face of the violation of their god. But he was behind their god prying open the secret door to the hollow within the statue.

“It's all right, Polly,” he said as he drew her gently forth.

He stood above her with his back to the wall swinging the sacred sword against the onslaught of fanatic men.

They fell before him, but more came on.

His hands could hardly hold the mighty weapon. For more than half an hour he had been fighting. He was weakening but he braced himself and swung for the last time.

There came a hammering at the door. It crashed in. Police clubs whistled right and left. The Chinese fled into their secret lairs.

* * * * *

“And I guess that will be all,” panted Harry in the taxi that took them home. “I don't think you'll ask for any more adventures after this one.”

“Why didn't you pick up the Joss's head?” replied Pauline. “It would have looked so nice and dreadful in the library?”

But the glory of her golden hair nestled upon his torn shoulder and he knew that he would go through all the perils in the world for happiness like this.

CHAPTER X. KABOFF'S WILD HORSE

For several months after old Mr. Marvin's death, Owen had kept to his cubby−hole room adjoining the financier's small, plain−furnished, workaday office. But recently he had got the habit of doing his work in the library, where the tall, pure statues looked down upon his skulking head and the grand old books that had borne their messages of good from generation to generation, held their high thoughts in stately contrast to his skilled and cruel plots.

Above the bowed bald head that was planning the death of a young girl to gain her fortune stood a figure of Persephone−child of innocence and sunlight shadowed by black robes of Dis. Upon the coward who feared all but the darkest and most devious passages of crime shone high, clear brows of Caesar and Aurelius. Gray folios of Shakespeare held up to the ambitious ingrate the warning titles of “Lear” and “Hamlet” and “Macbeth.” And by his side brooded ever that mystic relic of the farther past —the Mummy, from whose case had stepped a daughter of the Pharaohs in the likeness of Pauline.

But Owen thought little of contrasts.

He was opening his mail on a morning in early May when he came across an envelope addressed in the awkward scrawl of Hicks. He tore it apart nervously, for if Hicks could be moved to write, it must be a matter of concern.

“Dear Owen, No doubt he suspects you of foul play. He has seen his attorneys and is about to take steps to have you removed from the trustee−ship.”

The paper crackled in Owen's trembling hand. So the Baskinelli incident had gone a little too far. Harry Marvin had sense enough to know that he would not have to fight three murderous Italians and a rabble of Chinese unless there had been a plot behind Pauline's peril. It might be best to go directly after Harry —to put him out of the way first. And yet, Owen pondered, there was no proof of anything wrong. Pauline was admittedly plunging into these adventures of her own free will. Nothing could be proved against him or Hicks.

He resumed his work. Among the letters lay an advertising dodger which had been dropped through the door. Owen glanced at it carelessly at first, then with keen interest. He read it over:

“BALLOON ASCENSION FROM PALISADES

Signor Panatella, the famous Italian Aeronaut, will make parachute drop from height never before attempted.”

The ascension was to be made that afternoon from one of the amusement parks on the New Jersey shore of the Hudson.

“This is Providence,” he muttered to himself, catching up the dodger. Slipping through the door and up the stairs, he tapped at the door of Pauline's room. When there came no answer he entered swiftly, laid a paper on the table and glided back to the hall, back to the library.

From there he called up Hicks.

Hicks' domiciles were so many and suddenly changeable that he claimed nothing so dignified as a regular telephone number. But he had scribbled on the bottom of his note the number of a saloon on the lower West Side.

He was there when Owen rang.

“Hello, Hello,. . . . Is that you, Hicks ?. . . . I want to see you. . . . What?. . . . No, right away . . . . .Broke?. . . you always are .... you'll get the cash all right.. . . .What's that? .... Come here? .... Not on your life. I'll come to you .... Not half that time .... I'll take the motorcycle. All right .... Good−by.”

He hung up the receiver, went up to his room and got into cycling kit. As he came down stairs he met Pauline, who was returning from a shopping trip.

“Good morning, Owen,” she said brightly. “Do you know, I believe there is more peril in a dry goods store than on a pirate yacht. What parts of my new hat are left?”

“Only the becoming ones.”

She sped on up the stairs. After her first imperative inquiries of the mirror concerning what she considered her wild appearance, she picked up the letters on her dressing table and began to run through them.

The large black type of an advertising dodger loomed among the letters.

Pauline tripped down the stairs. To Harry, seated on the steps enjoying the Spring sunshine and puffing a

leisurely cigarette, appeared a mysterious vision.

He knew by the elaborate way in which she took her seat beside him and hid the piece of paper in her hand that she had some new whim in fermentation —something to ask him that she knew he wouldn't want to do.

“Yes,” he said, moving along the step away from her. “I know you've just bought me the loveliest cravat, that I'm the nicest brother in the world, that I look so handsome in Springy things and —well, what it is?”

Pauline pouted at the other end of the step.

“I'm going up in a balloon and jump down,” she announced, “from a height never before attempted.”

“Polly I You are going to do nothing of the —”

“No, I wasn't going to, until you grew so great and grand. I just wanted to go over and see him fly.”

She tossed the dodger over to him. He glanced at it.

“Well, if you promise you aren't plotting any more pranks, I'll take you.”

“That's a worth−while brother. It's a pink one.”

“Pink one?”

“Cravat, of course.”

Harry groaned. “Give it to the cook,” he pleaded. “He wears 'em alive. If that fellow goes up at 2:30.you'd better hurry.”

“I'll be ready before you are.”

She rose quickly, but Owen, looking, listening, had time to close the door unseen, unheard.

At the rear of a little West Side saloon, he signaled with his horn, and Hicks came out. He was a bit shabbier than usual, and he had been drinking, but he was not intoxicated.

Owen locked his machine and taking his arm walked him rapidly up the avenue.

“What do you mean by writing to me?” demanded Owen. “Haven't I told you never to put words on paper?”

“Oh, I guess you got that house wired so nobody'll catch you,” grunted Hicks. “Live wires, too−clever butlers, footmen, maids, chauffeurs, cooks; you're safe enough.”

“You forget those are your wires. They don't know they're working for me. Hicks, are you out of your head? Have you told Bemis that you and I are working together? ”

“Sure not; but that butler is no fool, Mr. Owen.”

“Was it from him you found out that Harry had the lawyers after us?”

“No —queer thing that, that —it wasn't.”

“Who, then?”

“The little Espinosa.”

“Espinosa —in New York?”

“Yes —met her at the Trocadero a week ago. She'd seen old Calderwood already. I guess she blackmails him —the old reprobate, and him the noble counselor at law for Mr. Harry Marvin!”

“So you put her on the scent —for us?”

“Why not? The young fellow's been acting suspicious for a long time.”

“You did very well.”

“How about some money —I haven't seen the color of a roll since you put that fool Baskinelli into the game. Ain't you coming across?”

“Certainly; here,” said Owen, handing over enough to sate even the predatory greed of Hicks. “Now, what I want you to do is to find me some one among your horse racing friends who is down and out enough to take a little cash job —at certain slight risks?”

“Yes —what?”

“I want a good rider on a wild horse. He could make a thousand dollars in an afternoon if the horse should happen to get wild at the right time and do the right thing.”

“Hm'm,” mused Hicks. “I wonder if Eddie Kaboff has still got his livery stable down on Tenth avenue. We might go see.”

After ten minutes' walk Hicks brought up in front of a bill−plastered door in a fence. He held it open for Owen and they passed across a vacant lot to a large dilapidated−looking stable at the further end.

The short, dark man who sat in a tilted chair against the doorway and puffed lazily at a pipe, seemed to embody the spirit of the building and the business done there.

He was a man who had once —in the days of racing —been called a “sport.” He might still be called “horsey” and would consider the term a compliment. But Eddie Kaboff's fame and fortune had both dwindled since the good old betting days when little swindling games larded the solid profits of crooked races. One by one his thoroughbreds had given up their stalls to truck horses, just as Eddie's diamond studs had given place to plain buttons.

His beady black eyes watched the two newcomers on their way across the lot, but he gave no sign of recognition until Hicks and Owen reached the door.

“Hello, Eddie,” said Hicks.

Kaboff got up slowly and extended a flabby hand to his acquaintance. He was introduced to Owen, who let Hicks do the talking.

“What's new, Eddie?”

“Nuthin'.”

“Still got that wild horse you never was able to sell?”

“Yep.”

“Can you still manage him yourself?”

“I guess I could, but he ain't safe to take among traffic.”

Hicks stepped close to Kaboff, talking in rapid whispers. The little man turned white.

“No, no; I'm too old for that kind of game,” he said.

Owen drew from his pocket a roll of yellowbacks —the biggest roll Eddie Kaboff had seen since the days of “easy money.”

“This much to try it,” said Owen, “and as much again if you make good.”

Kaboff's glance wavered a moment between the penetrating eyes of Owen and the money in his hand.

“Take it; it's yours.”

The flabby hand closed almost caressingly around the roll. “We'll go in and have a look at the brute,” he said.

They followed him through a line of stalls to a large padded box at the far end of the barn. A beautiful bay saddle horse occupied the box. Kaboff entered and called the animal, which answered by flying into a seeming fury, plunging about the box, kicking, rearing and snapping.

“Same old devil,” muttered Hicks. “He'll do.”

The sight of an apple in Kaboff's hand calmed the animal. It came to him and ate docilely while he slipped a bridle over its head. Once outside the stall, however, it began another rampage.

Hicks held a last whispered conversation with Kaboff, giving him minute instructions.

“I can just try it, you know,” said Kaboff. “I can't guarantee to get away with it.”

“As much again if you do, you know,” said Owen as he started briskly away with Hicks.

The place that Panatella had chosen for the start of his balloon ascension was a field upon the crest of the Palisades above the amusement park.

Panatella had brought with him from abroad a reputation for dare−devil adventures in the air. And he had proved his reckless courage in the several brief ascensions that he had already made on this side.

Today, with his promise of the longest parachute drop on record, people flocked to the field from New York and all adjacent New Jersey.

“I wish you wouldn't always invite that velvet−pawed servant on our trips,” grumbled Harry to Pauline, as Owen went for his dustcoat.

“Owen is my trustee and guardian. You have no right to speak of him as a servant. Besides, when he's along he keeps you from being silly.”

Harry stamped out to the garage, swung a new touring car around to the door, and soon, with Owen and Pauline, was speeding for the ferry.

Signor Panatella was superintending the filling of the great gas bag. He was a tall, lithe man in pink tights beneath which his muscles bulged angularly like the gas filling the balloon bag.

A Latin rapidity of speech and motion added to the pink tights made him comically frog−like, and even the abattis of medals on his breast could not save his dignity.

He bustled about giving orders to the workmen who were preparing to cut the ropes, then flitting back to the crowd to answer the questions of impromptu admirers.

Pauline had left the car and was standing between Owen and Harry near the rapidly filling bag.

“I wish I could talk to him, too —he's so cute and hippety−hoppy,” she said.

Owen stepped to Panatella's side.

“Would you permit the young lady to see the balloon basket?” he asked.

“With pleasure,” said the airman after a glance at Pauline. He led the way to the basket, and helped Pauline up so that she could look at the equipment, the anchor with its long coil of rope, the sand bags and water bottles.

She was plainly fascinated as Panatella explained the manner of his flight and his drop through the air. As she saw them attach the basket to the tugging bag she was thrilled.

At this moment there was a flurry of excitement on the outskirts of the crowd. A horseman on a beautiful bay mount, that was evidently unmanageable, came plunging and swerving down the field.

The crowd broke and scattered in front of the menacing hoofs that flew in the air as the vicious animal reared.

The horseman, clad in a somewhat threadbare riding suit, was a small man with beady black eyes that turned from side to side as he swayed in his saddle. He seemed to be afraid of his mount and to be looking for help. But it was remarkable that apparently so poor a rider held his seat and actually managed to bring the beast to a nervous stand some fifty yards from the balloon.

The little man looked around over the heads of the crowd. He caught sight of Owen beside Pauline near the balloon basket. The lifting of his riding cap might or might not have been a salute and signal.

“Oh, I wish I hadn't promised Harry not to go up. I know Signor Panatella would take me,” sighed Pauline.

Harry had turned away to watch the actions of the strange horseman.

“You might scare him a little,” Owen suggested.

Those words were the greatest risk he had taken in all his deeply laid plots.

Pauline caught at the suggestion eagerly. She sprang lightly from the little platform into the balloon car.

A murmur of mingled astonishment, applause and alarm rose from the crowd. Two of the workmen were cutting the last ropes that held the basket to earth . Ten others were holding it with their hands awaiting the airman.

Panatella purposely delayed the moment of mounting the basket. The tugging of the huge balloon against the strength of a dozen men gave impress to his feat, and he liked the state of suspense.

But the sound from the surprised throng called his attention now to a scene that made him forget affectation and effect. He started to run toward the basket, shouting peremptory orders:

“Out of the car; out of the car instantly, madame! You are risking your life.”

His excitement infected the crowd. Surging, it seemed to sweep with it the rider on the restive horse. For, as a hand was suddenly lifted in the midst of the crowd the horse apparently overcame the legs braced to spring, it shot forward directly at the balloon basket.

The hand that had been raised was the hand of Raymond Owen.

All was happening so swiftly that neither Harry nor Panatella reached the basket before the maddened animal.

The crowd had given way in panic before it. Cries of fright were mingled with cries of pain as the beast charged straight upon the men holding the basket, felling and crushing them with shoulder and hoof.

For an instant a few desperate hands held to the wrenching car. Panatella had all but reached the platform; Harry was within arm's length of it, when, with a writhing twist the bag jerked the basket sideways and upward, knocking to the ground the last two men who had held it and whirling forth into the deathly emptiness of space a cowering, stunned girl, whose white face peered and white hands pleaded over the basket rim —peered down upon the upturned faces of thousands who would have risked their lives to aid, but who stood helpless in their pity, hushed in fear.

For a moment Harry had stood dazed. It was as if the twanging taut of the ropes, as the bag tore almost from his grasp the most precious being in the world, had snapped the fibers of action in him.

The daze passed quickly, but in the moment of its passing. The balloon, risen now five hundred feet in the air, had swept its way westward over a mile of ground.

Harry turned to look for his motor car. Standing as he was at the spot from which the balloon had ascended, he now faced a human barricade. With a shout of warning he charged at what seemed to be a vulnerable point in the files of wedged shoulders. The wall resisted. The throng was lost to all but the dimming view of the balloon. Harry swung right and left with his broad shoulders. He tore his way through.

The car was standing where he had left it on the outskirts of the field. As he approached it he saw Owen emerge from the crowd and hurry toward a runabout that had just been driven upon the field.

“What's the matter?” yelled a man in the machine, and Harry recognized the voice of Hicks.

“Miss Marvin —carried away in the balloon!” cried Owen in a tone of excitement that was not all feigned. He joined Hicks beside the runabout.

Harry sprang to the seat of his touring car. It seemed to leap forward. He shot past the two conspirators and heard Owen's voice calling after him:

“Wait! Where are you going? I'll go with you.”

“You're too late,” shouted Harry bitterly, over his shoulder. An envelope of dust sealed itself around the spinning wheels of the big machine as he took the road after the balloon.

Steadfast but hopeless he fixed his eyes upon the unconquerable thing in its unassailable element —a thing that seemed to be fleeing from him as if inspired by a human will. Death rode beside him at his breakneck speed, but he did not know it. He knew only that he must follow that black beacon in the sky—that he must be there when its flight was over —when the end came.

He did not know that Owen and Hicks, in the runabout, were also following —that they, too, watched with an interest as deep as his, with a hope as poignant as his hopelessness, the dizzy voyage of Pauline.

CHAPTER XI. FROM CLOUD TO CLIFF

“Wonder what he thinks he can do,” growled Hicks as they sat in the runabout and watched Harry pass them.

“Trying to break his own neck —for nothing,” replied Owen. “If he keeps up that speed we'll get both birds with one sand bag.”

“I hope so. He didn't speak, did he? You can see by the way he acts he don't want us around —even now.”

“It doesn't matter what he wants —it's what he does.”

“You don't think he can save her?”

“He might —and I don't want her saved this time, Hicks, you understand. I can't afford it this time. I've said too much.”

“Well?”

“Where did you get this runabout?”

“Upper East Side —private party; I didn't want to do any business near home.”

“That's right.”

“How much is this machine worth?” asked Owen irrelevantly.

“Oh, six or seven hundred —it ain't new. Why?”

“If anything should happen to it, there wouldn't be any trouble, provided the bill was paid, would there?”

“I got an idea the owner would grab at $3oo for this here buggy. But why?”

“And if this automobile disappeared, vanished —no trace of it; you're sure there wouldn't be any investigation?” pursued Hicks.

“Yes —it would be all right, I tell you. But I want to know what your scheme is. How can you use this machine to get rid of Harry? Tell me,” Owen insisted.

“Never mind —yet. How do you make the course of the balloon now?”

“I guess she'll go over Quirksborough and then up between Hoxey and Brent.”

“Then we can pass him at Quirksborough.”

“How do you figure that?”

“He'll stop for gasoline. He hasn't got enough to go more than two miles beyond there. I saw that he hadn't when we set out.”

“What do you want to pass him for? Why not let 'em both break their own merry little necks an' us pick 'em up an' do the weepin' afterward? That's our music.”

“You fool! Don't you think a balloon ever came down safe yet? Don't you know that young devil has got his head full of schemes to beat me out' again? I tell you we've got to make sure of this trick. We've got to get him.”

Unconsciously Hicks brought the machine to a stop as both men strained their eyes at the balloon, now traversing a lower course more slowly.

They saw Pauline stand erect in the basket and lift the heavy anchor over the side.

Harry, going at terrific speed on the deserted road, saw the drop of the anchor with a thrill of hope. At least—even if it was useless in itself —it showed him that Pauline was brave and calm enough to use her wits. He waved again but there was no answering signal.

Suddenly the balloon itself was lost to sight from the road. At the lowering angle, drawn downward partly by the anchor and partly by the gradual loss of gas, it swung over the hills.

The road led between two hills. Beyond it curved to the east and north. As he reached the curve Harry was surprised that the balloon was not in sight. When after circling another hill Harry had still failed to pick it up he was alarmed as well as puzzled. The hills had muddled his senses of direction, but he knew that he was near the river again —back on the verge of the Palisades. This added to his fears.

There was but one thing to do, though —follow the road. He went on slowly.

Suddenly he uttered a cry and threw on full speed. Over the top of a high, jagged cliff, set like a rampart between two bastion knolls, he saw the upper half of the gas bag.

It veered and tossed in the wind like a tethered thing. The basket was invisible, but Harry knew that the anchor had caught on the cliff side.

As he neared it he discovered that what was a cliff on one side was the river wall on the other. He thanked heaven that the road led to the top of it. He turned the machine up the road, which threaded narrow ledges through growths of bramble and stunted trees.

He saw and turned sick in soul and body, for the pulling of the balloon held the basket almost inverted, and Pauline was not in the basket.

The anchor had doubled itself into rock or root far down the cliff side. From it the balloon dragged toward the river instead of toward the shore. The taut rope writhed fifty feet out from the top of the declivity.

To the edge of the cliff crawled Harry. He moved rapidly, but at the uttermost verge he paused and covered his eyes with his, hand.

At last he looked down.

To Pauline on her wild flight had come increasing calm. As she felt the balloon reaching lower levels —though it still soared high above the hills —she even allowed herself a little hope. Leaning over, she watched the shining blades of the anchor dance through the air. Northeastward she could see the waves of the great river dancing. On the little anchor, hung her hope of life; in the water beyond the farthest cliff lay her final peril.

She had lost track of Harry and the other automobile long ago. She had given up all hope of aid from any living thing.

The balloon moved slowly above the palisade. The anchor dragged on the landward side of the knolls. These were sheer rock that the steel talons clawed in vain.

The balloon moved out over the river, then suddenly glided back. An eddy of breeze from the water had turned its course. The anchor dangled along the river wall of the precipice.

Pauline seized the rope. She alternately pulled and loosened it, trying to hook the anchor to tree or shrub. Suddenly she was flung forward —almost out of the basket. The balloon had stopped with a jerk. Hopefully, fearfully, she pulled in the rope. The anchor held. The balloon was tugging and swaying wildly, but its tether did not break. She looked down at the ledge. Between her and that narrow footing the only thoroughfare was two hundred feet of swaying rope. She pulled upon the rope again. She dropped two more of the heavy ballast bags over the side, and the bag shook and groaned upon its stays as it dragged the anchor deeper into the rock. She put her feet over the edge of the basket. With her hands clutching the rim, she lowered herself. Taking her hands from the basket and grasping the rope, she started down.

The raw hemp tore her hands. The fearful strain upon her arms made her sick and faint. Only desperation nerved her after the first ten yards. The wrenching of the balloon whirled and jostled her. At first, holding only by her hands, she was flung out from the aut halyard like a flag. Then instinct told her to wrap her feet around it and she trembled on. She looked down once, saw the far swaying river, and looked quickly up again. It was not until her groping feet touched the rock of the ledge that she opened her eyes again. At the top of a slender rope whirled and veered and battled a balloon with an empty basket. The sound of creaking ropes mingled in her ears with the chugging of a motor car. The chugging seemed a long way off, but its noise seemed to make her dizzy. She sank in a dead faint upon the narrow ledge beside the hooked anchor.

“Pauline! Pauline! It's I —Harry. Can't you hear me? Pauline!”

There came no sound in answer —only the creaking of the balloon rope in the air, the rasping of the anchor fluke upon the stone.

He sprang up and back to the motor and began throwing out the robes, blankets, tools and chains. He laid a blanket on the ground and began to slash it into strips with his pocket knife. In the ends of the strips he cut slits and linked the slits with the chains to form a rope. He paused only once in his frantic labor. That was when he rushed back to the edge of the cliff to look again and call again−in vain. He fastened the chain at the end of his strange line to a sapling growing some ten feet back of the verge and with a throb of relief saw the other end drop to within a few feet of the unconscious girl. He tested the strength of the cable by pulling on it with all his might. It did not give. He put himself over the cliff side and began the descent.

Owen and Hicks had not only lost the balloon, but had lost Harry, too. They could follow him only by the deep cut tracks of his flying car, and these were as likely to be over marshes and fields as on the highway.

More than once Hicks urged that they turn back.

“We can't do no good,” he argued. “If they ain't dead they ain't — that's all.”

“I've got to be sure,” muttered Owen.

The little runabout had a hard fight to climb the cliff that Harry's big car had taken so easily. But as they came through the grove into view of the balloon and the empty basket the two felt amply rewarded for their worry and trouble and toil.

“By George, it has happened. It's done!” cried Owen. No artist gazing on a finished masterpiece, no conqueror thanking the fates for victory could have spoken with more triumphant fervor.

But Hicks was out of the machine and running to Harry's car. He saw the shreds of the blankets; he saw the knife; finally he caught a glimpse of the chain that was fastened to the sapling.

“Don't be so sure,” grumbled Hicks. “Come on —but come quiet.”

He got down on his hands and knees and crawled to the edge of the cliff. Owen followed him. Together they drew back with gasps of surprise and anger.

Hicks sprang to his feet. His big−bladed knife flashed in his hand. He sawed excitedly at the small chain. A low curse escaped him as the blade bent on the links.

Owen had dashed to Harry's auto. He was back with a pair of heavy pliers. In a flash he had cut the chain. The end of it shot over the cliff. There was a startled cry from below.

It was several minutes before Hicks and Owen looked down again.

The man they thought they had just killed and the girl whom they had marked to die stood on the ledge in each other's arms, oblivious of life or death, or foe or friend, of everything but love.

Pauline was still aquiver with the shock of her waking. A cry ringing above her had brought her from her swoon and she had looked up to see the terrible balloon still reeling over her and to find Harry dangling from a rope's end not ten feet away.

She rose weakly and stretched out her arms to him.

“Be still; don't move, dear,” he called softly.

“You can't help me. You —”

There was a sudden snapping sound from over the top of the cliff. The chain end of the line fell upon his shoulders. He dropped joltingly to the ledge and lunged forward toward a further fall. It was the soft arms of Pauline that caught and held him. Both trembling a little as their lips met.

From overhead came the sound of a starting automobile. Harry shouted at the top of his voice. There was no answer. He stopped quickly and picked up the severed end of the life line.

Look; it wasn't broken; it was cut;” he cried. “Good heaven, Polly, who is it that hates us like that?”

For answer she merely nestled nearer in his protecting arms.

They sat down on the ledge, and Harry's keen eyes watched the tantrums of the balloon in the wind. It was pulling fiercely toward the river now, but the anchor held fast.

Suddenly Harry sprang up. Pauline started to follow his example, but he motioned her to stay where she was. In his hand gleamed the revolver, that he had carried ever since the battle in Baskinelli's den.

“Who is it?” whispered Pauline. “Can you see some one?”

He raised the revolver in the air, took aim and fired. The balloon rope at his feet suddenly slacked and he caught at its sagging loop to gave the anchor from loosening. He fired twice again at the balloon bag, and Pauline, clinging to his shoulder saw the monster that had held her a slave to its elemental power, that, like some winged gorgon had held her captive in the labyrinth of air, crumple and wither and fall at the prick of a bullet; saw it collapse into a mass of tangled leather and rope and slide in final ruin down the smooth cliff.

She looked at Harry with the whimsical smile that she could not suppress even on the dizzy heights of danger.

“Did you really think I would fly away again?” she asked.

“Hopeless ward,” he said. “Pitiful case. Miss Pauline Marvin, crazy heiress —thinks she's funny when she's merely getting killed. No, Miss Flippancy, I wanted a line to slide the rest of the way on,” he announced as he gave the anchor rope a twist around a rock.

Pauline's merriment vanished like a flash.

“Oh, I can't do it again, Harry, I can't,” she cried tremulously.

“It will be easy this time,” he told her. “Here, give me your hands.”

With a piece of the blanket rope he tied her wrists together, and placed her arms about his shoulders, grasping a rope that sagged away to the wrecked balloon on the road far below. He placed a leg over the ledge, wrapped it around the rope and bracing the other foot against the rock wall, started joyously on his fearful task.

Joyously, for if ever man rejoiced at the gates of death it was Harry Marvin. To him the chance to risk his life today was a blessing and a boon. It was what he had prayed for, hopelessly, on the long motor dash in the wake of the balloon —just the chance to try and save her. To die with her was all he asked; to die fighting for her was all he wanted; and here he was, holding her in his arms on a stout rope, already half way down the cliff.

