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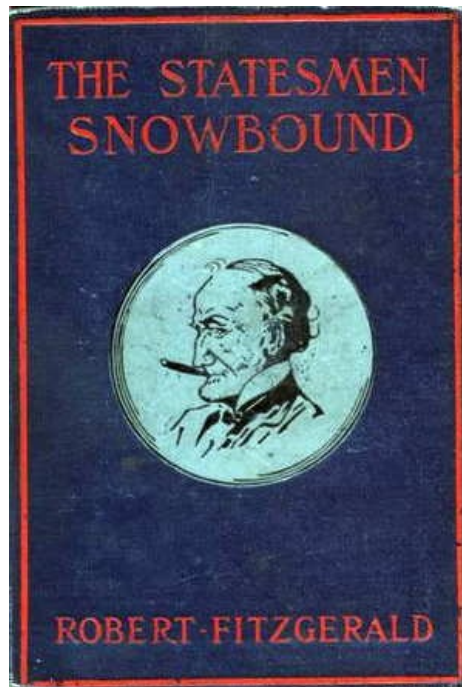
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE STATESMEN SNOWBOUND ***



THE STATESMEN SNOWBOUND

By **ROBERT FITZGERALD**

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The Statesmen Snowbound

I

THE FUNERAL

Toward the close of the —th Congress I was designated a member of a committee on the part of the House to accompany the remains of the late Senator Thurlow to their last resting-place at the old home in Kentucky. And it might be well to state here that I am quite aware that some of my ungrateful countrymen apply the spiteful term "junket" to a journey of this description. When one considers the sacrifices we Congressmen make in order to serve the nation, it is hard to believe that unthinking persons begrudge us a little pleasure. In many cases we give up all home life, business interests, and personal comfort, and take up our abode in second-rate hotels and boarding-houses. We are continually pestered and annoyed by office-seekers, book-agents, cranks, and reporters; and, alas, we form habits that cling like barnacles, try as hard as we may to shake them off. A taste of public life is fatal to most men, and the desire to feed from the public crib goes right to the bone. It is like a cancer, and it is removed only with grave danger to the afflicted. Everything, therefore, which may lighten our burdens and tend to relieve the situation should be the aim and study of our constituents. But this may be digression.

The trip out was necessarily a quiet one, though a well-stocked buffet kept the delegation from absolute depression. Leaving Washington early in the afternoon we arrived at the little Kentucky town the next morning about eleven o'clock, and found that we had yet some five miles to go over bad roads to the homestead. We were met by two nephews of the deceased, with a host of relatives and friends. The son, Albert Thurlow, came on with us from Washington. There was ample accommodation in the way of conveyances, and we proceeded slowly up into the higher country. In something more than an hour the house was reached—a big home-like structure, large enough for us all, and the entertainment most lavish. The estate was an extensive one, and the innumerable outbuildings and well-stocked barns gave evidence of wealth and thrift. A long

drive between rows of lofty poplars led to the main entrance, and the view from the front of the house down to the river was superb. There were servants in abundance, and nothing had been overlooked to insure our comfort. The stables were the attraction for most of our party, and several kings of the turf were brought out for inspection. We were taken all over the place, and many things of interest were shown us. A Bible and powder-horn, once the property of Daniel Boone, books with the autograph of Henry Clay, duelling pistols, quaint and almost priceless silver and china, and a rare collection of old prints and family portraits. The walls in one room were fairly lined with cups, the trophies of many a famous meet.

And such whiskey! There is nothing like it in Washington, or in the whole world, perhaps. A volume might be written in praise of that mellow, golden fluid. There were many in our party who would gladly add to this glowing testimony, and wax eloquent over the virtues of that noble life-saver and panacea, referred to by our good hosts as "a little something." Accustomed, as most of us were, to the stuff served over the Washington bars, this was indeed well worth the trip out.

Late February is not the time to see rural Kentucky at its best, and but few signs of spring were visible. The day of the funeral dawned with leaden skies, and a piercing wind from the north groaned in the chimneys, and whistled through the leafless trees on the lawn. The branches of a huge maple scraped and fretted against my windows and woke me several times during the night. At an early hour a servant was piling high the fire, and the room was soon bathed in a cheerful glow, the logs cracking and sputtering merrily. I parted the curtains of my large old-fashioned bed, slipped to the floor feeling very well and fit, and glanced curiously about me. Every appointment of the room was long out of date, but nevertheless made for snugness and comfort. The lover of antique furniture would surely revel here. I do not know what would delight him most; the high-post bed, the dressing-table, the chest of drawers, or the old clock on the mantel. The sheets and hangings smelled faintly of lavender, the walls were papered with landscapes in which pretty shepherdesses, impossible sheep, and garlands of roses predominated,—a style much in vogue in the early forties,—indeed the room seemed as if it had been closed and laid away by a tidy housewife years before, and opened and aired for my reception but yesterday. An illumined text,—a "Jonah under his Gourd," elaborately worked in colored silks,—a smirking likeness of "The Father of his Country," and an equally self-satisfied looking portrait of Mrs. W. hung in prominent places.

There was a gentle tap on the door, and an ancient darky entered, with a tall glass of whipped-cream punch, light as a feather, and as delicate as thought. Then, breakfast, in a long, low-ceilinged room on the ground floor, with a blazing fire at each end, a pickaninny gravely watchful over both. Only the male members of the family were at the meal, which was a solemn festival as befitting a house of mourning.

At ten o'clock the funeral procession left the mansion and slowly wound its way along a rough road to a little weather-beaten church a mile or so distant. It was set well back from the highway in the shadow of tall pines, and looked lonely and uncared-for. In the churchyard were a few scattered tombstones, moss-grown, and very much awry. The graves were unkempt and sunken, and weeds and poison ivy struggled for the mastery. The day was bitterly cold, with an occasional flurry of snow; but, in spite of that, an immense crowd had gathered. The church and churchyard were filled to overflowing. It was the largest collection of queer looking people, horses, and "fixes" I have ever seen. The services were brief, but most impressive, and it must have been a trying ordeal for the aged clergyman, an old friend of the deceased. Several times his voice faltered, and he seemed about to break down. The coffin was borne to the grave by six stalwart negroes, laborers on the estate. A lad followed, leading poor Thurlow's favorite horse. Then the widow and her son, the relatives, friends, and family servants. A fine male quartet sang "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and a soul-stirring contralto, "Asleep in Jesus." Tears stood in the eyes of all, the negroes weeping openly and uncontrollably. As the grave was filled in, the snow began to fall in real earnest, gusts of wind lashing the pines into fury. It was the beginning of a three days' blizzard long to be remembered in that country.

Returning to the warmth and comfort of the homestead, we found a vast array of eatables and drinkables; every one was welcomed, but notwithstanding the unusual number of guests, all was well-ordered and decorous. The Thurlows and their numerous clan are a fine-looking folk; the men, sturdy, well set-up—a fighting people, yet generous, kindly and hospitable. The women—gracious, lovely, and altogether charming. Beyond the universally cherished idea of beautiful women, blooded horses, and blue grass, my knowledge of Kentucky had been rather vague. My information had been derived chiefly from my experience on various Election Committees, where moonshiners, mountain feuds, and double-barrelled shot guns played prominent parts. Commonwealths, like communities, are advertised most widely by the *evils* in their midst; a fact which jolts the reformer and drives the optimist to drink. The lordly manner of living, the immense estates, and the magnificent hospitality of our hosts, was a revelation to me; and an occasional reference by one of the older servants to the grandeur of antebellum days indicated a condition of even greater splendor and luxury. But the cruel hand of war had devastated and impoverished the country, the slaves were freed, and the land for years lay untilled and neglected. Marse Henry, the head of the house, was killed in almost the first battle of the war. Marse Breckinridge died, a prisoner in Fort Warren, and now Marse Preston had followed them to the land of shadows. Uncle Eph'm, himself, was getting very feeble and helpless, and it would not be long before he joined his loved ones on the other shore. De good ole times were gone forever!

It was with regret that I left this attractive home, and I gladly accepted an invitation to return in

the fall for the shooting. For the shooting, indeed! Why, *that* was all over! Dan Cupid never aimed truer! My wife—a Kentuckian—says that I will never shine as a Nimrod, but it seems to me that I have had pretty fair success in that rôle.

II

SENATOR BULL AND MR. RIDLEY—TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE NEWLY FLEDGED MEMBER.

Again on the train, our troubles were over, and we pulled out of the station amid cheers and yells from hundreds of throats—an odd contrast to the mournful silence of the throng upon our arrival.

In our party were Senators Baker, of Kentucky; Bull, of Montana; Wendell, of Massachusetts; Hammond, of Michigan; Pennypacker, of West Virginia; and Congressmen Holloway, of Illinois; Manynifters, of Georgia; Van Rensselaer, of New York; a majority of the Kentucky delegation, Mr. Ridley, Senator Bull's private secretary, and several newspaper men.

Senator Bull is seventy, tall and massive. His features are striking—a big nose, heavy, grizzled mustache, bushy brows emphasizing eyes blue and kindly, a wide mouth, tobacco-stained, with a constant movement of the jaws—bovine, but shrewdly ruminative. A leonine head of shaggy white hair crowns the whole. Ridley, the private secretary, is about the same age. He is a ruddy-cheeked, round-paunched little fellow, scarcely measuring up to the Senator's shoulder. The thin fringe of hair around his shining pate gives him the appearance of a jolly friar. He peers at you through gold-rimmed spectacles, and is quite helpless without them. He has been with Senator Bull for years, serving him faithfully in various capacities, and is now a partner in the enterprises which have made the Senator many times a millionaire. The title of "private secretary" is one of courtesy merely, and seems to highly amuse the two friends.



Senator Bull and Sammy Ridley.

Senator Bull and Sammy Ridley.

At nightfall we had left the storm behind us, and were speeding over the mountains. The sunlight, lingering on the higher peaks, cast great shadows into the depths beyond. There had been much snow all winter, and the summits sparkled and shone out dazzlingly, then went pink and crimson and purple as the radiance slowly faded. The lamps had not been lighted in the car, and most of us had gathered at the observation end, impressed by the grandeur of it all, when the silence was broken by Mr. Ridley.

"That's a pretty sight, sure! It gives me a kind of solemn feeling all over. The glory up there makes me think of dying, and heaven, and angels, and all that," he said gravely. "That patch of light calls to mind the fellows I know who climb the heights, and when they get near the top the sunshine of prosperity, or fame, or notoriety, or whatever you call it, strikes them and it wilts

them, and they can't stand it for long, so they fall back, and you don't hear of them any more. There're others, though, who get up there and fairly bask in it all, walk around, lie down, eat and sleep in it. *They* can stand it, and, my, what big shadows they throw!"

"Well, well, well, Sammy Ridley, I never heard you talk like that before," said Senator Bull; "it must have been that funeral to-day. Got on your nerves, eh? Some folks are affected like that. Come away from that window, boy, and get back to earth again." Thus urged, Mr. Ridley got back to earth again, and took a drink of generous size. Several of the delegation joined him. The movement seemed a popular one.

The conversation then turned to the deceased, his many good qualities, his probable successor in the Senate, and the bearing his death would have upon the political situation in Kentucky.

"We will miss him in the Senate," said Senator Wendell; "we will miss his wise counsel, the broad statesmanlike views, and the kindly personality that endeared him to us all. Thurlow was a great man, and the State of Kentucky will no doubt erect a fitting memorial."

"Yes," said Mr. Ridley, "I suppose they will. They ought to. It may be some consolation to the family anyhow. But it is an empty sort of thing, after all, when you come to think of it. A man's life and actions are his best monument; those who loved him will never forget him, his enemies will be sorry they spoke, and there will be something *more* than appropriate cut on his tombstone—that's certainly all a man should want. What's the use of waiting for a fellow to die before immortalizing him in marble or bronze? It is small satisfaction to him personally. Why not put up a statue while he is living, and let him have the pleasure of walking past it with his wife and children on a fine Sunday afternoon when all the folks are out?"

"There is a rich vein of truth in what you say, Sammy," said Senator Bull; "but you are alive and well, and it is almost impossible for you to take a dead man's view of the situation."

"I don't know but what you are right, Senator," observed Mr. Ridley thoughtfully, and the group relapsed into silence.

"You are a Southern man, I believe, Mr. Ridley," said Representative Van Rensselaer a few minutes later, as they touched glasses.

"I *was* one, sir, very much of one; that's why I am limping around now. I was in the Confederate Army, up to the fall of sixty-three, and then I was taken prisoner."

"So you have had a taste of Union prisons, eh?" asked Senator Baker, who spoke feelingly—his "Recollections of Johnson's Island" had just made its appearance.

"Just a leetle might of a taste, Senator; nothing like your experience, though. You see, it was this way with me. I was captured by a pretty good sort of a fellow—a big, husky, soft-hearted chap who wouldn't hurt a flea. That's him over there," pointing to Senator Bull, "and he has held me prisoner ever since. He ran up against me at Chickamauga."

"Well?" said Senator Baker expectantly.

"Tell them the whole story, Sammy," said Senator Bull, as several of the party drew their chairs up closer to the private secretary; "tell them the whole story; it will kill time, anyway."

"Yes," continued Mr. Ridley, "I was taken prisoner, and it all came of my foolishness and scorn for the enemy. We boys of the —th Arkansas thought any Johnny Reb could whip five Yanks, and it made us kind of careless-like, I reckon. I was a raw country lad when the war broke out, as tough a specimen as ever Jefferson County turned loose on the unsuspecting public, but I wasn't much worse than the rest of the boys who loafed around Todd's livery stable swapping lies, chewing tobacco, and setting the nation to rights. We were all full of fight when the Sumter news came, and anxious to get in it; and I saw a heap of it, too, before I made the acquaintance of Nathan Bull.

"There was some lively skirmishing on the morning of September twentieth, sixty-three, before the armies got together in earnest. It was real comical to see the boys tearing up their love-letters and playing-cards just before going into battle. The roads and fields were speckled with the scraps just like a snowfall on the stage, as I reckon all of you have seen in plays like 'Alone in London,' and the 'Banker's Daughter.' It was in one of those preliminary set-tos that somehow my company strayed away, and left me up in the woods with a bullet in my leg. I was looking around for some place where I could lie down and nurse myself a bit, and at the same time keep clear of the shells and other things flying around. The air was full of them—making a noise like 'Whar-izz-yer?' 'Whar-izz-yer?' Haven't you often heard that sound, Senator? Some poor devil hears it once *too* often, every now and then, doesn't he?"

"It was very hot and dusty, and I was plumb crazy for water. Somehow I managed to work my way out to a big clear space on the side of the hill. The brush and weeds were up to your neck. At the foot of the hill was a piece of marshy land where there had once been a spring. It had long since dried up, but there were patches of greenish water here and there. I threw myself on the ground, and my, how good that nasty-looking water tasted! Then I bathed my face and hands in it. I heard a man over to my right shout out that General Hood had been killed; and in a minute or so two of our officers dashed out of the timber, coming my way, riding for dear life, and nearly trampling me. Meanwhile, the battle seemed to be raging all around me. Most of the heavy fighting that day was done in the woods, and the losses were big on both sides. Well, I dragged

myself to a little clump of sassafras, not caring much whether I lived or died, I was that played out, and my leg burning and stinging just as though it was being touched up with a red-hot poker. I had been there about fifteen minutes when a blue-coat rose up in front of me—right out of the ground it seemed—and says, very fierce, 'You're my prisoner!' He was a young fellow, about my age, and didn't look at all dangerous. I just wished that leg of mine had been all right, I would have given him his money's worth, I tell you! But it wasn't any use. I couldn't stir for the misery.

"'You're my prisoner,' he says again, louder'n before.

"'All right,' says I, 'I'm willing,' seeing there wasn't anything else to say, and putting a free and easy face on it.

"'Get up, then, and come along with me,' says he. I pointed to my leg, and tried to grin. He saw the curious way it was lying—all twisted up—and the big red splotch on my trousers, and says, as if imparting information, 'You're hurt, man, badly hurt. Keep perfectly still,' which seemed to be unnecessary, as that was the onliest thing I could do anyhow. 'I'll get you out of this. Now, brace up,' and he knelt down, and held out his canteen. I tried to take it, but the effort was too much for me. 'Poor chap, he's gone,' I heard him say, and then I faded away. When I came to—a minute later it seemed to me—I was in a Yankee hospital; a big tent full of men groaning and dying, and doctors running this way and that with bottles, and bandages, and knives; and the cussing, and the screaming, and the smells! It makes me sick to think of it, even now. It was hell! I know you don't want to hear about the time I spent there, and in another place like it, tossing and groaning through the long days and nights; and when I got nearly well again, about my life in prison, and my parole. Nathan fixed that, and I walked out a free man, limping a little, just as I've done ever since. Nathan hadn't forgotten the Reb he had taken prisoner, and when I went back to Pine Bluff, poorer'n a rat, and no prospects to speak of, he gave me my start in life. He sent me with a letter to his folks in Illinois, and when I got there they gave me work to do, and treated me like one of their own. They certainly were white to me. When Nathan came home after the war, he cal'lated that Illinois was too far east for him, so after a few years we packed up our duds, and 'migrated out to Montana. There we've been ever since. That's my story, and it ain't a very startling one after all, is it?"

"And it is true—every word of it," said Senator Bull warmly. "Sammy has stuck by me through thick and thin. I don't believe I could have made out without him. As a mine boss, store keeper, deputy sheriff, and Indian fighter, we swear by him out our way. There is a fellow, gentlemen, who calls a spade a spade, and oftener than not a *damned* spade!"

"Don't take my character away, Nathan," expostulated Mr. Ridley humbly; "give me a show. I'm an old man now, and all I've got left is my good name, and a little something in the savings bank. Don't be hard on me."

"Sammy," continued the Senator, unnoticing, "could have gone to Congress if he had cared to. The Democrats were after him only year before last. Their man won out hands down. Sammy declined the nomination. And that's the only thing I have against Sammy Ridley. He is a Democrat. It's born in him, just as some folks inherit a taste for liquor, and others come into the world plumb crazy, and are satisfied to stay that way all their lives. However, it is not as bad as it seems. They do say out in our country that the firm of 'Bull and Ridley' is bound to get there, because when the Republican party is in the saddle, and there's anything to be had, it's 'Bull and Ridley,' and when the Democrats are on top, it's 'Ridley and Bull,' and when the Populists come in we are going out of business. So there may be some truth in it after all. What say you, Sammy boy?" Mr. Ridley nodded gravely. "In Washington Sammy is invited everywhere, but society is not his strong point. He won't get in the swim."

"I'd rather not be 'in the swim' than swim in dirty water," said the private secretary brusquely. "But speaking of the Senator; *there*, friends, is certainly an all-around heavy-weight."

"Sammy, Sammy," said the Senator reproachfully. "I see you are getting back at me. I didn't think it of you. No bouquets, if you please. As a matter of fact, gentlemen, I feel that I am growing beautifully less every day; I have noticed it ever since I came to Washington. I haven't been in the Senate long enough to amount to anything, if I ever do. We new people are only in demand when there is a vote to be taken. We are put on minor committees, and are thankful for any crumbs that fall from the great man's table. I am a very small spar in the ship of state. It takes all the conceit out of a fellow when he finds how little he amounts to in Washington. He leaves his own part of the world a giant, puffed up with pride and importance; but the shrinking process begins as soon as the train rolls out of the home depot. It comes on like an attack of the ague—you are first hot, then cold, then colder still. You shiver and shake——"

"For drinks?" murmured one of the newspaper men absently.

"Well—yes," replied the Senator, smiling. "I hadn't thought of that. Very neatly put. Quite true. And, as I say, he shivers and shakes—for drinks—loses, and loses—pays for them, and by the time he reaches Washington he and his pocket-book are several sizes below normal."

The humble attitude of this, one of America's wealthiest and most influential men, was edifying but scarcely convincing. The newspaper men looked at one another dubiously. Perhaps, they thought, when the Senator's magnificent house in the West End was completed, and his wife and daughters came over from Paris, the poor fellow would not be so lonely and neglected. He was a fine man, and it seemed too bad that he should be so side-tracked.

"Quite true, Senator," agreed Representative Holloway, "and matters are even worse in the House. There are more of us there, and the mere individual is more dwarf-like than over in the Senate. We are treated like a lot of naughty school-boys, and when we meekly beg leave 'to speak out in meetin' we are practically told to shut up and sit down. The new comer is the victim of much quiet hazing on the part of his colleagues,—ably aided and abetted by the Speaker,—but he soon learns the ropes, and quickly effaces himself. He reserves his babble for the cloak-room and hotel lobby; yet, to many of his constituents, he is still a great man. There is no sadder sight in the world than the newly-fledged Congressman in the throes of his maiden speech, delivered to a half-filled House, busily reading the papers, talking, writing, or absorbed in thought. An official stenographer, right under his nose, wearily jots down the effort, and the real audience consists of a few bored friends in the galleries who smile uneasily now and then, and wonder what it is all about, and how long the blamed thing is going to last. Anyway, he gets it in the Record for free distribution to thousands of constituents, who read it, perhaps, and try to imagine why 'Applause' is tagged on to the finish."

"A gloomy picture, but not overdrawn," sighed one of the Kentucky delegation. "Here's looking at you, Holloway," he added, more cheerfully, "here's looking at you."

III

COLONEL MANYSNIFTERS—AN OUTING WITH THE "JEWELS"

Colonel Manysnifters, who had been quietly smoking a little apart from the group, now drew up and joined us. He had been imbibing rather freely since we left the station, but with the exception of a somewhat suspicious silence, had shown no further effects of his efforts in behalf of the Whiskey Trust. The Colonel's resemblance to Uncle Sam (as popularly portrayed) was so striking that children taken to the Capitol for the first time would shout with glee when he was pointed out to them. Rural visitors went home satisfied that the country was safe—they had seen Uncle Sam on hand, sober, and 'tending to business!' A friend once said to him, "Manysnifters, you look so much like Uncle Sam that whenever I see you on a jag I feel like this great nation of ours is going to hell!"