At the bottom he let her feel the firm earth once more. “Now you can open your eyes,” he said.

With his torn hands he started to lift her arms from his neck; but she clung there, weeping.

“Oh, Harry, you are so patient, so good and brave, and I have made you risk your life again for me.”

“Sure; that's it; worry about me, now,” he grumbled, although he held her tenderly and close. “When will you find out that my life doesn't matter; it's yours that counts?”

“I will never, never do it again,” said Pauline like a naughty child.

“You used to say that when you were four years old. It was usually a lie,” said Harry.

“I love you,” said Pauline irrelevantly.

“Then why−in−the−dickens−don't−you−marry me?” he demanded.

“Because —”

She stopped. Steps sounded from the roadway. They peered through the thicket that concealed them and saw Owen approaching.

Pauline hailed him. He turned toward the thicket in obsequious haste.

“Thank Heaven, Miss Marvin,” he cried. “It must be a miracle. And you are safe, too,” he added, turning to Harry.

“How did you know I was ever in danger?” inquired Harry grimly.

“We heard shots,” explained Owen. “We saw the balloon fall and we knew what you had done. It was magnificent. I congratulate you.”

“Congratulate Polly,” said Harry. “She slid out of Heaven, while I only slid down hill.”

“Where is your car, Mr. Marvin?”

“Up on the hill —if the kind persons who cut the chain didn't take it with them.”

Owen did not change color. “I will go and see if it is there. If not, I'll find Hicks and his runabout. He's waiting somewhere about.”

He set off briskly up the road.

“Polly, you still trust that man?” asked Harry.

“One has to trust one's guardian, doesn't one?”

He tossed his hands above his head in a gesture of “Give it all up.”

“That's right; keep 'em there,” said a rough voice, and a wiry man with white handkerchiefs tied over his face below the eyes sprang with crunching strides through the bushes. “Keep up your hands, I say,” he thundered at Harry, as he leveled a revolver.

Pauline was beside him and Harry dared not move. But Pauline dared. With the resourceful courage that always inspired her she whipped his revolver out his hip pocket and fired at the intruder's head.

His hat fluttered off into the road. He sprang at Pauline and wrested the gun from her. As Harry rushed him, he had no time to fire, but the butt of one revolver crashed on the young man's forehead. Harry sank unconscious in the road.

Pauline knelt beside him. She was screaming for Owen —even for Hicks. Hicks was instantly beside her but not to aid or rescue, for Hicks was the man with the handkerchief mask. He half dragged, half carried Pauline to a thicket that concealed the runabout. He drew a roll of tire tape from under the seat and bound it cruelly around her lips. He took ropes and tied her hands and feet, placed her in the seat beside him and started the machine. If Harry, struggling to rise out of the dust of the road, could have seen Pauline now, bound and gagged beside Hicks in the runabout, he would have known her to be in greater peril than ever the balloon had brought her.

Pauline was not long unhidden. As the quick ear of Hicks caught the sound of wheels, he grasped her roughly by the arm and thrust her into the bottom of the machine. Without taking his hand from the lever or slackening speed, he pulled a blanket over her and tucked it in with one hand.

“Don't move, either,” he growled, “or you know.”

A farmer on his wagon came around a bend. His cheery “good morning” brought only a grunt from Hicks, but the sound of the kind voice thrilled Pauline. She struggled under the blanket and almost reached a sitting posture

before Hicks crushed her back.

The runabout had flashed by, but the farmer had seen something that alarmed even his stolid mind.

When a half mile up the road he came upon a young man, dazed and wounded, staggering through the dust, he drew rein and leaped out.

A draught of whiskey from the farmer's bottle braced Harry.

“You passed them on the road?” he cried.

“A machine with a man in it and somethin' else —somethin' in the bottom of it that moved,” said the farmer.

“A horse,” said Harry, “quick —one of yours will do.”

The farmer hesitated. Harry thrust money into his hand. “Quick,” he shouted.

Together they unharnessed the team. Coatless and hatless, tattered, wounded and stained, Harry swung himself to the bare back of a stirrupless steed and galloped out on what he knew was the most dangerous of all the pathways of Pauline.

CHAPTER XII. THE OLD GRIGSBY HOUSE PAYS PENANCE

To young Bassett, of The American, the excitement of existence, since he became a reporter and joined the jehus of the truth wagon, had consisted mainly of “chasing pictures” in the afternoons and going to strings of banquets at night. He had no more enthusiasm for photographs than he had for banquets. Word painting and graining was his art. And so when a big story walked up and beckoned to him he was as happy as a boy in love.

It had been a dull day for news. The evening papers were barren of suggestions and the assignments had run out before Bassett's name was reached. That meant another afternoon of dismal lingering in the office, without even a photograph to chase.

Bassett flung himself disgustedly into a chair and straightened a newspaper with a vicious crackle as the last of the other reporters hurried out. He thought he caught a gleam of merry pity in the reporter's eye. Never mind. Let 'em laugh. Let 'em wait. One of these days he'll be the one getting the real stuff and putting it through, too, from tip to type, without a rewrite man or a copy reader touching it. Let 'em wait!

“In a balloon? Where?”

The suddenly vibrant voice of the city editor talking over the telephone caused Bassett to lower his paper and hushed even the chatter of the office boys.

“Palisades —Panatella; yes. Who's the girl? You don't know?”

The paper dropped from Bassett's hands.

“Much obliged. I'll have a man over there, but you go right ahead.” The city editor clicked down the receiver and whirled in his chair.

“Oh —Bassett. Our Weehawken man says a young woman has been carried off by Panatella's balloon. They've lost the balloon. Get a car and get over there quick. Go as far as you like, only find the girl and let me hear from you —quick.”

Bassett jumped to a phone and ordered a high−powered machine to meet him at Ninety−sixth street. He ran down William street, with his straw hat under his arm, and dived into the subway. An express had him at Ninety−sixth street in a few minutes. His machine was there. They dashed for the ferry and were on the aviation field before the bewildered crowd that had witnessed the runaway flight of the balloon had dispersed.

Bassett jumped out and mingled with the people. They knew nothing except the general direction toward the west that the balloon had taken. Automobilists had pursued for a long way, but had seen the gas bag turn to the north and disappear in the hills. The automobilists had returned —most of them. Two who had been with the girl before she leaped into the basket had not returned.

Bassett got back in the car beside the driver, and they glided off on the westward road.

Every one in the farm houses along the route had seen the balloon. But the houses were further and further apart as Bassett's course was drawn northward and, often he missed the trail.

The trail was blazed by the wheel ruts of a giant touring car and a small runabout that frequently left the highways and plowed across the fields. He lost them in the middle of a field that was marshy where the automobiles left the road and rock−dry at the middle and further side. After a half−hour's maneuvering he ordered the driver to go back to the road.

“Maybe they done the same thing —turned round an' come back,” suggested the chauffeur. “Hello, what kind of a rig is that?” he added as a wagon appeared around a bend in the road.

The peculiar thing about the “rig” was that while it was a tongued wagon with whiffletrees for two horses, there was only one horse. The driver, a bearded farmer, was urging the patient animal on, although it was impossible for it to do more than plod in its awkward harness.

“What's the matter?” called Bassett, cheerily, as the machine drew alongside and stopped.

“I dunno,” replied the farmer, shaking his grizzled bead. “Ef I was a young feller like you I'd go right off an' find out.”

“I'll go right away; what's up?”

“I dunno. I ain't knowed anythin' like it in this part o' the country in fifty year. First, down yonder on the old river road I meets a autymobile, with a man drivin' it and somethin' alive an' movin' lyin' in a blanket by his feet. I

ain't got more'n a half mile back from there when I finds a fine young feller, with his good clothes —what he's got left —tore to pieces, no shoes, or hat on him, an' his head bleedin' bad from cuts. 'Where are they? Did you see a autymobile?' he yells at me. I tells him what I had saw, an' he takes my off hoss there an' goes gallopin' up the road."

"What road?" cried Bassett.

"Ye circle this here field an' climb the hill, then take the first turn."

"Which way?"

"West, if you don't want ter jump in the river."

"What, we're back at the river," gasped Bassett.

"That's about my luck. The balloon's gone over the river; it's in New York, and some Harlem reporter is leading it down to his office on a leash to have it photographed, and I'm —I'm hoodooed, that's all."

"I dunno," said the farmer, "but ef ye ast me, I'd say that feller in the autymoble was makin' for the woods beyond Quirksborough. It's lonely up through there, an' he had somethin' in that there machine that he wanted to keep lonely, I'm guessin'."

Bassett motioned to the driver to go on. "We might as well see what it is; the balloon's gone home for supper," he said bitterly.

In five minutes they reached the turn where the farmer had last seen Harry Marvin disappear. They took the turn into an ill−kept, dust−heavy road that had cast its blight of brown upon the reeds bordering it. The woods became more and more dense and the road more narrow. In some places the dust was crusted, as it had dried after the last rain, and the men in the automobile could see that the wheels of another machine and the hoofs of a galloping horse had plunged through this crust but a short time before.

Around a bend in the road, going at full speed, Bassett sighted Harry Marvin for the first time. He stood up beside the driver and hailed him, but Harry did not even turn around. The beat of his horse's hoofs drowned the sound. The deep lines of the runabout's wheels in the dust held his gaze and his senses to one thing alone —the rescue of Pauline. He urged the poor beast to its last tug of strength. Weak and dizzy from his wound, he knew that he could go but a little way afoot. The road's high, close−set wall of trees was broken for the first time by a little clearing. Harry's passing glance showed him that there was a house in the clearing. He was exhausted and a thirst, but his eyes swept back to the wheel tracks on the road.

The runabout had gone on. Harry, without drawing rein, was about to follow. But suddenly, weirdly, the rickety walls of the deserted house gave forth a sound, a rattle and a crash, and from a shuttered window beside the low−silled door bellied a sheet of smoke.

Harry reined the foaming horse and sprang off. Freed of his weight, the animal staggered on a few paces and fell, panting, in the dust.

Harry did not see it. He was battering at the door of the burning house.

Hicks could hardly be called a nervous or a timid man. He was certainly not a coward, like Owen; but neither did he have the shrewd, scheming mind which was the bulwark of the craven secretary's weakness. At the moment when they discovered the young lovers safe at the foot of the cliff after the escape from the balloon and rock ledge, the two arch conspirators were two very different men. Owen was shaking like a leaf in his terror of discovery, but thinking of a hundred schemes to save himself. Hicks was deadly cool, and thinking of just one thing —immediate and cold−blooded murder.

But now, although he thought he had killed Harry, although he knew he had Pauline gagged and bound in the bottom of the runabout, Hicks was afraid. He was afraid of the incompleteness of the thing. He was eager to have done with the girl as well as with the man. And now this latest plan of Owen's was but another chapter of procrastination.

The incident of the farmer's curiosity had unnerved him, too. He put back over his face one of the white handkerchiefs that he had taken off when he began the flight.

"There's no more 'pity−the−poor−girl' stuff in this," he said gruffly to Pauline. "If you don't keep quiet I'll kill you. I mean what I say."

He still had the instinctive crook sense to conceal his natural voice. Hicks was afraid, but as mile after mile fell behind them and the westerning sun gave promise of the early shelter of dark, he began to gain confidence. He mumbled to himself reminiscently:

“The old Grigsby house, eh? Nobody but —” he checked himself. “Nobody but somebody would thought've that.”

The “old Grigsby house,” in front of which the runabout came to a stop after many miles of travel, was set back from the road about three hundred yards. In front of it and on either side, the trees had been cut away, but a tangle of riotous shrubbery lined the path to the door. Behind the house the trees had been left untouched, and now in its tottering condition the venerable building literally rested on two of the great elms, like an old man on crutches.

The windows were few and shuttered. The black steel blinds were dead as the eyes of a skull. The steel was not rusted and only a little weather−stained.

There were no steps to the door. It opened on the ground level, with a cracked board serving as both porch and foot mat. The signs of attempted preservation were what gave the place its ominous air. There was a menace in the steel shutters of the old Grigsby house, and in the fact that the path to the door was kept clear.

Up this path Hicks carried Pauline. Before he lifted her in his arms he tested her bonds. He did not know that Pauline was too terrified to conceive the simplest plan of action. Compared with the fear that possessed her now the torturing suspense of the balloon flight seemed like peace and safety.

Hicks held her with one arm while with the other he unlocked the low door. Swinging heavy on strong hinges, it opened into a narrow hall, mildewed with the dampness of decay, the dust of disuse. He carried Pauline up the stairs, which groaned and bent under his steps and pushed open a door. There was a broken chair, a table, a cot, a washstand, with pitcher and bowl, and a small oil lamp set in a bracket on the wail.

Hicks laid Pauline on the cot, and lighted the lamp, using the same match for a cigarette. He seemed spurred by a desire to get away as if the tottering, grimy halls held memories too grim for even his hardened soul. After testing the shutters of the window, which were locked on the outside, he stepped back to the cot and cut Pauline's bonds, and removed the bandage from her lips. As she fell back in a half swoon he hurried through the door, closed and locked it and went down the stairs.

Half way down he stopped abruptly, stood for a moment listening, then hastened on, dropping his cigarette over the banister. He did not see where it fell. He did not care. His only aim was to get out —to get away. He had heard a sound as he came down the stairs that turned his fear to terror —it was the distant grumble of an automobile horn. He locked the door and sped down the bramble−walled path to the runabout. He had left it in the middle of the road, so that as he leaped in and started again it left no swerve of its wheel ruts toward the old Grigsby house. It was five miles to the nearest town, but Hicks made it in twenty minutes, and without hearing again the threatening automobile horn. The first thing he did was to telephone to Owen.

For half an hour Owen had been locked in the library of the Marvin house. The events of the early afternoon, the failure of his best−laid plans, the suspense of waiting the result of Hicks's final move, had made him a nervous wreck. He had lighted a dozen cigars and thrown them away. As many times he had picked up the telephone only to set it down again without calling a number. At last he had taken out the thin tube of light pills, had drawn the shades, switched on the electric lights, and sat down to wait for the half−peace that morphine brought to his conscience.

As he leaned back in his chair, awaiting the effect of the drug, the mummy in its case stood in front of him. He closed his eyes in a pleasant stupor. He opened them in terror. For a moment his hands were outstretched in front of him, with claw−like fingers clutching at thin air; then he covered his eyes with them to shut from view the mummy, which stood over him, its upraised hand pointing to him the finger of accusation; its woman's eyes blazing with anger; its cold lips speaking a message that chilled his blood.

The telephone bell jangled again and again before Owen found courage to open his eyes. When he did so he clutched at the instrument, eager for the sound of a human voice.

“Hello! . . . Yes, this is Owen . . .” He glanced apprehensively over his shoulder at the mummy. Its hand was lowered and it stood motionless as before. He turned excitedly back to the telephone. “It's YOU! Hicks? . . . What news? ”. . . . She's at Grigsby's? What do you mean? Somebody after you? . . . . Not him? . . . . I give you my word there hadn't been anything on that road for two months. . . . What have you done? What! Nothing? You should have called the police from Jersey. . . . All gone to pieces? ... Stay over there, I'll join you tonight. Yes, go back to the house and watch. . . . What? . . . . All right.”

Pauline, left alone, began to regain her courage. After a few moments she was able to stand up and move

slowly about her prison room. She tried the door and the window shutters mechanically. She searched the room for something that might be used to batter down the door. There was nothing. She sat on the cot and tried to think.

She sprang up again, trembling. The dry, choking smell of smoke had reached her. Hicks's lighted cigarette had fallen among the wisps of old wall paper in the hall.

She ran to the door. Baffled, piteous, alone, she turned —and looked on death.

For through the cracks in the floor flashed now the golden daggers of flame in sheaths of stifling smoke. She cowered, choking, by the outer wall of the room.

The flame daggers grew into scimitars. The inner wall caught fire. There was no outlet for the suffocating smoke.

She sprang to the middle of the room and seized the broken chair. With all her might she crashed it against the door. It fell in pieces at her feet.

She picked up a leg of the chair and, running to the window, pounded upon the shutters. She screamed, and beat upon the shutters. It was the rattle and crash upon the shutters that made Harry rein in his horse before the old Grigsby house.

He saw smoke burst from the lower windows, and, battering on the locked door, he heard her screams.

“Harry! Harry!”

It was to him she called again in her peril, as she had called before —in the wreck of the yacht, in the den of Baskinelli, and even this day from the rim of the runaway balloon. Always, inspired by that call, he had found their way to safety.

He thrust the full weight of his mighty body against the door which held like solid rock.

“Harry! Harry!” came the cries again.

“I'm coming, Polly; I'm here!”

He dashed to where a heavy tree limb had fallen, carried it to the door, raised it and charged with it as a battering ram. He might as well have slapped the door with his flat palm.

He looked at the windows whence the smoke poured —smoke mingled with flame. Half crazed by the cries from above, he raised the limb to try to break the shutters. He stopped and let it fall. The toot of an automobile horn and the excited voice of young Bassett stopped him.

“What's doing?” gasped the reporter. “Is anybody in there?”

Harry pointed to the shuttered window of the upper room. The cries came again, and with the sound, of the woman's voice Bassett turned sick. He made a dizzy charge at the door, but Harry caught him back.

“All three together,” he said.

They flung their strength at the portal —but still it held.

Bassett turned away, sobbing. He looked up to see Harry spring into the big car which he forced through the brambles.

“What are you doing? You're crazy!” yelled the chauffeur, running toward the machine.

“Get her —if I can't —after the smash!” was Harry's answer. The car lunged on at full speed.

The impact rocked the burning house. Frame and door crashed down together before the battering car. It plowed for half its length into the smoke and fire, stopped an instant, quivered and backed out again, splendid ruin.

On Harry's forehead a deep cut streamed.

Bassett sprang to catch him, but he climbed out unhelped. Together they leaped the shattered wall. Through searing smoke they climbed the quaking stairs and burst into the shuttered room.

The lamp still flickered dimly in its bracket.

“Pauline,” called Harry, chokingly, “Pauline, answer me.”

There was no answer.

On hands and knees he groped over the hot floor. He found her by the window, where she had fallen. And flames choked them as they fled.

Outside he knelt beside her, chafing her hands, when she wakened. He had turned her so that she did not see the towering glare of the flames as the old Grigsby house furnished burnt penance for its crimes. Pauline raised her arms and touched tenderly his bleeding brow. He lifted her into the car that Bassett and the driver had patched up.

“Home, James,” said Bassett, with a tired grin, but stop at a telephone somewhere and let me tell my boss that I've got a piece for the paper.”

CHAPTER XIII. DOUBLE CROSS RANCH

“I tell you, Harry, I can't endure it. I couldn't face anyone I know. I want to run away —far, far away, where nobody ever heard of balloons or automobiles, or me.”

“Polly, you aren't afraid of a little talk, are you? Everyone is saying how brave you were, and, here, when the danger's over, I find you a flimsy little coward!”

She picked up one of a pile of newspapers that lay on the stand beside her, and thrust it before Harry's eyes with a manner at once questioning and rebuking. He read the head lines:

SOCIETY GIRL CARRIED OFF IN BALLOON

Miss Pauline Marvin Has Remarkable Experience After Accident on Palisades.

Harry laughed and patted her hand reassuringly. “Oh, but that's only one of them,” wailed Pauline. “Look at this one:

PAULINE MARVIN LOST IN THE SKY

“Can any woman live after that,” she cried.

“Why, it's no crime to be lost in a balloon,” said Harry. “See, they tell it just as it was —they make you a real heroine.”

“A man might live it down, dear, but a woman, never! To be 'lost in the sky' is altogether too giddy. Margaret!” she called.

The maid stepped quickly forward.

“You may pack my things, Margaret, and be sure to put in some warm winter ones. Is the snow on mountains cold like real snow, or is it like the frosting on cake?” she inquired, turning again to Harry.

“What are you up to this time?” he demanded.

“Montana first,” she proclaimed with a melodramatic flourish. “And if I am followed by my fame or by my relatives —I shall go on —to the end of the world.”

Harry had long ago abandoned the idea of laughing at her whims. Even the most fantastic of her projects was serious to her.

He merely looked at her in mute suspense awaiting the fall of the blow.

“You needn't begin to see trouble−yet,” she laughed. “But I am going, Harry. I'm going to accept Mary Haines's invitation and visit her and her nice, queer husband on their ranch. You remember Mrs. Haines, that dear Western girl that we met on the steamer when she was on her honeymoon?”

“Well, it's pretty tough just at this time,” objected Harry. “Business is bothersome, and I ought to be here; but if you insist ”

“Oh, you're not coming with me,” stated Pauline, cheerily. “In the first place you are not invited, and in the second place you are not needed in the least. Now get me a telegraph blank.”

He came back with the desired paper and a fountain pen and she scribbled:

Mrs. Mary Haines, Rockvale, Montana. Care Double Cross Ranch.

Arrive Thursday at 8 a. in. Will explain haste when see you.,

Pauline Marvin.”

Run down and 'phone that to the telegraph office,” she told Harry. “And now for the packing, Margaret.” She thrust a tiny foot in a pink slipper over the edge of the bed.

“But you are ill, Miss Marvin,” protested the nurse with a first faint assertion of authority.

“That's so,” said Polly. “How can we get around that? Oh, yes; it's time for your airing, dear —and when you come back I shall be well and packed.”

“Plenty of air,” suggested Harry sarcastically from the doorway, “if it takes you as long to pack as it does to put on your hat.”

Pauline flung him a laughing grimace and he strode off to the library. As he was repeating the brief message to the telegraph office he did not hear the light footfalls that ceased at the library door, nor could he see the drawn, gray face of Owen who heard the message spoken over the telephone, and was passing up the stairs with his slow, dignified tread when Harry came into the hall.

“Good morning, Mr. Harry. I see you are quite yourself again. Yesterday was a terrible day.”

“You do look done up,” retorted Harry, curtly, as he picked up his hat.

Owen's step was not slow or dignified after the door shut upon Harry. He sprang up the last stairs and into his own room.

Here on a small writing desk was another telephone. He snatched it up nervously and gave the call number of the place where he had held his first conference with Hicks.

He held a brief conversation over the wire, snapped down the receiver, sprang to a wardrobe for his hat and stick and hurried from the house.

The dullness that a sleepless night had left in his eyes had disappeared. The fear that had shaken him ever since the uncanny reappearance of Harry and Pauline was dissipated, or at least concealed by a new hope —a new plan of destruction.

He knew only that Pauline was going away and that she must be followed —no matter whither her whims might lead.

Hicks was seated in a corner of the rendezvous drinking whiskey and water. He was plainly in a black mood.

“You got a pretty fat roll yesterday, Hicks. But,” Owen drew out his wallet, “here is a little. Get yourself ready to make a trip tomorrow. I'll let you know the time and the train.”

Hicks looked covetously at the bills, but he demurred: “You mean we're after them two again!”

“Hicks, we must be after them because one of them will soon be after us.”

“Where they goin' now?”

“Rockvale, Montana. That is, the girl's going. What I haven't found out yet is whether Harry goes, too. If he stays here, I'll stay, and you'll go West.”

“After Pauline?”

“Ahead of her!”

“And then what?”

“Then you will have to use your own judgment. But don't get excited and kill her, Hicks.”

He accompanied the sharp warning with the alleviating roll of yellowbacks, which Hicks quickly deposited in an inside pocket.

The next morning they shook hands at the gate of the Pennsylvania station. Hicks looking a bit uncomfortable but much improved, in a suit of new clothes, and carrying a suitcase, hurried to catch the flyer for the West. A few hours later Owen was wishing a happy journey to Pauline at the same station rail.

Mary Haines stood in the low doorway of the Double Cross ranch house and gazed down the sun−baked road to where, in the far distance, a little wisp of dust was visible.

Laughing, she turned and called to someone inside the house. A towering, slow−moving, but quick−eyed man, in a flannel shirt, with corduroys tucked into the tops of spurred boots, appeared on the stoop. Hal Haines was so tall that his broad−brimmed hat grazed the porch roof of the house.

“Hal! Hal!” she cried eagerly. “What do you think? Pauline Marvin is coming to visit us —Pauline Marvin! ”

“The little girl we met on the ship that I had to yarn to about the wild West?”

“Yes, of course. How you did lie to her! Goodness, I hope that's not why she's coming. She'll be awfully disappointed.”

“Oh, I don't know as it's necessary to disappoint her,” said Haines. “If the State of Montana don't know how to entertain a lady from the East as she likes to be entertained it's time to quit bein' a State at all.”

“Hal!” Mrs. Haines eyed her husband sternly. “I want you to remember who Pauline Marvin is. I'm not going to have her frightened by any of your wild jokes.”

Haines burst into a ringing laugh.

“Honest, my dear, I promised that young lady if she ever came to Rockvale she'd see all the Wild West I told her about. I gave her my word. You don't want to make me out a liar, do you?”

“You can say that conditions have changed greatly in the last two years.”

“Oh, come, just one little hold−up the day she gets here. She'll think it's great. She'll think she's the lost heiress that was carried off in the mountains —the one I told her about.”

“I tell you I will not hear a word of it. She may be ill or something; it would scare her to death.”

“I'll ask her if she's ill before I let the boys rob the buck−board. What dye say, mother? Just this once.”

His boyish joy in the prank brought laughter to her eyes, and he knew that his sins would be condoned.

Four days later Hicks, who looked as far from home in his excellent clothes as the clothes looked far from home in Rockvale, alighted, from a lumbering local train. He made an inquiry of a man on the platform, and, carrying a heavy suitcase, slouched up the main street of the town.

Ham Dalton's place was the one the man had directed him to, and Hicks, I after engaging the best rooms in the house for seventy−five cents, scrubbed a little of the dust of travel from his person and went down to the bar and gambling room. The drink of whiskey he got made even his trained throat writhe, and he strolled over to the poker table to join a group of calm and plainly−armed spectators of high play.

From the conversation he learned that the dam at Red Gut was washed out; that Case Egan, a noted rancher, was in jail for shooting a deputy sheriff, and that Hal Haines was expecting a “millionairess gal” visitor from New York.

“When'll she be on?” drawled one of the players.

“Tomorrow's express.”

“Sence when did the express stop at Rockvale?”

“Sence the president o' the road told it to stop for this here young person,” replied the informant crushingly.

Hicks was scanning the faces of the men about him with a purposeful eye. Especially he watched one —a lean man in red shirt and leather breeches, booted and spurred, who stood near the table.

Hicks approached him. “Hello, Patten,” he said.

The man whirled so sharply that the revolver he had drawn, in whirling, caught in Hick's coat and jerked him into the middle of the room. The poker game went on without a sound or sign of interruption. The bartender took a casual look at Hicks and the gunman, then went on talking to a customer, as before.

“Hello, Hicks,” said Patten, putting up the gun. “I'm much obliged that I didn't kill you. We don't greet old friends quite so hasty out here, boy, as you do in New York —especially when we haven't heard our right name in some years,” he added in a lowered voice.

“How long have you been here, Pat?”

“Eight−nine−twelve years; ever since that friend of yours, Mr. Owen, paid me $10,000 for getting rid of a certain —what he called a certain obstacle.”

“Which you didn't get rid of?”

“No, he made the mistake of paying me in advance, and it didn't seem necessary to harm anybody.”

“Got any of the money left?”

The lean gunman held his head back and guffawed.

“It's near here, I guess, but it ain't mine. It dropped between this bar and that table.”

“Do you want a little job?” asked Hicks. “But let's go in the back room.”

They strolled into an empty wine room and ordered drinks.

“What kind of a job?” asked Patten.

Hicks leaned across the table and whispered rapidly. His old acquaintance drew back, with a sudden suspicion.

“But no foolin' this time,” warned Hicks. “Only part money in advance.”

He produced $5,000 in bills from his trousers pocket, but secreted it again quickly as the waiter appeared.

Patten got up and sauntered out into the barroom, returning presently with three men of his own brand —broad−built, grim−eyed ruffians of the far north country —three of Case Egan's cattlemen.

In the meantime Mrs. Haines was flustered not only by the prospect of meeting her distinguished friend, but by the tumultuous staging of the great hold−up scene that was to mark Pauline's welcome. Hal had been up at three o'clock in the morning rehearsing the boys in their parts. He had set off at five o'clock for the station.

As Pauline, trim in her traveling suit of gray and blithe in the clear Western air, tripped from the express, all Rockvale was there to meet her. Hal Haines, mighty man that he was in the region, was red with pride as the girl who could stop the express at Rockvale gave him her hand in happy greeting.

As he helped her into the two−seated buckboard, no one in the crowd noticed the man who had arrived the night before standing on the platform and pointing out the girl to Tom Patten who was seen to mount and ride rapidly away.

“I hope you saved some of that lovely Wild West for me, Mr. Haines,” said Pauline, as the finest pair of

horses in the Double Cross stable whisked them along the road to the ranch.

“Very little left, Miss Marvin —very little left; still —whoa, there! What's this?”

At a bend in the road five masked and mounted men had dashed from cover and quickly surrounded the buckboard with a small circle of leveled gun−barrels.

Pauline had time to cry out only once before she felt herself gripped by powerful hands and dragged from the wagon seat, where Hal Haines sat shaking with laughter. He stood up and started to draw his revolver slowly. From behind him a lasso was thrown lightly and the noose tightened around his arms.

He kept on laughing, although he was a little afraid the boys were overdoing matters. He knew his wife would never forgive him for this actual kidnapping of Pauline —he certainly had never intended it.

And she was really frightened. He could tell that by her cries as she was thrust across the pommel of the masked leader's horse and the horse was spurred to a tearing gallop down the road.

Haines tried to shout a command and call the joke off, but the riders had all followed after their leader, and he was alone in the buckboard.

“They needn't have been so realistic with their knots,” he said, as he struggled to free himself from the rope.

It was ten minutes before he wriggled free. He picked up the lines and drove on toward the ranch —a little nervous now over the receptions he would get, but still laughing.

At the fork where the road to the mountains left the main highway, Haines flashed out his revolver in real excitement. Another group of five masked men had driven their horses out of a clump of small trees. They fired their revolvers as they surrounded the buckboard. Then suddenly discovering that there was no woman passenger, they tore off their masks and came up with quick, eager inquiries.

Perhaps for the first time in his life Hal Haines knew what fear was — not fear for himself, but for another.

“Boys, there was another party on the road. They took her. I took 'em for you,” he said in a stifled voice. “Come on. Cabot, give me your horse; take the rig back and tell Mrs. Haines.”

He sprang into the saddle, and, filling their revolvers as they rode, the band of jesters, who had suddenly turned so grimly serious, dashed back toward town.

Two miles from where Tom Patten had swung Pauline to his saddle bow they picked up the train hoofs that left the road and made toward the mountains.

The men who had set out so gaily a few hours before rode silently, fiercely now. Mile after mile swept behind them as they held to the trail. Sometimes it followed the roads, sometimes it broke over open country. At last it reached the hills and stopped at the river.

Patten's band had ridden in the water upstream. After a mile of it the leader ordered three of them out on the south side. They left silently, rode five miles across country and separated, each taking a different route. Patten and one companion kept on with Pauline who was now almost insensible. At last they left the stream on the north bank and climbed into the higher hill country where they entered a thicket and stopped.

“Here we are,” said Patten. His companion dismounted and lifted Pauline from the other's saddle.

With a swift daring and dexterity, born of fear, she flung aside his arms and sprang toward the horse he had just left. She tried to mount, but her strength was gone. They tied her feet with a rope and seated her on a great fallen tree, while they cleared away a tangle of bushes and began to tug with their combined strength at a giant rock, which the bushes had concealed.

The stone moved inch by inch until behind it Pauline saw, with a chill shudder, the black opening of a cave.

She flung herself from the log pleading piteously. They cut the rope that bound her feet and led her to the cave. As the giant stone was rolled back into its place she uttered one wild far−echoing cry. Then darkness!

For many minutes Pauline lay prostrate. A dim light from some hidden orifice in the top of the cave behind a shelving wall, seemed to become brighter as her eyes became more accustomed to the shadows. She arose and began to inspect the cave.

It was a chamber of rock about forty feet long and twenty feet wide . The bottom and roof converged slightly towards the end farthest from the giant boulder that formed the door. But even there the cave was twenty−five feet high.

The boulder door was set into the rock portal, and not a wisp of light came through the brush that, covered the crevice. Pauline, after a brief hopeless test of her frail strength against the weight of the granite mass, moved slowly along the wall to the extremity of the chamber.

Here, about seven feet from the floor, ran a ledge of rock, between two and three feet in width; and, from this ledge upward the wall slanted at an angle of forty−five degrees to a wide shelf or fissure. It was from this fissure that the faint light came.

Pauline groped her way back along the other wall to the front of the cave again. Despairing, she sat down on the chill stone. The events of the last few hours had left her in a state of mental vertigo. The hold−up of the buckboard and her carrying off by the bandits seemed fantastically impossible.

So this was her “escape” from scenes of adventure. This was the “great, safe, quiet West,” where she should forget her perils in New York and wait for others to forget them. She thought of her promise to Harry that she would not try to get into any more scrapes. In her former dangers —even when there seemed hope —she had a buoying trust that there was one man who could save her. He had always saved her. In his protecting shelter she had come to feel almost immune from harm. But with Harry three thousand miles away and totally ignorant of her need of him no sense of imagined protection sustained her now. She took it for granted that Mr. Haines had been made a prisoner or killed. She knew the word would reach Mrs. Haines and the latter would invoke all the powers in the State to find her; but she was, sure she would be dead before anyone unearthed this fearful hiding place.

The light at the far end of the cave grew steadily more dim and Pauline judged that the day was waning.

A rustling sound caught her ear. Sounds are animate or inanimate. This was unmistakably the sound of a living thing.

Pauline trembled a little but she stood up. Was it man or beast that she had for companion in the mysterious cave?

She took a faltering step forward. The sound seemed to come nearer. The cave had gone almost pitch dark, and, suddenly, from the mid−level of the back wall —from the rock ledge —there flashed upon the sight of the imprisoned girl two beady, burning eyes.

CHAPTER XIV. THE GREAT WHITE QUEEN

Hal Haines' best driving team was lathered with foam and the buckboard swung through the gate on two wheels as Bill Cabot drove back to the Double Cross Ranch.

The young cowboy whom Haines had ordered to carry the news of disaster to Mrs. Haines, seeing the buckboard and only Cabot driving, knew instantly that something had gone wrong.

“What is it, Will?” she called, running down to the gate. “Didn't she come? Has anything happened to Hal?”

“She was held up and carried off, Mrs. Haines.”

“I know; I know. You played the joke; but what happened?” She looked at the foaming horses. “What made you drive home like this?” she demanded.

“She wasn't carried off by us, Mrs. Haines. Some other crowd got ahead of us —some crowd that meant what they was doing. The Boss and the boys has got the trail by this time, I guess. The Boss said I should come and tell you.”

For a moment Mrs. Haines looked at him in doubt.

“Is this another joke, Will?” she asked. “There hasn't been a hold−up in this section for ten years.”

“I guess the jokin' is all knocked out've all of us,” answered Bill, turning shamefacedly away. “No, ma'am, this is the truth and —and I wish the Boss had took some one else's horse instid of mine.”

“Never mind. They'll have all the men in Montana out to find that girl, if this isn't a hoax,” cried Mrs. Haines in a voice that choked. “Go tell the other boys to get ready. The Sheriff will want them, if Hal doesn't.”

She sped back to the house and with a trembling hand rang the bell of the old−fashioned telephone that furnished a new blessing to the ranches.

A moment later Curt Sikes, the telegraph operator at Rockvale, almost fell from his chair as he took the following message over the wire at Mrs. Haines's dictation:

Harry Marvin,

Fifth Avenue, New York:

Pauline kidnapped. Come at once.

Mary Haines.

“What —what's it mean, Mrs. Haines?” he gasped into the transmitter. “It ain't the young lady that Hal Just took off the express, is it?”

“Yes, that's who it is, Curt. Cabot and the boys are coming into town as fast as they can ride; but you call Sheriff Hill and get as many men as you can−in case we need them. You'll hurry, won't you, Curt?”

“Yes, ma'am; and I'll get your message right on the wire. They'll put it ahead all along the line.”

If Curt's speed in getting the telegram away was inspired partly by burning need of telling the news to Rockvale that did not reflect on Curt. He flashed after the New York message a terse call up and down the line to “Find the Sheriff,” and then bolted out to the platform. His shout was heard not only at the little hotel across the street from the station, but at the city limits of Rockvale a good mile away. Rockvale answered the shout as a clan answering the beacozes flare. When Curt Sikes shouted it meant news.

His messages along the line had little effect. He had spent the morning flaunting the news to fellow operators and rival communities that the Express had stopped at Rockvale. They had only half believed that, and now this added flourish was too much. Even Sheriff Hill, whom the message overtook at Gatesburg, fifteen miles south, laughed when he read it, and started for Rockvale only because he was going there anyway to get Case Egan.

There ain't much doubt which is now our leadin' city —Butte or Rockvale,” he remarked as he swung to his saddle and set off with two deputies.

He found something more than overdone home town pride in Rockvale, however. The narrow streets were filled with men, women and curious, wide−mouthed children. Horses, packed for long riding, with rifles bolstered to the saddles, were tied all along the rails of both the main hotel and the station. Curt Sikes was the center of a changing but ever interested group, but two of the Haines posse who had just come in without any report of capture, but with all the vivid news of the hold−up were now the main objects of attention.

Briefly they told the story of the pursuit. With Haines leading they had struck a trail that took them to the

river. They had waded the river and found no trail on the other side. Knowing the bandits had taken to the middle of the stream, Haines had divided his party. He sent two men down stream, one on each side and he and the three others rode up stream, two on each side.

After long rough riding Haines had found a trail coming out of the water. All four had followed it a long way. There were three bandits making the trail, but the three stopped and each took a different direction, one straight up into the hills, one straight down into the valley, and the other off here towards town. Haines and one man had started on the trail to the hills. The other two —the two talking now —had each taken one of the other trails, but had lost them. They thought Haines would lose his, too. It had been a clean, up−to−date expert piece of work —this kidnapping. The getaway had been a work of art, just as the hold−up had been a wonder−piece of stage setting.

"You saw all the gang that held you up?" asked the Sheriff.

"We wasn't held up —tha'd a been a little too rich, I guess," said one of the cowboys. "It was Boss Haines an' the girl that was stopped."

"Well, then, I mean did Haines see the gang? Were any of them Indians?"

"Injuns? No. The Boss thinks some of 'em were cattle−crooks from the Case Egan outfit. I guess they ain't no Montana Injuns that'd start anythin' like that."

"You guess a lot more than you know," said the Sheriff quietly. "I may be calling on any of you boys for some fast work against old Red Snake any of these days."

"What's the trouble, Sheriff?"

"Oh, just one of their devils brewing bad medicine again up at Shi−wah−ki village. Red Snake always was a little bit crazy —talking about the thieving white man that stole his country and looking for a chance to get the rest of his people killed off."

"I heard that down at Hallick's last wek," drawled a man in the crowd. "The Sioux is only waitin' for the Great White Queen to come out o' the heart o' the airth an' lead 'em on the warpath. They got a surprisin' plenty o' arms, too, for reservation Injuns. Know that, Sheriff?"

The Sheriff nodded slowly. "I wish Haines would get in," he said. "I'd like to have a talk with him before we start. But it's getting late."

The dull thudding of tired horses hoofs from the other side of the hill below town came, to him as an answer. Presently Haines and his companion joined, silently, the eager crowd at the station.

The owner of the Double Cross seemed to have aged ten years since he had driven away with Pauline from that same station platform only a few hours before. He would have given all the acres of the Double Cross for just a word about Pauline; he would have given his life to know that she was alive.

"There's nothing for it, Sheriff, but to rake the whole country," he said wearily. "They've hidden her somewheres, if they haven't killed her. And if they've killed her, mind, it's me you're to hang for it."

The Sheriff laid a strong hand on his old friend's shoulder. "I can get the state militia out to look for that girl, Hal," he said. "By the way, is there anything —anything queer about her?" he asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, only that her folks have been writing to the Governor at Helena. Sikes just gave me this from Governor Casson himself. Who is this Raymond Owen? Who's been wiring to the Governor?"

"That's her guardian, I think. H'm," mused Haines as he read the message, "that is queer. I wish they'd have wired me that yesterday."

The Sheriff folded the telegram and putting it back in his pocket, stepped up on a box near the hotel door.

"I want to call for a hundred volunteer citizens to go hunt this girl," he announced.

A minute later, all that was left of Rockvale was the buildings and the women, children and old men who stood watching a cloud of dust blotting the sunset glow and listening to the retreating clatter of a flying cavalcade.

Sikes kept the office open late. At 7 o'clock he telephoned to Mrs. Haines at the Double Cross:

"What does he say?" she cried.

"Just one word —Comin'," said Curt in an aggrieved voice. "He could've sent ten words fer the same price," he grumbled.

Red Snake was one of the younger chiefs of the Sioux. He was too young to have had a share in the bloody last stand of his race in their Montana wilderness; but he was old enough to have watched the dwindling of spirit

and power among them for twenty years.

And every day of watching kindled new hate in the breast of the Indian. In him the spirit of his fathers had left the old unquenchable belief in the Day of Restoration, when, by some supernatural intervention, the Indians would return to their lands, the lands revert to their primeval state, and civilization be lost in the obliterating wilderness.

The officers of the Agency had had trouble with Red Snake on several occasions. Twice he had started out at the head of war parties and had been caught just in time to prevent bloodshed among the isolated settlers. But of late he had been docile and peaceful. The new disturbances —the occasional shooting of a cowboy and the petty stealing of cattle dated from the beginning of the sway of a new medicine man in Red Snake's principal village of Shi−wah−ki.

His name was of many syllables in the native language, but he was known as Big Smoke. He was a young Indian who had spent some years among the whites in the Southwest, had made a pretense at getting an education, but had reverted violently to the life and faith of his fathers. Big smoke had predicted to Red Snake the coming of the Great White Queen, who would empower the arms of the red man to overthrow the whites and would make him again master of his rightful lands.

Red Snake, squatted on a blanket beside his teepee, listened with immobile features but with a thrilled heart. He summoned a council of the chiefs, secretly, and the medicine man addressed his message to them also.

Thereafter the Indians of Shi−wah−ki were restive. Their growing spirit of rebellion manifested itself in foolish little offenses against the white men. These were punished with the white man's customary sternness and this increased the rancor of the Indians. It increased, too, their eagerness for the fulfillment of the strange prophecy of the coming of the White Queen.

On the very day when the white man's village of Rockvale was in a hubbub of excitement because of the kidnapping of Pauline, the village of Shi−wah−ki was tumultuous with a different fervor.

Into the circle of the assembled chiefs, rimmed with awed faces of squaws and papooses, had danced the weird figure of Big Smoke. He had been called upon by Red Snake to announce what further of the White Queen his medicine had revealed.

Big Smoke wore the head of a wolf with cow's horns set over the ears. His lithe red body was covered with a long bear skin. His legs were bare to the tops of his gaily beaded moccasins.

He circled the silent group with fantastic gyrations and stopped finally in the center. Lifting his hands, he addressed the tribe. First, in glowing rhetoric, he pictured the ancient glory of the Sioux —their wealth in lands, their prowess in the hunt, their triumph over all other red men. He told of their long and brave struggle with the white man, who by the intervention of wicked gods had been enabled to conquer them. But the time of vengeance and retribution had come after long years. The Indian was to return to his own.

“The Great Spirit is sending us a leader,” said Rig Smoke. “The Great Spirit has spoken to me and said: 'Lo, I will send a White Queen with golden hair. She shall come from the heart of the Earth, and she shall lead your warriors against the oppressor.”

This was the third time Big Smoke had said this. That was what made it most impressive to the listeners. Big Smoke had staked not only his reputation as a medicine man, but, also his life, upon this wonderful prediction, which had aroused his people as they had not been aroused in fifty years. For it was the law of the ancient code that fulfillment must follow immediately the third announcement of the miracle. If fulfillment failed there remained only the Great Death Stone in the valley. No prophet of the tribe had ever won in the racewith the Death Stone.

And so the chiefs sat in respectful silence and the young braves arose eager for the war dance when Big Smoke finished speaking.

The dance, beginning slowly, waxed wilder; the tom−toms beat more vibrantly, until the whole village was encircled by the painted and bonneted tribesmen. The red glare of daylight fires illuminated the wild faces. The women cowered with their children beside the teepees. In the midst of the tumult, the medicine man stood with hands stretched upward calling on the Great Spirit to send the White Queen.

When the dance had subsided, the Council resumed its deliberations.

It was arranged that there should be a hunt that afternoon and the foxes or coyotes should be driven as near as possible to the settlements. This would be a means of reconnoitering and it would make the whites think the

Indians were engaged in peaceful pursuits.

Pauline, after her first startled cry, stood spellbound by the two glowing eyes that shone from the far end of the cave.

There was no light now —save for the eyes. The rift in the roof from which the mysterious glow had come seemed to have been closed suddenly. The pitch darkness made the eyes doubly terrible, and just perceptibly they moved and flashed which showed they were living eyes.

Pauline longed to scream, but could not. Behind those fiery points imagination could picture all manner of horrible shapes. Was the creature about to spring upon her?

The eyes vanished as suddenly as they had appeared.

The low rustling sound came again; then the utter silence.

Pauline, freed of the uncanny gaze, was able to think and act. If that animal could find its way into her prison house, there must be another entrance to the cave.

It was plain that the animal had been crouching on the slant rock above the ledge. Pauline began again to grope around the wall. She could touch the top of the ledge and now in several places she found small crevices in the wall by which she tried to climb.

Time and again she fell back. Her soft hands were torn by the jagged rock; her dress was in shreds; her golden hair fell down upon her shoulders. She might have been some preternatural dweller of the place.

At last her foot held firm in a crevice three feet above the floor. Clutching the ledge−top, she groped for another step —and found it. In a moment she was on the ledge.

She sank there, covering her face with her hands. The eyes had blazed again scarcely three feet away. She felt the breath of hot nostrils, the rough hair of a beast, as the thing sprang. She felt that the end had come, but she still clung to the ledge.

As she uncovered her eyes, slowly, she was astonished to see that the faint light had returned. It came, as she had thought, over a concealed shelf of stone above the rocky incline.

The eyes had vanished. The cave was still.

She began to scale the incline. Her hands and feet caught nubs and slits of the surface and a little higher she felt the cool dampness of earth and grasped the root of a tree. As she drew herself up, she looked over the shelf and saw, at one end of it, the open day.

She crawled a little way upon the shelf then stopped. She hardly dared to go on. What if the opening, large enough to admit the light, were too small for her to pass through? What if the light had been only a lure to torture her? What if she must return into the darkness with that thing unknown, the thing with the blazing eyes!

She crept on with her eyes shut. A stronger glow of light upon the closed lids told her she had reached the end of the shelving. The next moment would tell her if she had reached freedom or renewed captivity. She looked up.

Three of Red Snake's young warriors had gained most of the plaudits of the village during the afternoon of the hunt. They rode together and not only did they bring in many foxes and coyotes but much news of the white people. They had met armed men throughout all the mountain country, riding up and down the river. The armed men had greeted them fairly and had asked them for information of other white men who had stolen a girl and carried her away. The white men were thus fighting among themselves. It was a propitious time for the coining of the new Queen.

These three young men, about five o'clock in the afternoon, had just started the drive of a coyote towards the level country when the quarry doubled suddenly and turned into the hills.

With shouts and shots, the Indians pursued it, but their horses were no match for it on the devious wooded paths, and grunting their disgust they saw it dive into a burrow in a rocky hollow of the cliff.

They dismounted and stood about the mouth of the burrow grumbling and “cursing their luck “in an ancient tongue. At last two of them mounted and started to ride away, and their companion followed, slowly, leading his horse.

A sound made him turn his head. With a cry of mingled fear and joy, of awe and triumph, he threw himself prostrate before the mouth of the burrow.

The other Indians dashed back. They literally fell from their horses to the feet of the wonderful being who had risen from the heart of the earth —the promised goddess who would lead them against the oppressors. In the poor, disheveled person of Pauline, coming from her prison cave, they saw their great White Queen.

CHAPTER XV. THE DEATH STONE

As the thrilled and frightened Indian lay prostrate at her feet, he might well have believed her to be some creature from another world.

Her face was very pale and round it fell in tumultuous glory the cascades of her golden hair. Her dress was torn to shreds by the jagged rocks and there was blood upon the delicate hands that she held out in pleading to the only living thing she saw−the red man.

He did not move. She stepped nearer and, stooping, gently touched his shoulder. At the touch he trembled like a leaf, but raised his head and looked at her with terror and awe and adoration in his eyes.

“Won't you help me? I have ben a prisoner in the cave. I must find Mr. Haines —Haines, do you hear? Or go to Rockvale —Rockvale,” she repeated, hoping that the names at least he might understand.

He motioned questioningly toward his horse, and, at her nod, he sprang up and brought the animal to her side. Helping her to mount, he took the bridle and began to lead the way into the thickly wooded hills.

The journey was slow and arduous, but it was not long. Darkness had not yet fallen when the hill trail dipped into a valley, and Pauline's weary, hopeful eyes looked down upon a village on the plain.

The hope vanished quickly as she realized that the houses of the village were teepees and that the people that moved among them were braves and squaws.

An Indian boy of perhaps twelve years sprang suddenly from a thicket beside the trail, gave one glance at her, and, with a shriek, set off at full speed toward the teepees.

Cries sounded and resounded from the hills. Tom−toms were beating. She became aware that the Indians were swarming about her and acclaiming her a guest of unusual honor. They stopped her horse at the entrance to Red Snake's teepee. The great chief stepped forth himself, with Big Smoke, the medicine man, close behind him.

The prophet, who had foretold the coming of the Great White Queen, wore a mien of pride and triumph, even as he bowed low before Pauline. But of all the red folk in Shi−wah−ki village, Big Smoke was undoubtedly the most amazed at the fulfillment of his prophecy.

The braves who were assigned to lift Pauline from her horse and bear her into the Chief's teepee were surprised that one immortal should be so weak as almost to fall into their arms, so weary as to be scarcely able to walk. But Pauline, seated upon a high pile of furs within the teepee, where the weird light of a fire fell upon her pallid features and her flowing hair, presented a picture strange and marvelous.

They gathered around her, Red Snake and the medicine man in the center of the adobe, the lesser chiefs behind them, and in another circle the ranks of the braves.

Even in her utter exhaustion, the savage solemnity of the gathering fascinated Pauline. Had she been left alone she would have fallen asleep upon the piled furs; but this low muttering, grim−visaged assemblage of the red men forced her to respectful attention. That they honored her, she understood; but she saw, too, that the Indians were all armed and some of them were painted. As Red Snake arose to address the tribe a menacing murmur filled the teepee and the young chiefs whetted their knives upon the ground.

Red Snake's harangue, unintelligible to Pauline, had an electrical effect upon the Indians. Frequently as he spoke he turned toward her and always when he did so he bent his head upon his breast and raised his mighty arms in token of submission to a power mightier than his own.

As he finished, Pauline arose, swaying a little from her great weakness. She shook her head in token that she did not understand. Her outstretched, pleading hands bewildered, but subdued the warlike assembly.

Red Snake called a ringing summons, and from the rear circle of the audience shuffled forward the strangest man Pauline had ever seen. His undersized, stooping form was garbed in a miner's cast−off red shirt, a ranchman's ex−trousers, a pair of tattered moccasins and a much−dented derby hat, with a lone feather in the band of it. It was White Man's Hat, a half−breed interpreter.

As he approached, cringing and bowing, Pauline noted that a penetrating, not unkindly eye gleamed from under his bushy brow, scrutinizing her in flashes between his obeisances. Unlike the other Indians, he was not afraid to look the Great White Queen in the face, as he solemnly repeated the last words of Red Snake:

“According to the prophecy, you have come from the heart of the world to lead us against those who steal our

land.”

Pauline stood for a moment in complete bewilderment. Then, as the meaning of the words, with the meaning of the strange gathering, flashed upon her mind, she took a step forward, speaking in earnest protest.

But she spoke only to the Chief, for the Indians had broken all restraint and were crushing their way out of the teepee, with cries and brandishing of weapons. They swept the little interpreter with them. And Red Snake saw in Pauline's look and tone of appeal only the pleading of a wronged goddess for vengeance upon her enemies. He called the women of his household, who shyly led the Queen away.