Georgia is the Colonel's native State, and he is proud of it, but I imagine that some recent legislation down there has greatly upset him. He looked rather downcast when I last saw him, and refused nourishment either in solid or liquid form. And then he said, eyeing me solemnly, "'Times is right porely down our way, boss. Things don't lap. De chinquapin crap done gin out 'fore de simmons is ripe!' Now, boy, don't ask me how things are going in my State. You know as much about it as I do. Let the old man alone, won't you?" and so I left him.

"Well, Colonel, how do you feel now?" asked Senator Bull solicitously.

"Oh, I'm all right," replied the Colonel, suspicion lurking in his tones. "I know what you think, Senator, but I am not. No, siree! I *have* had three or four small ones, but I am not 'lit' by a jugful! The idea! Drunk on four high-balls! Why, they just clear my brain—drive the fog out. Maybe it's the Scotch, maybe the soda. A fine combination, the high-ball. I am as stupid as an owl when I am cold sober, but when I drink, I soar! I feel like a lark with nothing between myself and the sun except a little fresh air and exercise. Oh, there's nothing the matter with me; any one can see that.

"It's funny how small this world is, and how time flies. I supposed you all noticed the tall, bald-headed man with the spectacles who ran up and hugged me to-day. Ain't he the ugly one? His ma certainly did hand his pa a lemon when he was born. Why, if I had been a long-lost brother he could not have been gladder to see me. Well, I was glad to see him, too, but the sight of him called up memories at once humiliating and smile-provoking. Senator, may I trouble you to depress the business end of that syphon? Thank you. Now, that fellow's name is Seymour—that's why he wears specs, I suppose—and he rattles around in the chair of Applied Science at Jay College, this State. Not much of an institution, and still less of a job, I imagine, and poor Seymour's salary quite in keeping. If there ever was any one deserving a Carnegie medal, Seymour is the chap. He studied medicine once, and graduated high up, but he never practised his profession! That's saving lives for you. Can you beat it?"

"Well, Harry was a protégé, or something of the sort, of our late friend Thurlow. And, as I said, I beheld his honest, glowing countenance with mixed feelings. But it is a long story—a long story —" and the Colonel paused as if seeking encouragement to proceed.

It was forthcoming.

"We would like very much to hear it," said Senator Wendell gravely; "that is, of course, if it involves no sacrifice of your feelings. We are all friends here, and will go at once into executive session. Let all who have a story to tell, an anecdote to relate, or a joke to perpetrate, feel free to do so. The galleries shall be cleared, and reporters and the public excluded—metaphorically speaking," he added hastily, turning to the newspaper men, who wore a pained expression, "metaphorically speaking, of course." The skies journalistic cleared at once, and then Colonel Manysnifters, a born diplomat, whispered to the waiting porter, who nodded knowingly, and

disappeared.

"Senator, I thank you. You relieve the situation. I am a modest man, sir, and hesitate to talk about myself even among friends; but since you all insist, there is nothing for me to do but yield as gracefully as I may—and as a yielder I glitter in the front rank. My experience, gentlemen, was a peculiar one, and I think it will hold you for a while.

"It was during that never-to-be-forgotten session of Congress which lasted almost up to the time for getting together again. Cleveland was on the thro—in the White House, I mean—and I was looking after things up at the big building on Capitol Hill.

"One day in the latter part of June, when the sun was firing up for a real old-fashioned Washington summer, and the thermometer about four degrees below Jackson City, a number of my constituents came on to see me, and after we had transacted certain important business I undertook to show the boys the town; and in the party was this fellow, Professor Seymour.

"We started out one broiling afternoon upon our giddy round of pleasure, and, after keeping up the festivities all night and a portion of the next day, I became separated from my friends in some unaccountable way, and toward evening found myself wandering down town near the wharves. It was very dusty and close, and the temperature a slice of Hades served up on a hot plate. There was no need for matches, all you had to do was to put your unlighted cigar in your mouth and puff away. I was trying hard to remember why I had on glasses,—they were of no use in the world to me,—and I was also much astonished to find that I was wearing Seymour's coat and hat, the latter a typical western slouch, broad-brimmed and generous. I also sported a tie loud enough to frighten an automobile. After pondering awhile upon this remarkable state of affairs, the thought arose so far as I knew I might be Seymour myself! I was strangely befuddled by the adventures of the past twenty-four hours, and it was not long before I began to seriously argue with myself that I *was* Seymour,—undoubtedly Seymour,—indeed, why should I not be Seymour as well as any one else? This masterly line of reason settled it. I *was* Seymour, and as an instructor and guide of youth I felt that I ought to be thoroughly ashamed of myself for flocking with the dissipated crowd I had just left. Acting upon this elevating thought, I braced up considerably, assumed an air of virtue, and not knowing exactly what to do next, joined a throng of people who were jostling one another in their efforts to get on a steamboat. A sail, I fancied, would do me no end of good, and as the ticket seller assured me with a smile that the boat was perfectly safe and would return in a few hours, I went aboard with the rest of the fools, children, and old folks. This I accomplished after barely escaping a plunge into the river from what struck me as being an exceedingly narrow gang-plank.

"The band struck up one of Sousa's lively marches, a hoarse whistle sounded, the boat trembled all over, and we were off. As the *Charles Auchester* glided out into the stream, two young women with camp stools in their hands pushed through the crowd at the entrance to the hurricane deck—an elevation I had succeeded in attaining—and took their seats near a life-raft upon which I reclined, Cleopatra-like.

"'Oh, aren't these excursions perfectly lovely, Ruby?' said the taller of the pair, taking off her hat and dropping it in her lap.

"'Yes, and so cheap. All the way to Indian Head and back for a quarter. It's a godsend for us poor tired folks who have to stay in town all summer. And you know what that means, don't you, Pearl?'

"'Oh, yes, but don't let's talk about it,' said the other fretfully. 'I try not even to think of what we will have to go through. What good does it do to fuss over things we can't help?'

"'That's right, dear,' said her companion, 'and it doesn't pay to look far ahead, either, if one wants to be happy. I never do.'

"They were pretty and quite well dressed, these two maidens. As to their being without a male escort, I rather admired their sturdy independence. Everything about them bespoke refinement, and yet the very next remark from the girl called Ruby sent a shiver through my sensitive frame, and caused my hastily formed but favorable opinion of the pair to change color.

"'I'd give anything, Pearl, if Will and the other fellows were here. They always buy, and I've got an awful thirst on me.'

"'We might have some beer, anyway,' mildly suggested Pearl, and a flying waiter took the order.

"'I guess we can pick up something on the boat,' remarked Ruby; who, by the way, was good to look at—a black-eyed lass with regular features and lots of pink and white complexion. Pearl, languidly sipping her beer, nodded in the affirmative. This person, evidently the younger of the two, had a babyish face, big innocent blue eyes, and a profusion of fluffy yellow hair. She did not appeal as much to my sense of the beautiful as the dark one did; but I have always been partial to brunettes. She told me later that she was twenty—which figure was enough for me to know, I suppose. Oh, I understand women. They are an open book to me.

"About eight o'clock the moon, immense and crimson, came up from behind the Maryland hills, and cast a lurid path upon the wavelets. The girls, or rather the 'Jewels,' as I have since learned to think of them, huddled closer together, with a not too capacious shawl around them, for the wind was freshening considerably. For a while I stopped looking at them, being interested in the little stunts that are done on the boat as it passes Mount Vernon. The tolling of the bell and the

dirge by the band absorbed all my attention.

"It was not long, though, before I began to feel that I was the object of very earnest scrutiny on the part of an individual or individuals nearby. Turning suddenly, I met the basilisk gaze of Pearl and Ruby. Their dreadful remark came to me with crushing force. They had begun, as they coarsely put it, 'to pick up something.' Lobster-like, finding myself in hot water, I turned several beautiful shades of red immediately. I became terror-stricken—I, the dignified Professor of Applied Science at Jay College, Kentucky! All my innate modesty began to assert itself; and is not this the surest protection of the innocent? I arose and fled.

"Unfortunately, while retreating, I looked back, simply to see how the shameless creatures were affected by my departure. Oh, fatal curiosity! They must have considered my backward glance an invitation to follow, for they did so with alacrity. That accursed backward glance! Lot's wife—you know the story.

"However, I saw that I was in for it, so just before reaching the steps leading to the bar, I resolutely faced my pursuers and stood at bay. They bore down upon me like ships that pass—no, I won't say that.

"'You sweet thing,' chirped Ruby, 'it knew how thirsty we were, didn't it? I don't care if it isn't the youngest baby at the christening, it's just all skeezy; so there!' This speech was delivered in gentle tones, but loud enough to be heard by several bystanders, who snickered disagreeably.

"'Yes, popper,' joined in Pearl warmly, 'do buy us a drink.'

"'Yes, popper!' I could have slapped her! Heavens! Did I look as old as that? I was aghast, for I have always prided myself upon my youthful appearance.

"'If you call me "popper" again,' said I in a savage undertone, 'I will throw you overboard! Do you hear? How dare you speak to me anyway? I have a great mind to call an officer! Come now, girls,' I added in a milder strain, aware of the helplessness of the situation, 'let's go below; and keep quiet, do. I will buy the drinks.'

"Then in sheer self-defense I ordered beer, then more beer, then cocktails, then I don't know what—Pearl asked the waiter to bring it—a queer greenish-yellow stuff which quickly overpowered me. When the vile mixture had gotten in its handiwork the Jewels seemed highly satisfied, and laughed gleefully. A few moments later I was introduced to a 'gentleman friend' of theirs whom they fished out of the crowd. He was a flashily dressed youth who insisted upon another drink—and another—at my expense. After that I have a faint recollection of getting off the boat upon its return to Washington, and of being hustled into a night-liner, the Jewels and their pal nobly standing by me. We jogged along for miles, Ruby singing at the top of her voice and the gentleman friend joining in at the chorus. Pearl's head was bent over, wobbly fashion. She was either asleep, or lost in deep thought. I have also a dim recollection of the vehicle coming to an abrupt halt, and a head thrust in at the window, saying pointedly that if we did not make less noise he would run the whole blanketty-blank gang in. This made me mad, and I wanted to fight the stranger then and there; but my warlike purpose was frustrated by the Jewels and their friend, who flung themselves upon me, wisely detaining me. The end of our journey was reached soon afterwards and our little party rolled out.

"I was then dragged up an apparently endless flight of steps, and into the vestibule of a large old-fashioned house, once the stately residence of a famous man, but now given over to the undesirable class of persons into whose clutches I had fallen. An aged negress tugged at an immense paneled door, and let us into a wide hall, at the end of which a lamp burned feebly. Then we struggled up more stairs, and after many turnings drew up before a shabbily furnished room. Into this I was rudely pushed, and the door closed and locked upon me. I rocked about in the darkness, grabbed the bed as it swung around for the third time, got a strangle hold, and went right to sleep. From this I was awakened some hours later by voices in the hall just outside. The transom over the door was open, so I could hear pretty well all that was said.

"'That's a good sort of haul you made to-night—nit!' growled a deep bass. 'Ain't you afraid you'll get into trouble? That fellow in there is Colonel Manysnifters. You've all heard of him—haven't yer? Why, he is the biggest man in the House—a great swell—money to throw at the birds; and he's been a throwin' it, hey?' said he of the voice, with a chuckle; 'but he ain't no greenhorn, I can tell yer! The old sport can make it powerful warm for us when he gets out of here!'

"'Suppose he never gets out—not for a long time, anyway; and the ransom—just think of the ransom!' joyously urged one of the Jewels, whose voice I recognized.

"'Oh, that sorter thing don't go now,' said the man; 'besides, the cop who stopped yer awhile ago knows a thing or two. You can't work any Turkish brigand racket here in Washington—the town's too small. Could do it in New York, I suppose, but not down here. The game ain't worth the candle, anyhow. The chap's blown in all he had about him. We've got his scarf-pin and alarm clock, and that's all there is to it.'

"'I guess you're right,' remarked the Jewel; 'but wait until Lola comes, and see what she says.'

"'So they think I am old Manysnifters,' thought I, trying to smile. 'That's real funny, ain't it? Oh, if he were only here now, wouldn't he get me out of this?' And in my fancy I could see my husky friend grappling with the gang outside, pitching them down the stairs, and carrying me off in triumph—the way they do it in the best sellers. My captors then went below, their voices trailing

away into silence. They left me with some nasty thoughts.

"What would the faculty of Jay think of their Seymour, could they but gaze upon him now? What would my pupils say? The World, the great World at large, the Press, the Pulpit?' (My brother is an Atlanta clergyman.) 'What would these great social forces say?' Confused ideas of my identity and importance arose like fumes to further befuddle me. I sat on the side, and in the middle of the bed, in despair—longing for something to smoke!

"The hours dragged slowly by, and yet Lola, Lola the mysterious, upon whose decision so much depended, came not.

"Something must be done, and quickly,' thought I, and I started to get up. But hark! I heard some one in the hall softly slip a key in the lock of my door, and turn it with a creaking sound. The next moment a very odd figure came into the room. 'Twas a little old woman, and as she glided toward me I sank back on the couch quivering with terror! On, on, she came, and lightly touched my forehead.

"My first impulse was to shriek with affright; the impulse was all right, but I just couldn't do it. I must have been paralyzed. I blew first hot and then cold, and then stopped blowing altogether.

"So there I lay, stark with fear. But my visitor seemed to be very harmless. She drew up a chair by the side of the bed and took her seat, muttering something I couldn't catch. Then she bent over me and I felt her warm breath on my cheek!...

"The situation had changed but slightly when I came to a little later. She was talking.

"Marse Edwin, Marse Edwin, don't yer know yer ole black mammy? Hush-sh-sh, chile, doan' answer me, 'cept in a whisper! I'se done come fer to save yer! I nussed yer when yer was a little baby, and I promised ole Missus always to look arter yer. De sojers is a huntin' fer yer, Marse Edwin; dey's all eround us! Hush-sh-sh!' said she, as I attempted to rise; 'lie still, honey, dey'll sartainly cotch yer if yer goes out now! Dey's sentinils posted everywhar, and dey'll shoot you down like a dog! My poor Marse Edwin,' she wailed, 'why did yer do it? Why did yer do it? Why did yer kill him? He nebber done yer no harm. Why, Gawd bless him, he done sot ole Mammy free! But dar ain't no use talkin' 'bout it now!' She walked up and down the room several times, still muttering, and then peered out of the window. Something in the street attracted her.

"Hush-sh-sh, chile, now's de time! Git up quick, deary, but fer de Lawd's sake doan' make no noise! Follow de ole woman—dis way.' I got up at once and obeyed her. It was a ghastly sort of thing, this Marse Edwin business, but I saw a chance of escape at the bottom of it. We went to the lower part of the house on tip-toe, and the negress, opening the street door, pushed me out into the cool dawn, saying with a shaking voice, 'Run, Marse Edwin, run fer yer life! Watch out for de sojers! Good-bye, Gawd bress you, my lam'!' And I ran, you bet.

"Day was breaking when I found myself in the street, and as I emerged from the slightly disreputable neighborhood where I had passed the night I felt sure that a glance in the mirror would show me up a haggard, white-haired wreck. The air was wonderfully reviving, though, and I felt a subtle change stealing over me. An odd, pricking sensation, like one's foot awakening from sleep, gradually took possession of me, and to my horror I appeared to be separating from myself. Any one who has had that feeling knows what it is. At one moment I was the Professor; the next, I was undoubtedly Manysnifters! I found myself walking by the side of one; then, in the twinkling of an eye, with the other. It was not long, however, before I began to get tired of it, so just before I reached the hotel I determined to decide once for all who I was. I felt that it was important I should know. The decision was arrived at by a simple expedient to which I invariably resort whenever I find my judgment wavering. There is no patent on the thing, and I don't mind letting you all into it. Fortunately, I still had my luck-piece—an ancient Roman coin—with me.

"Now,' thought I, 'let the antique beer check decide it. I will cinch this question by tossing up. If it falls heads, I am Manysnifters, and if the reverse appears, I am the Professor. I will abide by the decree of Fate.'

"Up went the Denarius, striking the asphalt with a merry ring in its fall. I bent eagerly over it, and lo, the image and superscription of Caesar stared me in the face!

"So I was Manysnifters after all, and this fact was further impressed upon me an hour or so later by an enterprising office-seeker, to whom, in my enfeebled state, I fell an easy prey—I endorsed his application for the Nova Zembla consulship."

IV

AN ACCIDENT—DINNER

Colonel Manysnifters's story was very thirst-provoking, and President Madison, our grinning drink-mixer, had a busy half-hour of it. It was now about seven o'clock and we were again overtaken by the storm, which hurled itself upon us, fairly rocking the car in its violence. The train, which had been proceeding slowly and jerkily, now came to a full stop. An avalanche of snow, earth, and loose stones had fallen at the end of a deep cut. Had we been going at any

speed an awful catastrophe would have resulted. As it was we were barely moving when we ran into the obstruction. It would be hours before the track could be cleared, and there was no relief in sight. Fortunately, we were well provisioned, and could stand a siege of a day or so in any event. The brakeman set out on his long, hard journey to the nearest telegraph station, swinging his lantern, and swearing picturesquely. Every precaution was taken to guard the train against further accident. Our party accepted the inevitable philosophically. Dinner was announced, and amid the good things provided by our chef we soon forgot our mishap.



President Madison.

President Madison.

"Now, gentlemen," said Colonel Manysnifters genially, between the soup and fish, "let's cut out golf, religion, baseball, and politics, and get down to serious subjects. Senator, what is the best poker hand you ever held?"

Senator Wendell, thus addressed, said, with a far-away look in his eyes, "Let me see, let me see. Oh, I remember now; it happened twice—three times—or was it three times? Twice I will swear to."

"How's that?"

"I say it happened twice; I am positive of it—and before the draw, too."

"Who was dealing?" asked the Colonel eagerly.

"Poker stories barred," said Senator Baker sternly. "Remember, gentlemen, that this is a non-partisan gathering; not only that, but some of us know absolutely nothing about the game. And yet, and yet," said he thoughtfully, as if to himself, "it *is* a fascinating subject. Why, on one occasion,—I will never forget it,—being right under the guns, I passed without looking at my hand. The man next to me opened the pot, and all the rest stayed. I picked up my cards carelessly, and imagine my delight when I found that I had—"

"Senator, Senator," said Van Rensselaer reproachfully, "I am surprised. I didn't think you would go back on the sentiments you so warmly espoused a few moments ago. Let us avoid so agitating a topic. Personally," continued he, slowly and dreamily, as if going into a trance, "I have no objection to the game. I have played it myself, though I do not pose as an expert. Coming over on the steamer last summer—'twas the night before we landed—the game was steep, painfully steep, and nothing friendly about it, with the lid off finally. I was about two thousand to the bad,—it was the consolation round, ending with and up to me,—my deal, and the fellows counting and stacking their chips preparatory to cashing in. I doled the papes with deliberation, and a saddened soul, and skinned my hand carefully. They were hearts—all but one. A seven, four, six, five and a trey of clubs. That's the way they came to me. A nice little straight, but apparently not nice enough. All the fellows stayed, and there was considerable hoisting before the draw. Then the man next to me took one card; the Englishman with the monocle, two; General Thomas, one; the fat man from Cincinnati, three (to his aces), and Doctor McNab stood pat; and then discarding the trey of clubs—foolhardy, very foolhardy, but I did it—I dealt myself one—the eight of hearts! My, how good I felt! The battle was on! Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, until one by one the players dropped out, leaving the Doctor and myself to settle it. Doctor McNab saw my three thousand and raised me five.

"Five better," said I.

"Back at you," said he; the others in the meanwhile keeping tab in their notebooks.

"Once again," said I.

"And again," said he.

"That was about all I could stand, and I called him. With a leer of triumph he threw his hand on the table, face-up, displaying——"

"Stop him, stop him!" shouted Mr. Ridley, rising excitedly. "Don't let him take the money! If I'd a knowed you at the time, brother, it never would a happened! I'd a put you wise to that McNab. He ain't no more doctor than I am, and his name ain't McNab either! The scar-faced son of a gun! I've been up against him, and so has Bull; ain't you, Nathan?"

"Poker stories are barred, I believe," said the Senator coldly.

Mr. Ridley's face was a study.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he muttered, with his mouth full of potatoes. "Let's change the subject; there are lots of other things to talk about. I like war stories, myself. Senator," said he, turning to Senator Hammond, "the first time I ever saw you—and then it was some distance off—you were in the biggest kind of a hurry; I never saw a man so anxious to get from here, say, to over there."

"When was it? I do not recollect," said the old veteran pleasantly.

"Why, at Bull Run; don't you remember Bull Run?"

"Do I? Well, I should say I did. You fellows certainly had us going that day, and if you had been smart you would have pushed matters, captured Washington, and thus ended the war, or at least have been in a position to dictate your own terms. As to our retreat, I remember so well the disgusted tones of a staunch Union lady living in Washington, speaking to one of the boys on the night of our return.

"'You coward!' she said bitterly, 'to run away at the first fire! Don't you know that the finger of scorn will be pointed at you all the rest of your life?'

"'That may be so, lady,' said the soldier doggedly, 'but I'd ruther hev the finger o' scorn pinted at me any time than one o' them damned Rebel cannon!'

"And another of the boys limping by, foot-sore and weary, was accosted by this same angry dame, 'You ran, did you? You ran! Shame! Shame! A big fellow like you! Why did you run?'

"'I run, mum, 'cause I couldn't *fly*, that's why I run!'"

"Yes, quite true; and yet, after all, how like the moon we are," muttered one of the newspaper men disconnectedly.

"How so?" inquired Senator Hammond acidly.

"Why, here we are, full—gloriously full—on the twentieth of the month, and eight days later, down to our last quarter."