Darkness had fallen as the women glided ahead of her to a spot outside the main village, where a spacious teepee had been erected apart. Only a peaceful moon and a firmament glittering with stars lighted their path. But from the town behind came terrifying yells, the rattle of tom−toms and occasionally a rifle shot as the braves prepared their spirits for the test of battle. Pauline found her new home filled with all the luxuries and sacred relics of the tribe. There were rugs richer than those in the Chief's house; the walls were festooned with strung beads, and on the large, low couch of bear skins lay the most splendid of Indian raiment.

The women, with better understanding than men of the earthly needs of immortals, made her lie down, while they bathed her aching temples and wounded hands, replaced her torn garments with a gorgeous blanket robe and smoothed her flying tresses into long comfortable braids. Other women came bringing food. And there was a pipe and a pouch of agency tobacco with which the goddess might soothe the hours before repose.

Pauline ate eagerly while the women looked oil in silent approval. When she had finished, she arose smiling and signed to them that she would rest. They left softly, and neither the exciting recollections of the day's adventures nor the tumult of the braves outside could hold her for a moment longer from the blessedness of sleep.

She slept far into the next morning. But so did the village, for the Indians had reveled to exhaustion. It was nearly noon before she attired herself in a fringed and beaded dress of buckskin, with leggings and exquisite little moccasins and laughingly permitted one of the women attendants to place a painted war feather in her hair. Thus clad and with her wide braids falling, she sat regally to receive the morning call of Red Snake. She was beginning to take a tremulous pleasure in the game of being an immortal. Pauline's questing spirit was too happy in adventure not to find a thrill in being thus translated from hungering captive to reigning queen, from queen to angel.

Red Snake's call was formal and politely brief. He brought with him the amusing interpreter to inquire if the Spirit had found comfort in the hospitality of his people, and more particularly if the war dance of the preceding night had given her satisfaction.

Pauline replied, with gracious solemnity, that her Spirit had found good repose and had been comforted by the pleasant music.

“And when will the White Queen lead us against our enemies —the men of her own color, but not of her kind?” inquired the Chief with child−like eagerness.

Pauline hesitated an instant after the interpreter repeated the question. Then, recovering herself, she answered gravely:

“Today, Red Snake, the Queen rests from her long journey out of the Happy Hunting Ground. Tomorrow also. Upon the next day, perhaps, she will lead the warriors.”

The little interpreter's keen eyes flashed understandingly as he left out the word “perhaps” in repeating her answer.

Red Snake was elated. He made profound salutations, promised that the war party would do her honor, and hastened away to announce the news.

The interpreter lingered, pretending to smooth the door rug. He looked up suddenly and his eyes met Pauline's with an expression of friendly interest. Instinctively she accepted the tacitly offered friendship.

“You are a white man —you speak English,” she said.

“Part white —part red. You speak all white,” he added significantly.

“Of course,” she whispered, stepping to his side. “I am not a Queen — not a Spirit. I do not know why they believe I am. But I must get away —to Rockvale, to Mr. Haines's ranch, to the white people anywhere. You will help me?”

He looked at her pityingly now. He had believed that she was an accomplice of the medicine man in a shrewd fraud, and he had merely wanted to share the joke, risky as it was. To find her an accidental and unwilling

monarch struck him dumb.

"That is very hard," he said slowly. "Look!"

He parted the folds of the teepee door curtain so that she looked out toward the village. Three women sat next the door and beyond were groups of braves, still in their war paint, some conversing, some stalwart and still. They seemed to be doing nothing in particular.

"Well?" questioned Pauline.

He led her across the teepee to a narrow slit in the rear curtain. Through this she peered as she had peered through the door and saw exactly what she had seen though the door —women crouching at their tasks in. the near foreground, an armed circle of warriors beyond. Now she understood.

"I am a prisoner then?"

"They will guard you night and day."

"Why?"

"It was prophesied that a Great White Queen would come to lead them to battle. You have come, as the prophet said, and you have promised to lead them to battle. Above all, be proud, and not afraid."

The Interpreter hesitated a moment.

"There was another White Queen whose coming was prophesied many hundreds of years ago," he said. "She came. She led the Indians victory over other Indians and then she vanished in the strangest way. I would tell you of it —but I am afraid. They say her spirit is always near. Some day you may know how she vanished."

Before she could speak again, he had glided out of the teepee.

While Pauline was away Harry had planned to accomplish mighty labors. With masculine fatuity he let himself believe —before she went away —that a man can get more work done with his goddess afar than when Cupid has a desk in his office.

It did not take more than thirty−six hours to turn separation into bereavement; not more than forty−eight to turn his "freedom for work" into slavery to the fidgets. The office, instead of a refuge, became a prison to him. However, he made a pretense of sticking to the grind, and it was not until the Thursday on which his chartings showed Pauline would arrive at Rockvale that he actually quit and went home.

He slipped into the library to be alone. It was more restful here. As he sat in the great leather chair and unfolded a newspaper, the portrait of Pauline smiled brightly down at him in seeming camaraderie. At his side stood the Mummy so intimately associated with her and his dead father's strange vision from the tomb.

Harry began to read, but he was still nervous to the point of excitement, and his thoughts wandered from the words. He was suddenly conscious of another presence in the room. He let the paper fall and gazed intently at the portrait.

But a moment later, Harry Marvin sprang excitedly from the chair and fairly leaped towards the picture. From somewhere out of the dim air of the library a hand had reached and touched his. It had touched his shoulder and then, with a commanding finger, had pointed upward at the picture on the wall.

"The Mummy! It has warned again," gasped Harry. "Polly, Polly!" he cried to the portrait, "I'm coming. Just hold on."

He strode bark to the table and pressed a bell.

"Tell Reynolds to pack me up, Bemis," he charged the astonished butler. "Tell him it's for Montana in a rush. Have a machine ready for me in fifteen minutes."

Even Bemis's constitutional aversion to haste was overridden. He sped into the hall, calling to the valet,. as Harry picked up a telephone.

"Hello, this is H. B. Marvin. I want our private car attached to the Chicago flyer," he said. "No matter if it holds up the flyer, I'll have President Grigsby's authorization in your hands in five minutes. Thank you. Goodbye."

As he reached the door of the machine, a messenger boy turned up the steps. Harry called to him, took the telegram and read Mrs. Haines' message: "Pauline kidnapped; come at once."

With a muffled ejaculation, he dropped the slip of paper and sprang into the car, which in ten minutes pulled up to the station just as the disgruntled, but curious trainmen were coupling the luxurious Marvinia to the eighteen−hour express.

Owen coming quietly down the steps of the Marvin house, picked up the telegram which Harry had let fall.

Reading it, he smiled, and he was still smiling when another messenger boy followed him to the door. Owen took the second message and the smile broadened into an ugly grin as he read:

"Raymond Owen Fifth avenue, New York. All's well. Hicks."

Five days after the disappearance of Pauline, the express stopped again at Rockvale station. As Harry swung from the rear step to the dingy platform, there were many curious eyes to observe his arrival, but the watchers were mostly women and children. The men of Rockvale were still out on the long hunt for Pauline.

Harry hurried first to the station telephone. Sikes had got Mrs. Haines on the wire as soon as the smoke of the express had been sighted ten miles away. But all she could tell Harry was that there was nothing to tell. His lips were set in a hard line as he hung up the receiver. He asked a few hasty questions of Sikes, hurried across to the little hotel, paid for a room and hired a horse. Blankets and provisions strapped behind, he was out and away up the road to the mountains within an hour.

And while he urged his sturdy little mount to better speed on his uncharted journey, Pauline, not twenty miles away, was preparing for the last journey she might ever make.

The blow had fallen. Her royal place, her immortal power had vanished.

The Indians had permitted one postponement of the day of battle. She had said that the Spirits had spoken to her and warned against bloodshed upon that day. It should be the second day thereafter the Spirits had said. The Indians were disappointed, but they bowed to the edict.

The morrow passed quietly, but on the next day —the fifth of her royal captivity —she was summoned from her house by the assembled chiefs in battle paint and feathers. She tried to whisper through the doorway that the Spirits had forbidden again, but Red Snake answered:

"You are greater than all other Spirits; you will lead us today!" I

"Tell them," said Pauline to the interpreter, "that the White Queen does not lead today!"

Red Snake, his face black with anger, after haranguing the chiefs, turned to Pauline:

"Daughter of the Earth —twice our warriors have been ready for battle and you would not lead them. Today you must go before the Oracle and prove your immortality. The Oracle will tell."

The warriors departed; only the little interpreter remained.

"What does it mean?" cried Pauline.

"It is the race with the Great Death Stone," he answered, and his own voice trembled. "But," he whispered, "I will ride. I will try to find help. Wait."

He slipped under the back of the teepee. Unseen by the excited Indians, he made his way to the line of ponies, with lariats and rifles swung from their saddles. He picked one and, mounting, rode slowly out of the village, speaking here and there to the braves he met.

Pauline, left alone, fell upon her knees and prayed.

Harry met Haines and two of his posse on the road to the mountains.

They were on their way back to a general rendezvous ordered by the Sheriff, but Harry continued on his way up the mountain.

Mile after mile the little mustang put behind him while the sun was still high. On the slope of a hill they came to a crossroads, and Harry, riding almost blindly, reined to the right.

The pony swerved wildly to the left.

Instinctively Harry gave the frightened horse its head.

A half mile farther on the animal stopped and sniffed the wind. At the same instant Harry heard a feeble shout from the road. A weirdly garbed little half breed lay on the ground holding the bridle of the horse that had thrown him.

"Ankle gone," he explained. "Riding for help, I help was. You ride now. White girl —they're killing her up there now."

"White girl? Where? Talk fast, man."

"Two miles over the mountain and down to the valley straight ahead. You go to the bottom of the valley, not to the top —not where the Indians are. Climb tree; take my rope; it's the only chance now."

Harry caught the coiled lariat from the other's saddle and rode as he had never ridden before. All was vague in his mind, except that Pauline was near, was in peril, and he must reach her.

How, by road and trail, he ever reached the Valley of the Death Stone Harry never knew. Perhaps chance,

perhaps some invisible courier guided him to the lonely spot. After long, hard riding he was attracted by the low rumble of many voices lifted in a sort of chant. Following the voices, he came to the foot of a steep cliff side where a long trench, partly of natural formation, partly hewn from the stone, made a chute or runway from mountain top to valley.

At the upper end of the runway a motley band of Indians were engaged in some weird worship. Harry started his horse up the steep in the shelter of the woods. When he came to a spot where a huge tree limb crossed the runway, he remembered the little half breed's words, “Climb the tree; it is the only chance.”

Almost at the same instant from the midst of the Indian group emerged two giant braves carrying a white woman between them. They placed her in the runway. Her golden hair, unbound, floated on the wind.

Harry choked back a cry, threw aside his rifle, caught the lariat, and, swinging up the tree, crawled swiftly out on the overhanging limb. Concealed by the foliage he waited.

A rifle cracked, and, for the first time, he saw that at the top of the runway, behind Pauline, the stood a mighty boulder, almost perfectly round, the diameter of which —about five feet —fitted the trench so well that it could roll in it like a ball in a bowling gutter.

None even among the Indians knew how many times the Stone of Death had rolled and been dragged back again to the top of the cliff. The stains upon it were unnumbered. Up on its surface was written in blood the doom of the false prophets and pretending immortals. None had ever won in the race with the Death Stone.

The crack of the rifle was the signal for a group of red men to press behind the stone to free it on its fearful course. It was also the signal for Pauline to run. Her hair streamed wildly in the wind as she sped, like a frightened deer, down the deadly path.

The rifle sounded again and the Indians heaved the stone into the trench.

It rumbled as it came on. It gained upon the fleeing girl. They had planned to prolong the torture by giving her a hopeless lead.

Dancing, gesticulating, shouting, the Indians watched the race. Only one watcher was silent and motionless. Hidden by the leaves he braced himself upon the tree limb. For the first moments after the rock was released he had turned sick and dizzy. Now, as they came near —the thing relentless but inanimate pursuing the thing helpless, beautiful and most precious to him of all things in the world, not the quiver of a muscle hindered the desperate task that he had set himself.

A moment later he was sobbing like a child as he half dragged, half carried Pauline to his waiting horse. By the magic of luck, by the mystery of a protecting Fate, the lariat noose had fallen about her shoulders. To the amazed and terrified Indians up the cliff she had soared suddenly, spirit−like, out of the trench and vanished in the foliage of the tree, while the boulder thundered on, cheated of its prey.

But swiftly out of the woods upon the open plain below appeared a rider with a woman clasped before him on the saddle.

The baffled Indians scurried for their horses. They reached the valley. They gained upon the burdened horseman and his tired horse. They fired as they rode, the bullets spitting venomously in the dust around Harry and Pauline.

The pony stumbled. Harry jerked it up and it struggled bravely on, but the cries behind sounded louder.

The bullets hit nearer.

Suddenly the firing increased. There were more cries. And Harry, reining the pony saw, galloping over the ridge to the westward, the full posse of Hal Haines. They fired as they came. They cut between him and the Indians. He stopped the pony and lifted Pauline to the ground.

“My precious one, God bless you and forgive us all,” sobbed Mrs. Haines as Polly was caught in her mothering embrace. “And you —you had to come all the way from New York to save her,” she added, turning to Harry.

“Don't say anything about it, Mrs. Haines,” he said in a stage whisper. “I came out here to rest and avoid publicity.”

CHAPTER XVI. SOPHIE MCALLAN'S WEDDING

A few days after their return from Montana Pauline sat reading by the library window. They had come late to the country this Summer and the park of Castle Marvin had had time to leave and bloom into utter splendor. It was like a flowery kingdom in the Land of Faery, and as her eyes were lifted listlessly now and then from the printed page, they roamed over the garden which lay like some vast and radiant Oriental rug in Nature's palace hall. The distant forest was the palace wall, tapestried in green; its dome, a sky of tender blue; its lamp, the morning sun; its Prince, her Harry standing in the garden.

“He should always stand in the garden,” thought Pauline tenderly. “The flowers are such a splendid foil for him.”

She shut her eyes in sheer satiety of beauty. Not even the shabby man mopping his hot forehead as he came along the road, marred the picture. She was a little surprised to see him, a moment later, talking in an easy way with Harry but there was no false pride in her lover —brother and all men were his friends until they proved themselves his enemies. All except Owen.

The shabby man, holding his hat between his nervous hands, was evidently an applicant for work. Harry pointed to the flower beds and the rose trees with a nod of inquiry. The man assented vaguely. And they came on up the path together, making their way towards the servants' quarters over the garage. Harry paused at the window:

“I have hired a new gardener, who does not know his own name,” he said as they passed on.

Pauline turned back to the pages of the Cosmopolitan. A picture in an article on the motor races caught her eye and held it for some reason that she did not at first understand. It was a picture of a man in auto−racer's costume, with a helmet tight upon his head and the keen features and daring eyes peculiar to those who live by peril. She had started to read the caption when she was interrupted by Bemis bringing her letters. With a little flutter of pleasure, womanlike, she began to read the letters from their postmarks before opening them. She hit upon one that brought a little peal of laughter from her, and she opened it eagerly and read:

“Walter and I want you and Harry to be with us at the wedding. Don't faint. We decided only yesterday, and it's going to be very quiet, with just the few people whom we can reach with informal notes like this. You can motor over in an hour. Tell Harry our lions arrived last Thursday from Germany, and after the wedding the keeper will exhibit them. If Harry won't come to see me married, he'll come to see the lions.

Yours in a flurry, Sophie McAllan.”

Pauline laughed again. It was like her unconventional chum, Sophie, to arrange her wedding with the same startling haste that had marked all the breathless events of her life. The lions she mentioned were typical of her original ideas. She had suddenly announced to her parents one day that she was tired of domestic animals and was going to keep lions instead. And her amused and amazed father had not only been forced to yield, but to keep his eye out all over Europe, Asia and Africa for new bargains in well bred lions ever since.

It was also typical of Sophie that she had selected from among all the dashing wooers; at her heels, Walter Trumwell, simple and sedate, who was horrified by her pranks and shocked by her use of slang, but who adored her with the devotion of a frightened puppy. Their engagement had been long announced. It was only in its high−handed abruptness that the wedding was a surprise.

Pauline dropped the letter on the table and hurried from the room to look for Harry.

He had head her first call and was coming in from the garage. Pausing at the door of the library, where he had last seen her, he narrowly avoided a collision with Owen, who was hurrying out. The look of covert guilt on the secretary's face aroused his latent suspicion. But Owen, quickly recovering himself, bowed, apologized and passed on.

Harry stepped into the library. He saw the open letter on the table, looked at the envelope and saw that, he was included in the address. He read the letter, and the old look of trouble came into his eyes as he turned to see if Owen were watching.

As he stepped into the hall he saw the secretary leaving the house. He stood in the doorway and watched Owen depart in his own machine, driven by his own chauffeur, a sullen young fellow whom the other employees

held in aversion.

"He's up to something. I wonder what harm he could do at the McCallan wedding," muttered Harry, as he moved down the steps and out to where the new gardener was working. The man had been greatly improved as to cleanliness and clothes, but there was still the strange distant look in his eyes as he got up from a flower bed to speak to Harry.

Pauline, after circling the house in vain search of her brother, had returned to her unread letters and her magazine.

As she lifted the latter from the table, the picture of the man in racing costume again struck her eye, and this time she read the caption:

"Ralph Palmer, whose skull was fractured in the Vanderbilt Cup Race and who disappeared from a hospital six weeks ago."

She studied the face again. It seemed the living likeness of one whom she had seen dead. Suddenly her thoughts crystallized and she sprang up. She rushed again to the front door, carrying the magazine open and saw Harry and the gardener talking on the path. She ran down to them.

The gardener took off his hat, but Pauline looked at him with such piercing scrutiny that he hurried to resume his work. Harry, after a brief affectionate greeting, turned to give some last instructions, and, behind his back, Pauline stole another look at the magazine.

"It is; I am sure it is," she said half aloud.

Harry turned quickly. "What is, dear goddess of the garden?" he asked cheerily.

Pauline closed the magazine abruptly.

"Oh! I —I was dreaming," she answered, with a little nervous laugh.

"You can't have a dream when you are one," he said, putting his arm about her waist as they moved back towards the house.

"I have news," she exclaimed, remembering the wedding invitation. "Sophie McCallan is to be married tonight —just like that —without telling till the last minute."

"I read the letter in the library."

"Did you tell Farrell to have the car ready?"

"I will, dearest. But I am not sure that I can go."

"But you must go."

"I got a telegram this morning, and I must go into town."

"To New York! Oh, Hairy, I simply hate your old business. Haven't we got enough money without trying to make all there is in the world? Aren't we..."

"No, not to New York —just into Westbury, Miss Firebrand. I must use the wire direct to the office."

"Absurd. Why don't you telephone your message?"

"Code messages, dear. They can't be talked."

"But you'll be back in time to go with me?"

"I'll do my best. I'm starting directly. There's Farrell with the machine now."

"But Farrell must get my car ready."

"He will. Farrell isn't going with me."

Her threats and pretty pleadings followed him as he drove away. But Harry did not drive towards Westbury farther than the first crossroads. Instead, he swerved out across country towards Windywild, the great McCallan estate. Only a vague purpose moved him. His suspicions were groping. But he was forming dimly in his mind a plan to keep Pauline away from the McCallan wedding. Premonition whispered that even among the nuptial gayeties there might be danger.

On the crest of Winton's Hill, from which the road slopes down to beautiful Windywild through parked forests, but from which the rambling white villa, with its barns and garage can be seen in striking bird's−eye view, Harry stopped his machine.

To his far vision there was no unusual stir about the McCallan house, in spite of the wedding day. Owen's car was not at the gate nor in the yard, and he certainly would not have sent it to the garage if he were making a business visit to the manager of the estate.

With a hateful sense of spying on the innocent and the sincere dread of being met there by anyone —even by

Owen —he was about to turn around, go back and agree to take Pauline to the wedding, when the movement of a figure through the distant garage yard made him stiffen to attention and strain his gaze.

In an instant he had whipped his binoculars from under the seat of the runabout and was staring through them at the establishment below. A few moments afterwards he carefully replaced the glasses, and drove away.

Owen had left the Marvin place in haste, seemingly intent upon a direct and important errand, but if any one had seen where the car stopped an hour later, both the haste and the errand would still have been unexplained.

They were in the loneliest stretch of woods a half mile beyond the McCallan house when Owen leaned forward and said to his driver: “You may stop here.”

“Yes, sir,” answered the young man with a respect that he showed to no one else. He drew the machine to the roadside and then asked: “Am I to go with you or stay here?”

“Stay here,” answered Owen. “But don't sit there lolling in the seat. We have broken down —you understand —and you will keep us broken down and keep on mending the machine until I return.”

Owen, who was not averse to physical effort when his dearest object was at stake, walked the half mile to Windywild rapidly. Unlike Harry's, Owen's plans were definite and fixed.

He strode through the front gate but took his way immediately to the stable in front of which two grooms were currying a restless horse.

“Hello, Simon,” said Owen. “My car has broken down up the road here. I wonder if you can help me out.”

“I guess so,” said the groom, not very cheerfully.

“We got plenty to do today as it is, Mr. Owen, with the weddin' party on an' them gol blamed lions to look after.”

“Who talka da lions?” cried a grim voice, and, turning, Owen pretended to see for the first time a short, heavy set man of the gypsy type, seated on a box at the stable door smoking a cigarette and evidently regarding all the world as the object of his personal hate.

“Why, who is that man?” asked Owen of the groom in a tone of condescending interest. “Where have I seen him before?”

“If ye ever saw him before, ye wouldn't want to see him again,” declared the groom. “He's Garcia, Miss Sophie's new lion tamer, but we ain't had time to tame him yet. He's wild.”

The answer to this taunt was a rush from Garcia, who, uttering an unintelligible roar that might have done credit to one of his lions, sprang towards the groom. The latter took quick refuge behind the horse.

The man's fury made Owen step aside, too, but he looked on with an appreciative smile. As Garcia came back, growling, to his seat on the box, the secretary stepped up to him and held out his hand.

“Is it really you?” he said, the patronage in his voice offsetting the familiarity of his manner.

“If it looka. like me, it is me,” snarled the Gypsy. “Him —over there,” he cried, pointing to the groom, “he donta looka like his own face if I get him.”

“Come, old friend,” said Owen in a low voice. “Don't you remember me? Don't you remember the Zoological Garden in Brussels and the lion that bent a cage so easily one day that it killed Herr Bruner, of Berlin.”

The last words spoken almost in a whisper, had an electrical effect upon the lion tamer. He fairly writhed in his seat and cowered away from Owen as from one who held a knife over his head.

It was at this moment that Harry, looking from the hill, put away his binoculars and turned his car around.

“Come, let's see the lions, may I?” asked Owen, cheerily ignoring the man's terror, secretly enjoying it.

Without a word Garcia led the way into the stables.

The lions, six in number, were quartered in box stalls rebuilt with heavy steel bars. They had been quiet, but the sight of a stranger set them wild and their roaring thundered through the building.

Garcia led Owen to farthest cage and stopped abruptly.

“You after me?” he inquired, his nerve partially recovered.

“Yes, but to help you, not to harm you, old friend.”

“You lie, I theenk. You tella the police of the leetle accident in Bresseli —no?”

“No, indeed; you are too useful a man to lose, Garcia. Besides, I need you again.”

The gypsy held up his hands in refusal. “No,” he whispered. “I hava one dead man's face here always.” He pointed to his eyes. “I cry it away; I go all over da world. I not forget. He not forget. He folla me.”

Owen laughed. “Come, come,” he said, “you are foolish. You had nothing to do with that affair, except to

loosen one little bar ever so little. (Garcia groaned.) And it would be just as easy to leave say a cage door open tonight while they're having the wedding."

"You mean —?"

"I mean only a little joke. Nobody will be hurt, I feel sure. Of course, if any one should be, you could not be blamed. Come, I want a quick answer. If you won't do it, of course —you don't want anything said about Brussels, do you, old friend?"

The man uttered another cry.

Owen drew money from his pocket. The man seized it greedily. If he was to do the blackest of deeds, there was nothing in his conscience to prevent him from profiting.

"Tonight —during the wedding, remember," said Owen. "I will give you the signal. And, mind, you brute, if you don't do it, you know what I'll do to you."

A few moments later he was out chatting cheerily with the grooms. "I'm not going to ask you to help me with the car, Simon," he said. "You're too crowded today, I see. I'll send Farrell up to the Hodgins House and wait for him. Good−day."

He swung off down the road, greatly at peace with all the world. He did not even rebuke his chauffeur when he caught him loafing on the grass.

Harry and the household chauffeur, Farrell, were talking together outside the garage and Harry was handing a $10 bill to Farrell, who grinned broadly as he pocketed it. Owen saw nothing in this to cause him apprehension. Harry was always generous with the employees. It was well for Owen's plan that he should go to the wedding in so pleasant a mood.

Pauline looked up from her book as Harry entered the library.

"I'm so happy," she cried. "You are a darling boy to come home so soon."

He accepted her rewarding kiss gratefully.

"Yes, I think it's all right," he said, "though there are some serious matters in hand at the office."

The butler appeared at the door. "Farrell asks if he may have a word with you, Sir."

"Farrell? Why, yes; let him come here."

The chauffeur, cap in hand, stepped into the room.

"Guess I got to take the big car to New York, Sir. I haven't got the parts to fix it, and I can't get them nowhere but in New York."

"Very well; that's all right, Farrell."

"But be back surely by four o'clock, Farrell," warned Pauline. "You are the only driver I have."

"Oh, I'll get back all right, Miss."

But immediately after uttering these words in a tone of perfect respect, Farrell committed an astonishing offense against the laws that separate servitor and employer. He caught the shimmer of a wink upon Harry's eye, and he had the audacity to return it.

Three minutes afterwards Farrell did a stranger thing. Going direct from the house to the telephone in the garage, he took up the receiver and called up the house. Owen, passing by, stopped spellbound, at the door, to hear these mandatory words spoken by the chauffeur to Harry Marvin, whose answering voice could actually be heard by Owen through the open window of the library.

"Mr. Marvin, you are needed at your office. Come at once," phoned Farrell.

He was grinning again as he came out of the garage, got into a machine and drove away. Owen gazed after him with puzzled, lowering brows.

CHAPTER XVII. PALMER COMES BACK

Harry had just hung up the receiver of the telephone and had turned to Pauline with feigned disappointment.

“My office is calling me,” he said. “I'm needed there at once. I shan't be able to go to the wedding.”

The sight of the happiness fading from her flowerlike face filled him with shame. It was the first time in his life that he had lied to her and he was half sorry now that he had done so. But he must go through with it now, and if there was apology in the kisses he pressed on her reproachful eyes it was not confessed.

“I am going to the wedding just the same,” declared Pauline.

“Of course, you are,” he agreed heartily. “Farrell will be back with the car by five o'clock.”

“But who will chaperon me?” she objected, woman−like, to her own decision. “It would look absurd to take Margaret, and Owen isn't invited.”

“You will not need a chaperon going over —provided Farrell gets back,” he said as he took his hat from the table.

“You mean you don't believe Farrell will get back!” she exclaimed. “You are treating me like a child. You don't want me to go to the wedding just because you can't go.”

“Now, don't, don't,” he pleaded, as she started to leave the room. “I don't mean anything of the kind. I mean Farrell is the only man who can drive the large car or the roadster safely. There is no reason in the world why he shouldn't get back.”

“And how am I to come home?” she demanded, turning again toward him.

“I will call for you in the runabout on my way from New York. Perhaps even I shall be able to arrive in time to greet the happy pair,” he added cheerfully. “You'll make my excuses.”

Owen, who was listening at the door, had just time, to glide away before Harry hurried out.

The young master of the house had driven far toward the station before the secretary returned to the library.

This time he entered and pretended to be hunting for a magazine. Pauline's disconsolate face gave him the excuse he desired.

“Why, Miss Marvin, has anything happened?” he asked in a tone of concern.

“Oh, everything has gone wrong,” she cried, almost in tears.

“What do you mean?”

“Harry is called to the city just when we are invited to Sophie McCallan's wedding, and Farrell has taken the limousine for some silly repairs. They'll not get back; I know they'll not. They never do.”

“But, Miss Marvin?”

“Oh, don't try to apologize for him. He cares more for his old business than he does for me. He makes automobiles himself, and yet I can't have enough for my own personal use. I'm sorry I forgave him,” she flared.

“You are right, Miss Marvin; it is an outrage.”

She looked at Owen in astonishment. It was the first time she had ever heard him venture a critical word against Harry.

“I think it is your fault,” she declared. “You are the one who should see that I have cars and drivers —everything I want.”

“But you know the machines have not come from the town house, Miss Marvin. They will be here tomorrow.”

“Well, Owen, it isn't for you to say that what my brother does is an outrage. He does everything for the best.”

“Miss Marvin, Harry is lying to you,” he said quietly. “He and your chauffeur have formed a plot against you. Your car will not be back this afternoon at all.”

She sprang to her feet, furious.

“Owen, be still! How do you dare to say such things?”

Raymond Owen had found his great moment, His enemy had set his own trap and Owen would see that he should not escape easily. The opportunity to break forever the bond of faith and affection between Harry and Pauline had come. His voice rose as he poured out his revelations and denunciations.

Pauline was leaving the room, when he thrust himself before her.

“You must hear me. I know what I say is true. It hurts me as deeply as it will hurt you, but you must hear it. I

believe I have discovered —by the merest accident —the cause of all your perils. The plots against you have been arranged at home."

"You are mad. I will not listen to you. Let me pass."

"Not until you have heard," he declared firmly.

"I was passing the door of the garage only a few moments ago," he went on in a rapid whisper. "I saw Farrell at the telephone. He called the private house number —the number of this phone on the table. You and Mr. Marvin were sitting here. I was so surprised that I stopped and listened to Farrell's words. I could see Mr. Marvin listening at the phone here. Farrell said: 'Mr. Marvin, you are needed at your office. Come at once.' Then he hung up the receiver and came out, laughing. He got into the limousine and drove off towards the city. If he could drive the limousine to the city, could he not drive it to the McCallan's for you?"

Pauline put her hands to her ears with a protesting cry.

"It isn't true," she whispered. "It is only a scheme of Farrell's to get an afternoon off."

"It is a scheme of Harry's to keep you from the wedding —for what purpose only he knows. It is one of many schemes that have held your life in constant peril. I saw their plan arranged. I saw your brother hand money to Farrell at the door of the garage and they parted, laughing."

Pauline's mind whirled. "I won't believe it! I can't; I can't!" she cried. Doubt and fear and fury mingled in her breast. Weeping tumultuously, she rushed past Owen and up to her own room.

Two hours later, the struggle over, she called Margaret, who bathed her hot temples and dressed her for the wedding.

Harry Marvin, in town, tried his best to make good use of the time he had stolen. But the thought of his well−meant chicanery was heavy on his mind and it was not unmixed with apprehension. After all, Pauline might find a way to go to the wedding. Might he not, instead of having averted a danger, simply have absented himself from the scene of danger when he was most needed? His nervousness increased. He found himself incapable of work, and at three o'clock, to the surprise of his clerks, who had thought his unexpected visit must mean an important conference of directors, he called a taxicab and started for Westbury. But he had no intention of going to Castle Marvin unless it was necessary. He meant to telephone from Westbury and learn whether or not Pauline had gone to the wedding. If she had not, he would remain away until late.

A few minutes before four o'clock, Farrell, with his pretty wife whom he had called to share his plot and his holiday, drove up to a rural telegraph office. They were both laughing as Farrell handed this message to the operator:

Miss Pauline Marvin, Castle Marvin, Westbury. Blow−out. Can't get back this evening. George Farre

"You —don't want to say what kind of a blow−out it is, do you?" grinned the operator, glancing out of the window at the spic and span machine.

"If you don't see everything you look at, you'll save your eyesight," replied Farrell cheerfully.

At the next town he telephoned to the Marvin office in New York. He came out of the booth with a worried look.

"The boss has left in a taxi for home," he said. "Wonder what that means. Guess we better sort of travel along towards Westbury. He might need me."

They changed their course and had driven for some time at an easy rate through the smiling country when the sound of a machine coming up speedily behind caused Farrell to look around. The passenger in the open cab waved his hand and Farrell, saluting, slowed down. The cars stopped, side by side. Harry raised his hat to the young woman.

"You're not going home, are you, Farrell?" he said.

"I heard you'd left the office and I thought something might have happened, and I'd be near enough so you could get me quick."

"Nothing has happened. I'll get along nicely with this cab. You'd better keep a good distance and not come home until tomorrow morning."

"Very well, sir. That suits us fine." Farrell grinned.

The taxi started on and Farrell turned off at the next crossroad.

"He's a great boss, but a queer one," he said to his wife. "It's a queer family all around. I wonder what's being cooked up now."

As the time of Farrell's expected return drew near Pauline's despair and anger increased with every moment. When four o'clock struck she arose and walked nervously out to the garage to ask if any word had been received from Farrell. She found Owen there.

As she turned toward him, after her futile questioning, Pauline's grief suddenly mounted to anger.

“It is after four, and Farrell has not returned,” she exclaimed.

She had come out to the yard in the exquisite white gown that she was to wear to the wedding, a flashing jewel at her white throat, her hair done regally high. Now, in her anger, she was a picture of fury made beautiful.

Her outburst was interrupted by a messenger boy with a telegram. She opened the message with nervous fingers.

“Blow out. Can't get back this evening,” she read.

She tore the message into pieces, dropped them and, stamped upon them with her white slippers.

“It's true, it's true!” she cried, turning desperately to Owen.

“I am terribly, hopelessly sorry —but I knew that it was true,” he said solemnly.

At this moment along the drive came the new gardener wheeling a barrow of fresh mold, his rake and hoe lying across it. “Palmer!” Pauline cried.

The man let fall the barrow as if he had been cut with a whip lash. He looked up and for an instant his dazed eyes seemed to brighten. Then he picked up the barrow as if no one had spoken and went on.

Pauline followed him.

“Bring out the roadster,” she called over her shoulder, and, as she stopped beside the gardener. The garage men, bewildered, but used to the kindly vagaries of their pretty employer, sent the machine down driveway.

“Can you drive an automobile, Palmer?” asked Pauline.

This time the man's eyes did not brighten. He looked at her respectfully, but dully. She drew him to the car and repeated the question. He only grinned foolishly and kept on shaking his head.

“Wait,” she said, and, running back to the house, reappeared directly wearing her hat and flowing white wrap. “Come, Palmer, you must drive me to the wedding,” she declared.

She made him get into the car and take the wheel. As she got in beside him, his hands fumbled aimlessly with the lever.

“Palmer! Palmer!” she dinned his forgotten name into his ears. “Don't you remember the race, the road, the flying cars, the speed, the speed! Don't you remember the man who was in the lead —the man the crowd cheered for? That was you, Palmer, the greatest of all the drivers.”

She leaned forward in the seat, arms outstretched as if holding a tugging wheel, eyes set straight ahead, slippered feet threading imaginary levers, graceful body swerving.

He watched her, frowning. A vague purpose seemed to animate the hand groping with the levers.

“Wake up, Palmer! It's time for the race —the Vanderbilt Cup. Kirby and Michaels have started. There's Wharton coming to the line. Don't you see the crowds? Can't you hear them cheering? Palmer! Palmer! * * * Yes, we're coming! * * * Palmer is coming back. * * * “Way there!”

He found the self−starter; the engine sounded. He found the clutch and gears. His eyes were shut. The car started slowly and he opened his eyes. Pauline sank back in the seat, laughing and clapping her hands, half hysterically.

“Bravo, Palmer!” she exulted.

The astonished workmen saw them glide through the outer gate. Raymond Owen from his window saw them and rubbed his hands pleasantly. Fate indeed seemed to be favoring his deadly work today!

The car swung into the highway.

“Drive faster,” commanded Pauline.

The listless hands hardened on the wheel. She saw him bend over and fix his vision on the road. She thrilled at the miracle she had wrought.

More speed, and the wind blew her cape from her shoulders; the dust beat in her face. She merely tightened her veil and sat silent.

“Take the first turn to the right,” she called in his ear as they neared the crossroad. He did not slacken the speed.

“It's a sharp turn; slow a little,” she cautioned. He did not seem to hear her.

She placed her hand sharply on his arm. He drove past the crossroad, the speed to the last notch.

Pauline tried to stand up in the seat and seize the wheel. He thrust her back with one hand, not even looking at her. He was leaning far over the wheel now, his eyes blazing. She could see the beat of blood in his temple.

“Stop! Stop! You are on the wrong road. You will kill us both!” she screamed in his deaf ears. She tried again to wrest the wheel from him, but this time he held her fast after he had flung her back. She had raised up a Frankenstein for her own destruction. She was being driven by a madman.

As they took the curve outside Westbury village another car filled with men and women fairly grazed them. The women screamed and the men shouted wildly after them. But they flashed on.

Down the hill at Gangley's Mills the pace grew even greater. From the west prong of the road fork at the bottom a taxicab shot into view. There was a shout of warning, a rattle and creak as the taxi swerved, safe by inches.

On the skirts of Clayville a group of farmers and a constable were arguing a roadside dispute. Pauline could see dim figures leap into the road waving arms; she could hear them shouting. The figures jumped to either side as Palmer drove through the group.

They sprang back into the road, cursing and shaking their fists, only to be routed anew by the rush of the taxicab following.

The roadster straightened out on the ledge of Scrogg Hill. In spite of the curve and the precipice Palmer held his speed. His daring, his utter mastery, stirred a kind of admiration in Pauline and the death she saw looming stirred anew her courage. She wrenched her arm free from his grip. She stood up and swung her weight against the man, rasping for the wheel. The car swerved toward the cliff, but he jerked it back, striking at her brutally with his free hand. She fell in the seat, but returned, desperate, to the encounter. She caught the wheel. She tried to command it, but his strength drew the other way. The machine shot toward the abyss. There was a crackle as the wooden guide fence splintered under the wheels. There was a crash!

Harry, leaning from the taxicab behind, uttered a groan. The roadster had gone over the cliff.

Fifty feet down the rock−gnarled hillside they took Pauline from the clutch of the dead driver. His fall had broken hers and it was only from fear that she had fainted. Harry, pressing the taxi driver's flask to her lips, saw her eyes open and his cry was like a prayer of thanksgiving.

When Harry lifted Pauline to carry her to the taxicab, to his abasement he felt her hands press him away. He thought she had not yet recovered, that she believed herself still in the grasp of the madman. He set her on her feet and looked at her questioningly.

Without a word she turned from him and started up the road.

“Pauline!” he cried. “What do you mean? Don't you know me? It's Harry.”

She kept on without turning. He caught her by the arm. “Don't you know me, your brother?” he pleaded.

She turned, tremblingly. “You are not my brother,” she blazed. “And I did not know you until today.”

“You are hurt and ill, dearest. Come, let me take you home.”

She walked on up the road.

“But where are you going?” he demanded.

“I am going to the wedding. You tried to keep me away by your base trick but you can't do it.”

Now he understood. “I know; I know,” he groaned. “It was the meanest and most useless thing. But I did not think it was safe for you to go to the wedding. I am sorry to the bottom of my heart.”

“Goodbye,” she said coldly, walking on.

“But you can't go like that,” he exclaimed, pointing to her torn and draggled clothes, her unfastened hair.

“It is better to go to friends whom I can trust,” she said coldly, and moved on.

As gently as he could he lifted her in his arms and carried her to the taxicab. Placing her in the seat he followed, and as the machine started began to pour out his repentance. She would not even answer, but sat with averted face, weeping and trembling.

At last she became quiet. He drew her tattered wrap closer about her shoulders and put his arm around her so that her head rested against his breast. A moment later, looking down, he was surprised to see that she was smiling like a tired child.

CHAPTER XVIII. A HOT YOUNG COMET

“That's right; praise her; pet her; make her think she's great, so she'll do it all over again.”

Harry turned away wrathfully from the joyous greetings of Lucille and Chauncey Hamlin to Pauline.

“Harry is quite right,” said Lucille. “I ought to snub you entirely. It is disgraceful, it's wicked to be as brave as you are, Polly.”

“Oh, I say, Lucy,” pleaded her brother. “You'll have Miss Pauline all upset.”

“She likes it,” snapped Harry. “She's been upset out of everything from a balloon to a house afire, and now she's looking for new capsizable craft.”

“Polly! You wouldn't try it again! You don't want any more thrills after this?” Lucille's astonishment was sincere.

Pauline cast a serpentine glance at Harry. “Am I to live quietly at home with a creature like him?” she inquired.

“Why don't you have me beheaded, 0 Great White Queen?”

“The braves are reserved for torture. Where are you people going so bright and early?” she added turning to Chauncey.

“Going to take you for a little morning spin. Car's perfectly safe.”

“Yes, do come along, Polly,” urged Lucille.

“What! In a safe car? Never!” exclaimed Harry. “It isn't done, you know—not in this family. Now, if you had a hot restless young comet hitched at the door, Chauncey.”

Pauline laughed merrily. “No, I couldn't go this morning even behind a restless young comet.” She glanced mischievously at Harry. “Duty before pleasure; have important business on hand. No, I can't tell even you, Lucille —you're not to be trusted. You'd be sure to tell Harry.”

As the Hamlins drove off, Harry turned anxiously.

“You've not forgotten your promise? There is to be a long rest from wildness, isn't there —no more adventures?”

“Yes —a rest from wild ones. I am going to have a tame adventure now.”

“Polly, Polly! What do you mean?”

“This,” she answered, taking the morning paper from the table. Unfolding it, she showed him a headline:

GREAT LORDNOR STABLES TO BE AUCTIONED

World−Famous Horses of Late Millionaire Sportsman Under Hammer.

“Well?” questioned Harry.

“Don't you see?” she tantalized him.

“Not in the least.”

“I am going to buy Firefly and ride him in the steeplechase handicap.”

Harry's smile was almost despairing, but he answered quickly. “Oh, I see. You'll have me ride him and break my precious neck. I thought for a second you meant to ride yourself.”

“That's just what I do mean. It will be gorgeously exciting —and perfectly safe.”

“Safe?”

“Well, of course, I might be killed by a fall or something.”

He laughed in spite of himself. “I shall not permit it,” he said.

“You will not permit it?” she beamed. “Then I'll ask my guardian. I may ride Firefly in the steeplechase if I choose, mayn't I, Owen?” she asked brightly.

Pauline could never bear malice; already she had forgiven Owen, as well as Harry.

The secretary had just entered and was watching the two with a questioning eye.

“If we own Firefly, you may,” he smiled back at her.

“I told you,” she triumphed over Harry.

“But we don't own him,” said Owen, puzzled.

“We shall this afternoon. The Lordnor stables are being sold. Please give me a great deal of money so that I

can't be outbid."

"Does Miss Pauline really mean this?" asked the secretary.

"She does," Harry answered in a tone of disgust at what he thought now was only Owen's weakness. There seemed no chance of a plot against Pauline in this original scheme of her own.

"She rides wonderfully. I do not see why she should not," Owen condescended.

"You don't seem to see much of anything," declared Harry.

"But you'll take me to the auction?" coaxed Pauline.

"I'll have to —or you'll spend the whole estate on a Shetland pony."

Owen sauntered from the room, laughing. Bareheaded he walked quite across the garden and down into the wood−copse by the path gate.

A gypsy was leaning upon the gate and gazing nervously up and down the road. He turned at the sound of Owen's footsteps, and the eyes of the young chief, Michel Mario, gazed apprehensively into the smiling eyes of the secretary.

"How are you, Balthazar?" greeted Owen.

"Don't use that name to me," pleaded the gypsy. "You have work for me? I have come all the way back from Port Vincent to see you."

"It was kind of you," said Owen with the faintest tinge of sarcasm. "Yes, I have important work for you. Have you ever doctored a horse, Balthazar?"

"Many times —but not with my beauty medicine," grinned the chief.

"I mean with a hypodermic needle. I mean a race horse−so that he might possibly fall in a race."

"And injure the rider?"

"Exactly."

"It is very easy —but very dangerous. I should want —"

"I know; I know," exclaimed Owen petulantly. "Here is the money."

Balthazar gloated over the yellow bills.

"And here is the weapon."

The Gypsy took the needle from the hand of the secretary and thrust it quickly into the inside pocket of his blouse. "Thank you, master. I will do what you say," said the Gypsy, making a move to go.

"Not quite so fast," commanded Owen. "You do not know the place or the time."

"The Jericho track next Saturday," answered the Gypsy promptly. "What is the horse?"

"Firefly. It will be bought at the Jericho stables this afternoon. You will be there to see it and to remember it. Goodbye now."

"Goodbye master —and many thanks."

Michael Caliban, wealthiest of sportsmen, attended the auction of the Lordnor stables, and seemed bent on adding the entire string of splendid horses to his own far−famed monarchs of the track.

The only time during the afternoon that he met with defeat was when the famous steeplechaser Firefly was brought out.

"Five hundred dollars," said Caliban curtly.

"Six hundred," said the musical voice of a girl and the crowd turned to look.

Caliban smiled condescendingly. "A thousand," he said.

"There, you see you can't do it. The horse isn't worth any more," cautioned Harry.

"Fifteen hundred dollars," cried Pauline.

"Does she mean that, or is this only a joke?" demanded Caliban, turning to the auctioneer.

"The lady's word is good enough for me. Going at fifteen hundred — going, going —"

"Two thousand dollars. I guess that'll stop any jokes around here," grinned Caliban.

"Three thousand," said Pauline so quickly that even Harry gasped, cut short in mid−protest.

Caliban turned away and strode disgustedly out of the crowd amid hoots of laughter.

"He is worth it; why he is worth any price," cried Pauline as the smiling groom led Firefly up to her.

The magnificent animal thrust its nose instantly between her outstretched arms, and as she patted him delightedly the crowd rippled with spontaneous applause.

Harry joined her on the way to see Firefly put in his stall. He gave the caretaker instructions, and laughingly

dragged Pauline away from her new pet.

As they entered their machine, Raymond Owen came from behind the stable.

Engrossed in the business complications growing out of the European conflict, Harry had quite forgotten Firefly and the steeplechase when the day of the great Jericho handicap arrived.

He was in the library reading a letter when there burst upon his sight through the open doorway a vision that took his breath away.

Pauline, in full jockey uniform, white and blue and yellow, was pirouetting on her gleaming black boots before him.

“Polly!” he cried, unable to grasp the meaning of the prank. “Have you cut off your hair?” he added in alarm.

“No; here it is,” she laughed, snapping off her visored cap and revealing masses of hair.

“Oh, don't do it,” he begged. “Look! Here's a letter from the McCallans asking us to their house party in the Adirondacks. We're expected tomorrow. Let's go there instead.”

He handed her the letter. Without glancing at it she flicked it into the air with her riding crop and danced out of her room..

“So I surrender again,” he murmured, laughing in spite of himself.

Riding out toward the starting line, Pauline swerved her course a little to avoid the gaze of the gentlemen riders who eyed her curiously. She heard a call from an automobile beside the track and rode, over to where Harry and Owen were seated in the car.

Their lifted hats as, she bent to shake hands with them caused the crowd to stare in astonishment. Pauline, blushing furiously, sped Firefly to the line.

“That horse works queer,” commented Harry, as she rode away.

“Do you think so?” asked Owen.

“Yes, it's on edge, but its legs are shaky. I wonder...”

But the riders were ready. The signal sounded. The crowd's cheer rose in the names of their various favorites. Field−glasses were unbuckled.

“By jolly, Firefly took the first jump in the lead,” cried Harry, a thrill of admiration lightening the worry in his heart.

“He's all right,” said Owen.

Over the wide green the horses began to string out, with Firefly ahead.

“She's going to win it; I believe she is,” exclaimed Harry excitedly as he and Owen stood in the automobile. “No —no; he wobbled at the fourth jump. He's losing ground.”

But Firefly seemed uddenly to grip his strength as one horse passed him. He pulled himself together under Pauline's urging. He regained the lead.

They came down splendidly toward the homestretch. The bodies of the powerful beasts rose one by one over the last hedge.

“They're over! They've won —or, heaven help her! They're down!”

Leading at the last jump, the drugged heart of the great horse had conquered his courage. As he stumbled heavily, Pauline shot over his head and lay helpless in the path of the other riders.

Harry, dashing madly toward the track, but hopelessly far from her, had to turn away his head as the crashing hoofs passed her. When he looked again, attendants were carrying her swiftly to the clubhouse. He sped toward it, Owen following.

Harry tore his way through the excited crowd to the side of Pauline. A doctor was administering restoratives. Pauline opened her eyes and looked about her bewildered. She saw Harry's anxious face and smiled penitently.

“I've —learned a lesson this time,” she whispered.

“It is nothing serious —her shoulder bruised a little,” said the doctor.

“Thank Heaven!” breathed Raymond Owen with well feigned emotion.

CHAPTER XIX. OWEN OFFERS A REWARD

Cries of delight coming, in the voice of Pauline, from the direction of the garage made Harry lay down his newspaper and go forth to investigate.

As he approached he saw Bemis and Lucille's coachman lifting a crate from a carriage. From within the crate came the whimpering barks of an imprisoned bull terrier.

“Oh, isn't he dear?” cried Pauline turning to Harry.

“I don't know, I haven't yet made his acquaintance. Where did he come from?”

“Lucille sent him to me. Johnson just brought him over. Hurry, Bemis, and let him out. The poor darling!”

“Is that what is called puppy love?” inquired Harry.

“Hush,” commanded Pauline. “And Bemis, run and tell Martha to cook something for him —a beefsteak and potatoes ”

“And oysters on the half shell,” suggested Harry.

“Love me,” announced Pauline sternly, “love my dog.”

The coachman had ripped of the last top bar of the crate and a splendid terrier sprang out with a suddenness that made Pauline retreat a little. But, as if he had been trained to his part, he bent his head, and, with wagging tail, approached her. In an instant she was kneeling beside him rewarding his homage with enthusiastic pats and fantastic encomiums.

“Why, he likes me already —isn't he charming?” she demanded.

Harry threw up his hands—“And this for a dog —a new dog —possibly a mad dog!”

“You are a brute.”

The dog was making rapid acquaintance with his new home, investigating the garage and, more profoundly, the kitchen, door.

“Here, Cyrus, come Cyrus,” called Pauline, and started towards the house. Owen, in his motorcycle togs, was lighting a cigar on the veranda when they came up the steps. Without even pretending to enter into Pauline's enthusiasm over the terrier, he excused himself and walked off briskly in the direction of the garage. A few minutes later they saw him on the motorcycle speeding down the drive.

“I wonder what the impressive business is today,” remarked Harry sarcastically.

“Let poor Owen alone. He is good and kind even if he doesn't care for Cyrus.”

“Look here! Why don't you ever say any of these nice things to me — the things, you say to dogs —and secretaries?”

“Because I've promised to marry you —some day —and it is fatal to let a husband —even a futurity husband —know that you admire him.”

“Well, as long as you do, it is all right.”

A half mile down the main road to Westbury a runabout was drawn up, and a converted gypsy was alternately pretending to repair an imaginary break and relieving his nerve−strain by pacing the road. Balthazar's fantastic garments had given way to a plain sack suit and motor duster, but the profit of his employment by Raymond Owen was worth the discomfort of becoming “civilized.”

The muttering of a distant motor made him fall to his knees and, wrench in hand, wiggle hastily under the machine.

To all appearance he was bitterly pre−occupied with the woes of a stalled tourist when a motorcycle chugged to a stop beside the runabout and Owen called him.

“I thought you had failed of our appointment, master,” he said eagerly as he crawled out. “I have waited for more than half an hour.”

“It is sad that you should be inconvenienced, old friend,” answered Owen.

“I have done what you commanded me, master,” Balthazar said with an ingratiating smile. I have found them.”

“Found whom?”

“The friends I spoke about at our last meeting —the little band that earns money by —making it.”

"Oh, yes —your counterfeiters. Are they to be trusted?"

"Master, all guilty men are to be trusted. There is always protection in knowing the sins of others."

"Sometimes, Balthazar, I almost suspect you of possessing a brain. But, remember, I have told you that I shall soon be through —unless you accomplish something."

"Master, it is because I dare not risk your freedom —your life. For myself I care nothing. I live to serve you, who have been my benefactor."