"That's bad, very bad, O'Brien," said another scribe mournfully. "Forgive him, Senator. I will have something to say to him later." Withering glances were cast at the unlucky one, who seemed about to sink under the table, and the wind outside howled dismally, and rattled the windows in its rage.



Senator Pennypacker.

Senator Pennypacker.

The situation was steadied somewhat by Senator Pennypacker. The Senator, who entered public life five years ago a poor man, and who, by living economically, saving his pay, and borrowing his chewing tobacco, is at present worth considerably over a million dollars, now favored the company with some sage remarks as to the tendency of the times toward extravagance, the high cost of living in Washington, the iniquity of the boarding-house keepers, and the difficulty he had to make both ends meet. The Senator is a tall, lank, ungainly looking man; thin lipped, with mean, cunning eyes, strained ever for the main chance. A few tufts of reddish hair are flattened on either side of his cranium, and his nose and chin were sharpened on the grindstone of necessity and early hardship into twin beaks. Verily a vulture, battenning now on the Trusts, and feared and hated by other birds of smaller body and weaker wing. With him, Selfishness is indeed the main-spring of Ambition! His features are well-known to the public through the medium of those extensive advertisements in the papers heralding the great vegetable remedy "Gee-Soo-Na."

His remarks were received in silence, though a careful observer might have noticed an exchange of solemn winks between Colonel Manysnifters and Sammy Ridley.

"Oh, he is the stingy one, all right," Colonel Manysnifters confided later to Mr. Ridley. "He is the kind of fellow who would send his best girl a box of candy Saturday morning, and call around Sunday night and eat it all up."

When the Senator had fully delivered himself, some one brought up the negro question.

"They certainly are the limit in Washington," said Colonel Manysnifters. "The sassy black rascals seem to think they own the town. And nigger policemen, too! Think of a white man being arrested by a nigger policeman!"

"I do not see why lawbreakers should object to the color of the man who gathers them in," said Van Rensselaer sarcastically.

"We Southerners do, anyway," retorted the Colonel hotly.

"You Southerners should behave yourselves, then there would be no trouble," observed Senator Hammond dryly.

"Well, that's all right, now," said Colonel Manysnifters, flaring up, "we don't expect you Northerners to feel as we do about it! We——"

"Come, come, Manysnifters," said Senator Bull pacifically, "don't get excited. Don't let the 'nigger in the wood-pile' spoil this occasion. Calm yourself."

"Oh, I'm not excited. It takes a lot to excite me," said the Colonel; "but just to give you an idea of how things are going in Washington, a cousin of mine from Atlanta, a kindly disposed chap as ever lived, meeting an old negress on the street there the other day, said to her, 'Well, Auntie, how are you this bright morning?'

"'Huh!' exclaimed the old woman angrily, 'Auntie! Don't you call me no Auntie! I ain't yoh aunt, and I ain't yoh uncle; I'se yoh ekal!' Now wouldn't that jar you? That's the way the niggers feel

about it in Washington."

"Forget it, Manysnifters," urged Senator Bull, "forget it. Give the colored brother a show. He will work out his own salvation."

"At the end of a rope," growled the Colonel.

"Be charitable, sir, be charitable," said Senator Pennypacker ponderously. "The negro problem lies with the white people of the South. They will solve it. Give them time. Perhaps they may find

"With keen, discriminating sight,
Black's not so black,
Nor white's so very white!"

"Oh, we will solve it all right," said Colonel Manysnifters knowingly, "trust us for that. Only—you Northern folks keep your hands off. That's all we ask!"

Mr. Ridley, to soothe the fiery Southerner, poured out a generous libation, and the dark cloud rolled over.

V

SENATOR BULL'S STORY

When we returned to the observation car Senator Bull was unanimously called to the chair.

"I shall hark back to my boyhood days," said he, "and relate an incident in my early life, and its sequel when I attained man's estate. I suppose all of us have had experiences which have more than once brought home the weight of that bewhiskered old maxim—"Truth is stranger than fiction."

"There were twelve of us—Bert Martin, Joey Scott, Tom Hyland, Georgie Morris, Jake Milburn, Bob Hardee, Lannie Sudduth, Owen Prouty, Alf Rush, Ed Ross, Dolph Levy, and myself. The Forestburg Rifles we called ourselves. Ed Ross was captain, and Lannie Sudduth and Bob Hardee, lieutenants. There were no other officers, for that would have left too few privates; but, as it was, our nine men marching single file and wide apart made a fine showing. Owen Prouty limping bravely along, brought up the rear. 'That lame Prouty boy' was the gamest fellow in the command and it nearly broke his heart when we marched away in earnest in sixty-one, and left him behind—the leader of the home-guard.

"The Rifles were armed with wooden guns, and drilled twice a week in Bert Martin's barn—drilled with almost the same precision and attention to the manual as we *had* to do in later years. Ed Ross was a strict disciplinarian even then, and awfully in earnest. Indeed, we all were for that matter. When the notion is strong upon them, young folks beat their elders all hollow at that sort of thing. Every Saturday afternoon at three o'clock, weather permitting, we met at our armory, and after some preliminary maneuvers marched down High Street. Old Cush Woodberry and the other loafers at Horton's would come out on the platform in front of the store and review the troops. The interest those lazy fellows took in us was astonishing. Old Cush even volunteered one day to give us some instructions in tactics, but our gallant captain courteously declined. There were others, though, who did not admire us so much. The green-eyed monster reigned supreme over on Liberty Street, and around by the court-house lot. There the country lads in town for Saturday market were entrenched, and they jeered at us enviously from the line of wagons drawn up in battle array. Occasionally a rotten apple or potato would sail through the air in our direction, but we marched past our tormentors stiffly erect, and apparently unconscious. Had our numbers been stronger we would have joyfully stormed the enemy's works, but the country boys were bigger than we, and vastly more numerous; so with us discretion was indeed the better part of valor.

"The Rifles were organized just after school broke up, and flourished all that summer; a remarkable thing for Forestburg boys, for we were a squabbling lot, prone to quarrel and fight upon the slightest provocation. But in some way our captain held us together—just as he did afterward at Antietam and Gettysburg. Dear old chap, he holds us still!

"In early September we received our colors. Up to that time Owen Prouty had carried a small flag on his musket, but it had never been dignified as the company's colors. Our real flag was given to us by the little McDermott girl, and the giving was done so prettily and sweetly that our boyish hearts were touched—and this is saying a good deal. Not, indeed, that the Forestburg boys were rougher than other boys, for I guess they are all pretty much alike; but we had been taught to hate and shun the McDermotts. They were newcomers, and Danny McDermott had been a Young Irishman, or something else equally as dreadful. Then, too, Forestburg was a Know-nothing stronghold, and we fell naturally into our daddies' way of thinking. So we roundly snubbed the pleasant-faced Danny and his family whenever we had a chance, and the fellows at school used to bully Terence, the son, most atrociously. Yet as we marched by the McDermotts' on Saturday afternoons little Katie would always run out to the gate delightedly and wave a large flag, and after a while we came to look upon the little golden-haired child and her flag as quite a feature of

our parade. Finally, one day she stepped into the street, and with a quaint curtsy presented the flag, garlanded with roses and buttercups, to our captain. The command was at once ordered to halt, and all eyes were fixed upon Ed and the blushing child.

"'Attention!' shouted Captain Ross. We obeyed and looked straight ahead as good soldiers should, with a sly glance out of the corners of our eyes at our leader. But Ed knew just what to do. He faced about sharply, and made a low bow to the lady, took the flag held out to him, and then made a speech. Ed Ross was always a fine talker, and had won the elocution prize at school the year before. On this occasion he fairly surpassed himself. I have often thought of it since. At our next meeting we unanimously elected Miss Katherine Burke McDermott an honorary member of the Rifles. Tom Ryland's sister drew up the resolutions, and they were very beautiful.

"It was a sultry afternoon, and the little jury-room was suffocating. The fight for a life which had raged out in the gloomy court-room for two weeks or more was now transferred to the ten by twelve cubby-hole where we had been cooped up since noon. The evidence against the prisoner was overwhelming, but some of the jurors still wavered as to their clear duty. Eight of us were for murder in the first degree; the others were in the same frame of mind, I am sure, but tantalizingly slow about saying so. It looked like an all-night struggle.

"Thrice since midday had Sheriff Watkins popped in his red head and asked if we had agreed upon a verdict, and as often had he angrily withdrawn. Watkins had a profound contempt for juries in general, and our jury in particular. According to the sheriff, the case of Commonwealth against Hardy was decided, and decided fully, when Dillingham finished his speech. Dillingham was the prosecuting attorney, and Watkins worshipped him down to the ground. Watkins was therefore clearly prejudiced, but in this instance his views were undeniably sound.

"The court, despairing and thirsty, had adjourned to meet at seven o'clock. In the jury-room all arguments for and against the stand taken by the unshaken eight seemed exhausted. The hours dragged wearily by. At half-past five o'clock, to our great surprise, three of the obstinate crowd came over to our way of thinking. Whether stern duty, our mutual discomfort, or the prospect of another night away from their families wrought this, I know not. So then, with the single exception of Colonel Ross, we were all for stringing up the prisoner.

"Colonel Ross still stuck out doggedly for a milder punishment—anything to save the poor devil's life, he said. For the first time in my career I rebelled against the judgment of my old friend, and for the first time found myself arrayed against him, and the novelty of the situation was far from agreeable. The clock in the town hall struck six, and the whistles down at Thayer's mill blew furiously. The Colonel was biting the ends of his mustache and gazing moodily into the crowded street below. I went up to him and put my hand on his shoulder.

"'Now, Colonel,' said I, in my most persuasive tones, 'can't you make up your mind to join us in this thing? We are all agreed except yourself. God knows we have no personal feeling against Hardy. We are simply doing what we think is our duty, and a mighty nasty one it is, too! You know that. But we owe something to society—society, whose structure was shaken to its very foundation by the perpetration of this crime! (Dillingham's own words.) The prisoner is clearly guilty. Why, the fellow practically confesses it. We ought to put some stop to the killing and general rascality up there in the settlement. Our section is fast becoming a monstrous blot on the fair name of the Commonwealth! (Dillingham again.) What is there left for us to do but carry out the law? What is there left for——' My voice died away weakly. Something in the Colonel's face effectually blasted my budding eloquence. At that moment I felt myself a greater criminal than Hardy or any of his gang.

"Colonel Ross tapped the floor impatiently with his crutch. He was a testy man, but much was borne from him.



Colonel Ross addressing the jury.

Colonel Ross addressing the jury.

"Gentlemen," said he, his eyes flashing, "I verily think that the good God above in His great wisdom and mercy picked out this jury Himself. I am sure He did. Now, listen to me. It will not take long.

"We have all had a tedious two weeks of it, haven't we? The weather has been warm; our business neglected; some of us have sick ones at home we are anxious to see; and we are all losing our health and temper in this close confinement. And I by no means omit the dreadful meals at the Darby House. But, gentlemen, rather than come over to you and hang Eph Hardy, I would stay here forever! Not, indeed, that there is any danger of that, for the Judge will discharge us pretty soon if we do not come to terms. But I can at least go to my home with nothing to haunt me the rest of my life. I can at least close my eyes at night without fear of troubled dreams or hours of unrest. And I thank God for it.

"Now, my friends, while all that we've gone through has been wearing on a fellow, it has not been without interest. You have doubtless heard and gazed in wonder at "the cloud of witnesses" the defense and prosecution have summoned for this case. You have listened open-mouthed to the fine eloquence of the lawyers. You have seen, day after day, the fashionable city folk, who have come down to our little town, troop in and take their seats—and the reporters, and the men with the cameras, and the hungry-looking "poor whites." Now, gentlemen, of course you have seen and heard all this, and of course you have been duly impressed. *I* have been, I grant you; but of late there has been but one thing in that court-room I could see; but one thing that interested me, and held my attention to the exclusion of all else. I don't suppose you know what I mean. It is this—back, 'way back by the door a little woman has been in torture, such torture as I hope you will never know. I cannot keep my eyes from that shabbily dressed figure; from that white, tear-stained face. Again and again I have seen her veil drawn down, and the poor creature shaking with grief. At first I did not know her, though I guessed. Watkins told me about her. She is the prisoner's mother.

"When Dillingham was putting in his finishing touches this morning I thought of *my* mother. *She* was like that when they brought my brother Archie home. You remember Archie—and the day he was drowned? We were all in swimming that Sunday, you know, and Parson Moore said it was a judgment, but my poor mother could not bring herself to think so.

"Well, the Hardy woman called to mind mother when they told her about Archie. That same awful, awful look of despair.

"As I said before, I see the hand of God in the choosing of this jury.' The Colonel eyed us almost exultingly.

"Boys! Attention!" Mechanically we old soldiers arose and faced about, obeying our Colonel as of yore. The order was electrical, and set us tingling with expectation. Something else was surely coming.

"The Colonel bowed profoundly to an imaginary person at his side.

"Boys, listen! I accept this flag from your fair hands in behalf of my men and myself. Mere words

fail to express our thanks, but in deeds most glorious will we attest our love for you, and the Stars and Stripes!—or something like that—all very childish and grandiloquent, but we kept our word, didn't we? And again—picture it to yourselves, now—Bob Hardee's barn; your captain in the chair; Private Ryland rises, and offers the following: "Be it Resolved, that Miss Katherine Burke McDermott be, and hereby is, elected an honorary member for life in the Forestburg Rifles, and that we swear to cherish and protect her forever." That was the gist of it, I believe, and there were other resolutions regarding the same young lady, which have unfortunately escaped my memory. But, boys, need I remind you that these resolutions were adopted unanimously? O, let them bind us still! That broken-hearted woman in there was once the little golden-haired lass to whom we were so loyal in the long ago. Shall we not be loyal to-day? It isn't justice, and it isn't law; but, boys, we've got to save that fellow's life—now, haven't we?"

"An hour later we entered the court-room. The woman over by the door looked up with a faint flush on her face. Hope had made it radiant. She knew that 'The Rifles' would never vote to take her boy's life!

"And she was right.

"We acquitted him.

"The verdict was heard in absolute silence. Then there was a slight stir in the rear of the room. Nothing, after all; only—a woman had fainted. It was hot in the court-room that night, and no place for women, anyhow, as Colonel Ross gruffly remarked at the time.

"But there were tears in his eyes."

VI

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLOWAY HAS THE FLOOR

At the conclusion of Senator Bull's story President Madison was again requisitioned, and a crap game which was in lively progress in the dining-car was thus rudely disturbed.

"Tell us, Holloway, about your nomination and election to Congress. Was it not somewhat in the nature of a surprise?" asked Congressman Van Rensselaer.

"Very much so. It will hardly make a story, but if you would like to hear how it happens that the —th District of Illinois is represented in Congress by a Democrat for the first time in its history, here goes—but mind you, now, I don't pretend to be in Senator Bull's class as a story teller.

"It was a piping hot day in August, and Harrisville at its worst. Whenever a vehicle passed, clouds of dust floated in at the windows and settled upon my books, my papers, and covered my green baize table with an infinitesimal section of H— County real estate. Even the slumberer on the sofa was not exempt. His usually ruddy face had become ashen, and his snoring was developing into a series of choking gasps. It was fearful, this dust,—alkaline, penetrating, stifling,—and from such soil the raw-boned, hard-featured men of H— wrung a living. And I, sharing their narrow lives, began to understand the true significance of the word 'onery' as applied to us by our more prosperous and oftentimes just exasperated neighbors.

"It was court day, and I had just come in after a stiff tussle with a pig-headed judge, an irritating opposing counsel, and a H— County jury. I thought of old Uncle Peter Whitehead, 'The onriest critters in the whole State of Illinoy come out o' H—! Thar ain't no tellin' which way an H— County jury's a goin' to jump. The law and the facts ain't nothin' ter them, it's jest the way they are feelin' that particler day and minnit. If so happen they got outer bed the wrong foot furrard that mornin', then it's good-by ter the pris'ner, and hell fer the lawyer that's defendin' him!'

"Court had adjourned until two o'clock, leaving the fate of my client undecided, and I came into my office, tired-out, warm, and exceedingly anxious. Clearing Thad Hawley meant a great deal to me just then. It was my first important case, and I felt that my future would be decided in a great measure by its outcome. If the twelve stolid farmers upon whom I had showered my eloquence went Fraley-ward in their verdict, I knew that my professional goose would be cooked, and visions of a move to some distant bailiwick rose up before me. Fraley and Hicks would then monopolize the Harrisville practice, and perhaps in a year or so some other fledgling would rise up in his ignorance and be as ruthlessly cut down as I had been.

"Yes, I was worried, and the sight of Andrew Sale asleep on my sofa did not tend to soothe that feeling. At any time a visit from the county chairman would have been most unwelcome, but now it was an exhibition of unmitigated gall! Another contribution, I supposed, angrily eyeing the sleeper. I had been the 'good thing' for Sale and his crowd for some years past, and had pretty well resolved to cut loose from them—and politics. I thought of the many ambitious young fellows I knew who had been permanently injured while hovering around the political flame. Some, indeed, were burned to death, others are floundering through life on crippled wings; all were more or less singed, both morally and financially. My experience thus far had been a financial singe, and the last scorching was still fresh and quivering. Only the week before I had given Sale my check for quite a tolerable sum, and then as soon as he had left my office, kicked myself for

doing so. The money, he said, was to go toward defraying the expenses of the nominating convention, which was to meet at Shawnee on the twenty-first, and as a good man and true I had to 'cough up' with the rest of them.

"And here he was again!

"As I glared at him the chairman turned over uneasily, sputtered, sneezed, opened his eyes, and sat up, staring stupidly.

"'How're you? How're you?' he roared, wiping his face with a grimy handkerchief. 'Ain't this dust awful? There ain't no doing anything with it. If you put the winders down you'll smother with the heat, and if you leave 'em up, you'll choke to death. Hobson's choice, eh? Ha, ha! And all that prayin' for rain on Sunday, too. Providence's ways is certainly beyond us—ain't they? Well, I rather guess *this* visit 'll surprise ye.'

"'It does, Mr. Sale, it does!' said I warmly. 'You know I told you when you were here the other day that I could not—you know damn well that—'

"'Now, now, now,' said he soothingly, holding up his hand, 'don't do that! You're on the wrong tack, Mister, 'deed you are. There's another guess a comin' to you. It ain't money we want this time, no, siree! Money don't cut no ice this trip, though it *is* a mighty handy thing to have a jinglin' in your jeans—ain't it? No, it ain't the "sinews," as Jim McGubbin calls it; it's *you*, Mr. Holloway; it's *you*, sir!'

"'Me, Mr. Sale?'

"'Yes, sir; you. Why it's as plain as the nose on your face, Mr. Holloway, and that is—the Democratic party of the —th deestic' is pretty unanimous on *one* thing anyhow, this year. I'll admit we ain't come to no final decision on our platform, but we air pretty generally agreed on our *candidate*, and that's the Honrubble Andrew Jackson Holloway—yourself, sir! That's why I am here to-day. When I heerd you speakin' in court just now, I turned and says to Jim McGubbin, says I, "That there's the voice that'll wake 'em up in Congress." I felt just like the old feller in the Bible. The sperrit of prophecy was on me. And Jim he agreed with me. Jim's got the Shawnee organization right under his thumb, same as—'tween you and me—I've got H—. McGubbin's out and out for Holloway. "Holloway and Reform!" That's our cry this year. I seen Potter James and old Pete Whitehead over to Andrewville yesterday, and they'll fetch their people in line for you all right. If you'll make the run, we'll elect you sure; and that ain't no lie.'

"Sale, a big man with a loud voice, impressive tones, and masterful ways, overpowered me.

"'Sit down, Mr. Sale,' I said weakly, 'sit down. Let us talk it over. This nomination—it is a great honor, I am sure—I can scarcely tell you how flattered—how—'

"'Oh, that's all right, that's all right,' said he, beaming. 'I know'd you'd be a little, well—flustered, eh?—when I fust broke the news to you, and I don't say but what it isn't perfectly natural, too. These things don't happen to a man every day, and especially to—beggin' your pardon—to a man as young as yourself, sir. But the Democratic party of the —th deestic' of Illinoy knows a good thing when they sees it.' Sale's unconscious sarcasm hurt me. 'I have sounded them to the bottom,' he went on, 'and it's Holloway, Holloway, Holloway, everywhere. Now you'll let us put you up, won't you? There ain't no earthly doubt 'bout your gettin' the nomination. Harrison may give old Colonel Harrison its vote on the first ballot, just as a compliment, you know; and I'll admit that down Hall City way there's some talk of Sile Munyon, but there ain't nothin' to it. We'll prick the Munyon boom before it's bigger'n a pea. We'll fix things, you bet. And we'll elect you, too! It's a good job to hold down—that of being a Congressman; it ain't the office so much as it is the purgatives that go with it. I'd like to go to Congress myself. Maybe I will some day. Well, as I was goin' to say, I driv over to the Courthouse Sunday, and saw the boys there, and I talked them into the right way o' thinkin'. They are all O. K.

"'There's a deal of grumblin' and dissatisfaction 'mongst the Republicans just now. Sam Thorne ain't done the square thing by the gang that 'lected him, and they are mighty sore over it. Washington's kinder turned his head. He's got awful stuck up of late, and wears a long-tailed coat and beaver hat all the time. And that 'pointment of Ben McConnell postmaster of Liberty has hurt Thorne and the Republican party a heap all over the deestic'. Ben McConnell never voted the Republican ticket but twicst in his life. Up to two years ago he was a red-hot Democrat, and no one down in their hearts, Republican or Democrat, has any use for a turncoat. I take it all in all, he is the most onpopular man in Illinoy to-day. His conduct is as hard to swaller as a dose of them old Greek twins, Castor Oil and Politics, we use to wrastle with at school. Of course in political life, like in ordinary life, you have to eat a peck o' dirt before you die, but you don't have to eat it all at oncst like he's a doin'! Why, old war-horses, Republicans all their lives, were turned down for this here upstart! It's done the party a deal of harm. And then, as I said before, Sam Thorne's confounded airs is making everybody sick. No one ever thought anything of the Thornes when I fust grew up. They wasn't no better'n any one else. Sam Thorne's father was the clerk of the court at Liberty, and a darned poor one at that, as I have often heard my father say. I went to school with Sam, and many's the thrashin' I have given him, but that's neither here nor there.