"You lie, of course," remarked Owen casually. "But what of the new plan?"

"They are in Bantersville, only twelve miles from Castle Marvin. A house that has been long occupied and with no houses near."

"And they are still manufacturing coins there?"

"Yes; but they are becoming frightened. Two of the distributors have been arrested. They would be glad of a safer, a swifter method of making money."

"Come along, then."

Owen mounted the motorcycle while Balthazar sprang to the seat and started the runabout. They sped briskly over the roads, turning at last into an old weed−grown wagon path fringed copse−like by the branches of ever−hanging trees. The machine swished through the barrier leaves and came out upon a small clearing where there stood a gaunt house, evidently long deserted.

Balthazar drove on along the road for almost a quarter of a mile before he stopped the machine, Owen following without question. They left the runabout and the motorcycle and walked back to the house.

"It is an excellent location," commented Owen, as Balthazar lead the way into a basement entrance. "Who did you say was the man in charge of the —concern?"

"Rupert Wallace. He is a world−traveler like yourself, though no match for you in mind, master."

Balthazar, as he spoke, was rapping lightly on a wall, which had no sign of a door. It was pitch dark where they stood. But suddenly with hardly a sound, two sliding doors opened to the Gypsy's signal and a faint light from a gas jet on the wall gleamed on an inner passage. Balthazar, closely followed by Owen, walked quickly down the secret hall, and, without signal this time, another set of silent doors opened upon a brightly lighted room.

A crabbed, withered woman admitted them.

The room was overheated because of the presence of a gas forge on which a cauldron of metal was being melted. On one side there was a stamping press, and on the other a set of molds.

Wallace noted Owen's curiosity, and stepping to the table in the middle of the room, picked up a handful of half−dollar pieces.

"You are interested in our work —the work of supplying the poor with sufficient funds to meet the increased cost of living," he said, smiling. "These are some of our product. We are proud of them. The weight is exactly that of the true fifty−cent piece. And only one man in fifty could tell the difference in the ring of the metal."

Owen looked at the coins in sincere admiration.

"It is very remarkable," he said. "But Balthazar tells me—"

"I know. You have a little business of secrecy for myself and my friends. You may speak here in perfect safety, Mr. Owen. Gossip is not a fault —or a possibility —of our profession."

"I do not believe there is anything to say but what Balthazar has already told you, except—"

Owen hesitated.

"Except what, master? Is there a change in the plan?" asked Balthazar.

"I think there might be. Something occurred today that might give us a favorable lead. Miss Pauline received as a gift a terrier dog. I believe it could be made use of."

"In what way?" asked the counterfeiter.

"By stealing it and bringing it here."

"I don't understand —ah, yes; indeed I do."

"Excellent, master," exclaimed Balthazar. "It could be done today. Can I have two of your men, Rupert?"

"Yes; take Gaston and Firenzi. They are always to be trusted."

At his words two men, stepped forward. One of them had been working at the metal pots. But in response to a hurried word from Rupert he quickly threw off his cap and apron, and caught up a hat and coat.

Rupert Wallace stepped to the side of the room where a pair of upright levers stood out of the floor like the levers of an automobile.

He pulled the one nearest him and the sliding doors parted softly. Owen and Balthazar, with their new escort, stepped through. For a moment, Wallace waited. Then he drew back the other lever, and the departing guests found as they reached the end of the secret passage, that their path opened, almost magically before them, in the hushed unfolding of the second door.

“Goodbye, Cyrus,” said, Harry as Pauline strolling down the garden with him, tossed to her new pet a dainty from the box of bon−bons she carried.

“What do you mean by that?” she demanded.

“That the oysters on the half shell would be better for his health.”

“I didn't give him oysters on the half shell.”

“No; but you gave him everything else in the house. He is stuffed like the fatted calf —or like the prodigal son —I don't care which —”

“If he likes candy he shall have candy,” declared Pauline, sitting down on an arbor bench and extending another sugar−plum to the dog.

The gratitude of Cyrus was expressed in a leap to the side of his mistress. As Harry sat down, he discovered that Cyrus had occupied the favored place beside Pauline. Next instant there was a yowl of dismay and the adored gift of Lucille fell several feet away from the bench.

“Harry! I think that is dreadful!” exclaimed Pauline, springing to her feet.

“I do, too,” he answered. “That was why I threw it off the bench.”

“To treat a poor innocent dumb creature like that!”

“Polly! You don't mean it, do you? You think I hurt him?”

“You've−hurt−his−feelings.”

“That doesn't matter, but if I've hurt yours —it does. I apologize.”

“You are always joking. You don't understand how sweet and dear animals are. You will probably treat me the same way after we are married.”

She ran to the spot where the wary Cyrus was munching the last piece of candy. But he accepted her caresses without enthusiasm, keeping a careful eye on Harry.

She called to the dog and walked briskly toward the house.

But Cyrus did not follow. The box of candy was still on the garden bench, and Cyrus was not immune to temptation.

Owen followed on his motorcycle the runabout in which Balthazar and the two chosen members of Rupert Wallace's band made their swift journey toward Castle Marvin.

A quarter of a mile from the grounds Owen drew alongside.

“This would be a good place to stop. The car can be hidden in the lane.”

“Yes; master,” said Balthazar.

He wheeled the machine upon a narrow roadway into the cover of the woods, and, with his companions, got out. Owen rode on ahead and was waiting for them as they neared the little foot path gate to the Marvin grounds.

“Look through the hedge there,” he directed.

Balthazar crawled on his hands and knees to the box wall that surrounded the grounds. He thrust his shoulders through the bush and gazed for a moment at the dog devouring Pauline's bon−bons on the bench.

“I should say it would be well to act now —instantly, master,” he cried, returning.

“Go on. I will be at the house, and will try to hold them back if there is any noise.”

As Owen began to wheel his cycle up the drive to Castle Marvin, Balthazar and his two aides wriggled through the hedge−row, crossed a strip of sward and reached the bench. Balthazar caught the dog's head in his powerful hands. There was not a sound. The animal's muzzle was shut fast and in a minute it had been tied, leg and body. They ran to the gate, to the runabout, and were away.

“Why Harry, I can't find him anywhere. What could have happened to him?” cried Pauline, rushing into the library.

“Owen lost? Thank Heaven!” he exclaimed fervently.

“No; Cyrus. Harry it's your fault. He was angry because you pushed him off the bench and he ran away.”

“Polly,” he said, wheeling in his chair, “I am not worried. I decline to be worried. And I am going away from here.”

“Not before you help me find Cyrus.”

“Yes —long before.”

She turned and whisked crossly out of the room.

Harry picked up his hat and coat, and in a few minutes was being driven away by Farrell on an urgent call to town.

Pauline stood on the veranda and watched his departure with silent wrath.

“I wonder if he is really cruel —or —if he is just a man and doesn't know any better,” she pondered audibly.

Then, as she saw Owen approaching from the side path, “Oh, Owen, won't you help me? I've lost Cyrus!”

“Cyrus? Am I sure whom you mean? Ah, yes; the new member of our family circle.”

“Yes; he's gone.”

“The only thing to do, I should say, is to advertise. I will call up the newspapers immediately, Miss Pauline.”

“You are dear! I must have him back. Think what Lucille would say if I lost him on the first day!”

“I'll offer a generous reward and he'll soon be back.”

“Thank you, Owen.”

CHAPTER XX. CYRUS MAKES A REPUTATION

The proceedings behind the hidden doors in the cellar of the ruined house between Bathwater and Castle Marvin were not interrupted by so small a matter as the kidnapping of an heiress —a kidnapping that had progressed no further as yet than the capture of a dog.

As Owen stepped into the den the next forenoon he saw the bull terrier tied to the wall.

“I see we have the main ingredient of the repast in hand.”

“The main ingredient and the most dangerous,” said Wallace. “He has done nothing but howl and. bark. May we kill him?”

“Not yet,” answered Owen. “It is possible that she might demand sight of him before entering the house, or some nonsense of that sort. I would let him howl a little longer.”

“Very well,” laughed Wallace. “What orders have you for us today, sir?”

The other counterfeiters kept steadily on at their work over the melting pots, the molds and stamping machines. The old woman was stacking half−dollar pieces at the table.

“Why do you have the woman here?” demanded Owen suddenly.

“To prevent starvation,” answered Wallace. “Carrie is not only our purchasing agent, but our excellent cook.”

The hag looked up for a moment with a cackle of appreciation; then bent again to her work.

“Can she write?” asked Owen.

“Yes.”

“Well, then, she can help us. Here is an advertisement which appears in the morning papers.”

He presented a newspaper clipping to Wallace, which read:

LOST —A fine white bull terrier. Finder will receive liberal reward if dog is returned to Pauline Marvin. Castle Marvin, N. Y.

“What do you want Carrie to do?”

“Answer the advertisement. Just call her over here.”

The hag laid down the coins and moved laboriously to the, table. Wallace produced from a drawer a pen, paper and ink, and told the woman to take his chair. Owen dictated:

“Miss Pauline Marvin:

A dog came to my house yesterday which I think is the one you advertise for. I am an old, crippled woman and it's hard for me to get out. Can't you come and see if it is your dog?

Mary Sheila, 233 Myrtle Avenue.”

The old woman wrote slowly in a shaking hand, and Owen waited patiently while she addressed an envelope. Then he placed the letter in the envelope, sealed it, and took his leave.

“And no sign of Cyrus?” inquired Harry cheerily as he entered the library, where Pauline sat disconsolate.

She did not even answer and she was still gazing dejectedly out of the window when Bemis brought in the mail. Two of the letters she laid aside, unread; the third, she opened: “A dog came to my house yesterday —” Her face lighted with hope and happiness; she read no further.

“Oh, isn't Owen —splendid,” she breathed. “He knew just what to do.” And with the letter in her hand she ran out to the veranda.

“Harry! Harry!” she called across the garden. There was no answer.

“Run up to Mr. Marvin's room and see if he is there, Margaret. Bemis, go out and see if he is at the garage.”

“No, Miss Marvin,” said Bemis. “He has gone into Westbury.”

Pauline stood silent for a moment.

“Well, then I must go myself,” she said with quick decision.

She sped upstairs and within a few minutes was, out at the garage in her motoring dress. A mechanic was working over her racing car in front of the garage, the racing car that was just recovering from recent calamity in the international race.

“Is it all fixed, Employ? Can I drive it today?” she asked eagerly.

“Why—yes, ma'am —you could,” said the mechanic. “But I haven't got it polished up yet.”

“That doesn't matter in the least. I want to use it to day —now.”

She sprang lightly to the seat of the lithe racer and in a moment was away down the drive.

NO. 233 Myrtle avenue was an address a little difficult to find. Myrtle avenue was well outside the new town and Pauline had made several inquiries before an elderly man, whom she found in the telegraph office, volunteered directions.

She thanked him, and drove back for two miles before she found the turn he had indicated.

The appearance of the place was unprepossessing enough to dampen even the ambitious courage of Pauline. But the sight of woman on the porch training a vine over the front door, allayed her fears.

“You are Mrs. Sheila —you sent me a message that you had found my dog?” she asked, approaching.

For a moment the confusion that the woman had meant to simulate was sincere. She had expected to see no such vision as that of Pauline on the blackened steps of the coiners' den.

“A dog?” she quavered vaguely. Then, “Oh, yes, my —dear little lady —the pretty white dog. He came to us yesterday. My son he brought me the newspaper, and—”

“Oh, you are just a dear,” cried Pauline. “May I see him now? I am so fond of him!”

“Yes, my little lady. Will you come in?”

Pauline followed her into the basement. She stepped back with a tremor of suspicion as the woman rapped three times upon the folding doors, and they opened silently on their oiled rails. But she was inside the narrow passage, and the light that gleamed through the second pair of doors allayed her anxiety. With a bow and the wave of a directing hand, the old woman waited for Pauline to enter.

In a breath she was seized from both sides. Strong cruel hands held her, while Wallace smothered her cries with a tight−drawn bandage.

She had hardly had time to see the little terrier tugging at his chain in the corner of the room, but his wild barking was all she knew of possible assistance in the plight in which she found herself.

They laid her on the floor. She heard a voice that seemed strangely familiar giving abrupt orders. Pauline sought in vain to place the memory of the voice of Balthazar, the Gypsy.

Suddenly she heard cries. The barking of the dog had stopped and there was the thud of heavy foot steps on the stone floor of the cellar.

“Catch him! Shoot if you have to,” came the command in the mysteriously familiar voice. She felt that her captors were no longer near. There was a beat of rushing foot−steps on the floor.

It was several minutes before she heard voices again.

“The cur hasn't been there long enough to know her. It won't make any difference,” said Wallace, coming through the open doors. “But I'm sorry it got away.”

“Where is Miss Pauline?” asked Harry, as he entered the house on his return from Westbury.

“She has found her dog, sir,” answered Margaret, smiling. “She went to get him —with the racing car.”

His brow darkened. “The advertisement was answered, you mean, Margaret?”

“I think so, sir.”

An hour later he walked into the garden and sat down on the rustic bench where he and Pauline had quarreled. He had just taken up his newspaper when he was startled by the spring of a small warm body fairly into his face. Lowering the torn paper, he saw Pauline's dog cavorting around the bench in circles of excitement.

The animal rushed towards him again, but did not leap this time. It came very near and, with braced feet, began to bark wildly.

Harry stood up. The dog, with another volley of barks, started towards the gate. Harry followed instinctively. The terrier dashed ahead of him, reached the, gate, returned, renewed the appealing barks, and again led the way.

In another minute Harry was following the urgent little guide. He was thoroughly stirred now. As the dog returned to him the second time, with its appealing yelps, he quickened his speed.

After traversing five miles of dust−laden road they reached a certain house on the thoroughfare, which still carried the dignity of “Myrtle avenue.”

The dog rushed up the steps. Harry, following closely, was surprised to find the door was ajar. He entered and found himself in the cellar passageway.

A sound outside made him grasp the broken rope on the collar of the dog. It was an automobile wheezing to a stop and it was followed by the sound of voices. The outer door opened. Harry drew the dog aside into the

darkness and held its muzzle tight.

Four men entered. One rapped on the wall and the panels opened softly. The man went in.

Harry's hand had fallen on a slim stick as he stooped in the darkness, and he slipped the stick into the aperture between the folding doors. He carried the dog to the outer door and thrust it through. Then he came back.

“Who is the woman?” asked a gruff voice.

“She does not concern you. Have you distributed all of the coins?”

“All but $5,000. She's a peach, ain't she?”

The door crashed at their heels. Harry was in the room. He had gripped Wallace by the throat before the man could stir. The others backed toward their hidden weapons. Shots blazed in the room but the smoke was protection for Harry, swinging wildly at whomsoever he saw.

“You're there, Polly?”

“Yes,” she gasped, tugging at her bonds in desperation. She was almost free.

Harry had Wallace at his feet and Wallace's gun was in his hand. He blazed blindly through room. A shriek told of one man gone.

Pauline felt strong hands grasp her. She was whisked through the door; through the outer door and away, into the fresh air, and into the waiting automobile. She felt Harry's hot breath on her fore head as they sped in flight.

There was clamor behind them for a moment car was starting. Then came only the thrash of footsteps through the grassy road as the coiners rushed to their own machine.

One stern command reached the ears of Pauline and Harry as they sped on:

“It's your lives or theirs. Get them or kill yourselves.”

“It's no use, Polly. Come,” cried Harry, after a time.

His voice sounded grim, peremptory. The machine with a sudden swerve had gone almost off the road with an exploded tire. It was only Harry's powerful hand that had saved them from wreck.

But as he helped Pauline out and led her on a run into the forest he heard the sound of the pursuing machine coming to a stop and the tumult of voices behind them. He knew that one peril had only been supplanted by another.

“Where —Where are we going, Harry?”

“The Gorman camp —if we can make it; if we can reach the river.”

“There's the old quarry,” she exclaimed as they came out on the crest of a blast−gnarled cliff overlooking a stream. “I know their camp is near the quarry.”

“But on the other side of the river. Don't talk; run,” he pleaded, leading her down a footpath that traced a winding way over the face of the cliff into the quarry.

In the shelter of the rocks there stood two small buildings about five hundred yards apart. One was the old tool house of the deserted quarry. The other was a hunter's hut, evidently newly built.

A commanding cry came from the top of the cliff.

“Halt or we fire!”

They ran on. A shot echoed and a bullet flattened itself against the stone base of the quarry not two yards from Pauline.

“In here —quick,” said Harry, dragging her to the hunter's lodge and thrusting her through the open door. There was another shot and the thud of another bullet as he slammed the door.

It looks like a fight now, Polly,” he said, as he' moved quickly around the hut. “And thank Heaven —here's something to fight with.”

From a rack in the wall he lifted down a Winchester rifle and a belt of cartridges. “Get into the corner and lie down,” he ordered.

“No, give me the revolver,” cried Pauline.

She did not wait for his protest, but drew from hilt coat pocket the pistol he had wrested from Wallace.

For an instant he looked at her with mingled admiration, love and fear. He opened the little window of the hut, aimed and fired three shots at the group of six men who were running down the cliff path.

“Into the tool house,” ordered Balthazar, stopping only for a glance at one of his fellows who had fallen. The five gained the workmen's hut and burst the door open. Immediately from the air hole and the wide chinks in the sagging walls came a blaze of shots.

A small white dog ran down the path into the quarry, but no one saw it.

Balthazar was searching the tool−house. “Ha!” he exclaimed suddenly. “That is what we want!” He lifted from the floor a box of blasting powder. But the next instant he dropped it and sprawled, cursing, beside the half−spilled contents. Another man, shot through the body, had fallen over his leader.

Balthazar quickly recovered himself. He whisked about the hut and found a coil of fuse. The shots were still dinning in his ears while he fashioned, with the powder and the box and the fuse, a bomb powerful enough to have shattered tons of imbedded stone.

“Stop shooting,” he commanded. “Here's a better way!”

As he suddenly threw open the door and dashed out, he nearly fell over the dog whining in terror. But Balthazar kept on. In a better business —with a heart in him —he would have been counted among the bravest of men. Running a swaying, zigzag course, in the very face of the fire of Harry and Pauline, he reached the hunter's hut and dropped the bomb beside it.

He did not try to return. With the long fuse in his hand he moved into shelter behind the hut, struck a match, lighted the fuse, and fled toward the river.

After him ran the small white dog.

Balthazar turned and uttered a scream of rage. He dashed at the animal, which dodged and passed him. In its teeth it held the bomb he had just laid at the risk of his life. The fuse was sputtering behind as the dog fled.

Balthazar pursued desperately. The path to the river led through a narrow defile of rock. But the beast was not trapped at the water's edge as the Gypsy had expected. It took to the water with a wide plunge.

Balthazar turned away, cursing. He rushed back to the huts. The guns and pistols were silent. He picked up from the side of the path a huge piece of wood. As he neared his companions, he shouted:

“come out! Rush them, You cowards! Follow me!”

Harry fired his last two shots and two men fell. Pauline had long ago emptied the revolver.

Three men came on. There was a crash as the log in Balthazar's mighty hands beat down the door and he staggered through.

But Harry was upon him. He hurled the Gypsy across the room. He charged at the others and one went down.

Through the door came four men.

“It's Harry. Help him!” cried Pauline.

Balthazar charged straight at the newcomers but he did not attempt to fight. He was out through the door and away to the river before they could intercept him. Within a few moments his companions lay bound on the hut floor.

“But how did you find out? How did you know we needed you?” asked Pauline afterward of young Richard Gorman, whose camping party had been the rescuers.

“That's the girl who told us,” he said, pointing to a dejected little bull terrier that stood, quaking with excitement, a few feet away.

“Cyrus!” cried Pauline, running and clutching the little terrier in her arms.

“Yes, he brought us the dead bomb and we knew something was up.”

CHAPTER XXI. THE GUEST OF HONOR

“Well, prove it,” said Harry. “Show me that you mean it!”

“Why, Harry, what a woman says she, always means.”

“Always means not to do.”

“But, Harry, really I'm going to be good this time,” pleaded Pauline.

They were emerging from the gate of the Marvin mansion to the avenue, and as Harry turned to Pauline with a skeptical reply on his lips, the approach of a young man of military bearing stopped him.

“By Jove, isn't that —who the deuce is it? Why, Benny Summers!”

The young man was hurrying by without recognition, when Harry called sharply: “Hello, Ben!”

“Harry —Harry Marvin! By the coin of Croesus, is it really you?”

“No,” said Harry, grasping his hand, “not the 'you' you used to know. I've been driven into premature old age by caring for a militant sister. Polly, this is Ensign Summers of the navy. Please promise me that you won't get him into danger, because he used to be a friend of mine. He has never done anything more dangerous than run a submarine and shoot torpedoes out of it in a field of mines.”

“A submarine? Torpedoes?” cried Pauline. “Isn't that beautiful.”

“But, Benny, how are you? What have you been doing? I haven't seen you in a thousand years.”

“I'm still at it. And I've got it, Harry. I give you my word, I have.”

“Got what?”

“The torpedo —I mean THE torpedo, in capital letters and italics with a line under the word. I've invented one that would blow —well — I've got it.”

“Congratulations, felicitations, laudatory, remarks, and enthusiasm,” cried Harry. “Without having slightest idea what a torpedo is, I rejoice with you. Come on back to the house, and tell us about it”

“I'm sorry, I can't, Harry, now. I'm engaged for a conference with the Naval Board, and I'm late already. But will you and Miss Marvin come to luncheon with me tomorrow?

“Why not you with us, we saw you first?”

Summers laughed. “Well, for this reason, I want you to meet Mlle. de Longeon, who will preside at this particular luncheon, and who is −”

The flush that came suddenly to the cheeks of the young officer brought involuntary laughter from Harry and Pauline.

“I take that as an acceptance —the Kerrimore, East Fifty−sixth street,” he called, sharing in their laughter as he fled.

But at the gate of the Marvin house he came upon Raymond Owen. There was a hasty clasp of hands and “You're to come, too,” cried Summers, continuing his flight.

“Where am I to come?” asked Owen, as he approached Harry and Pauline.

“To luncheon with Ensign Summers tomorrow. Isn't he dear? I love men who blush. They seem so innocent.”

“The Fates defend us!” implored Harry.

* * * * *

Ensign Summers had gained a position beyond his rank in the navy. A natural bent toward science and a patriotic bent toward the use of science as a means of national defense had inspired him to experiments which had resulted in success amazing even to himself. He had been allowed —during the year preceding the meeting with Harry and Pauline —a leave of absence. In that time he had visited Italy, France, England and Germany, and had studied under naval experts. He had come back home with his own little idea undiminished in its importance to his own mind, and he had proceeded with youthful enthusiasm and effrontery to prove its importance to the highest of his commanders.

The tests now about to be made —tests of a new torpedo gun and new torpedo —had been ordered by the mightiest in the land. Triumphant in his discovery and wealthy in his own right, Summers was the happiest of men. It was in Paris that he had met Mlle. del Longeon. Exquisitely beautiful, of the alluring and languorous type, quick of wit, tactful, and with great charm of manner, she had completely fascinated the young officer. He had

vowed his adoration of her almost before he knew her. His avowals had been repulsed with just that margin of insincerity that would double his ardor.

It had required many letters to induce Mlle. de Longeon to leave her beloved Paris and visit friends in America. Summers knew she was not a Frenchwoman, but he was totally in the dark as to what was her nationality. Summers didn't care. He was madly mad in love with her, and there was no other thing to consider.

It was for this reason that Mlle. de Longeon was the guest of honor at the little luncheon in his rooms, to which he had invited Harry and Pauline. The affair was quite informal. There were a number of navy men present, a few young married people. The atmosphere of the gathering was “sublimely innocuous,” as Mlle. de Longeon remarked to Summers in the hall after the guests had departed.

But Mlle. de Longeon had met one guest who did not impress her as innocuous —or sublime —Raymond Owen. Pauline had presented the secretary on his arrival, and Owen had immediately devoted himself to her. Not long after luncheon was served the voice of Mlle. de Longeon rose suddenly above the general talk.

“But, Mr. Summers, you have not told us yet of your new invention. When shall the plans be ready? When shall you rise to the realization of your true success?”

Summers beamed his happiness in the face of the brazen compliment, like the good and silly boy he was.

“I'm supposed to keep this secret,” he answered, “but I can trust every one here, I know. The plans are going to be sent out day after tomorrow.”

“You mean you will have them completed —all those intricate plans?” queried Mlle. de Longeon in a tone of breathless admiration.

“I'll work all tonight and most of tomorrow; but, of course, it's only a case of putting into words ideas that have already been put into solid metal. My gun and torpedo are ready for work. It isn't so very difficult, and it's —well, it's a lot of fun.”

“And great honor,” paid the woman he loved.

For a moment their eyes met, but only for a moment. The next, Catin, the valet, who was taking charge of the luncheon, under pretense of anticipating a waiter moved quickly to fill her wine glass. Even the subtle eye of Owen was not sharp enough to see Mlle. de Longeon pass him a crushed slip of paper, and she had been too long trained to concealment of even the simplest emotions to betray uneasiness now.

Nevertheless, there was the possibility of surprising Mlle. de Longeon, and that possibility was realized as she glanced at Raymond Owen. His set, tense face reflected for the moment all his hatred of Harry and Pauline, who were talking blithely with Ensign Summers, another naval officer and two of the wives of the civilian visitors. She turned to him with a suddenness that would have seemed abrupt in the manner of one less beautiful.

“Mr. Owen, do come to see me,” she said. “I am sure —at least I think I am sure —that we have many matters of mutual interest.”

In her softly modulated tones, the invitation had no significance beyond the literal meaning of the words.

“It will be an honor,” he answered.

“Tomorrow evening, then?”

“Delighted. And, later, the Naval Ball?”

“No, I'm afraid the Ensign will not permit any one else to take me to the ball; but we shall meet there, afterward.”

In a New York street, among the lower there was at that time a foreign agency that was not a consulate, but was visited by diplomats of the highest rank in a certain nation, the name of which, or the mystery of whose suspicions, need not be touched upon.

There was no regular staff at the agency. The rooms were maintained under the name of a certain foreign gentleman —or, rather, under the name that he chose to assume. There were two servants, but they saw little of the master of the house. He was seldom at home, but when he was, he had many visitors.