"'Oh, we've got 'em this time, sure! Yes, they're going to run Thorne again. He's got hold of a wad there in Washington, and can buy up the whole convention if need be. I wouldn't trust any of them Republicans. The Democratic party is above sech doin's. We stand for purity, patriotism—the whole bag o' tricks! Ha, ha! And politics, I guess, is like everything else. So long as you stick

to the Thirteenth Commandment, you'll get there without any trouble.'

"The Thirteenth Commandment'?"



"—Stick to the Thirteenth Commandment!"

"—Stick to the Thirteenth Commandment!"

"Yes, the Thirteenth—"Thou shalt not be found out," you know. Oh, we'll fix the Thorne gang as sure's you're born to die! My luck'll carry you through. It sure will! A chiropodist in Chicago once told me that there was a terrible commotion in the heavens when I was born. Venus was bit by the Dog Star—or some such foolishness—all of which went to show that I come on the earth at just the right diabolical moment. And I guess the fellow knew what he was a talkin' about, with his maps, and charts, and things. Anyway, I've got no kick comin'. I have always had the best o' good luck, and I'll pass it on to you.'

"Sale was a good talker, and carried everything before him. Now and then I managed to slip in a word or two in feeble protest, but he swept away all my objections with the same easy movement that he chased off the flies from his face.

"When I looked at my watch it was ten minutes before two o'clock. Sale was going out into the hot street, jubilant, and I was the more than probable nominee of the Democratic party of the —th district for Congress! I knew that Sale would make good his word; and, having given it, I would stick to mine. But my tempter out of the way, I writhed and groaned under my folly and weakness. I grabbed up my hat, and hurried back to court as in a nightmare. The Hawley case went against me, but it paled into insignificance by the side of my newer and greater misfortune.

"For Sale had hypnotized me!

"Of course I was nominated. Nominated with shouts, and cat-calls, and much unearthly clamor. Nominated on the second ballot to the eternal confusion of the Munyon crowd, who afterward, I have been told, bolted the ticket and voted solidly for my Republican opponent. I made a speech, and was wildly cheered, then dragged in Lum Atkins's buggy to my hotel by an army of yelling partisans. I was interviewed by reporters, photographed by an enthusiastic young woman on the *Argus* staff, and made in every way to feel that I was one of the truly great. But I knew otherwise.

"In the months following I hobnobbed lovingly with every heeler, ward-worker, and thug in that part of the State. My bar'l was tapped, and well tapped. The stubs in my check-book are mutely eloquent. Then the press got in its fine work. When the opposition sheets were through with me not a shred of character had I left. I shivered in my moral nakedness, one enterprising journal said, and that is just about what I did. My public appearances—on the stump, and on the rostrum—afforded rare fun for the other side. I was not an orator—never claimed to be one—and of course they made the most of it. I spoke my little piece as well as I could, but my opponent was known as 'The Silver-tongued Demosthenes of Illinois'—or something like that—so where did I come in? And how those newspaper fellows did enjoy it all! God bless them! They have proven good friends of mine since, but their sharpened quills were fiery darts to me in those days!

"And I was otherwise discouraged. My encounter with big Bill Such of Sangamon left him, as before, the undisputed rough and tumble champion of middle Illinois. My people at home, too, were solidly against me. Life-long Republicans, as they had always been, they felt that I had disgraced them, and showed it very plainly. As the standard-bearer of a party upon whose banners Victory had never perched, at least so far as my district was concerned, I was indeed the leader of a forlorn and ragged hope; but my blood was up, and I was determined at least to make a better showing than any other Democrat had done.

"But it was an expensive ambition.

"Election day rolled around, and I spent the greater part of the time driving to and from the polling places in my own county. I was particularly anxious to carry H—, even though all the other counties failed me. That would soften the blow to the family pride, I thought. Not a morsel of food passed my lips during the whole of that trying fifth of November. From sunrise to sunset I never left my buggy, except once to vote, and at nightfall I was fairly done up. When all was over I was too tired-out to await returns at headquarters, so I turned in quite early, only venturing to hope that the fate of Judkins would not be mine. For Judkins, a recent victim, had been so overwhelmingly defeated in the spring elections that he had retired from the political arena in disgust; anathematizing politics in general and the politics of the —th district in particular. Then, in his weak and shattered condition, he fell into the arms of the eldest Parsons girl, who had been stalking him for, lo, these many years!

"I slept as soundly as though trouble, sorrow, and Congressional elections had never been; and in the morning came the surprise.

"I was elected by an enormous majority!

"I can not explain this phenomenon; they are still trying to do that out my way. It was an upheaval, with the great Democratic party and its astonished candidate very much on top. Its like will never occur again in my State; not in my district, anyhow. A recent Republican gerrymander will prevent that. Andrew Sale says he did it. Maybe he did; I don't know."

"It was Fate—f-a-t-e—Fate!" said Colonel Manysnifters, solemnly. "There's no avoiding it. My sainted parents, both good Presbyterians in their day, would doubtless have urged predestination. That may be it. Your election to Congress was something you couldn't side-step. Nor, by the same token, can I. Only when I am nominated, I don't worry any more. There *is* a general election, I believe, but that doesn't fret me much. We have eliminated the opposition down our way—perfectly legal and statutory. Oh, yes. There *are* a few 'lily-white' votes cast on the other side, they tell me,—sort of a registered kick for conscience's sake, I suppose,—but it is just a matter of form, and nobody gets excited over it. They are trifles lighter than air, yet—

"Small things should not unheeded be,
Nor atoms due attention lack,
We all know well the miseree
Occasioned by an unseen tack!"

"And again:

"Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand
Make contractors' mortar
That is used throughout the land."

"Well," said Sammy Ridley, drawing a deep breath when the Colonel was through, "I may be a damn fool, but I am no poet!"

VII

REPRESENTATIVE VAN RENSSELAER UNFOLDS A STRANGE TALE

"And now, Van Rensselaer," said Colonel Manysnifters, "it's around to you. I reckon you have something up your sleeve that will surprise us, eh?" The debonair Congressman from the Empire State was quite equal to the occasion. He seemed primed and ready, and needed no further urging. There was another hiss of soda, the clink of glasses, and with a prolonged sigh of satisfaction he began.

"This is a true tale, and unfolded now for the first time. Harken unto the evidence.

"It was a lovely afternoon in early spring, and 'The Avenue' was alive with a leisurely moving throng—for no one hurries in Washington. I strolled along, thoroughly enjoying the balmy weather, the crowds, and the charm of it all. About four o'clock hundreds of government clerks streamed out sluggishly from the side streets. At the crossings fakirs were busy, their customers good-naturedly elbowing each other in their eagerness to be swindled. And violets everywhere! The air was filled with the scent of them. Men, women, and children with trays piled high with the tiny purple and white flowers were doing a tremendous business; their customers ranging

from dignified statesmen to the loudly dressed Afro-American gayly swinging along. Out of the fashionable Northwest came many carriages, passing from the grim shadow of the Treasury into the sunlit way beyond. The trend of movement was eastward—always eastward—toward the great white dome on the hill. Congress was in session, and history was making there. The war debate was on in all its fury, with the whole world listening breathlessly. Pictures of the ill-fated *Maine* were much in evidence, and maps of Cuba in the shop windows were closely scanned. The probability of war with Spain was loudly and boastfully discussed by seedy looking men in front of the cheaper hotels and restaurants. Extra editions of the New York papers with huge scare headlines were eagerly bought up. The latest news from the Capitol—*via* New York—was seized upon with avidity. The papers were filled with the rumored departure of the American Consul-General from Havana. 'Twas said that he was coming direct to Washington. His portrait and the *Maine* lithographs were hung side by side, and the people spoke of 'Our Fitz' with enthusiastic affection. The President and his Cabinet were roundly censured for their policy of moderation. Much whiskey and beer was consumed by thirsty patriots. The pent-up feeling of the people found relief here and there by loud cheering—especially at the bulletin boards. Tiny Cuban flags were worn. Crossed American and Cuban flags were everywhere displayed.

"The De Lome incident—the intercepted letter of the imprudent Spanish Minister, and his subsequent disgrace and recall—was another much-discussed topic. It was an open secret, especially among the newspaper fraternity and others in the know, that the former minister had dispensed with lavish hand a corruption fund to influence writers on the American press. A little clique of journalists in and around the Capitol had profited greatly. Information about alleged filibuster movements found a ready market at the Spanish legation. These, and a dozen other subjects relative to the momentous events then impending, occupied the thoughts of a highly excited public.

"That walk down Pennsylvania Avenue from the Treasury to the Capitol opened my eyes wider than ever to the fact that the popular clamor was for war, war, the sooner the better. The sentiment in Washington voiced that of the entire country. Similar scenes were occurring in all the large cities, and I could fancy the crowd at the home post-office waiting for the latest Buffalo papers, hear the warm debate at Steve Warner's, and see Major Kirkpatrick haranguing the boys from the steps of the city hall; which, in fact, he did. (See the Hiram *Intelligencer* of that date.)

"Henley of Iowa had the floor when I took my seat in the House. The galleries were filled. It was warm in the chamber, and fans, bright bits of color, waved briskly. In the Diplomatic gallery the representatives of many nations seemed anxious and absorbed. Subdued murmurs of applause, like the hum of a mighty hive, arose at the telling points of the speech, which was for war! war! war! The galleries reeked with enthusiasm, and quailed not before the stern eye of the Speaker.

"Notwithstanding Henley's fiery eloquence, I was desperately sleepy, having been up late the night before; indeed, there were streaks of rosy light in the eastern sky when I reached my hotel. I found myself nodding at my desk, and it was with an effort that I turned to the work which had accumulated before me. An enormous mail had arrived. The usual place-hunting letters from constituents, a petition from the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Hiram Center protesting against the sale of liquor at the Capitol, invitations to dine, a tempting mining prospectus, circulars without number, and at the bottom of the pile a square blue affair with the Washington postmark. I gave it my immediate attention. The letter began abruptly, and ran as follows:

"Ah, senor, have you forgotten Saratoga, and the little Mercedes? Have you forgotten your promise to the Cuban girl? Surely not! The pain in my heart you must well understand, for I know that *you* love *your* country very dearly. I read your speeches—all of them—I read them in the papers, but not a word for Cuba—my poor, bleeding Cuba! And yet you swore to me that night on the veranda, with the moon shining so softly through the vines, that your voice would ever be raised for Cuba—Cuba Libre! Would I have kissed you else? Now, dear friend, when you make one of your beautiful speeches again, think of Cuba, my gasping, dying Cuba, and

"MERCEDES.

"P. S.—I am in Washington, at the Arlington.—M.'

"This was interesting, to say the least. Of course, I remembered Mercedes, and old Villasante, her fat papa, and Manuel the brother, and Alejandro the cousin. Yes, I remembered them all very well and the night on the veranda, with the moon shining softly through the vines, the music floating out to us from the ballroom, the innumerable bumpers with Manuel Villasante, Carlos Amezaga, Alejandro Menendez, and others of the Cuban colony at the hotel. Also the promise made to my lovely partner as to the voice for Cuba—Cuba Libre!—when I took my seat in Congress; the warm pressure of her arms around my neck—and the kiss! How could I forget it? But that was two summers ago, and my views now and then were vastly different. Whatever I may have said under the combined witchery of Mercedes, the moonlight, and the champagne was not to be seriously considered now. Like all Americans and lovers of liberty, I thought of course that Cuba should be free, that she should make every effort toward that much-to-be-desired end, but the idea of my own country stepping in to aid her did not strongly appeal to me. While Cuban affairs elicited the warmest interest in the States, those of our people who had actively assisted the patriots had become involved in endless trouble both with the home government and that of Spain. Filibustering was severely frowned upon, and many recent attempts had proven most disastrous,

jeopardizing both the lives of the 'patriots' and the *entente cordiale* between two great and friendly nations. The blowing up of the *Maine*, undoubtedly the work of Cuban insurgents in order to hasten hostilities with Spain, had rendered the situation most acute. Pledged to the Administration, I was a conservative of conservatives. I was therefore opposed to any interference in Cuban affairs, and I regarded a conflict with Spain as the height of folly. I was determined to fight to the bitter end any measure for war.



The Kiss!

The Kiss!

"With all this in mind, I tore up the fair Cuban's letter and threw it into the waste-basket. At that very moment a page hurried to my side and handed me a card.

"Manuel Villasante was waiting to see me!

"I went out to him most reluctantly. He greeted me with enthusiasm; his delight amounting almost to rapture. I am afraid I did not meet him half way, nor anywhere near it. He did not appear to notice it.

"My dear, dear friend,' said he, 'this is a sublime moment! To see *you*, the gay companion, the good fellow, the butterfly, I may say, of other days, a member of this great body is certainly soul-stirring! So you have realized your ambition? What next? The Senate? And then—then?' he pointed upward, 'higher yet? and still higher? Ha! The White House? Who knows?' he whispered prophetically.

"I cast my eyes modestly to the floor.

"This is quite enough for me, or any other good American; but, *Senor*, tell me about your father and the *Senorita*, your sister; are they well? And how long have you been in Washington? It is certainly good to see you again.'

"We are all here for a few days—my father, my sister, and I. You know we are living in New York this winter?'

"In New York, eh? Fine! It is strange,' I continued, 'but I was thinking of you and your family the very moment your card was brought in.'

"Ah, my friend,' he said mysteriously, 'you know what it is, do you not? It is the mental telepathy. I have known of things most wonderful to happen by the mental telepathy. Only yesterday my sister Mercedes—'

"Quite right,' said I, heading him off, and remembering something I had read not long before, 'it is indeed a wonderful, subtle thing. We live in the midst of the unknown. Unseen forces drag us hither and thither. At times we are brought face to face with the occult, the eerie, the gruesome. Charcot says in his superb work on the subject that—er—that—well, we will hardly go into it now. Some other time. The matter is a profound one, and not to be touched upon lightly. How is my old friend Alejandro Menendez?'

"He is well, but—sh! Caution! Are we quite safe here? Yes? It is a great secret, but I tell *you*—you, a trusted friend. I tell you all! Alejandro Menendez is at this very moment approaching the

shores of our beloved isle! I can see it now—the beautiful yacht, the calm blue sea, the brave patriots, and our glorious flag floating in the breeze! And a more magnificent body of men never set forth in a grander cause; with hearts full of courage and high purpose to fight, aye, to die, in the sacred cause of Liberty!

"That's great!" said I, with a burst of false enthusiasm, 'great! never heard anything better in my life! Villasante, old fellow, put it there! I admire your ner—feeling!' And we clasped hands.

"And you will join them?" I added.

"No, not yet," he said, with an expressive shrug; 'I am more needed elsewhere; here—in New York. There is money to be raised, arms and ammunition to be procured, sympathies to enlist, influence to gain. Later, I will see Alejandro, and the beautiful *Sylph*.'

"The what?" I asked, rising excitedly.

"The *Sylph*—the *Sylph*—queen of vessels! Senor Robson's yacht. Senor Robson—the tall handsome fellow who was with us at the Spa. You know him.'

"Know him? Of course I know him! Robson? Robson a filibuster? Impossible!"

"Why so?" asked the Cuban coldly.

"Hell, man!" I said, 'don't you realize what it all means?—certain failure, disgrace, death! My God, what folly!'

"Never, never!" shouted Villasante, waving his arms. 'Glory awaits them! The plaudits of the world! The embraces and blessings of a freed people! Laurel wreaths shall crown their brows! Poets shall chant their praises! History will render them immortal! Oh, what an opportunity is theirs! And everything has been most carefully planned. 'Twas Robson's own idea. A picked lot of men, with rifles and ammunition. He to command the vessel; Menendez to assume the lead on landing. Their destination, co-operation with the patriots on shore, supplies—everything has been arranged for. As to their success, I have no fear whatsoever!'

"I was aghast! The thought that my hare-brained cousin was engaged in such a foolhardy expedition was maddening. I loved the boy as a brother—indeed he *was* my foster-brother, brought up in my own family, and regarded as one of us. The Cuban studied my face curiously.

"Senor," said he gravely, 'knowing your sentiments, I came here to-day for advice. There is much more to be told. Every moment is precious. To-morrow in New York—'

"Stop!" I thundered, 'you have gone too far already! There is some mistake. You are laboring under a delusion. I will tell you frankly, Villasante, that you misjudge me. Many things have happened since I saw you at Saratoga two years ago. My views upon public questions have changed, as a more intimate acquaintance with any subject is apt to effect. I should like to see your country self-governed, the Spanish yoke overthrown, and liberty in its best sense gained; but the United States must keep her hands off! It would mean war with a friendly nation, an ancient ally. In other words, there would be the Devil to pay! Can't you see our position in the matter?'

"Caramba!" (or something like that) exclaimed Villasante excitedly, walking up and down, and clenching his fists. 'Your country *must* aid us! We can not free ourselves—quite impossible! We are weak; Spain is mighty! For centuries she has held us in her torturing grasp! It has been a continual drain of our blood, our pride, our gold, and all that goes to make for the self-respect and prosperity of a nation! Cuba is desolated! She cries for aid—first to you; if unheeded, then to the whole world! Shall the Pearl of the Antilles fall to Germany, France, or England?'

"Not while the Monroe Doctrine is respected and enforced, as it will be!" said I spread-eagle-ly.

"Your Monroe Doctrine, bah, I care not *that* for it!" said he, snapping his fingers. 'Let the United States look to herself if she refuses to help us! As for you, Senor,' he continued in milder tones, but with a threatening note, 'if, as you tell me, you are no longer our friend, as a gentleman you will at least respect the secret that I have so ill-advisedly betrayed to you. My kinsman's life, as well as that of the Captain Robson, depend upon your silence. I rather think you will do us no harm, eh?' And there he had me. If I was ever disposed to violate his confidence, the fact that I would thereby jeopardize my young cousin would effectually deter me. I assured the tempestuous fellow that his secret was safe with me, and after a few moments we parted, with a great show of politeness on both sides. I was glad to have him go.

"Again back in my seat my reflections were anything but pleasing. It was harrowing to think of Charlie Robson so completely in the power of these desperadoes, his probable fate, and the grief of his family and friends. And what could I do to save him? My hands were completely tied.

"The Villasante family and I were under the same roof, all of us being at the Arlington, but I hoped to avoid seeing them. Certainly, after my talk with Manuel, a meeting would be anything but agreeable. With these and a thousand other perplexing thoughts I left the House, hailed a cab, and was hurried to my hotel.

"While dressing for dinner there came a discreet knock at the door, and Manuel Villasante glided in.



Manuel Villasante.

"I was distinctly annoyed.

"'Pardon this intrusion, Senor,' he said courteously, 'also what I may have said to you this afternoon. I was excited—distressed—wounded to the heart! Perhaps I forgot myself. Let us forget it all, and be good friends once more,' and he held out his hand with a smile. I took it. There was something very winning about the fellow, and he made me feel sorry and ashamed. Somehow all the blame shifted over to me. We shook hands warmly.

"'Now,' he said, 'you are the bon comrade I knew at Saratoga. Let it always be so. My father and sister are waiting below and long to see you. Perhaps you will dine with us? We will consider ourselves fortunate.'

"We went down to the parlors and found Mercedes and her father. She was as beautiful as ever, and the old fellow was the same courtly, polished man of the world as of yore; a little grayer and more rat-like, perhaps, but showing no other signs of advancing age. Mercedes was a trifle more plump than when I last saw her, but not unbecomingly so. What a magnificent creature she was!



Papa Villasante.

Papa Villasante.

"My Cuban friends had much to say about their life in New York, the many flattering attentions received from friends and acquaintances, the opera, the shops, and other delights of metropolitan life. The Senorita said she preferred New York to Paris; so did her papa and brother. They loved America and everything American.

"The dinner was a delight. Afterward we went to the theatre. The excitement in the streets did not escape the notice of the Cubans. Nor did the flag of Cuba Libre picked out in electric lights over the entrance of a restaurant near the theatre, nor other significant sights and sounds. But they warily held their peace. I looked for some show of feeling, but there was none. A tête-à-tête with Mercedes was out of the question, and for this I fervently thanked the gods! There was no telling the havoc that bewitching face might have wrought. Principles, opinions, and theories might have withered and fallen utterly consumed beneath the fire of those ardent glances and the magic of that caressing voice! So it was all for the best.

"After the play there was supper, and then we returned to the hotel. Parting with the Senorita at the elevator, not without a tender pressure of her jeweled fingers,—ah me!—I proposed to the father and son that we go to my club, a few staggers away. They consented and we ambled leisurely along, the streets now quite deserted. The night was fine; clear, and unusually warm for the season. We moved along silently, enjoying our cigars; at peace with ourselves and all the world. As we approached H Street I was roughly seized by the collar, a gag thrust into my mouth, and turning in amazement was felled by a terrible blow from a cane—Papa Villasante's cane! While on the pavement, stunned and bleeding, blows and kicks were rained upon my face and shoulders by the pair, who were evidently bent upon killing me. Then Manuel drew a long, deadly looking knife! I caught its hideous gleam in the semi-light as it was about to descend, and then I lost consciousness!

"An interested and amused group surrounded me when I opened my eyes and realized that the end was not yet. Hillis, of Kentucky, Campbell, of Ohio, Reyburn, of Texas, and many others were grouped about my desk in mock solemnity. A loud laugh arose as I staggered to my feet; for I alone, of a vast gathering, had slept soundly through one of the most exciting debates in parliamentary history! Through it all—the battle raging around me, and the House swept as by a great storm. Through it all, yea, even unto the adjournment!"

"A very pretty tale, and one to be remembered," observed Colonel Manysnifters thoughtfully. "I never had an adventure like that, because I am awfully careful about what I eat and drink, and I roost at chicken-time. There's no telling what will happen to a man when he violates Nature's laws. Night is made for sleep, and the three hours before midnight count for more than all the rest."

"And yet, Colonel," remonstrated Van Rensselaer, "by your own admission just now——"

"You mean my outing with the 'Jewels,' I suppose. That, my friend, is the solitary exception that proves the rule. That little adventure simply confirmed yours truly in his belief of the old maxim learned at Mammy's knee, that

"Early to bed and early to rise,
Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise!"

"I may misquote, but it will do. Old Sol has scarce seemed to illumine the Western heavens ere I seek my humble couch. And yet I do not pose as a saint. But stop! If I do not greatly err, the junior Senator from Massachusetts seems restless and eager-eyed. I think he would like to take the floor. I know the signs, having often observed just such a readiness in many a good man before."

Senator Wendell, blushing, denied the charge, but when urged by all present responded gamely.

"I really think I have no story to tell that would interest you. My life has been cast upon very hum-drum matter-of-fact lines, and I can recall no startling incident. In my native town there is a shop-keeper who, when he is out of any article called for, tells his customers to wait a moment while he sends the boy over to the warehouse,—the 'warehouse' being the larger and more prosperous establishment of a rival just around the corner,—and the boy never returns empty-handed. I shall have to imitate my worthy friend; so pardon me just a moment." And the Senator left us and went to his room. He soon returned with some papers.

"I am, as perhaps you know, connected with the —— Magazine, and this is one of the many manuscripts that reach our office every day. These things, with a very few exceptions, are promptly returned to their authors—provided, of course, that sufficient postage for that purpose is enclosed. This particular effort is as yet under advisement. Perhaps the tale will interest you. It is called 'The Creaking of the Stairs,' and is rather out of the ordinary. You may fancy it."

VIII

SENATOR WENDELL READS "THE CREAKING OF THE STAIRS"

"After four years of luxury at the Capital there came a most disastrous change in the Administration and I lost my rather exalted position under the government. This was all the greater shock, for I had cherished the comforting idea that I was protected to some extent by the Civil Service law. However, when I recovered from the first effects of the blow I looked the situation squarely in the face, and was content with a stray crumb which fell from the opposition table. I had still some influence to command, and after superhuman exertion managed to secure a twelve-hundred-dollar clerkship.

"My wife, always cheerful under the most trying circumstances, was fully equal to this occasion.

"'Well, my love,' said she, 'of course we must give up everything here, and that will be a little trying for a while, I'll admit, but we should be thankful that you are not thrown out altogether,' adding with a tinge of melancholy, 'I don't think, though, that I could bear to live in Washington after the change. Suppose we try A—— for a while.'

"A—— is over in Maryland, about six miles from town, and very convenient trains are run between the two places. One can live quite comfortably there for very little, so my wife's suggestion was quickly adopted.

"'It reminds me of dear, dear Salem,' she said some weeks later, 'and rents are so cheap. Think of the ridiculously small price we pay for this house.'

"'Suspiciously small, you mean,' said I gloomily, not at all reconciled to my wife's choice of abode. But as my feeble protest was treated with silence I held my peace. 'Anything for a quiet life' has ever been a favorite conceit with me.

"Mrs. Ploat had taken an old-fashioned house in Queen Anne Street, large enough for a family of twenty persons. Now, as my household consisted of only my wife, her unmarried sister, and myself, I could not understand what was wanted with such capacious quarters. But I had no say in the matter. My wife fancied the house, it seemed to me, on account of its colonial air, wide halls, huge high-ceilinged rooms, and general lack of modern improvements.

"I never liked the house in Queen Anne Street, though this aversion was apparently unreasonable, for we were cosy enough after the throes of moving in and settling down were over. But it struck me from the start that there was something decidedly uncanny about the place, and a vague feeling of uneasiness became very keenly defined in me whenever I heard the creaking of the stairs.

"The stairs throughout the house had an infernal habit of creaking—one after another—as if somebody was coming up or down. At first I thought it was the rats that infested the old mansion in legions; but I abandoned this idea after a few experiments which proved conclusively that the

creaking sounds could only be made by a person or thing quite as heavy, if not heavier, than myself—then tipping the beam at one hundred and eighty pounds.

"In the course of time I became personally acquainted with each stair in the Queen Anne Street house, and especially with those in the main flight. Business, or pleasure, often compelled me to keep late hours, and on such occasions, on arriving home, I would naturally try to reach my room as quietly as possible. With my shoes in my hand, and by a series of agile leaps from one less noisy stair to another, I usually succeeded in attaining the upper part of the house without much disturbance.

"The annoying sounds occurred at all hours, but were of course more noticeable at night. I am a light sleeper, and was invariably awakened by them, and this, with the loud ticking of a grandfather's clock on the first landing, usually banished further slumber, and I would arise at daybreak, weary and unrefreshed. The clock was finally stopped, after a heated discussion with my wife and sister-in-law, who regarded it with something akin to reverence. It was indeed a venerable affair. I hated the thing even when it was quiet, for it reminded me of a coffin set on end, and I would pass it in the dark hurriedly, and with averted face.

"I do not think that either my wife or sister-in-law ever heard the creaking of the stairs. If they did they never said anything about it to me. For my part, I was silent, because I did not want to be laughed at by my womenkind, and I knew also that if the matter reached the ear of our only servant she would immediately take her departure. Help is not easy to obtain in A—, and if it were known that our home was haunted we would be obliged to do all our own drudgery in future.

"This state of things continued nearly a year. Occasionally, for a week or two at a time, the creaking stopped altogether. In these intervals I slept well and improved in every way, but when the disturbances returned I became more depressed and gloomy than ever. My health was wretched at the time, and I felt that I was gradually breaking down.

"At last I determined to call upon my landlord, Doctor Matthai, and lay the trouble before him. He was born and raised in the house, and I thought it probable that he could solve the mystery, or at least suggest a remedy. Doctor Matthai lived just across the way in a quaint cottage covered with great climbing roses and set well back in a prim garden, with hollyhocks and hedges of box, and an ancient sun-dial which was my wife's never-ending delight.

"The doctor was a short, thick-set, heavily whiskered gentleman, and looked more like a retired man of affairs than the prosy recluse that he was; but he had long since ceased to take any active interest in life, and gave himself up entirely to scientific study and research of a more or less abstruse nature. A useless sort of existence, it seemed to me, as mankind was never destined, nor intended, to reap the benefits of his labor. His sister kept house for him, and had full charge of all his business matters. The doctor owned considerable property, and Miss Regina proved a capable manager; as a collector of rents she certainly had no equal—to that I can cheerfully testify. She was not popular in A—, nor was her eccentric brother. Unpleasant tales were told about Matthai. I never knew all the particulars, but they had something to do with the murder of a slave in antebellum days. The townfolk were extremely reticent on the subject, and very mercifully so, for, as I have since learned, the tragedy occurred in our house in Queen Anne Street.

"I found Doctor Matthai in his library, immersed in study as usual; quite out of the world so far as every-day happenings were concerned. He greeted me rather coldly.

"'I beg your pardon,' said I, 'but I have come to see you about the house.'

"'My sister, Regina—' he interrupted.

"'Yes, I know,' said I, 'but this visit is to *you*, though I fear you will look upon what I have to say as very nonsensical and farfetched. To me, though, it is a very serious matter.'

"I dwelt at length upon the grievance; putting it as strongly as possible. The doctor listened attentively, and when I concluded, laughed and said, 'I believe you fully as to the creaking of the stairs, but you attach entirely too much importance to it. The noise results, I have no doubt, from perfectly natural causes. You must remember, sir, that the stairways are very old indeed, any jar from the movement of persons in other parts of the house, the action of the wind against the walls, or the rotting or shrinking of wood from age will produce just such sounds as you have heard. I quite fail, therefore, to see any mystery about it.'

"'However,' he continued, 'I will send a carpenter around who will probably set things to rights; that is, if the expense be not too great. I am not prepared to put a large sum of money on the house; and stairways, you know, are costly arrangements at best.' I fully agreed with him.

"'By the way,' said he, blinking at me through his thick glasses, 'there is just a bit of nervousness in your make-up, isn't there? "A little off your feed," as Regina says; liver out of shape—something of that sort, eh?' I confessed that that was just it. I frankly told him that I was not only a nervous man, but a miserably sick and frightened one to boot. He did not offer to prescribe for me, and after some moments of silence I judged that he considered our interview at an end. I arose to go, but on leaving the room fired a parting shot, which, to my surprise, proved a telling one.

"'Doctor,' said I, 'before you send the man to make repairs I would like you to hear the creaking of the stairs for yourself—just as a matter of curiosity. My wife and sister-in-law are going up to

the old home in a few days. Suppose you come over and spend a night with me while they are away.'

"The doctor chuckled, 'You are a queer fellow, Mr. Ploat; a queer fellow, and no mistake. You say you are run down, played out, can't sleep. Take more exercise, sir; give up late suppers, drink less, stop smoking. A man leading the sedentary life you do should take more care of himself. I am older than you are, and a physician. My advice may be worth something. As to coming over and staying with you, I don't see that there is anything in that. It seems absurd, quite so; but nevertheless, I will humor you. Let me know when to come, but on no account say anything of this to my sister. My absence would greatly alarm her. I have not been out of this house after dark for over forty years!'

"With this strange assertion our conversation closed.

"The following Monday my wife and sister-in-law left for Salem, and Doctor Matthai promised to be with me on Wednesday night. When I found myself alone in the house I resolved to put into execution an idea which struck me with much force. I thought it very likely that I would find out whether the creaking of the stairs was of human or supernatural origin; and this I hoped would be made plain before the doctor came over. That the noise was due to natural causes, as he so adroitly suggested, I, in my heart of hearts, could not bring myself to believe. Poe is my favorite author, and he perhaps could have suggested a solution of the perplexities that beset me; but no inspiration came to me from the oft-read pages which I turned over and over in despair.

"My plan was a simple one, and it was odd that I had not thought of it before; but after all, it would have been impracticable as long as my wife and sister-in-law were in the house.

"On Tuesday night I sprinkled a thin layer of flour over each stair, from basement to attic. This was a task of an hour or so, but I felt that I did not labor in vain. Then I turned in and slept soundly until midnight, when I was awakened as usual by the creaking of the stairs. It is hardly necessary to say that I remained in bed, making no attempt whatever to investigate, but valiantly drew up the covers over my head, fully expecting every moment to feel the weight of a dreadful hand upon some portion of my body.

"In the morning, my bravery having returned, I found upon each stair the clear impression of a naked human foot! The footprints were very large, and were made in ascent. There was no trace of them beyond the third floor, for the flour on the stairway to the attic above had been partially brushed off as by a trailing garment. The attic was perfectly bare, affording no hiding-place for man or beast, as there were no closets, presses or means of concealment of any kind. My visitor may have gone out by way of the trap door in the loft which opened upon the roof, but it was securely bolted on the inside, and the bolts, which were caked with rust in their fastenings, had evidently not been pulled out for years. I made a thorough search of the attic, the loft, and the upper floors of the house, but failed utterly to discover any further trace of the prowler.



“—Upon each stair the clear impression of a naked human Foot!”

—Upon each stair the clear impression of a naked human Foot!”

"I hardly knew whether to feel relieved or not when I learned that the unknown was no ghost after all. Certainly not the vapory, unsubstantial kind that flit through mansions such as mine. Here was a being of solid, nay, gigantic proportions, as the creakings and huge footprints fully attested. I knew, though, that I would assuredly have the best of Dr. Matthai should he (or she) of the massive feet see fit to appear on the coming night.

"After carefully sweeping up the floor I shut up the house, and resolved to keep my own counsel. I breakfasted in Washington that morning, having, for obvious reasons, given our servant a holiday, and returned to A— about five in the afternoon; dining later with Doctor Matthai, who met me at the station and very hospitably insisted upon my going home with him. Shortly after dinner I bade my host and his sister good-evening and went over to my own deserted dwelling. An hour or so after, Doctor Matthai came in. Both of us were armed, and I thought it singular that the doctor, who appeared to treat the whole affair as a joke, should have taken that precaution. We sat by the open fire in my dining-room, smoking; the doctor lingering somewhat mournfully upon the departed greatness of A— which, it seems, had once been a town of considerable social and commercial importance. With reminiscence and anecdote the hours sped by, and it was nearly midnight when we retired.

"The doctor, sharing my bed, asked me to arouse him if I heard anything during the night. I slept fairly well until the clock on the mantel struck two, when I awoke with a start. Complete silence reigned, and I rolled over again for another nap. As I did so I heard a faint creaking sound on the upper stair!

"Ah,' thought I, 'it is coming down.' And so it proved. I gave the doctor a violent nudge. He opened his eyes and looked at me stupidly.

"Hush,' I whispered, 'don't you hear it? Don't you hear it?'

"Yes, I do,' replied he, sitting up and peering into the darkness.

"Creak! Creak! Creak! Nearer 'It' came, and our floor was reached. Clutching his revolver, Doctor Matthai sprang out of bed and ran to the door. Then a horrible scream of terror and anguish rang through the house. An invisible hand seemed to drag the unfortunate man out of the room. There was a brief, desperate struggle on the landing, the creature went heavily down the stairs, and the street door shut with a bang!

"When I recovered to some extent from the panic of fear and trembling into which I was thrown by this awful and inexplicable occurrence, I hurriedly dressed, and seeing nothing of the doctor, went over at once to his cottage. Remembering his caution about Miss Regina, and not wishing to otherwise frighten her, I ran around to the alley at the rear of the grounds and climbed over the fence. The doctor's library and bedroom were adjoining apartments on the ground floor, and the long, low windows of each opened upon a porch at the side of the house. All the blinds were closed and securely fastened. I knocked on them several times, but there was no response, though a dim light was burning in the library. I heard some one moving inside, and for a moment I thought I heard the sound of voices in angry argument or expostulation. But of this I cannot be positive. I remained on the porch at least ten minutes, vainly trying to get into the rooms, then I gave it up and left the premises.

"My state of mind after the harrowing events of the night was indeed distressing. I did not—could not—return home. I have an indistinct recollection of walking swiftly up and down the deserted streets and far out into the country. Daylight found me several miles from the town; hatless, wild-eyed, a sorry spectacle, at whom one or two farmers, on their way to early market, gazed in amazement. When I turned back, the sun was high in the heavens. I went again to Doctor Matthai's. A crowd stood about the door. I was rudely seized and placed under arrest, charged—oh, my God!—with the murder of Doctor Matthai! The shockingly mutilated body had just been found in the hallway of the old house in Queen Anne Street! * * * I am innocent, innocent! Weeks—they seem centuries—pass, and I yet await trial. * * *

"George Delwyn Ploat, the writer of the above remarkable story, was hanged in the jailyard at A— for the wilful and brutal murder of Doctor Ambrose Matthai, a retired practitioner of that place. The plea of insanity, so strongly urged by the prisoner's counsel, proved unavailing, and the condemned man paid the penalty for his crime on Friday morning last."

"You know what a story like that demands, I suppose," said Colonel Manysnifters, reaching for the button; "and as I seem to be the self-appointed chairman here, I will now call upon the gentleman from Michigan for a few remarks. I am sure that he will not disappoint us. Senator, we are waiting for you, sir."

"Very well," said Senator Hammond, "since there seems to be no escape, I will do the best I can."

IX

SENATOR HAMMOND'S EXPERIENCE

"The facts that I am about to relate occurred many years ago while I was on a visit to relatives in Charleston, South Carolina. The old house where I was a guest stands on the Battery, and with its beautiful gardens is still one of the show places of the city.

"It was on a warm Sunday afternoon, and I found myself alone in the house, the family and servants at church, and a brooding stillness that presaged the approach of a storm, settling over all. At that time I was a dreamy, romantic, long-haired youth with all sorts of notions about the artistic temperament, carelessness in dress, and painting miniatures for a living. They told me I had some talent, and I believed them thoroughly.

"I had wandered in from the garden, my hands full of flowers for the vases in the library, when a sudden gust of wind tore through the wide hall, the door shut with a bang, and I found myself face to face with my ancestors. Grim gentlemen with somber faces, simpering almond-eyed beauties in cobwebby laces; and in the place of honor a frowning hag, whose wrinkles even the flattering painter dare not hide. Time had added to the sallowness of her complexion, and certain cracks in the canvas but intensified her ugliness. Artistic cracks they were, too, for they fell in just the right places, and heightened the general effect amazingly.

"Doubtless it was from this person, thought I, that I inherited my rather nasty temper and other moral and mental infirmities. I gazed at the lady long and earnestly, for as an ardent believer in heredity I felt that here I had the key to a problem which often worried me. I resolved to look her up at once in the family records.

"But I was saved that trouble.

"'Young man,' piped a high, thin voice close at hand, 'in my day it was considered boorish in the extreme to stare at any one as you are now doing. No gentleman, I am sure, would have been guilty of such a thing. But these modern manners, and modern ways are quite beyond me. Perhaps it is the mode nowadays to ape the rude youths who hung about the London playhouses in my time. N'est-ce pas?'

"I felt decidedly uncomfortable.

"'Pardon me, I——'

"'Stop!' said the voice, which came from the ugly one in the corner, 'stop, if you please! Don't attempt to apologize or explain; it takes too much time, and time with me is very precious just now. You see,' she added in milder tones, 'when one is allowed to have a say only once in a century, and but fifteen minutes at that, one naturally wants to do all the talking. That's perfectly reasonable, is it not? So keep quiet, my dear, and listen to me. No interruptions, if you please.

"'I am Margaret Holmead, your blood relation. You have the Holmead figure, and coloring, and I knew you were one of us as soon as you came into the room. Well.

"'Do you see that hussy in the ruff over there? That is Mary Darragh, Lady Benneville, my bitterest, bitterest enemy! See how she smiles at me! Deceitful minx! When I tell you all you will surely take her out of the room and fling her into the fire! For sixty years she has hung there taunting me. They brought her down from the hall above just to spite me, I do believe. 'Twas done in your grandfather's time. He was a Benneville all over, and of course had no use for me. So for sixty long years I have had to face Mary Darragh and submit to her impertinence, and I tell you I am sick of it! Why do I hate her? For a very good reason, sir. Let me tell you about it.

"'My troubles began at the Duchess of Bolton's ball, long before I came to this dreadful America. The King was there, and Lady Morley-Frere. If my voice trembles as I mention their names, it is with rage I assure you, and no wonder—for God knows that between them they played me a scurvy trick! Yes, these two were there, and Lord Benneville, my cousin, the handsomest man in all England—indeed, in all the world, I thought. He was tall and slight, with wavy hair, light brown, almost golden, in the sunlight. His eyes were gray, a lovely shade, though those who hated him swore 'twas green. A clever supple swordsman, and to the fore in all the rough games that men delight in. His face was very winsome, yet often swept by varying moods. I have seen it hard and stern, and again alight with the keenest appreciation of one of my Lord Kenneth's witticisms. And, too, I have seen it tender, pleading, and melancholy almost unto tears. Ah me!

"'Lord Kenneth, older by several years; taller, darker, soured by a great disappointment—so 'twas said—loved my Lord Benneville with all the affection his selfish nature allowed. And Benneville returned it frankly, in his open boyish fashion. They were ever together, and their adventures and daring escapades more than once nearly threw them into serious trouble. But what cared they, crack-brained as they were? Why, on one pitch dark night, masked and mounted, my Lords Kenneth and Benneville held up the Royal Mail, frightened the passengers almost to death, and alarmed the whole countryside; sober folk who thought the Devil himself was abroad! But the King only smiled indulgently, and nothing came of it save much gossip at court. They were merry days for all of us; balls and routs, and parties on the river, the King so handsome and debonair, and the world so bright with sunshine and happiness. Youth, my dear, is a great thing; what is there to compare with it?

"But I am losing time. I must hasten to the ball at the Duchess's. 'Tis hardly fair, this terrible silence they have imposed upon me. A century at a stretch—think of it!

"I looked my best that night, at least every one said I did, and I had my mirror to tell me so too. My gown was a wondrous figured thing from the Indies—a soft, clinging, silken stuff that became me well. Royalty sent an armful of great purple blossoms, strange in shape and smelling ravishingly. My clever Prue spent hours on my hair, with the little Lafitte for the finishing touches. My father was waiting below, and his eyes shone with joy when he saw me; for he was proud, very proud of his only daughter.

"The King patted my cheek and said such pretty things, and kissed me. Little did I know what was to follow! Child, beware of Princes and princely favor, for therein lies destruction!

"The night wore on, and the affair became gayer and more crowded. I had been much with my Lord Benneville, who seemed quiet and preoccupied, yet very tender and sweet withal. At that time there existed an understanding between Arthur and me. Nothing announced as yet, for my lover feared the King. His Majesty, of late, had been singularly attentive to me. In fact, so marked had this been that the Queen's manner toward me became more distant every day; thanks to Lady Morley-Frere, Mary Darragh, and the other busybodies who had the royal ear, and hated me. If I coquetted with the King 'twas but to see my heart's real master frown, and his face grow wan and sad, for by those very tokens I knew that he loved me.

"As I say, something was wrong with my dear Lord that night, and after I had danced twice with the King, and once with the old Duke, Benneville came to claim me. He took me away from the throng into a little gilded room with scattered tables for cards, and there we were quite to ourselves.

"My darling," said he, "the King has honored me with a very special mission. His Majesty deems that of all his loving subjects I am the best fitted for this most important business," and my lover's voice hoarsened, and there was hatred in his face. "I start at once for that far city where the Grand Turk holds court. It is a long journey, and a hard; and who can say when I will return? I have feared this all along, sweetest one, and I have tried in vain to put off the evil day; and yet, by Heaven, I will thwart him! You shall be Lady Benneville before sunrise! And you will, dearest?"