An hour after the luncheon in the rooms of Ensign Summers, the master of the mysterious dwelling was at home. And he had four guests. It would have, greatly surprised Ensign Summers had he known that one of the diplomat's guests was his own man servant, Catin.

“It is the worst duty I have ever had to perform,” the diplomat said solemnly. “It means, almost certainly, your death. But it is death for your country. It is the command of your country. The submarine must be destroyed and the plans —we shall get the plans through another agent.”

"I am not afraid to die," said Catin.

"Then here is the model of a submarine —not of the one you will enter, of course, but it will give you an idea. I have marked the place where you will secrete the explosive until the proper moment. I have also indicated the position for you to take in order to have some faint chance of reaching the surface and being saved."

One of the other men stepped forward and handed Catin a small square box. "This is the explosive. You know how to handle it."

With a military salute, Catin turned and left the place. Within half an hour he was carefully brushing Ensign Summers' clothes, as Summers came in.

"Would it be too much to ask, sir, inquired the perfect valet, "that I might accompany you in the submarine? I am afraid you will be very uncomfortable without me."

Summers laughed good−naturedly.

"It's impossible, Catin. This boat is a government secret in itself, and my new torpedo makes it a double secret. No one but a picked crew will be allowed on it, except —"

"'Except, sir?"

"Well, I admit I could command it. But it would be very unwise, Catin, and, I assure you, I shall get along all right."

Mlle. de Longeon's apartment was characteristic of the lady herself. The artist would have found it a little too luxurious for good taste — a little over−toned in the richness of draperies, the heavy scent of flowers, the subtleties of half−screened divans —there was something more than feminine —something feline. To Raymond Owen, however, it was ideal. The dimmed ruby lights, the suggestive shadows of the tapestries, were in tune with the surreptitious mind of the secretary. But there remained for him a picture that he admired more —Mlle. de Longeon coming through the portieres with a cry of pleasure.

"I am so glad you came —and so sorry I must send you away quickly," exclaimed Mlle. de Longeon. "The little ensign has telephoned that he is coming early to take me for a drive before the ball."

"I can come again —if I may have the honor," said Owen, rising quickly.

"Oh, there is time for a word," she said, smiling.

"There was something you wished to say to me, was there not? Something you did not care to say at the luncheon yesterday?"

"Yes. Why do you hate Miss Marvin?"

Owen was silent for a moment. "Why do you hate the little ensign, as you call another?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that we can be of service to one another, in all likelihood, and that, therefore, we should be frank friends. You wish to have Pauline Marvin out of the way, do you not? "

"How did you find that out?"

"People engaged in similar business find out many things. Now I —"

"Wish to be rid of Ensign Summers."

"Precisely."

"You are an international agent?"

"Yes. And I offer you my aid and the aid of the powerful men I control in return for your aid to me and them. Is it a bargain?"

They were seated on one of the curtained divans, a low−turned light above them. She leaned forward. Her long, delicate hand touched his. A splendid jewel at her throat heightened the magic of her beauty.

"Because it is my business to hate him —and make love to him at the same time. Come, Mr. Owen, let us be frank."

For the first time in his life Owen felt himself mastered by the sheer fascination of a woman. "What am I to do?" he said breathlessly.

"I will tell you tonight at the ball. Now you must run away."

He arose instantly, but as she stood beside him, be turned, caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

She protested with a little cry and a struggle not too violent to damage her coiffure. He drew back from her. There was something of astonishment in his eyes —astonishment at himself.

"You are the only woman in the world who ever made me do that," he gasped.

"Go, go," she pleaded.

"But you are angry? You break our agreement?"

"No, but I am overcome. I shall meet you tonight."

He caught her hand to his lips, and hurried from the house.

It was more than an hour after he observed her arrival at the Naval Ball before Owen had the privilege of a greeting from Mlle. de Longeon, and then it was only a smile as she passed him on the arm of a distinguished looking foreign diplomat.

Owen saw that she spoke a quiet word to her escort, who turned and looked at Owen. She beamed brightly at Owen, who smiled back at her, and moved slowly toward the door of the conservatory into which she and the diplomat had disappeared. He was surprised, a moment later, to see Pauline rush by him, with a little laugh.

"Is anything the matter?" Owen called.

"Nothing you can help. Stay right where you are," she cried.

Owen laughed his understanding and moved over to where Harry and Lucille were talking with Ensign Summers.

Meanwhile, Pauline, in the darkest recess of the conservatory was pinning together a broken garter. As she started back to the ballroom she was surprised to hear voices near her.

There was something about their foreign accent that roused the ever−venturous, ever−curious interest of Pauline. She crept along a row of palms and peered through an aperture. Mlle. de Longeon and the diplomat were talking together as they paced the aisle of palms on the other side. Pauline crept nearer.

Presently the voice of the diplomat became distinguishable.

"It is all arranged. The thing is to be done in Submarine B−2 tomorrow. All you have now to do is —"

Pauline could not catch the final words.

The two moved back to the ballroom. She followed close behind, a little suspicious, but with the thrill of a new plan gripping her.

She saw Ensign Summers step forward early to greet Mile. de Longeon. Another dance was beginning.

"This one is Mr. Owen's," said Mile. de Longeon, as she moved away on the arm of the secretary.

"Have you anything to tell me?" he asked.

"Yes. Induce her to make Summers take her down in his submarine tomorrow, and she will never trouble you again."

As the dance ended, Pauline and Harry, Summers and Lucille, joined them.

"Mr. Summers, I have a great request to make," declared Pauline.

"I grant it before you breathe a word," he answered.

"I want you to take me along on your submarine trip tomorrow."

"Polly, have you gone crazy all over again?" cried Harry.

"I don't believe it would be —" began Summers.

"It must be," she commanded.

"Well, I promised too soon, but I'll keep my word."

Owen and Mile. de Longeon had stepped aside.

"What does it mean?" gasped the secretary. "She is doing the very thing we want her to do."

"Sometimes Fate aids the worthy," said Mile. de Longeon softly.

CHAPTER XXII. SUBMARINE B−2

At the dock of the navy yard a submarine lay ready for departure.

There was nothing about its appearance to indicate that its mission was of more than ordinary importance. But it was an unusual thing to see a woman aboard, and the curiosity of the crew was matched by that of the young officers who had come down to see Summers off on his voyage of many chances.

The officers got little reward for their considerate interest. Ensign Summers was engaged. He was explaining to Pauline, as they stood on the deck of the war−craft, the entire history of submarines from the time of Caesar, or Washington, or somebody to the present day, and Pauline was listening with that childlike simplicity which women use for the purpose of making men look foolish.

“By Jove! I thought he was tied, heart and hope, to the lovely foreigner,” exclaimed one of the shoreward observers.

“So he is,” said another. “But Mlle. de Longeon isn't interested in his daily toil. Do you know who the young lady up there is?”

“No. She must have got a dispensation from the secretary himself to go on this trip.”

“So she did —easy as snapping your thumb. She's Miss Pauline Marvin, daughter of the richest man that has died in twenty years.”

The boat gong sounded the signal of departure.

Summers, with a hasty apology, left Pauline and stepped forward. The engines began to rumble. The deadly and delicate craft —masterpiece of modern naval achievement —drew slowly from the pier.

There was a shout.

Summers, delivering rapid orders on deck, turned with an expression of annoyance to see his faithful man servant, Catin, out of breath and excited, rushing toward the boat.

Summers ordered the vessel stopped. It had moved not more than stepping distance from the pier and in a moment Catin was beside his master on the deck.

“She told me it must —” he paused, gasping for breath.

“Who told you what?” demanded Summers.

“Mlle. de Longeon. I am sure it is a message of importance. She told me I must give it to you before you risked your life on the voyage.”

“Mlle. de Longeon!” He caught the letter from Catin's hand.

“My Hero —I cannot keep the secret any longer, cannot wait to tell you that it is you I love. Estelle de Longeon.”

Summers walked slowly, dizzily up the deck was in an ecstasy. He was oblivious to all the world—even to Pauline, who stood questioning an officer at the rail. The fact that his servant, Catin, slipped silently down the hatchway to the main compartment, and thence on to the pump room at the vessel's bottom, would hardly have interested him —−even if he had known it.

“Shall we put off, sir?”

The second officer saluted.

The Ensign came to himself instantly. “Yes, of course. I put back only for an important message,” he said. “My man got off, did he?”

“I think so.”

“All right. Go ahead.”

Catin, with that rare fortune which sometimes favors the wicked, had chosen precisely the right moment for his ruse. The crew of the submarine were all on deck save those in the engine room, and his quick passage to the vitals of the vessel was unseen.

Once in the pump room, he hastily drew from under his coat the bomb placed in his hands at the conference of diplomats, wound its clock−work spring and laid it beside the pumps.

There was a strange look on the man's face as he did this —a look at once proud and pitiful. Catin had not sense of treachery or shame. The deed in itself did not lack the dignity of courage, for, with the others, he was

planned his own death. And while the others were to die suddenly, ignorant of their peril, Catin was to die in deliberate knowledge of it.

On deck Pauline was eagerly questioning an under officer about the torpedoes, when Summers came up.

“You'll have to come down and see for yourself,” he said, overhearing her.

“First I'll show you the pump room —the most important part of us,” he was saying as Catin, in the boat's bottom, first caught the sound of nearing voices.

Catin leaped up the steps from the pump room. He was in the nick of time. A large locker in the main compartment gave him refuge just as Pauline and Summers reached the room.

“The pumps are our life−savers,” said Summers, as he directed Pauline down the second ladder. “If they go wrong when we're under water we can't come up.”

“And what do you do then?” asked Pauline innocently.

“Oh, just−stay down.”

Catin waited breathless in his hiding place until they returned. “By heaven, they didn't find it!” he breathed eagerly.

Pauline and Ensign Summers stood at the rail watching the foamy rush of a fast motor boat, when a hail sounded across the water.

A man was standing up in the motor boat and calling through a megaphone.

Summers raised his glasses. “Do you know who that is?” he asked laughingly.

“Of course not. What does he want?”

“It's Harry, and I suspect he wants to take you away from us.”

Pauline uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

“Isn't he silly!” she cried, “One would think I was, a baby, the way he watches me.”

Soon the voice of Harry could be plainly distinguished.

“Clear your ship; I am going to sink you,” he called.

“Cargo too precious this trip; don't do it,” answered Summers.

“Let me take the megaphone,” demanded Pauline.

“What do you mean by following us?” she cried.

“I don't trust that sardine can, and I want a regular boat on hand when you are wrecked.”

“I am very angry with you. It looks as if—”

Her words were drowned in Summers' laughter.

“Never mind. I know a way we can escape from him,” he said.

“How?”

“Why, sink the boat.”

“That will be splendid.”

He stepped aside and gave a terse order. Delightedly, Pauline watched the brief, machine−like movements of the crew trimming the deck. Summers escorted her back to the conning tower. They descended. Within a few moments the wonderful craft was buried under the waves.

“There he is —looking for us,” laughed Summers, as he made room for Pauline at the periscope.

Amazed, fascinated, she gazed from what seemed the bottom of the sea out upon the rolling surface of the waves. Harry's motorboat was near and he was standing in the bow, scanning the water with binoculars.

“And he can't see us?” asked Pauline.

“Oh, yes, he'll pick up out periscope after a while. Shall we fire the torpedo at him?”

“Yes, please,” said Pauline.

Summers' laugh was cut short. As if someone had taken his jest in earnest and really fired a projectile, the crash of an explosion came from the bottom of the boat.

“Stay here —” ordered Summers with a set face as he joined the rush of seamen into the pump room.

But Pauline followed.

An officer, with blanched face but steady voice, came up to Summers.

“What was it, Grimes?”

“It seems to have been a bomb, sir. There was no powder down there.”

The face of the Ensign darkened with suspicion and alarm.

“A bomb? So they were going after us —the enemy! We'd better get right up and back to port, Grimes.”

“I have to report, sir —the pumps are disabled.”

Summers turned with a look of pity toward Pauline, who stood at his elbow.

“And we can't get up again?” she questioned.

“There is one chance, but —” He stopped openly and listened. “Open that locker,” he commanded.

A seaman pulled back the door of the locker and disclosed the cringing form and defiant face of Catin.

“Catin! You!”

The man stepped forward with a smile of triumph.

“You set off the bomb? You wanted to kill me?”

“I did my duty. I obeyed my orders as you obey your orders. I had no enmity for you. I am, in fact, sorry that you were fool enough not to see that I was a little more than a valet.”

“You are a spy, Catin?”

“Yes, sir. And I have done my work, and I am willing to die with the rest of you.”

Pauline drew back, shuddering. She touched Summers' arm.

“Oh, Mr. Summers, I believe—”

“What is it?”

“I believe I know of the plot. I was in the conservatory at the naval ball. A man and a woman —”

“A woman?”

“Mlle. de Longeon and her diplomatic friend —you remember.”

“Yes —well?”

“They talked together in whispers. The man said 'The thing will be done on Submarine B−2 tomorrow.'”

A look of agony that the fear of death could not have caused came into the face of the young Ensign.

“Mlle. de Longeon? No!”

“Yes! Mlle. de Longeon,” sneered Catin stepping nearer. “Mlle. de Longeon is the principal proof of my statement that you are a fool. Mlle. de Longeon recommended me to you as a capable valet, did she not? Mlle. de Longeon frequently was your guest. Now Mlle. de Longeon has the plans of your submarine and your torpedo —plans which I took the liberty of removing from the little cupboard over the desk in your workroom.”

Summers sprang forward but he recovered himself.

“I should have told you,” wailed Pauline.

“How should you have known?” said Summers. In a moment he had lost his life work and his love. Suddenly he straightened himself. The soldier in him mastered the man.

“There is still a chance —one little chance,” he said.

“To get out?” cried Pauline.

“Yes —through the torpedo tube.”

She shuddered.

“I am going to make you do it,” he said, “because it is the only chance. The men will follow you. Harry's boat will be near.”

“And you?”

“I do not matter any more. Come.”

A gunner opened the great tube as Summers led Pauline into the torpedo room. Obediently she entered the strange passageway of peril and of hope.

“Goodbye,” he said, “and good luck.”

“Goodbye,” she answered. “You are a brave man. You are as brave — you are as fine —as Harry.”

From the end of the torpedo tube a woman's form shot to the surface of the water. Choking, dazed, but courageous, Pauline tried to turn on her back and gain breath. But they were well out to seat and the waves were crushing.

“What is that?” asked Harry, pointing and passing his glasses to the boatman.

The man looked and without a word swung the craft about and put the engine at top speed. And in a few moments Harry's strong arms drew her from the water.

“My darling, what has happened? ” he gasped.

“Don't think of me —think of them!” she begged, weakly. “They were trapped —down there. There was a

bomb —a plot —the machinery is ruined. Harry, help them!”

The boatman who overheard Pauline's first cry of appeal, now came forward respectfully. “There's a revenue cutter —the Iroquois — coming out,” he said, significantly.

Harry looked. “Splendid!” he cried. “Can we signal her?”

“No, but we can catch her?”

Shouts from a speeding motorboat brought the Government vessel to a stop. Officers came to the rail and helped Harry and Pauline to the deck.

“Ensign Summers and his crew are sunk in their submarine. The pumps are gone. There was a bomb explosion. Can you get help?”

“Where are they?”

“You can pick up their buoy with a glass —there.”

The chief officer looked through his glass. “Yes,” he said. “You'll come abroad, or keep your own boat?”

“We've got another piece of work to do —if we can leave our friends to your guarding,” said Harry.

“Well have the wrecking tugs and divers in twenty minutes.”

Harry and Pauline climbed back to the motorboat and sped up the bay.

“What did you mean another piece of work?” asked Pauline as she clung to his arm.

“My car is at the Navy Yard pier,” was his only answer.

She still clung to him in tremulous uncertainty as the motor sped them up through Broadway, into Fifth avenue, and on to the door of Mlle. de Longeon's hotel.

She and the diplomatic grandee who had held the confidential conference with her in the conservatory at the naval ball were together in her suite.

“And you have the plans actually in your possession?” he said.

“Yes. It has been a tedious process. It was easy to make him fall in love, but he is so fearfully scrupulous about his work. It took even his valet three months to locate the secret hiding place of the papers.”

“A little more caution mingled with his scruples and he would not now be dead at the bottom of the bay.”

“Oh, this is the day, is it?” asked Mlle. de Longeon, wearily. “After all, it is rather cruel to Catin.”

“To die for his country?”

“Nonsense! He dies because he knows he would be killed in a crueler way if he refused to obey you.”

The diplomat smiled. “Will you give me the plans?”

“Yes —why, Marie, what is it?”

A maid had entered with cards. “I am not at home today.”

Mlle. de Longeon moved to her writing desk, removed from it a packet of papers, and, with a little courtesy gave it into the eager hands of the diplomat.

“It has been a splendid achievement, Mademoiselle,” he said, enthusiastically. “I shall see that —what? Who is this?” he exclaimed, as Harry and Pauline burst into the room.

“Marie, Marie, I told you that I was at home to no one!” screamed Mlle. de Longeon.

“How dare you intrude in these apartments?” demanded the diplomat.

“I dare, because I want those papers,” declared Harry.

The packet was still in the diplomat's hands. He tried to thrust it into his pocket, but Harry was upon him. They clinched, broke from each other's grasp and struggled furiously.

As the last resource the diplomat drew the packet from his breast and flung it across the room toward Mlle. de Longeon. She pounced upon it. But Pauline was beside her. Stronger both in body and in spirit than the adventuress, she grasped her wrists, and in the luxurious, soft−curtained room there raged two battles.

But the struggles did not last long. Harry hurled his antagonist, an exhausted wreck, to the floor, and sprang to the side of Pauline. Throwing off Mlle. de Longeon's grasp, be picked up the packet from the floor, and with Pauline ran from the room.

A revenue cutter was landing a group of faint and silent men, at the pier of the Navy Yard when an automobile flashed in.

“Hurrah! They did it! You're safe!” cried Pauline, rushing past Harry to greet Ensign Summers.

The officer took her extended hands gratefully, but there was no light in his eyes as he answered.

“Safe —and dishonored,” he said. “I am only glad for my men.”

“Why dishonored?” asked Harry.

“Don't you understand?”

“The man,” said Pauline, curiously, “the man who placed the bomb? Where is he?”

“Dead,” said Summers. “He broke the tube after you were released and then attacked me with a knife. I had to kill him.”

“Good for you!” broke in Harry. “But what's all the gloom talk for? This stuff about dishonor? You've proved yourself a hero, man.”

“I have lost the most important documents of the Navy Department — through a silly entanglement with a woman.”

“No, you haven't. We went and got them for you,” said Harry, presenting the packet of plans.

CHAPTER XXIII. A PAPER CHASE

In Balthazar's band, which had failed so often do away with Pauline Marvin, there was, nevertheless, one man who had attracted the particular interest Raymond Owen —Louis Wrentz. Physically and mentally brutal, he had always been one to oppose Balthazar's delays.

Six months before Owen would have shuddered at the thought of employing this ruffian. Then his great aim was to be rid of Pauline by the most indirect and secret means.

But Pauline's hair−breadth escape a few weeks before from Mlle de. Longeon's cleverly planned plot, the almost incredible rescue of the submarine and recovery of Ensign Summers' torpedo boat plans, as well as the fact that the year of adventure was rapidly drawing to a close and that Harry's growing hostility and the increasing danger of exposure at the hands of some one of his aides, made the secretary willing to take every chance, made it imperative that he should have a lieutenant who could be trusted to strike boldly. Owen sent for Wrentz.

The man appeared in the guise of a servant seeking employment, and was brought up to Owen's private sitting−room.

“Wrentz, I want you to take charge of my work hereafter,” said the secretary.

“You mean the work of —”

Owen raised his hand in caution. “The work of conducting a certain person to a far country.”

“But Balthazar?” questioned Wrentz.

“I am through with Balthazar. He's done nothing but procrastinate. All his plans have failed because it was to his profit that they should fail.”

“I'll do the work quickly. What's your present plan?”

“A very simple one, but one that must be very shrewdly handled. It will mean that you and some of your friends will have to make a trip to Philadelphia. Where shall I be able to call you within a day or two?”

“At Stroob's lodging house, in Avenue B.”

“Very well. Be prepared to act on short notice.”

“I'll stick close to the place, sir.”

“And, Wrentz, understand that you are also to act firmly. No Balthazar, tactics. I'm through being tricked.”

“I'm sure I never failed you, sir,” said Wrentz, with an aggrieved air.

Owen smiled. “True, but temptation occasionally leads even the most honest of men astray,” he said, sarcastically.

While this last plot was being hatched Pauline and Harry were playing chess in the library. As she checkmated him for the third time he arose in mock disgust.

“They say chess is a perfect mental test. I wonder who is the brains of this family now?” she taunted.

“There's a difference between brains and hare−brains. You know, I lost because I had that Chicago thing on my mind.”

“Oh, isn't that settled yet?”

“No; I'm expecting to be called up any minute with a message that will send me out there.”

“Oh, Harry! That's terrible! When you go to Chicago you never get back for a whole week.”

“If you like me so much, why don't you marry me and go with me on all my trips?”

“Conceited!” she began, but her face fell again as the telephone bell sounded. Harry answered it, and after a few rapid questions turned to Pauline.

“That's what it is,” he said; “I go tomorrow. I must see Owen,” and rang the bell.

“Owen,” Pauline exclaimed upon his entrance, Harry must go to Chicago tomorrow. Isn't it dreadful?”

“I am very sorry. But I hope it will not be for long.”

“No,” said Harry, curtly. “Look over these papers.”

An hour later Owen drew from his typewriter this letter:

“Miss Pauline Marvin,

Carson Brown, Publishers, 9 Weston Place, Philadelphia.

New York.

Dear Madam:

After reading your marine story, published in the Cosmopolitan Magazine, we have decided you are just the person to write a new serial we have in mind.

Would you be interested to call on us at your earliest opportunity?

Yours very truly, J. R. Carson."

Owen sealed, addressed and, stamped the letter and enclosed it in a larger envelope, which he addressed to a friend in Philadelphia, with instructions to post the enclosure in that city.

He did not trust the mailing of the double letter to a servant, but, putting on his motor togs, prepared to ride to Westbury

"Well, he's got a reprieve; he's going to stay with us one more day," Pauline cried, happily, as she met Owen in the hall.

For the flash of an instant something twinged at the cold heart of the secretary. The bright beauty of Pauline, her happiness, her love for her foster brother, struck home the first realization of something missing —and never to be achieved —in his grim existence. Perhaps for the moment Raymond Owen had a dim understanding of the value of innocence.

The next afternoon Pauline stood on the veranda bidding Harry goodbye.

"I hate to go, Polly, but I must," he said. "I hate to leave you with that−secretary."

"Harry, please don't start again on that. You know I don't agree with you, and —and I don't want to quarrel with you when you're going away."

"Very well," he said, embracing her, "but don't get into any of your scrapes while I am away. Remember, it's a long way to Chicago."

"And Tipperary," she laughed. "Goodbye, darling boy, and run home the minute you can."

"I will. Goodbye."

Pauline had turned dejectedly back toward the house when the sound of steps on the walk drew her attention. It was the postman.

"I'll take them," she said, extending her hand.

She ran over the envelopes swiftly until she came to one which bore the corner mark of a publishing concern in Philadelphia. She had never heard of the firm of Carson Brown, but, to her enthusiasm of young authorship, the very name "publisher" was magical. She opened the letter hastily and read.

For a moment she stood spellbound with happiness. The realization of her dreams was at hand. Publishers were calling for her work instead of sending it back when she sent it to them.

With a glad cry, and waving the treasured letter, she rushed out into the garden to Owen.

"It's happened!" she sang, gaily. "I am discovered."

"You are what, Miss Pauline?"

"Don't you understand? Can't you see?"

"Not exactly, while you slant that letter above your head like a reprieve for a doomed man."

"Well, read it." She leaned breathlessly over his shoulder as he read the familiar lines.

"Miss Pauline, it is splendid!" he exclaimed. "I was always sure you would be successful with your writing."

"Yes, you encouraged me to get new experiences, while Harry always opposed me," she said. "But, oh, I wish Harry was here to see this."

"Shall you go to Philadelphia?" inquired Owen

"Indeed—shall and instantly."

"Is it so urgent as that."

"Of course. They might change their minds any moment and get some one else to write the story. Will you see what train I can take this evening, Owen, while I run and pack a few things?"

"With pleasure —but don't you think some one ought to accompany you?"

"To Philadelphia? Nonsense. It's just like crossing the street. Please, Owen, don't you begin to worry about every little thing I do."

"Very well," he laughed. As soon as she was gone he selected a time table, and scanned the train list. Then he took up the telephone and called a number.

"Hello, Wrentz?"

“This is Owen. It worked. Be at the Pennsylvania station with your men tonight. And, Wrentz, if the plan I gave you fails, I leave it to you to invent a new one. You understand? What? No. I don't want any return this time.”

Before Owen had helped Pauline into her car and bidden her goodbye, Wrentz and his men were on watch in the railroad station.

“Goodbye and good luck.”

Pauline was standing in the aisle, the porter stowing her baggage into her drawing room, when the men entered the car. She noted them with curiosity. There was nothing very sinister about them, but they seemed obviously out of place, but the next moment she had forgotten about them, and for the twentieth time, was reading her own story in the Cosmopolitan. For now, in the light of the magic it had wrought, she was bent on studying every word —to absorb the power of her own genius, so to speak —in order that “her publishers” should not be disappointed in the forthcoming novel.

When Pauline got off the train at Philadelphia she did not notice that one of the four men who had aroused her curiosity walked behind her as she left, or that he was joined by the three others in the taxicab which followed hers.

When she left the cab at one of the fashionable hotels, Wrentz alone followed her.

He was at Pauline's elbow when she registered. As she followed the bell boy through the lobby, he stepped to the desk, and, noting the number of Pauline's room —NO. 22 —he signed his name under hers with a flourish.

“By the way,” he said easily to the clerk, “is that pet room of' mine vacant—the one I had last year?”

The clerk smiled. “I'll see,” he said. “I had forgotten it was your pet room. I can't remember everybody.”

“Oh, I was just here for a few days,” said Wrentz.

“I remember you.”

“Yes, sir; 24 is yours,” said the clerk. “Front.”

Wrentz stood at the cigar counter to make a purchase. He did not wish to follow Pauline so closely that she might know he had taken the room next to hers.