"He took me in his arms. I was trembling from head to foot; fearful, yet joyous. Mine is an emotional nature. But his next words sent a chill through me.

"Lady Morley-Frere has promised to help me. You must leave the palace with her, and drive straight to St. Stephens-in-the-Fields. She has arranged it all, like the dear, clever woman she is. As for me, I am in Kenneth's hands."

"No! No!" I cried out suddenly, quite aghast. "Not Lord Kenneth! O God; not that man!" I feared and hated Robert, Lord Kenneth, and knew well that he had no liking for me. "Not Lord Kenneth," I urged.

"He is my friend," said Lord Benneville gravely.

"So what more could I say?"

"Your father has gone home, tired out," he said, by all this frivolity, but Lady Morley-Frere will keep you to the end; and then to Morley House with her. That at least is what she told him, and he seemed well content."

"I nodded passively, but wondered, knowing as I did my father's especial detestation for Lady Morley-Frere. Why, they scarcely spoke! But of course my Arthur knew. There was no further time for parley, however, as several of the guests, upon gaming bent, invaded our retreat, and we returned to the ballroom.

"Old Lady Morley-Frere gave me a meaning look when we met at supper, but had only the opportunity to whisper in passing, "At two o'clock; the little door under the green lanthorn." I knew the place well, having often taken chair there when the crowd pressed in front. Two o'clock came, and we succeeded in leaving the palace quite unobserved, thanks to the private door. It was bitterly cold and snowing hard, and we had scarce left the court-yard when I fell to shivering, my teeth clicking like castanets. Lady Morley-Frere, seeing my plight, held out a silver flask, and from the depths of her cloak growled out, "Drink, drink! 'Twill set you right in a trice. 'Tis hot and spiced, and good for you." I obeyed her. I had hardly swallowed it before a delicious warmth stole over me, and every nerve tingled with pleasure. I sank back into the cushions revived—exalted! Then I fell asleep. Oh, the shame of it! The shame of it! A thousand curses upon a tippie that caused such woe! May eternal perdition be the portion of the giver!

"Strong arms enfolded me when I came to my senses. My Benneville, I was sure of it!

"Darling," I murmured, still feeling strangely, "I have come to you. Yes, out of the storm have I come to you! Like a weary, drenched bird, I seek rest in thy dear arms! Kiss me, my dearest, kiss me!"

"He kissed me again and again ... How can I go on?... There was a sound of smothered laughter—the irritating laugh of a woman I hated.... His face was close to mine.... I opened my eyes.... Oh, God! It was the King!

"In my rage and confusion I flung him from me, and fell, half-fainting, to the floor. Then I heard

my Lord Benneville say brokenly, as one crushed by awful trouble, "Your Majesty is right. I pray you forgive my harsh words of yesterday. Fool, fool that I am to have been so tricked! O my Liege, my Liege, death would have been far preferable to this!" And then my dear Lord, sobbing, went out into the gray dawn, and out of my life forever!

"They took me from the King's chamber, and revived by the sharp air in the street I managed to grope my way to my father's house. To *him* I told nothing, for he was proud of me, and should I have killed him? Yet he was much perplexed at my determination, for I never showed my face at court again!"

"My relative's voice, growing weaker every moment, flickered and died out in a hissing whisper just as the silver chime over the mantel proclaimed that her time was up. Then I must have awakened.

"It may have been a dream, but so impressed was I by the old lady's story that all the rest of the week I searched for further light upon it. Into old carven chests I dived, opening package after package of mouldy papers. In the attic trunks and boxes were rifled, until at last, about to give up in despair, I found in an old desk a letter. It was in French with the Benneville crest and seal, brown with age, and by no means easy to decipher. The place of writing, and the date, quite beyond human ken, so frayed and stained was the upper margin. Freely translated, the letter read:

"My Dear Old Bobby:

"Here we are, safe and sound. And what can I say to you, friend of friends? This last scrape was the worst of all; was it not? Worse by far than the affairs with the little Italian, or the fat Princess, eh, Bobby, my boy? Our heartfelt thanks to his Majesty, God bless him! and to Lady Morley-Frere, and to your dear self—our eternal love! Oh, Bobby, the thought of marrying that sour-visaged cousin of mine makes me ill, even now! And yet—at the time, before I told you—I felt myself slowly drifting into it. The ground seemed to be slipping from under my feet, as it were. I felt wholly lost—trapped, by Jove! She was very determined. We are here with the Ambassador until the affair blows over. My sweetest Mary joins me in love.

"Ever your affectionate friend,

"BENNEVILLE."

"A dirty low trick of that fellow Benneville, I must say," said Colonel Manysnifters disgustedly. "That sort of thing could never have happened in these days. Did they ever move the Darragh woman's picture out of the room?" he asked.

"I believe so—some years later," replied Senator Hammond dryly; "in fact, they were *all* moved out, and hurried into the up-country for safe-keeping. That was about the time that we boys in blue were making it particularly unpleasant for the residents of that part of the State. I never knew the fate of the collection. I have not been South since '64."

"Well, anyway, Senator," said the Colonel, "I see you have got a line on your ancestors, and that's more than many of us can say. I've never bothered about mine. Descendants are bad enough. My forebears came over to America years ago as ballast—didn't have any names, just numbers, mostly thirteen and twenty-three! That old lady you were telling us about certainly got it in the neck, and I hope that she will even matters up in the other world. If she hasn't, by the time I get there I will do all I can to help her out—always assuming, of course, that I am going to the same place.

"Now, if you gentlemen of the press will kindly step to the front and favor us with your yarns we will all be mightily obliged to you. I have heard nothing from any of you since 'way back in the dining-car. Some observation about the moon, I believe."

Mr. Callahan, the dean of the corps, blushed slightly.

"It was O'Brien who got off the spiel about the moon. *I* have outgrown that sort of thing. In my younger days I might have—well, we won't be hard on O'Brien. He is not a bad fellow at heart, and I believe he will try to do better in future. Now, as it seems to be my turn at word-painting, I am going to tell you of an affair that occurred in Washington a few years ago. It has to do with a well-known society girl, an irascible father, a bad Chinaman, and a high collar—seemingly irreconcilable elements, I'll admit, but I will do my best to mix 'em in. I had the story in sections from most of the parties concerned; a wide acquaintance with the police and an intimate knowledge of the Chinese quarter helping out considerably. The odds and ends, pieced together, make, I hope, a hearable tale."

MR. CALLAHAN'S STORY

"My story begins, then, on a bright Sabbath afternoon in mid-autumn when Miss Janet Cragiemuir left her home in K Street and set out leisurely upon her walk to Bethany Church, where she revelled in her latest fad. She had recently taken a class in the Chinese Sunday-school. The good work began at three o'clock, and as it was nearly that hour, groups of Chinamen stood out on the sidewalk chattering as only Celestials can. They greeted Miss Cragiemuir with grave courtesy when she approached, and shuffled lazily out of her way as she swept past. She was followed into the building by her three scholars, one of whom presented her with a small package which was accepted with some reluctance. Then a brief whispered argument took place between the two, the Chinaman appearing to have decidedly the best of it, for he displayed his broken, yellow teeth in a hideous grin when his teacher turned from him to the other members of the class.

"Miss Cragiemuir was attached to her scholars, an intelligent lot of men, speaking English fairly well, and at times quite electrifying her by their naïve observations on men and things. But Ah Moy, the ugly fellow at the end of the form, was her especial pride. That gorgeously clad individual was considered the star scholar of the school, and as a shining example of what Christian training can do for the heathen was often pointed out to visitors. Well, Ah Moy *was* undeniably clever, but not in just the way the good people of Bethany imagined. As a matter of fact, a more corrupt Chinaman had never been smuggled into America. Ostensibly in the laundry business, and really a master workman in that line, the astute Chink had long since relinquished the labor over the tubs and ironing-board to Hop Wah, his silent partner. Ah Moy's chief interest in the establishment lay in its cavernous sub-cellar, where he conducted gaming tables and a smoking-'parlor' with flattering success. The gods evidently smiled upon him, for his den seemed to be unknown to the police, though they had ferreted out all other resorts of the kind in the city. As there is no 'graft' in Washington, and 'the Finest' are above reproach, the idea that Ah Moy enjoyed police protection should be dismissed with indignation.

"Ah Moy's place bore an unsavory reputation even among the saffron-hued residents of Four-and-a-half Street, but its bland proprietor was regarded by the authorities as a particularly inoffensive and law-abiding specimen—his high standing at Bethany proving a very strong card. He was also the head of a powerful secret society, or 'tong,' and wielded a tremendous influence in the Washington settlement, so his countrymen dared not betray him. There was another, and in its way an equally potent reason why the Chinaman played so well the rôle of convert. He had fallen desperately in love with Miss Cragiemuir, and to the unconscious girl his antics were puzzling, to say the least. He annoyed her, too, with presents—trifles which she could not well refuse without a scene, for after much surly mumbling he would sulk in his corner like a spoiled child unless she instantly accepted his offerings. So jars of preserved ginger, hideous ivory images, and trinkets of every description were showered upon her, much to her discomfiture.

"On the afternoon I speak of, Ah Moy, who had eclipsed all previous records for brilliant recitations, became decidedly uneasy as the benediction was being pronounced, and when he arose from his knees tapped Miss Cragiemuir gently with his fan.

"'Can Ah Moy walk home with pletty lady?' he asked in dove-like tones.

"Now Miss Cragiemuir's fads were invariably carried through to the last extremity, and Ah Moy's request, instead of embarrassing her, afforded a thrill of gratification. She felt sure that he yearned for a fuller knowledge of the great truths that had been unfolded in the afternoon's lesson, and she also felt, with some exaltation of spirit, that her influence over the man was being exerted for much good. So she nodded a pleasant assent to the delighted Celestial, who blushed and trembled with joy; and a blushing, trembling Chinaman is a sight for the gods!

"'Well, Ah Moy,' she said in her best manner, 'I hope you will think over what you have learned to-day, ponder it in your heart, and let it be a subject of prayer. I see a great change in you—a change for the better. The good seed has taken root, and my puny efforts will yet bear fruit in due season. Now next Sunday we will take up the wonderful story of "Daniel in the Lion's Den." That will interest you, I am sure.'

"'Ah Moy takee up anysing that Missee want,' said the Chinaman gallantly. 'Ah Moy velly, velly fond of Missee. He no come to Slunday-school at all if teacher no come too! Slunday-school is a great big bluff most allee time—it seem to me. Humbug, eh?'

"This was a staggerer.

"'Why, Ah Moy, how perfectly shocking! "Bluff!" "Humbug!" Where did you learn such words? Oh, Ah Moy, you don't know how much you distress me! I thought better of you than that; I did indeed! What do you come to the school for? Isn't it because you want to be a better man, and to lead a good and useful life? I certainly thought so. I am disappointed in you, Ah Moy, more than I can say. This is dreadful!'

"'Ah Moy rich,' he continued, unnoticing; 'got plenty money, habee heap house—one in 'Flisco, one in San Looey, one here in this city. He want get mallied; lovee gal, 'flaid tell her. 'Flaid makee mad. Ah Moy bashful!'

"'Really?' said Miss Cragiemuir with interest, wondering which of the two or three women at the Mission he meant, 'In love! Oh, Ah Moy, how romantic! Who is she? Perhaps I can help you.'

"I don't likee say,' replied he coyly.

"How foolish, Ah Moy. Tell me—I will promise not to mention it—not to say a word to any one. Understand?"

"Plomise?' asked he craftily.

"Certainly I will promise. Don't you think I can keep a secret? Lots of people tell me things—that's because they trust me. Who do you want to marry? Ah, I believe I know. Isn't it Hoi Kee?"

"No-o.'

"Oo-Chow?"

"No-o.'

"Hoi Sing?"

"No-o.'

"Well, I declare! Who on earth is it then?"

"Ah Moy want mallie *you!*"

"What?"

"Miss Cragiemuir, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, giggled hysterically. A flush of rage darkened the Chinaman's sallow features, and his eyes glittered with anger. Had the street been deserted he would have strangled her, then and there, after the pleasing Oriental fashion. But the time and place were unpropitious.

"Mellican gal makee fun of Ah Moy,' he said gruffly. 'She think he joke, when allee time he mean velly much what he say!'

"Then the teacher lost her temper.

"How dare you say such a thing to me? Are you crazy? You must be! Don't you ever talk to me again like that. Do you hear? Leave me—go away! I don't want you to walk a step further with me! Go home! I hope I will never, never see you again!' and she turned her back on him indignantly. Ah Moy made no response, but still stuck gamely at her side. She walked faster; so did he, keeping right in line. For a square or so they hurried along. Then she gave it up, slowed down, and said mildly, 'I am glad, of course, that you are fond of me, Ah Moy. I want all the members of my class to like me. I am trying to do a good part by you, and I hope some day to see you back in your native land leading your people to the light; but you have a great deal to learn yet. Besides,' she added thoughtfully, reverting to his unlucky remark, 'haven't you a wife in China?'

"I have *two* wiffee in old countly,' replied Ah Moy proudly, 'but I have none in 'Mellica—not a single wiffee—no, not one! Ah Moy want 'Mellican wiffee, so ba-ad, so ba-ad!' he said plaintively.

"Miss Cragiemuir was seized with a wild desire to shriek with laughter, but she wisely suppressed it. She felt that with the frank avowal of her scholar the end of her usefulness at Bethany was drawing near. It sobered and saddened her.

"Ah Moy accompanied her in sullen silence to the door of the house in K Street. Well-dressed church-goers gazed curiously at the pair, and many facetious remarks were bandied about. Fragments of this found their way to the ear of Major Cragiemuir as he was taking his afternoon airing in the park, and filled him with wrath. The Major is a testy, pompous specimen of the retired army officer, and takes himself very seriously. His sense of dignity and propriety is never for a moment in abeyance, and covers himself and all his belongings like a pall.

"This thing shall be stopped,' he declared, fuming with rage. 'I have put up with Janet's infernal nonsense long enough! I won't have her the laughing stock of the town! She shall give up this Chinese Sunday-school business at once! But what next, what next?' he groaned 'Really, Janet is getting quite beyond me—something decisive will have to be done. Each new fad is more damnable than the other! Will there never be any let up? God knows I have been a good father, and let her have her own way in everything—nearly everything; but this is going a little too far! If her mother had lived things would have been so different. Ah, me!' And muttering angrily to himself, he whacked the inoffending shrubbery with his cane.

"The old gentleman's walk was quite spoiled.

"When Miss Cragiemuir and Ah Moy reached the house in K Street the young woman thanked her pupil for his escort, and politely wished him a good afternoon. As she was about to leave him he madly seized her around the waist, exclaiming, 'Ah Moy kissee you good-bye!' and tried his best to do so. Miss Cragiemuir screamed, and nearly fainted with fright. Luckily, the Major turned the corner just at this moment, and speedily took in the situation. He rushed at the Chinaman, hurling him to the pavement, and beat him soundly with his ever-ready stick. Then he bestowed several well-directed kicks upon the prostrate form. Ah Moy scrambled to his feet and fled, closely pursued by the enraged Major; but the nimble-footed Chink managed to make good his escape, darting into a friendly alley, and disappearing.

"The terrified girl hurried into the house, and received shortly afterward from her father a brief,

but spirited lecture, which she will long remember. He sternly declared, after touching upon all of her hobbies,—he called them by a stronger name,—that if she continued to give him trouble he would close up the Washington house and live in future at The Oaks, the Cragiemuir place down in Maryland. This dire threat proved most effectual, for Janet hated The Oaks, and she recalled with disagreeable vividness one never-to-be-forgotten year spent there as a child. So she went to her room and wrote to the superintendent at Bethany that a sudden change in her plans would force her to give up her class. The letter, a masterpiece in its way, closed with expressions of the deepest regret, and was duly received by the excellent Mr. Bagby, who felt that both Bethany and himself had sustained an irreparable loss.

"But the affair of the Chinaman by no means ended here.

"Ten minutes after his unpleasant encounter with Major Cragiemuir, Ah Moy arrived at his place of business in Four-and-a-half Street, a mass of bruises, and with a heart full of hatred for his assailant. Perhaps, after all, the fellow had meant no harm. In his guileless, imitative way he had simply tried to do what he had often seen American young men do. Had he not frequently observed big Policeman Ryan kiss the red-haired widow who kept the lodging-house around on Missouri Avenue? Did not Muggsy Walker—across the street—salute his sweetheart in the same manner? Ah Moy had many times witnessed what struck him as a most absurd ceremony on the part of the foreign devils; but he had watched them closely, though, and flattered himself that he too could do the proper thing when occasion called for it. He had, in fact, done so, and was beaten for his pains! This was a h—l of a country, anyhow, thought he; after this he would stick to the good old ways of his native land, and have a whole skin to his credit. The teachings of a long line of philosophical ancestors were by no means lost upon this their up-to-date descendant. No more monkey tricks for him!

"On the night of the beating, Ah Moy did not feel equal to presiding over the tables, so the resort was closed for the first time in many months. Down in the dark sub-cellar he soothed his ruffled feelings with a long, quiet smoke, and meditated upon elaborate though somewhat impracticable schemes of revenge as he lay in his bunk.

"Several days later the Chinaman, still sore and in a bad humor, swung himself on a car for Sam Yen's, whose laundry was some distance up town. Yen was a quiet, easygoing fellow, and Ah Moy thought it great fun to badger and worry him whenever there was nothing more promising in view. On this particular morning Ah Moy found Yen shaking with a chill, and almost too weak to drag himself across the room. Sam scarcely replied to his tormentor's teasing, and the latter was about to leave the place in disgust, when a well-known countenance appeared in the doorway, and Dennis Coogan came in.

"Coogan was Major Cragiemuir's factotum, and Ah Moy, who had spent many a weary hour opposite the house in K Street waiting to catch a glance of Janet Cragiemuir, knew him by sight. Coogan presented a ticket and demanded his 'wash.' Sam Yen reached feebly for the pink slip of paper, peered up and down the rows of bundles on the shelves, and finally announced that the garments were not ready, but would be later in the day. Coogan then stalked out, stating that he would call again at five o'clock, sternly warning Sam not to disappoint him. Coogan aped the Major to the life, and Ah Moy, recognizing the caricature, hated him heartily for it. Yet, the Chinaman, sitting behind the counter, with his eyes nearly closed, paid but scanty attention to the customer; but when Coogan left, a look of supreme cunning flitted over his wooden face. He was silent for a few moments, and then, to the surprise and delight of Yen, volunteered to remain and complete the day's work, urging the sick man to turn in until he felt better. Sam Yen gladly accepted the offer of his kindly disposed countryman, and Ah Moy hurriedly left for his own laundry to get, he said, a very superior polishing iron, promising to return in a few moments. When he found himself on Pennsylvania Avenue near Four-and-a-half Street he entered the tea, spice, and curio emporium of Quong Lee.

"Quong Lee was not only a shrewd merchant, but a skilful chemist as well, and was regarded with deep reverence and esteem by his fellows. The eminent man, had he been a trifle taller, would have readily been taken for the great Li Hung Chang, spectacles and all; and it was owing as much to this wonderful resemblance as to his wisdom and learning that Chinatown groveled at his feet. He received Ah Moy effusively when the latter, breathless and excited, burst into the stuffy little room at the rear of the shop.

"'Welcome, thrice welcome, oh, Beautiful One,' said Quong Lee (not in English, but in the liquid dialect of the Shansi region). 'It fills my heart with joy to see you. Why have you thus deserted the lifelong friend of your father?'

"Ah Moy smiled sardonically, for he had parted from Quong Lee but at sunrise that morning, after a warm discussion over some of the nicer points of the game, and the old man's query appealed very strongly to his by no means undeveloped sense of humor.

"'Most excellent and revered sage,' replied Ah Moy dryly, 'pardon the unheard-of negligence, and generously deign to overlook the thoughtlessness of your sorrowing servant—do that; and, Quong Lee, you must help me! Quickly! Quickly! I want a poison such as you can easily distil. A mixture so deadly that the slightest contact with it is fatal! Give me that, I pray you, and let me go. Hurry! Hurry! I am in haste!'

"'You ask much of me, Ah Moy, after your harsh, ill-timed words of the morning,' remarked Quong Lee coldly.

"Forget them, O Munificent; forget them," said Ah Moy, deeply contrite. 'Carried away by excitement, your abject slave considered but lightly what he then so foolishly said, and now so fervently regrets—and—and—let's drop this powwow, Quong Lee. I have no time for it! I tell you, man, I am in a hurry!'

"Now, Quong Lee, while wholly in Ah Moy's power, and quite well aware of it, exacted from all of his countrymen a certain amount of deference, and was loath that his visitor should prove an exception to this gratifying rule. Ah Moy knew this, but the little farce was becoming very irksome to him; it took up too much of his always valuable time, and he intended to forego it in future. Quong Lee, thought he, was a tiresome old goat who badly needed his whiskers trimmed and his horns sawed off; and he, Ah Moy, was the man for the job.

"I am indeed fortunate," said Quong Lee, ignoring Ah Moy's concluding remark, 'tremendously lucky, in fact, for I think I have in my laboratory just what you desire. Yes, I am sure of it. I will get it without further delay.' He took down a lighted lantern from the wall, and lifting a trap door at the end of the room, plunged into the darkness. From the opening nasty, suffocating smells arose, and Ah Moy was driven out to the shop, where he impatiently awaited his learned friend. That worthy soon reappeared, and paying no attention whatever to the odors, beckoned Ah Moy into the room. Ah Moy approached gingerly.

"My beloved child," said Quong Lee, exhibiting the regulation tiny phial of romance containing a few drops of a white liquid, 'here is a poison ten-fold more subtle and deadly than that ejected from the fangs of the cruel serpent of the plain. The merest scratch from a weapon dipped in it will effect instant death. The victim curls up as a tender leaf in the midday sun. Yet it may be taken into the stomach with impunity. Strange, is it not? The minute quantity that you see here is all that I possess, and I shall feel honored if you will accept it. But,' he added, clutching Ah Moy by the wrist, 'should trouble come, remember that I—Quong Lee—'

"Trust me for that, venerable Uncle of the Moon; your name shall not be breathed in the matter, whatever happens. Ah Moy is not the man to bring misfortune upon the lifelong friend of his father,' and the fiendish chuckle which accompanied this remark filled the merchant-chemist with alarm.

"A million thanks, O Illustrious," continued Ah Moy, pocketing the phial. 'I shall never forget your generosity. In good time I shall repay. Ah Moy will not prove ungrateful. Pardon this brief visit, O revered wearer of the crimson blouse. We meet again to-night. Bathed in the glow of thy approving smile, I leave thee. We meet again to-night, to-night. For the present, farewell. And I say, old 'un, you were dead wrong about that last game. You get a little dippy toward morning, don't you? Most old folks do. Ta, ta.' He glided out, slamming the door behind him.

Quong Lee followed his guest to the street, and watched his retreating figure until lost to sight.

"Curse him! Curse him!" hissed the old man vindictively. 'May the gods destroy him! And Quong Lee will aid them! Give me but the chance; oh, give me but the chance!' And he crossed his fingers.

The subject of this cheerful soliloquy returned without delay to Sam Yen's, who welcomed him with a wan smile, and after explaining some minor details of the work, crept off to his cot. Ah Moy immediately began his self-imposed task, and worked with a will, crooning the while a quaint Celestial air. It was ironing day at Sam Yen's, and the new hand did not object particularly to that part of the process. By a quarter after four he had completed the job, and surveyed with much satisfaction the neat bundles, duly ranged on the shelves.

Dennis Coogan arrived at dusk, and throwing down his ticket and some small change on the counter, walked off with his parcel, mumbling something uncomplimentary about the dirty haythin' who kept honest folks waitin' for their clothin'. Later in the evening Sam Yen appeared, much refreshed, and relieved his kind assistant. Ah Moy then left, cutting short the thanks of his countryman.

Honesty is the best policy, and it is to be regretted that this astute maxim had not been more thoroughly kneaded into the moral make-up of Mr. Dennis Coogan. Arriving at the house in K Street, Coogan, sneaking through a side entrance and across the yard at the rear, took his master's clothing up to his own little room over the stables, where he carefully selected such articles as seemed to strike his fancy. It was the night of the coachmen's ball, and Dennis did not propose to be eclipsed at that event by any Jehu who ever handled the ribbons. So there in readiness lay the hired dress-suit, the Major's gleaming linen, and the other necessities of evening attire. Coogan leisurely donned the unaccustomed plumage, paying as much attention to his toilet as a debutante when arraying herself for her first cotillion. After struggling into a remarkably obstinate shirt he selected the highest collar he could find, put it on, and admiringly surveyed the general effect in a cracked mirror, turning his head this way and that as he did so. Suddenly, with a gasping cry, he lurched forward, and fell heavily to the floor.

Great was the horror and distress in the Cragiemuir household the next morning when the shockingly discolored body of the ill-fated Coogan was found. Major Cragiemuir, who was attached to the man, was sorely grieved by his death; and as there were no relatives to claim the body had the poor fellow buried from the K Street house, which was closed until after the funeral. The family physician and his confreres who examined the corpse were puzzled for some time as to the cause of Coogan's death. Cases of this sort, they solemnly declared, while not unknown to the profession, were yet extremely rare; and the long scientific name which was

inscribed on the register at the health office as the disease that carried off Dennis Coogan had certainly never been seen there before. The slight scratch under the chin made by one of the sharp points of the collar was quite unnoticed in the rigid inspection to which the body was subjected.

"On the evening following the untimely death of Dennis Coogan, impelled by a curiosity which he could not resist, Ah Moy sought out the fashionable neighborhood where the Cragiemuir's resided, and found, as he had scarcely dared hope, the mansion closed and the badge of mourning on the door. He saw a dim light burning in the front parlor, and in his excited fancy could see the still form of the hated Major reposing in the satin-lined casket beneath the flickering gas jets. The Chinaman laughed aloud, and then a look of supreme terror came into his face, for he thought he saw a menacing figure leave the house, and with clenched fists start over to him.

"Ah Moy, shrieking, turned and fled.



"Ah Moy, shrieking, turned and fled!"

"He finally took refuge from his imaginary pursuer at Wo Hong's. Here he drank repeatedly a fiery liquor which the proprietor, serenely untroubled by the revenue laws, dispensed to his pals for a trifle. When Ah Moy staggered into his den several hours later, Quong Lee, who had arrived on the scene, noted with much satisfaction the ghastly appearance of his friend.

"'If he keeps this up for any length of time,' thought the learned man, 'I shall be spared the performance of a very unpleasant act. Murder is not in my line—now—anyway. It is trying work for an old man like me—and the police forever at one's heels!'

"Leaving his associates in charge of the tables, Ah Moy wearily sought the adjoining room, a filthy, ill-lighted apartment, with rows of bunks along its sides. Opening a cupboard he drew forth a pipe and a small jar of opium. His stained fingers trembled violently as he rolled a much larger pill than usual and placed it in the bowl of his pipe. He had consumed a frightful quantity of the stuff in the past few days, and his nerves were in just the condition that required a larger amount than ever to quiet them.

"He stretched himself at full length in the nearest bunk and proceeded to lull the awful fantasies which threatened his reason. With a moan he buried his face in his pillow; for at the end of the room he saw a grim phantom whom, he felt sure, the doubly accursed Quong Lee had maliciously admitted. The old man should pay dearly for this on the morrow! Ah Moy felt his fingers tightening convulsively around the throat of the dying Quong Lee; he could hear the croaking in his victim's wind-pipe, and the gruesome death-rattle! The sounds were all well known to the Chinaman, and recalled a chain of lurid experiences.

"'I should have done it before,' he muttered, as in his fancy he kicked the body aside.

"He grew calmer. There was a bright gleam of hope in the thought that with the death of Major Cragiemuir his wooing would be far less difficult. As to the girl returning his love—bah! Women

were not consulted upon such matters—in China. He smiled, for he felt that his triumph was assured.

"Radiant visions came to him. He was floating in space, wafted by perfumed breezes. Around him were lovely faces dimly outlined in circles of roseate clouds. Each face was Janet Cragiemuir's, and all smiled most bewitchingly at him. Showers of white and yellow blossoms fell at intervals, and the orchestra from the Imperial theatre at Peking boomed lazily in the distance.

"Happy, happy Ah Moy!

"But the Chinaman, though a hardened smoker, had badly miscalculated matters, for when Quong Lee came in at daybreak to awaken him the 'Beautiful One' had been dead many hours!"

"Now, Mr. Denmead," said Colonel Manysnifters, turning to another representative of the press, "it's your turn. Let us have it good and strong. I have read your East Side Sketches, and like 'em immensely. Can't you give us a touch of New York in yours?"

"I'll try," said Denmead modestly, "though it isn't exactly a story. It was just a passing incident, but it was something that I will not soon forget. An affair of that kind is apt to make more or less of an impression on a fellow. Maybe you will agree with me."

XI

WHAT HAPPENED TO DENMEAD

"Several years ago I found myself in New York; penniless, weary, and heartsick. I wandered one morning into a tiny park, mouldering in the shadow of the huge skyscrapers with which Manhattan is everywhere defaced. I sank upon a bench, pulled a soiled newspaper from my pocket, and scanned for the fiftieth time the 'Help Wanted' columns. Work I wanted of any kind, and work of any kind had eluded my tireless search for days—ever since my arrival in New York. The benches about me were filled with bleary, unshaven men; some asleep, others trying hard to keep awake; each clutching a paper which presently it seemed they might devour, goat-like, in sheer hunger. The stamp of cruel want convulsed each hopeless face, and crowsfeet lines of despair lay as a delta beneath each fishy eye. About us in all directions towered huge monuments of apoplectic wealth—teeming hives, draining the honey from each bee, tearing from thousands their best years, their finest endeavors, their very hearts' blood—all to swell the wealth of a bloated few! And we, the drones, sat mildewing in the little open space below!

"The man next to me, his head hanging over the back of the bench in ghastly jointlessness, awoke with a snort, stared about him stupidly, and something like a sob bubbled up from his Adam-appled throat. He wiped his eyes with the back of a grimy paw, and diving into a greasy pocket pulled out a short black pipe. Between consoling puffs he jerked out, 'A man's a damn fool—a damn fool, I say, to come to New York to look for a job! That's why *you* are here. Oh, I know. I can tell. You're a stranger all right; that's easy to see. You look the part.'

"'That's so,' said I, 'and worse. I am about down and out. Financially, I stand exactly twenty-one—no—twenty-three cents to the good.'

"'I am right with you, friend—only more so. I have nothing, absolutely nothing! You've twenty-three cents, hey? A bad number, that twenty-three. Give me the odd penny, and perhaps luck'll change for both of us.' I put the copper into his hand, and in chucking it into his pocket he dropped it. It rolled out to the center of the walk, and in an instant not less than a dozen men made a determined rush for it. There was a desperate struggle; others joined; it became a mad, screaming, tumbling, sweating mob. Instantly a crowd from outside gathered, and a free-for-all fight began. Hundreds flocked in from the adjacent streets. The affair quickly assumed the proportions of a riot. Knives and revolvers were brought into play. It was every man against his neighbor, and an unreasoning wave of frenzy and blood seemed to sweep over the crowd. The police rushed in from all quarters, but their efforts seemed powerless. My new acquaintance and myself, the innocent cause of all the trouble, managed to escape from the thick of the fray—he with the loss of a hat and a bleeding face; and I in much worse shape—physically sound, but—I had lost my twenty-two cents! We hurriedly entered a dark canyon which led to wider paths where quiet reigned. The tumult in the park, sharply accentuated by pistol shots, came to us like the roar of falling water.

"'What an astonishing thing!' said my companion. 'And all for a penny—a bloomin' penny! And to think of the fabulous wealth stored in the midst of all these tigers! Do you suppose that mere walls of steel and granite could withstand the fury of such a mob as this great city now holds, straining at its leash? Horrible things will happen in New York one of these days, and we will not have long to wait for it either. Discipline of the crudest sort, and a leader, is all that is needed to start a great army of destruction in motion!'

"'But how about the police, the Federal and State troops, supposed to be in instant readiness?' I

urged.

"They would count as nothing before the fury of an organized mob. A portion of the monstrous mountain of wealth stored here in New York City should be moved to a central, safer point; say St. Louis, Omaha, or even further west to Denver. It's piling up here is an ever-present menace and danger. It is a serious problem.'

"Quite so,' agreed I; 'but there is a much more serious problem confronting you and me just at present, and that is a certain sickening emptiness which makes one weak and giddy. My few coppers stood between us and—and—well, serious thoughts of the future. I have never begged nor stolen, and yet—'

"Oh, don't bother about that. The thing's easy,' said my friend; 'just watch me.'

"A fat, prosperous-looking man approached. His sleek face, garlanded with mutton-chop whiskers, was creased in smiles. Evidently a broker who had just 'done' some one, was my sour thought. There were but few on the street, and the outlook for business was favorable.

"Pardon me, friend,' whined my companion, stepping out in front of him, 'but can't you give a fellow a lift? I'm a mechanic by trade, and—'

"Oh, cut it out!' said the fat man, leering knowingly. 'I'm on to what you're going to say. Why don't you fellows vary your song and dance—just for luck? G'wan. Get out of the way!' And he tried to side-step us. With a quick glance over his shoulder, my new acquaintance shoved a revolver right up in the teeth of the prosperous one. Skyward the podgy, bejeweled hands, and we deftly went through him, securing his wallet, watch, scarf-pin, and then stripped his fingers of their adornment. It was over in a flash, and the fat man on his back by a dexterous push and go-down which the Japs might add with advantage to their much-vaunted jiu-jitsu.



"—Shoved a revolver right up in the teeth of the prosperous one!"

"—Shoved a revolver right up in the teeth of the prosperous one!"

"Beat it!' urged my companion, and 'beat it' we did; dropping casually but hurriedly into a corner saloon, then through a side entrance out into another street. I looked at my friend admiringly.

"I suppose there's hell to pay around the corner just now,' said he coolly; 'but we are as safe here as if we were in Jersey City—and safer. Still, it won't do to linger. Come this way,' and he led me into a lunch-room of the baser sort.

"Sit here, at this table, and I will eat at the counter. We had best not be seen together, though they would never look for us here.' I gazed at him in amazement. My bearded friend had become smooth-shaven! His neck, but a moment before collarless, was now surrounded by a high white-washed wall; he flashed a crimson tie, and somehow his clothes looked newer and sprucer. Of all the lightning-change acts I have ever seen, this was certainly the extreme tip of the limit!

"What do you think of it?' he asked, grinning, jamming his whiskers still further into his pocket.

"Wonderful!' said I.

"Now,' said he confidently, 'I am absolutely safe, and I don't think the stout party saw *you*. Don't

worry. I caught only my reflection in the little swinish eyes. I saw nothing in the background. What'll you have to eat? There seems to be enough in the pocket-book—which I ought to empty and chuck—to buy up several lunch-rooms, with the Waldorf thrown in for good measure.'

"How much?' I asked.

"Not now,' he whispered, 'not now. Wait until we get out. The proprietor is looking at us. Here's coffee, and pie, and sandwiches—ice cream—oh, anything you like!'

"We munched in silence and he pushed up a twenty-dollar bill in payment, much to the surprise of the man behind the counter. The change pocketed, we strolled out leisurely, picking our teeth with easy nonchalance.

"I hated to give that fellow the double cross, but really, old cock, that is the smallest denomination in the bundle. Wander down to the Battery with me and we will investigate further.'

"You're an Englishman,' I essayed knowingly. 'I am on to the lingo.'

"Not on your life!' said he. Born in Newark, New Jersey, deah boy, I assure you—right back of the gas-house; what? These togs o' mine were handed out to me by an old pal—a cockney valet—and the accent goes with 'em, don't ye know?'

"I'm on,' said I, sadder but wiser, and then relapsed into reverie.

"The Battery was thronged as usual, but we found a bench away from prying eyes.

"Gee whiz! Jumping Jerusalem! Julius Caesar! Joe Cannon!' murmured my friend as he emptied the stuffing of the wallet into his hat. 'Am I dreaming again? I've often dreamt that I have found a bunch of money—picking it out of the gutter, usually—dimes, quarters, halves—bushels of 'em! But this is different—oh, so different! Can it be real? Am I on the boards again? Can it be only stage mon—? Look here; isn't this a windfall? Isn't this a monumental rake-off for a non-profesh? Heaven knows I'm but an amateur in this line—normally an honest man, with but slightly way-ward tendencies. Whooping O'Shaughnessy! Just look! Six one-thousand-dollar bills, fifty one-hundreds—that's eleven thousand! A sheaf of fifties and twenties, swelling the total to something like twelve thousand! Hoo-ray! Again I ask, am I dreaming? Pinch me, I'll stop snoring, 'deed I will. I'll turn over, dearie, and go to sleep again! Twelve thousand plunks! Wouldn't that everlastingly unsettle you? Well, well, well! Not so bad for a moment's effort before breakfast, eh? Ain't it simply grand, Mag? I wonder who and what our friend is, anyway. He wasn't dressed just for the part of bank messenger, though he had the inside lining, all right! A pursy old broker, I guess. Might have been a book-maker—you never can tell. Anyhow, I am sort o' sorry for the chap. It would break *me* all up if I lost a wad of that size! Who is he? Hell, what a fool I am! Here is the name on the flap of the wallet.

ABNER MCNAMEE,

24 Broadway, New York.

"Abner McNamee! Abner McNamee!! Abner Mac—! Ain't this the limit! Abner McNamee! We can't take this money! Just my damned, hydra-headed luck! You hear me? It has always been that way with me—all my life! We can't take this money, pardner! It's got to be returned! This money's all got to go back—every cent of it! Ain't it a shame? Abner McNamee! I oughter have known him at the time, but I only saw him once, and that was years ago. He has taken on a lot of flesh since then. Abner McNamee! Who'd 'a' thought it?'

"Who the devil is Abner McNamee?' I asked, scenting treachery. This was a share and share alike affair, and no crooked work, and—I needed the money! 'What's the game—this McNamee business? Do you think I am a fool?'

"Look here, pal,' said my companion quietly, 'say bye-bye to your dirigible and drop to the ground. You're all up in the air. Of course we are together in this thing. I've no thought of doing you. I know you can make trouble if you want to. You could turn me over to the first cop that heaves in sight, and there's one over there now—why don't you do it? Of course *I* would have something to say in that event, and then there would be *two* of us in trouble; and with Abner confronting the pair, the odds would be all in my favor. He'd never recognize *me*! No, sir! But what's the use of hot-airing like this? Be good, now, and listen to me. We can't, can't, can't keep this money! Do you hear? Now let it filter through your make-up—slowly at first, and then as fast as you like. Honest, pal, we've got to give it back!'

"Why?' I asked, still skeptical.

"Oh, what's the use of your going on like that? You worry me with your fool questions! Here, take it all and accept the responsibility, and I will leave you! Here—take it! Take it, you idiot!'

"Somehow, I hesitated—held back by Heaven knows what.

"No,' said he, returning the wallet to his pocket, 'I thought not! You know a thing or two after all. You haven't lost your mind. Looks are deceptive sometimes.' I instantly regretted my indecision.

"What's the matter with the money?' I asked. 'I was just kidding you. Give it to me. Hand it over. I will take it.'

"Never-r-r! Never-r-r!" he whispered mysteriously. "This money belongs to THE CAUSE!"

"Oh, come off!" said I with a foxy wink. Don't you think because I am a countryman I gambol exclusively on the green. I am not altogether to the emerald by a pailful! I've got you where I want you, and you know it! Quit your fooling and hand over the wallet! There's a cop over there now,' I added meaningly.

"Yes, over there—I see him,' said my companion slowly. 'A cop—a very necessary evil, highly ornamental cops are, and occasionally useful. Now kindly look over *this* way, deah boy, and you'll see two more of 'em.'

"I looked, and then—WOW! (The Milky Way.)

"They took me to Bellevue, and three days later I found myself echoing, 'Six one-thousand-dollar bills, fifty one-hundreds—that's eleven thousand. A sheaf of fifties and twenties, swelling the total to something like twelve thousand! Hooray! Am I dreaming? Pinch me, I'll stop snoring, 'deed I will. I'll turn over, dearie, and go to sleep again! Twelve thousand plunks. Well, well, well! Not so bad for a moment's effort before breakfast, eh?'

"And my nurse smiled wearily."

"That New York is a fearful and wonderful place," said Colonel Manysnifters gravely. "I will never forget the first time I went there as a young man. Why, I didn't get any sleep at all! The first night I was there I turned in about two-thirty, took off my clothes, and got in bed; but it seemed sort of foolish and wasteful. Sleep in New York? Well, hardly. I argued that I could do that at home—and me paying three dollars a day! So I got right up, dressed, and started out to see the sights. It was about three o'clock then, and there wasn't any one around but the night clerk and myself. I asked him if he couldn't lock up the house and go out with me for a little while. He smiled, and said that he would like to do it, but he was afraid the boss might kick; so we had a drink together, and I went by myself. I was a green boy then and didn't know any better, but I am on to the little old town now, all right! They all know me up there. As soon as I get off the ferry, perfect strangers come up, call me by name, shake hands, and slip me a card. I don't mean to brag, but I know the location of every poolroom in the city! I have a friend in New York who writes the dramatic criticisms for the moving-picture shows; he puts me in touch with the theatrical and newspaper element, and I have seen some high old times up there, I tell you! One night—but, hold on—I've had my inning, Mr. O'Brien is at the bat, I think."



"—Writes the dramatic criticisms for the moving picture shows."

"—Writes the dramatic criticisms for the moving picture shows."

Mr. O'Brien blushingly admitted the charge.

"This is the first time I ever spoke in public," said the young man modestly, "and I crave your

indulgence. If you don't mind, I will tell you about Judge Waddington and myself at Atlantic City last summer. Every one in Washington knows the Judge, and hopes that some day Congress will take up his claim and adjust it satisfactorily. The old gentleman is about all in, but we are doing what we can for him."

XII

O'BRIEN'S NARRATIVE

"I met him on the Boardwalk, and asked him where he was stopping.

"'Oh, a nice, home-like place—right over there,' indicating its position by a careless wave of the hand; 'nice place, quiet, no music at meals, or that sort of thing. Good cooking, no dogs or children. I came down here to rest. None of the glare and glitter of the Boardwalk hotels for me; no, sir!'

"'What's the name of your place?' I asked.

"'Hasn't any name—just a private cottage; old Southern family, one or two paying guests, you know. They have been coming here for years; never took boarders before, but the head of the house was caught in the Knicknack Trust affair last fall. Funny how many were hurt by that bust-up. Nearly all the boys down in Washington say they were stung. As I remarked, old man Montgomery is rather hard up just now; but proud, dev'lish proud, sir. I consider it a privilege to be taken in. They have rented the cottage next door for their guests. Every convenience.'

"All very fine, but the Judge avoided my direct gaze. Seaward he turned a shifty eye, and I knew that he was lying. He looked depressed and down at the heel, and bore the signs of recent illness. I led him, unresisting to the nearest café, and properly stimulated, he told me that the Washington summer had proven too much for him, that the boys had kindly advanced the wherewithal for a two weeks' stay at the shore, and that he had been very sick, but already felt like a new man.