In spite of her excitement, Pauline slept soundly that night. The next morning she had breakfast in her own room and at ten o'clock was ready to go to “Carson Brown's.” She was considerably provoked by the ignorance of the hotel clerk, who not only did not know the publishing house of Carson Brown, but could not even direct her to Weston place. He called the head porter and taxicab manager. The latter had an idea.

“I don't think it's Weston Place, but there's a Weston Street down in —well, it's not a very good section of the city, Miss. I wouldn't want to —”

“Never mind. In New York some of our best publishing houses are perfect barns. You may call a taxicab.”

“Yes, Miss.”

“Publishing house in Weston Street−whew! But she doesn't look crazy,” he instructed one of his chauffeurs. “I don't know what the game is, but it's a good job.”

Pauline's spirits revived as the cab whisked her through the big business streets, newly a−bustle with their morning life. She had a sense of pity for the workers hastening to their uninspiring toil. How few of them had ever received even a letter from a publisher! How few had known the thrill of successful authorship!

A few moments after Pauline's departure Louis Wrentz and his companions set to work.

Two of the men left the room and sauntered to opposite ends of the hall where they lingered on watch. Wrentz and the other man stepped out briskly and each with a screwdriver in his hand began unfastening the number−plates over the doors of rooms 22 and 24.

A low cough sounded down the corridor and they quickly desisted from their task and retired to their room while a maid passed by.

In a moment they were out again. Wrentz passed the number plate of 24 to his assistant, who handed back the plate Of 22. The numbers were refastened on the wrong doors. The watchers were called back.

“Now,” said Wrentz, “it is only a matter of waiting.”

Pauline's cab passed out of the central city into the region of factories.

“This looks like the section where the print shops are in New York,” she said confidently to herself.

But the driver kept on into streets of dingy, ancient houses —streets crowded with unkempt children and lined with push−carts.

“Are you sure you got the right address of them publishers, Miss?” he asked after awhile. “The next street is Weston and it don't look very promisin'.”

She drew the letter from her handbag and showed it to him.

“Well, that's the queerest thing I know,” he said, astonished by the letterhead. “I've been drivin' cabs —horse and taxi —for twenty years, and I never heard of no such people or no such place.”

“Well, at least go around the corner and see. Perhaps it is a new firm that isn't listed as yet,” said Pauline.

The driver swung the cab into a street even more bleak and bedraggled than the one they had just traversed. He stopped and got out. Pauline followed him. A blear−eyed man, slouching on a stoop, looked up in faint curiosity as she addressed him.

“There ain't no No. 9 Weston Street,” he answered.

“It usta be over there, but it's burnt down.”

Pauline's face fell. “Well, this is certainly stupid,” she exclaimed. “Of course it isn't Weston Street; it's Weston Place, as the letter says.”

“But my 'City Guide' ain't got no such place in it, miss,” answered the chauffeur.

“Well, I'll go back to, the hotel,” she said dejectedly.

She was on the verge of tears as she left the elevator and started for her room. She had looked through all the directories and street guides and knew at last that she had been the victim of a cruel hoax. All her joy and pride of yesterday had turned to humiliation and grief. She wanted to be alone —and have a good cry.

She was puzzled for a moment as she drew her key from her handbag and glanced at the numbers on the doors. She had been almost sure that No. 22 was the left−hand door, but she had been in such excitement that she could not trust any of her impressions. She started to place the key in the lock of the right−hand door.

Like a flash it opened inward and two pairs of hands gripped her. Her cry was stifled by a hand over her mouth. She was dragged into the room.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE MUMMY'S LAST WARNING

Pauline had barely time to recognize in her new captors the four strange men who had attracted her attention on the train, before a bandage was drawn over her eyes, another over her mouth, and cruel, heavy hands began to bind her limbs.

As she listened to the rough voices of the men, the mystery of the “Carson Brown” letter was entirely cleared away.

“That was easy,” commented Wrentz.

“Easier than the rest of the work will be,” said one.

“Shall we leave her on the floor,” boss asked another.

“Yes, of course.”

“Then I'll put a pillow under her head.”

“Pillow? Why a pillow? Since when did you become tender−hearted, Rocco?”

Rocco scowled, but he made no reply.

“You don't need any pillows or Pullman cars on the way to heaven,” said Wrentz with a snarling laugh.

The laugh was checked abruptly by a rap on the door. For an instant the ruffians looked at each other in alarm. There was no telling whether to open that door would be to face the drawn revolvers of detectives or only the expectant eyes of a bellboy.

There was nothing to do but to answer, however. Wrentz moved to the door.

“Who is it?” he asked.

“Your trunk, sir.”

“You are the porter?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, you can leave the trunk at the door. I am too busy to be interrupted just now. But here—”

Wrentz opened the door an inch and passed a dollar bill to the porter. “I am going to need you again in a few hours,” he said.

“Yes, sir; thank you, sir.”

Move the girl over behind the bed —out of range there,” commanded Wrentz. Two men seized Pauline and dragged her across the room where she could not be seen through the door, which Wrentz now opened wide.

In the corridor outside stood a large trunk. Wrentz and one of the men lifted it and carried it into the room.

“Your baggage is light,” said the man.

“It will be heavier in a little while. Open it.”

They obeyed.

“Do you think it is large enough?” asked Wrentz.

“Large enough for what —the girl?” demanded Rocco, who had been sulking since his rebuke.

“You are shrewd, Rocco. You have guessed rightly I suppose you'll want to put a pillow in it.”

“Yes,. I would,” said Rocco, who was the youngest of the band, “or else I would kill her first. What is the use of torture?”

Wrentz's dark fact grew even blacker as he eyed the young man.

“If you were a grown man, Rocco,” he said, “instead of a soft−hearted boy, you would know that there is one form of murder that is always found out —the trunk murder. And I want to say this to you,” he added with growing heat, “that if I hear one more word of rebellion from you this prisoner will be alive some hours after you have departed. Now, then, into the trunk with her.”

Rocco sullenly helped the others in the grim task. The trunk, large as it was, was not deep enough to permit Pauline a sitting posture, nor long enough to prevent the painful cramping of her limbs. But she was deadened to physical pain. With the words of her doom still ringing in her ears —the calm discussion of her death —her terror was her torture. The choking gag, the cutting bonds, the stifling trunk —in which the knife of Wrentz had cut but a few air holes —these were as nothing to the agony of her spirit —the agony of a lingering journey toward a certain but mysterious end.

Pauline had been a prisoner before, had been through many and desperate dangers, but her heart had never failed her utterly until she felt the pressure of the trunk lid on her bent shoulders and heard the clamping of the locks that bound her in.

She could still hear the voices.

“I'll go down and settle my bill and send up that porter,” Wrentz was saying. “Don't let him help with the trunk, except to run the elevator. You're sure your car is at the side entrance —not out in front?”

“Yes.”

“I will meet you there.”

Pauline had been so carefully bound that she could not stir in the trunk. As she felt it lifted and carried rapidly through the corridor to the hotel elevator she strained with all her might to make a noise —to beat with hands or feet or even with her head, the sides of the receptacle. But it was no use. She was carried through the hotel and out to the side entrance without attracting attention.

She felt the trunk lifted over the men's heads, and the whirring of an automobile told her that she was being placed in the machine.

“Well, you didn't care much for your pet room this time, Mr. Wrentz,” smiled the clerk as Wrentz asked for his bill.

“Indeed I did, but a message has called me back to New York.”

He paid his bill and hurried out to the big car in the back of which Pauline's trunk had been placed. Springing to the wheel, he ordered his followers in, and they drove away.

Once on suburban roads, Wrentz, either fearful of pursuit or drunk with success, began speeding.

Along the railroad tracks the noise of their speed drew a tumult of wild sounds from a string of gaily painted cars on the siding. The snarls and howls of beasts were mingled with the angry cries of men who seemed to be at work on the other side of the cars.

To Pauline the noises came faintly, but with a horrid and unearthly note. She, who had been the victim of so many cruet and fantastic plots, knew not what new danger the roaring of the beasts threatened.

In a moment, though, her mind was set at rest on this point. For Rocco, the young bandit, turning to the man next him, asked: “What does it mean? What are they doing?”

“It is a circus train,” answered the man. “They are loading the beasts into the cars.”

Pauline felt the machine swerve sharply and evidently take to a by−road, for she could hear the swish of leaves on overhanging branches as they brushed through.

“This place will do,” she heard Wrentz say. “Now, be quick about it.”

“It has come,” breathed Pauline to herself. “This is the place where I am to die.”

Through her mind, in piteous pageant, flashed thoughts of home, of Harry, of even Raymond Owen. There was a great loneliness in the hour of doom. But it would be over quickly. She shut her eyes tight and clenched her tied hands as the trunk was taken from the machine and placed upon the ground.

“Open it,” commanded Wrentz. “I don't want her to die in there.”

The men quickly unclamped the locks and lifted Pauline out.

“Take off the ropes and the bandages,” ordered Wrentz.

“Take them off? Why, she'll scream,” exclaimed one.

“If she does you may choke her to death in the car,” replied Wrentz.

“Why not here?” asked the oldest of the men. “Didn't Mr. —”

“Hush your mouth! You confounded rascal!” Wrentz screamed. “Are you going to mention that name here?”

“What harm —as long as she is to die? Dead women tell no more tales than dead men.”

“I will name all names that are to be spoken,” declared Wrentz.

“Well, he of the name that is unspoken —at least he did say that we must have no delays. We want to earn our money as well as you, Louis —remember that.”

“Come, come,” he said. “This is no way to be arguing among friends. You'll get your money all right; but there is one thing to remember−you ain't get it except through me. So let me handle the matter. Put the girl in the car.”

Pauline, although her bonds had been cut away, was unable to rise to her feet. They lifted her to her feet. She took a step or two, while they watched her curiously. Quickly strength and self−control came back to her. With a

sudden spring, she struck at Wrentz with her fist, and as he drew back, astonished she darted across the roadway toward the wood.

It was but a futile, maneuver. She had gone but a few paces when she was gripped from behind and snatched back.

“You see, Louis —I told you she would do something of the kind,” said the old bandit.

“And I told you it would do no harm. Place her in the car between you and Rocco. If she screams or makes a move to get away you may do as you wish, but not until then.”

Pauline still struggled feebly as she was lifted into the machine. Wrentz kicked the empty trunk to the side of the byroad and took the wheel again. He drove back to the main drive that skirted the railroad.

Distant as they were by now, the clamor of the caged beasts in the circus train could still be heard. To Pauline the creatures seemed less wild and cruel than these, her human captors.

Wrentz put on even greater speed than he had ventured before. Two policemen, Burgess and Blount, of the Motorcycle Squad, were standing by their wheels in the roadway when the sound of the car's rush reached their ears from half a mile away.

“By George, that fellow's coming some,” exclaimed Blount.

“And looks as if he wasn't going to stop,” said the other. “Halt! Halt, there!” he commanded, as the machine flashed up in a mantle of dust.

“They are coming, Louis,” said one of the men.

“I know they are. But there is no machine made that can catch this one. Have your guns ready, though. In case they begin to fire, pick them off.”

Pauline shuddered at the matter−of−fact way in which Rocco and the man on the other side drew their heavy pistols from their hip pockets and rested them on their knees.

“Do you see the girl in that car?” yelled Burgess to his companion over the din of their streaking machines.

“Yes. We want that party for more than speeding, I guess,” answered Blount. They bent low over their handle−bars and raced on.

“If he takes the 'S' curve like that we've got him —dead or alive,” said Burgess.

“And it looks as if he would. By George, he is!”

Wrentz's car had shot suddenly out of sight around a twist in the road. Wrentz was an able driver, and, even at its terrific speed, the machine took the first turn gracefully. But Wrentz had not counted on a second shorter turn to the opposite direction. And he worked the wheel madly for a second swerve; the huge car skidded, spun round, and, reeling on two wheels for an instant, turned over in the ditch.

It was several moments before Pauline opened her eyes. She shut them quickly and staggered to her feet shuddering —she had been lying across Rocco's dead body which had broken her fall and saved her life.

Two other men lay motionless in the road. But from under the overturned car there came a sound, and Pauline realized, with quick alarm, that Wrentz was still alive. She ran across the road and into the parked woods that hid the railroad from the drive.

Wrentz struggled out from beneath the car. His eyes swept swiftly from the bodies of his dead comrades to the form of Pauline just vanishing in the thicket. He was bruised and bleeding, but with the instinct of a beast of prey he followed his quarry.

“Dead or alive was right,” said Burgess, jumping from his wheel and examining the bodies in the road. “I wonder what that fellow was up to. And where is the girl?”

“I saw her and one of the men make into the park there,” said Blount. “You take charge here and I'll go after them.”

As he moved into the thicket in the direction Pauline had taken young Blount's attention was attracted by a new commotion. The park was on the crest of a steep cliff overlooking the railroad tracks and from the tracks came a riot of voices. Blount forced his way through the wood to a viewpoint from the cliff. Below him a score of men were moving rapidly along the tracks in wide, open order, evidently bent on some sort of a hunt.

“The circus men,” said Blount to himself. “An animal must have got out. This is certainly some day for business.”

He turned back to the work in hand.

Pauline, spurred by terror as she realized that Wrentz was again upon her trail, had sped like a wild thing

through the park paths. She could hear the heavy footsteps of her pursuer close behind. She could hear also a shouting from afar off. She made toward the shouting — the sound of any voice but the voices of the inhuman men who had planned her death was welcome to her ears.

She came out upon the cliff where it sloped steeply to the railroad yards, but not too steeply to prevent her descending. From her position, the lines of freight cars cut off from her vision the strange group of hunters who were shouting. Running, stumbling, creeping, clutching at small bushes, she scrambled down the cliff.

“Stop and come back!” she heard a menacing voice behind her. She sped on the faster.

A line of high bushes fringed the bottom of the cliff. Between the bushes and the first rails ran a ditch. Sheltered from all view from above, Pauline dragged herself along this ditch, seeking a hiding place. She knew her strength was almost gone. She was in terror of fainting. If she could hide somewhere and rest —

A single empty freight car stood on the outer track a hundred yards away. Its open door offered the only means of concealment that she had. She believed that the bushes were high enough still to shield her while she climbed into the car.

In this she was wrong. Wrentz, watching from above —for he was afraid of the voices on the tracks, below and had not followed Pauline —watched with pleasure as she crawled to the side of the car, and, after two failures, managed to drag herself through the high door. She sank exhausted. Gradually, however, her strength returned. Her mind recovered from the dazing experiences of the last few hours. She began to gain courage and to plan her further flight.

As she moved toward., the car door to reconnoiter, the sense of an invisible presence suddenly possessed her. Instinctively she turned.

One glance behind her and every fiber of her body seemed to turn to stone. Fear she had known, but never terror such as this. She stood paralyzed, unable to close her eyes, unable to move. For there beside her, towering above her in horrible strength, with wildly grinning face and cruelly outreaching claws, stood the thing that gave explanation to the hunt outside and the shouting. Pauline was in the clutches of a gorilla. She fainted as she felt herself gripped in the hairy arms.

Wrentz was gloating as he stood on watch over Pauline's hiding place. In a little while the men, would be out of the railroad yard and he would go down and finish the work. But his rejoicings were turned into amazement by the sight which now presented itself at the door of the car.

With Pauline, carried over one arm as if she had been a wisp of straw, the gorilla was crawling down to the trackside. Wrentz saw it crawl along the ditch and heard the crunch of broken bushes as the huge creature clambered up the cliff.

Wondering, scarcely able to believe his eyes, Wrentz followed at a safe distance.

Young Policeman Blount, searching for the fugitive chauffeur of the wrecked automobile and the mysterious young woman who had escaped from it, paused at the sound of heavy foot−falls. A low, guttural, snarling sound —a sound hardly human —accompanied the footsteps. He had reached the bottom of the cliff a half mile from where Pauline had found her perilous shelter. Peering up through the bushes, his astonishment and horror were a match for the astonishment and joy of Wrentz. The gorilla, with Pauline still clutched in the mighty paw, had reached almost the top of the cliff at its steepest point.

Blount blew his whistle, blast after blast. He started up the cliff, but came back at the sound of hurrying footsteps and calls; the hunters from the railroad yards had heard the signal.

“Hello! Have you seen anything of the gorilla?” yelled the first man to come up.

Blount pointed up the cliff side to where the hideous beast was just dragging Pauline over the topmost ledge.

The men stood spell−bound with pity.

“A girl!” gasped one of them. “She's as good as dead, if she isn't dead now. He just killed our foreman back in the yards.”

“No, thank heaven!” cried Blount, “she's not dead. Look!”

At the top of the cliff they saw Pauline's form suddenly quicken into life. The gorilla had released its hold upon her to make sure of its footing on the perilous ledge. Now she stood, a frail, pitiful, hopeless thing, fighting —actually assailing the beast, more mighty than a dozen men.

Their hearts sick within them they watched the brief struggle. Wrentz, too, watched it, from his hiding place on the top of the cliff. But his heart was not sick. In a moment, he was sure, his work would be accomplished for

him, and his employer would be rid of Pauline Marvin in a way that could reflect no blame on any one.

Blount started up the cliff. He took it for granted that the others would follow, but looking down after gaining half the distance, he saw the circus men still huddled together in fascinated awe.

“Look! Look!” they called to him. “He's taking her up the tree.”

Blount looked and saw the gorilla climbing ponderously the trunk of a large tree, the branches of which overhung the precipice. Blount climbed on frantically. He stopped again. The gorilla was crawling out upon one of the overhanging branches! The strange beast−brain had conceived a death for Pauline more terrible than any Raymond Owen bad ever plotted. Wrentz himself might have envied the gorilla.

Blount drew his revolver. He was not more than a hundred feet below them now. “It's the chance of hitting her against the chance of saving her,” he muttered. He fired. With a snarl of pain the gorilla turned and bit savagely at its shoulder. Blount rushed on. He stopped again and fired. He was at the verge of the cliff. He could blaze away now with no danger of hitting Pauline, for he was a sure marksman.

With a great throb of joy in his heart the gallant young fellow saw the beast turn, and, leaving Pauline with her arms around the limb, her eyes shut against the dizzy depths below, move back and scramble down.

Blount was on the cliff−top as the gorilla reached the ground. The beast charged. Blount fired again. Again the gorilla, snarling, bit at its wounded side, but it came an as if a dozen lives vitalized the gross body.

Blount backed away from the cliff, but the monster was upon him. It clutched him, hurled him to ground, dragged him back to the dizzy verge.

Slowly Blount was pressed over the precipice. The watchers below saw him in his last struggle writhe in the deathly grasp, twist his revolver and fire three shots into the heart of the gorilla.

Down the long fall to the jagged rocks went the beast.

Pauline was bending over the bleeding, battered form of the young officer when the circus crew reached them.

“Oh, you are brave, brave!” she cried.

He opened his eyes and grinned merrily. “If I'm brave, I'd like to know what you are.”

“Oh, I'm not brave, I'm nothing but a selfish little pig,” cried Pauline. “I've treated the dearest fellow in the world shamefully. He's forgiven me over and over, but he won't forgive me this time.”

“He'll forgive you anything, Mim,” Blount assured her, “for the sake of getting you safe back. But I shouldn't like to be the man who got you into this, when he hears of it.”

“The man's fe enough,” said Burgess, who had just up in time to hear Blount's last words.

“No, he didn't escape that way,” as Blount uttered an ejaculation of disgust. “He ran full tilt into me and when I tried to arrest him he drew his revolver on me. By good luck I got him first —yes, Jo, he's dead.”

“Dead,” repeated Pauline in a low tone. “How horrible to go out of life a moment after you had tried to commit murder.”

“It's not his first,” Burgess said coolly. “We've been after him and his gang these six months. It was Wrentz, Jo, and I made a haul of papers that'll get somebody into trouble.”

“Oh, don't hurt the young one,” cried Pauline. “He tried to help me.”

“Rocco? He was dead when they picked him up. And, now, Miss Marvin, hadn't I better get you a taxi?”

“Yes, thank you, but,” with irrepressible curiosity, “how did you know me?”

Burgess smiled. “How did I know you? I beg your pardon, Miss, but for nearly a year your picture's been in every paper, more or less, in the United States. You're a big head−liner —it's an honor to meet you, face to face. But it's Blount has all the luck. He's saved you — hell be a head−liner himself tomorrow.”

The hot color rushed over Pauline's face. “A headliner ” —so that was what she meant to the public, to the man on the street.

“Please, Please, don't let this get into the Papers,” she begged. “I'll do anything in the world for you if you'll just keep it out of the papers.”

“Will you tell us about those other adventures?”

Burgess asked eagerly. “It's a sure thing that somebody's been pulling the wires, making you walk the tight rope, and. somebody that knows everything you do. Any man on the force who could spot him would be made.”

“No, no,” Pauline insisted, an uneasy remembrance of Harry's suspicions lending emphasis to her denial. “Some of those things were done before anybody out of the house could know.”

“Just as I said,” Burgess agreed triumphantly.

“It's somebody in the house. Why he knew about your bull terrier, and the papers had it had just been, given you the day before —darned clever little dog to give your folks the clue.”

“Cyrus?” Pauline's face broke into smiles and dimples. “He's the cleverest, dearest, most beautiful dog in the world.”

“Fine dog, yes Miss, if he's like the picture the reporters got.”

Pauline's face clouded —for the moment she had forgotten the horrors of publicity.

“You won't put this in the papers?” she pleaded.

“He shan't,” Blount raised himself weakly on his elbow. “If the reporters haven't got it already, we'll keep you out of it anyhow, Miss.”

“Keep a scoop like this out of the papers?” Burgess laughed aloud. “You're talking through your hat, Blount, it can't be done.”

In one terrible flash Pauline saw her name in capitals, her photograph almost life−size, photographs of her trunk, the gorilla, Blount, in “head−liners, too, and Harry, furious, too far away for moral suasion; stern, cold, unforgiving, worse still, disgusted. She realized as she had never realized before that Harry was what counted most, Harry was the one thing she could not live without. To the terrors of these hours was added the terror of losing him.

She burst into wild sobs.

“I want Harry, I don't want anything in the world but Harry! Oh, take me home, please take me home!”

Burgess got a taxi and went with her to the hotel, where She was put to bed, a doctor sent for, and where at last she fell asleep.

But it was not until noon the next day that she was able to take the train for New York. And then began, two hours and a half that Pauline remembered to the last hour of her life. Her photograph stared at her from the front page of every daily paper —even the glasses and thick veil she wore to conceal her identity could not soften the conspicuous pictures. Newsboys called her name, and the gorilla story, Wrentz, and Blount's names, together —every passenger in the car, it seemed to her, men, women, and children, were discussing her. There were silly jokes, contemptuous criticism, half−laughing suggestions that there was something “queer about Miss Marvin.” just behind her, she heard one woman say to another, “But, then, my dear, what could you expect of any girl whose mother was an Egyptian” as if this equaled breaking the whole Decalogue.

Though she had wired Owen, the motor did not meet her, and feeling more than ever forlorn and forsaken, Pauline got into a taxi. Never had the old place looked so beautiful as today when she felt that it could never be her home again —she must tell Harry that her mother was an Egyptian and then even if he could forgive her this last adventure he would never marry her. Oh, how could she have been so silly, so conceited, so cruel to Harry! And what a fool she had been to go in search of experience in order to write. If she couldn't write with all this beauty spread out before her, if she couldn't write by living a real, human, everyday life, the sort of life that brings you close to normal people, how could she ever hope to write by living on excitement —on abnormal excitement and with abnormal people and situations?

She paid the driver and was walking slowly up the steps of the veranda, when, suddenly, she halted as if she had been struck. What was that? It couldn't be —yes, it was —funeral streamers hanging from the door−knob!

With a scream that rang through the closed door, Pauline fainted. When she recovered consciousness she was in the library. Bemis and Margaret were bending over her, and strong, tender arms were around her.

“Harry,” she murmured instinctively.

“Don't try to talk, my darling, drink this. You go,” to Bemis and Margaret.

“Oh, Harry, I thought you were dead.”

“I'm very much alive,” Harry said with a tremulous laugh.

“But Harry, what does all that black on the mean?”

“It means,” said Harry, savagely, “that though the mills of the gods grind slowly they grind surely —Owen's dead.”

“Owen!” Her eyes large with terror, Blount's words ringing in her ears —“I shouldn't like to be the an at the bottom of this when Mr. Marvin hears of it. “'Owen,” she repeated in a breathless whisper.

“Harry, you didn't kill him?”

“He didn't give me the chance. He was dead when I got here —overdose of morphine Dr. Stevens said. Seems

he was a drug fiend."

"Why that was the reason," Pauline said, her filling with tears. "He was crazy, he didn't know what he was doing. Poor Owen, poor Owen"— then turned hastily to safer topics. "But I thought you went to Chicago for a week."

"I did, but, you'll laugh, Pauline —I know it sounds fool —the Mummy came to me just as she came to me in Montana. I took the first train home. I knew you were in danger —I knew it was a warning. I'll ever trust, you out of my sight again—you've got to marry me now."

Pauline shrank back from his kisses. "No, no, Harry I can't —I won't —there was a woman on the train said my mother was an Egyptian."

Harry broke into a peal of laughter and caught her in his arms.

"Is that the only reason you won't?"

"Harry, is it true?"

"I don't know and I don't care—what difference does it make who your mother was? You are you, that's all I care for." His voice shook. "I love you so, Pauline, that I can't stand this life any longer—another adventure —"

Pauline silenced him with a kiss.

"I'm all through with adventures," she declared. "Harry I'm going to —"

"Marry me? Polly do you mean it?"

"Yes, yes. Oh, my dearest, I've been a selfish, silly, conceited little pig, but I'm cured, I'm cured at, last."

As he clasped her in his arms, the shutter swung violently to, and the case containing the Mummy fell with a clatter to the floor. Harry ran and lifted it as tenderly as if it had been a little child.

"I suppose we can hardly keep her here," he said regretfully, "but we'll give, no, I can't give her up entirely, we'll lend her to the Metropolitan Art Museum where she'll receive due honor. She's been a faithful friend to us, Polly."

"And here's another," exclaimed Pauline, as Cyrus ran frantically into the room, and leaping upon the couch with ecstatic barks of welcome, threatened again to take the place that belonged by right to Harry. But this time Harry joined in Pauline's caresses.

THE END