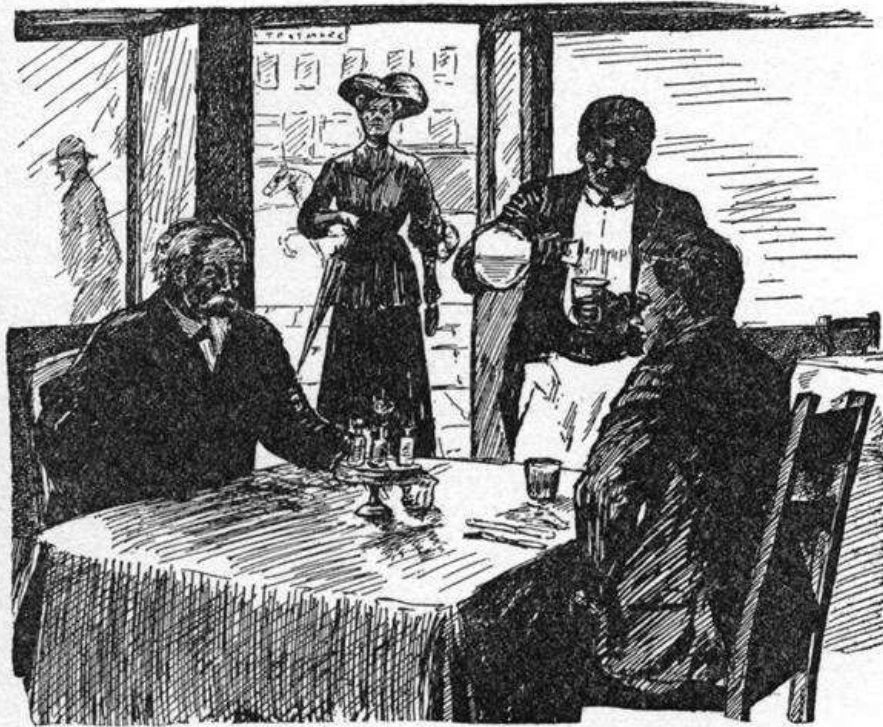
"I ordered another.

"'While I am very snugly fixed down here, Patsy,' said he confidentially, 'I must confess I was a little disappointed in the location of the cottage. From the picture on the letter-head the waves seemed to be curling under the Boardwalk onto the lower steps of the front porch. Every room with a sea view, and no mosquitos, the circular said. But the printer evidently got hold of the wrong form. We are a durn sight nearer Atlantic Avenue than the Atlantic Ocean!'

"'Regularly buncoed, eh?' I ventured.

"'As a matter of proximity to the sea, yes. But I am sure the Montgomerys are not a party to the deceit. They took the printed matter along with the new cottage, I reckon. How long will you be down, Patsy?'

"'Just the week-end, sir. My, but look over there!' Our eyes were glued on the entrance. Framed in the doorway, with the glare of the white street as a background, stood one of the finest examples of the early Gothic I have ever seen. She gazed haughtily about the room, and at the waiters who rushed to her side. She selected the table next to ours, and dropped into a seat, her attenuated form sharply at right angles, like a half-closed jack-knife. With long bony fingers glistening with rings she raised her veil, and opening a chatelaine bag, pulled out a handkerchief, smelling salts, and a gold-meshed purse. Then, with a murmured order to the waiter, she settled herself comfortably, and with an imperial uplift of the pointed chin the foxy face swung slowly around to us and settled with a grimace of recognition upon the Judge. My old friend reddened, and moved about uneasily.



“Framed in the doorway . . . stood one of the finest examples of the early Gothic I have ever seen.”

"Framed in the doorway ... stood one of the finest examples of the early Gothic I have ever seen."

"Pardon me a moment," said he, rising and starting over to her.

"Why, Judge Waddington, what a delightful thurprise," shrilled the lady of peroxide in a voice that carried all over the room and back as far as the bar.

"When did you come down? Thith ith thertainly fine." The judge mumbled something which I did not catch—it sounded like 'Oh, hell!'

"Here, Patrick," he said, without enthusiasm, 'I want you to meet a friend of mine.'

"An introduction to Miss Clarice de Dear, who had appeared in the original Black Crook company with Lydia Thompson, was no every-day occurrence in my hum-drum existence, and I was perhaps visibly affected. She overlooked it, and greeted me with girlish enthusiasm.

"Tho glad," she lisped, 'to meet any friend of the dear Judge's, and ethpethially you. I have heard tho much about you.' I wondered what in the devil she had heard. 'I've known Judge Waddington ever since I was a little tot.'

"And not so long, either," said the Judge gallantly—and grimly. The fair one shot a curious glance at him, and smiled a smile, sour in its exceeding sweetness.

"I have often heard the Judge mention your name. 'Twath only the other night he thaid—What will I have? nothing, thanks, I have just ordered.' But she joined us later, and still later, when the conversation became general; that is, we all tried to talk at once.

"From the Judge's attitude I gathered that he was commencing to celebrate the birthday of some famous man or the anniversary of a great battle. He never drank otherwise. To-day, he informed me, he was tanking up in honor of Bolivar, the great South American Liberator.

"Ah, Bolivar! Great man, Bolivar! Waiter!"

"Yes, sir!"

"The same!"

"From Miss de Dear, 'midst smiles and tears, I gleaned that she had once adorned the stage, pursued always by the jealousy of her less-talented sisters. Heaven knows she couldn't help the gifts of Nature which had come to her through no effort of her own—her birthright. The de Dears were all that way, as far back as Sir Something-or-the-other de Dear who came over with the

Conqueror—and her mother's first cousin went to the Philadelphia Assembly—how could she help it? *Noblesse Oblige!* All the girls were jealous—the cats! Anyhow, she had quit the scene of her early triumphs, lured by the attractive offer of a vaudeville manager. In this new field she appeared for a short time; but when on the roof they put her on the programme sandwiched between a troupe of performing dogs and a bunch of bum acrobats—she kicked! Any self-respecting artiste would have done the same! I agreed with her. She, too, like the Montgomerys, and other noble families, had been caught in the Knicknack disaster, and her savings swept away; and rather than be dependent upon the bounty of an immensely wealthy English aunt, she had consented to represent a great New York publishing house.

"'The World's Famous Fat Men,' twenty volumes; cloth, levant, or half-calf; ten dollars down, and a dollar a month far into the hazy future. Of course this was hardly the place to talk business, she said, but I had her card and knew where to find her. Every one should have the work. All the best people in New York, Philadelphia, Sioux City, and other places were putting it into their libraries, and so on, and so on.

"This flotsam and jetsam of her talk came to me from time to time as confidential asides from the main flow of palaver which rolled along steadily toward the Judge. The Judge, poor fellow, showed plainly the effects of the struggle; so much so, that I suggested a stroll up the Boardwalk.

"We arose with an effort, and went out to meet the bracing air.

"'Ah, the thea, the thea; the dear, dear thea! Always tho—er—wet and rethleth. I inherit a love for the water from my father's great uncle who was an Admiral in the British Navy.' As this was the first intimation Miss de Dear had given as to a fondness for water, except on the side, I felt that living and learning were synonymous terms. So, perhaps, did the Judge, who said, apropos of nothing in particular, 'When I was in California in fifty-nine, I saw a snake over forty-seven feet long. The onery rascal wouldn't coil up, and they had to carry him from place to place on flat cars. Now what do you think of *that?*' Miss de Dear gazed dreamily out at the tossing waves, and said nothing, while I caught hold of the Judge's elbow to steady him. Plainly the celebration was on.

"'My dear, dear Patsy,' he said affectionately.

"'Oh, I tell you what let'h do,' said the maiden impulsively; 'let'h go and have our fortunes told. I am dying to have mine told. Last night I dreamt for the third time that Aunt Genevieve had died and left me all her money. Maybe there is something in it. The palm of my left hand has been itching all day.'

"So to the fortune-teller's we went.



Professor Habib.

"Professor Habib was a Parsee, with features Irish in their intensity. As I gazed at him I thought of the far-reaching kinship of man. Here was a Fire-worshipper out of Persia, who for all the world looked like my brother Mick; and God knows Mick's no Parsee! Habib wore his native costume with a little red fez on top.

"Be seated,' he said courteously; again reminding me of Mick.

"Which one first?' he asked, pointing to a little inner room curtained from view. The Judge suggested genially that we all go in together, but the professor explained that one at a time was his invariable rule.

"Oh, all right, all right,' said the judge, somewhat miffed; 'far be it from me to—to——'

"Ladies first,' said I.

"'Tis well,' said the professor, with a salaam; and the pair disappeared behind the draperies.

"I wonder how long they are going to stay,' said the Judge, after we had waited some fifteen minutes. The conversation behind the arras, at first low and murmuring, was becoming animated. I distinctly heard the Parsee say, 'Who are the blaggards ye've brought here wid ye?' followed by an unintelligible reply.

"What did he say?' queried the Judge, looking up sharply.

"I don't understand Parsee, sir,' said I.

"That was no foreign tongue; that was American—with a brogue. I don't like that. Let's hurry them up. I say, what time is it?"

"We reached for our watches. They were gone! Instinctively I felt for my wallet. Gone! My scarf-pin. Gone!

"We made a wild rush for the little inner room.

"Miss de Dear? Gone! And the Parsee? Gone!

"Later, when we had made our report to the police, and I was guiding the Judge home, I asked:

"Who is this de Dear? Where did you know her?"

"Never laid eyes on her before!' growled the Judge."

"Another 'Jewel!'" said Colonel Manysnifters. "You find them everywhere."

XIII

AN UNINVITED GUEST

In the lull following Mr. O'Brien's story the conductor and porter went hurriedly through the car out to the rear platform; where, it seems, they had been summoned by the brakeman. They quickly reappeared with as bedraggled and woebegone a specimen of humanity as it has ever been my misfortune to see. An unwashed, evil-smelling, half-frozen Hobo was dragged into the car, to our utter amazement!

"Hold on a minute, conductor," said Colonel Manysnifters, as they were rushing the captive through. "What have you here? Where did you get him? Who are you, sir?" asked he of the tramp. "Who are you, I say, and what are you doing on this strictly private outfit?"



An uninvited guest.

An uninvited guest.

The tramp, quite unabashed, blew upon his fingers to warm them, picked up a cigar stump from the floor, lighted it, and looking around the group said courteously, though with a bored expression:

"Gentlemen, I got on your train about the time you did, though hardly in the same way. A ride on the trucks and brakebeams, while exhilarating in the extreme at the outset, soon becomes wearying and nerve-racking, so at the last water tank I made bold to take up my quarters on the rear platform, with an occasional climb to the roof for observation and change. But, my, it is cold out there! If it hadn't been for my friend here," exhibiting a flask, "I would have frozen to death. Alas, poor fellow, he is empty now!" and he held it up to the light.

"It grew very dark and bitter as the night wore on; then the blizzard caught us; but even in spite of that, I fell into a doze, to be rudely awakened by this fellow—but what can you expect from a person of that kind?" Here the brakeman gave a scornful grunt, and the conductor smiled broadly.

"After all," the tramp continued affably, between cigar puffs, "their lot is a hard one, and it is not for me to cast the first stone. So here I am, gentlemen, right with you, and my fate is quite in your hands." This with a magnificent wave of a grimy paw, and something approaching a curtsy.

"You should get down on your knees, fellow, and thank this brakeman. He undoubtedly saved your life. It would have been your last sleep if he had not come along! Where is your gratitude?" asked Senator Pennypacker severely.

"You may be right, sir," said the tramp politely. "I don't dispute your word. *I ought* to be friendly with that fellow, as I see he is a brother of mine. He belongs to my order. I can tell by his watch-charm—that square bit of enamel with the rising sun in the middle, and the letters 'I. O. U.' in red, white, and blue, around it. Yes, he is O. K. I have been a member of many fraternities, and in better days I was the keeper of the 'Hoot Mon' in our local Caledonian club. Brother, accept my thanks. Perhaps some of these days I may be able to repay you with something more substantial." The brakeman laughed, and by this time we were all in a melting mood. Senator Bull reached instinctively into his trousers pocket, and Mr. Ridley did the same.

"Just a moment, gentlemen, just a moment," said Colonel Manysnifters. "Now, sir," said he to the tramp, "we have been telling stories here to-night—some of them fair, some pretty bad. Let us hear what you can do in that line. We will give you a chance. If you don't make good we will put you off at the next station and turn you over to the authorities. Captain," to the conductor, "and you, President Madison, take our friend into the next car, give him something to eat and drink, wash him up a bit—several bits—and let him come back here and do his best."

"Sir, I thank you," said the tramp with dignity. "Your idea is a great and noble one. My stomach is so empty that it hangs about me in folds. You have all doubtless seen a balloon awaiting the kindly offices of the gas-man—that's me. But it will soon be remedied. Adieu for the present." He left us, with the conductor in the lead and the grinning darky at his heels.

"The nerve of those hoboos is something astonishing," said Colonel Manysnifters, walking up and

down, and filling the car with smoke in order to cover up all traces of our visitor. I'll bet a thousand dollars that that fellow had as good a chance at the start as any of us,—just threw himself away,—whiskey, I suppose, or women, or the platers—the combination more likely. Did you ever see such eyes?—like two burnt holes in a blanket!"

"Yet he has the manners of a gentleman, and seems to have had some education," said Van Rensselaer. "Did you notice his small hands and rather classic profile? Bathed, shaven, manicured, and properly clothed, he would be much like the rest of us—externally so, at least."

"May have been born a gentleman," observed the Colonel, "but he seems to have outgrown it. A college man, too, no doubt; but what does that signify? I have a friend who spent about six thousand simoleons on his son's education, and at the end of three years all the boy had learned was to wear baggy pants, sport a cane, and yell 'Raw! Raw! Raw!'—very appropriately—upon the slightest provocation. The kind of chap you will find dashing through the streets in a forty horse-power automobile with a hundred fool-power chauffeur in charge. As to the modern young woman, all the education *she* wants is to be able to write love-letters!"

"But our visitor is certainly an individual of strong personality!" grunted Colonel Manysnifters, continuing to blow smoke into all parts of the car. "Whew! Open the window back of you, Ridley. It is hard to realize that he has left us! He was certainly not 'born to blush unseen, nor waste his sweetness on the desert air,' eh?"

"The tramp problem is becoming a serious one," said Senator Pennypacker ponderously. "The great army of the unemployed is steadily increasing. In New York City alone, on October the first of last year, there were no less than—just a second. I have the data in my bag. I will read you some figures that will astonish you."

The Senator arose to get his bag. Faint groans were heard as he left us. Senators Bull, Wendell, Baker, several Representatives, and the gentlemen of the press arose as one man and rushed to the button. President Madison appeared and took the orders. Then Pennypacker returned with a look of determination on his face, and for fifteen minutes or more we were regaled with facts, figures, and statistics, all tending to prove that crime and wretchedness were on the increase throughout the country; that we were a degenerate people; and other equally cheerful information.

The hobo's return was hailed with joy. He was vastly improved in appearance, and fairly radiated contentment. He sank into the seat that Colonel Manysnifters had thoughtfully placed for him,—somewhat apart from the rest,—with a murmur of satisfaction not unlike the loud purring of a cat. Senator Bull pushed the cigars in his direction, and Van Rensselaer was equally assiduous with the whiskey and soda. Our visitor seemed perfectly at home. He drank,—drank deeply,—and wiping his mouth on his sleeve, drank again.

"The hair of the goat is certainly good for the butt," said he, smiling, and displaying a set of marvellously white and regular teeth. "Now, gentlemen, I am quite ready to fulfil my part of the agreement. If my little story interests you, you are welcome to it. It was this way.

"I was a doctor by profession, carpenter by trade, stevedore by occupation; then came harder times—booze—more booze—despair, illness, and I found myself discharged from the hospital, down and out—a hobo! Yet tramp life is not so bad after all. I like it. I like the open-air existence, the freedom from care and responsibility, and—the hours. I am much alone, and genius, you know, grows corpulent in solitude.

"My name is Tippett—Livingstone Tippett. Age, of no special moment. You know," he said pleasantly, "there are two things all of us lie about—our ages and our incomes. As this is a true story I will drop the *age* question. It is better so.

"My early life was uneventful. I was brought up by a pious mother in a quiet, deeply religious home; every influence uplifting and good-instilling. I was taught, among other things, to regard liquor in any form with abhorrence, and that drunkenness was the sin of sins. I was surrounded with every safeguard a loving mother could devise, and it was not until after her death and my wife's that I took to drink. My father and grandfather both died drunkards. Heredity, in my case, overcame both training and environment, and my troubles hurried on the inevitable.

"I passed through college unscathed, studied medicine, walked the hospitals, and began the practice of my profession under the most favorable auspices. I fell in love with a charming girl, and blessed with my good mother's approval we were married. Our future seemed singularly bright and untroubled. Life is a game and I was considerably ahead of the game. I was certainly playing on velvet.

"When my Elizabeth and I announced that instead of going abroad we would spend our honeymoon at 'Raven Hill' our little world thought it quite absurd. They were charitably inclined, however, and made excuses for us upon the ground that we were too much absorbed in each other to know what we were doing. But we did know, nevertheless. Our plans had been fully matured long before we saw fit to reveal them. To spend a month or so at Neville Mason's, down in Virginia, appealed very pleasantly to both of us, and I accepted my old chum's offer with avidity. We were to have everything to ourselves, with just as many servants as we wanted.

"We were married. There was a wedding breakfast, flowers, weeping relatives, old shoes, and a profusion of rice; nothing, in short, was omitted. A few hours later we left Jersey City on the

southbound flyer. Breaking the journey at Washington, and remaining over night there, we arrived at the tiny depot near our ultimate destination late on the evening of the following day. An ancient but still serviceable family carriage was in waiting, and we were conveyed in state to the mansion.

"The house at Raven Hill is a huge affair of the Revolutionary period, with numerous modern additions, which fail entirely to harmonize with the quaint architecture of the original. The stables and servants' quarters give the place the appearance of quite a settlement—a survival of slavery days one sees here and there in the South.

"We were shown to a suite of sunny rooms in the east wing which had been especially prepared for us, and soon made ourselves thoroughly at home. From this agreeable vantage-ground we set out upon many pleasant expeditions into the countryside, returned the visits of our neighbors, and attended the chapel at the Crossways in truly rural style. Nothing amused us as much, though, as the negro servants. To them Elizabeth was 'Honey,' and I, 'Marse Livingstone'; and over at the quarters the little darkies gave rare exhibitions of dancing for our benefit, while solemn, gray-haired Uncle Ashby picked a greasy banjo. The men sang in nasal, but not unmelodious tones, weird, crooning songs, with occasionally an up-to-date composition which found its way, no doubt, from nearby Richmond. I shall never forget those happy evenings at Raven Hill; and in my dreams I often see and hear the negroes as they danced and sang in the moonlight.

"There were some good horses in the stables, and we did not spare them. Our cross-country dashes were most exciting, and the total absence of fences in the region gave us an apparently limitless expanse over which to wander. And that reminds me of a never-to-be-forgotten fox hunt which was attended by riders from all over that section of the country. Half a dozen foxes were corralled at the 'round-up,' and I could not help thinking how tame our alleged 'chases' at home appeared by the contrast.

"One day while roaming about the lower portion of the Raven Hill estate we stumbled quite by accident into Dark Forest, vaguely hinted at by the negroes as a place to be avoided. This Dark Forest is a large tract of scrub oak, birch and holly, with dense undergrowths of briar; the haunt of innumerable small birds that dart in and out, chirping faintly. In its depressed portions the 'forest' has degenerated into a marsh through which a sluggish stream wends its way to the distant river. Slimy reptiles bask in the warm sun and glide lazily over the black, oozy soil. At intervals the stillness is broken by the splash of a gigantic bullfrog returning to his favorite pool. This acrobatic feat is usually accompanied by a deep-throated cry of satisfaction, not unlike the twanging of an ill-tuned guitar. On the edges of the marsh mud-covered terrapins drag themselves through the weeds and disappear with surprising swiftness when they see an intruder.

"Through this singular region, and overgrown with rank, sedgy grass, is a wagon trail, here and there along its winding course several inches under water; and into this wretched road we turned our horses. After a half a mile or so we left the marsh and struck into firmer ground. Then came a sharp bend in the undergrowth, and a clearing, several acres in extent, burst into view. Here stood a white-washed cabin in the midst of a little garden enclosed by a paling fence, and tall sunflowers, swaying to and fro in the breeze, brushed the low-hanging eaves. Flowers grew everywhere in profusion, and the rude porch at the front of the dwelling was half buried in a mass of fragrant honey-suckle. White curtains, gracefully looped, hung at the windows, and there was a charming air of femininity and comfort about the place. We dismounted, and tied our horses at the gate. As we approached the cabin an immense cat dozing on the stoop sprang up hurriedly and darted into the vines. We knocked repeatedly at the door without response. Finally, some one was heard approaching, so we walked to the lean-to at the rear, and there saw, coming up from the spring at the foot of the enclosure, a young and astonishingly pretty girl. She was not at all startled by seeing us; in fact, led us to believe from her manner that we were rather expected than otherwise.

"'Walk right in,' said the little beauty. 'I reckon you folks must be pretty well beat out after your long ride in the hot sun. It's a goodish bit from here to the Hill, ain't it?'

"'How do you know that we are from the Hill?' I asked in surprise.

"'Oh, I know,' she replied. 'I saw ye both at the station when ye first come, and then again at meetin' on Sunday. And you air a bride?' she added, turning to my wife.

"'Yes, and a very happy one,' said Elizabeth, placing her hand upon my shoulder in loving fashion. The child, for she was hardly more than that, gave an odd little sigh, but quickly brightened up again.

"'I'm downright glad ye came,' she said heartily. 'I do so like folks to be neighborly and sociable. Ye ain't stuck up, nuther, like most city folks; no airs, nor the like o' that. Pap'll be home soon, and he'll be glad to see ye too!'

"Then she prepared a nice luncheon in the living-room. The lightest bread, delicious butter, preserved peaches, and some slices of marvellous old ham; this, with a stone pitcher of cool, foamy milk, made life very pleasant to the weary travelers. The girl declined to join us, but sat near at hand, gazing intently at my wife. No detail of Elizabeth's attire seemed to escape her.

"'Oh,' said she, partly to herself, 'what beautiful, beautiful clothes!' And I registered a vow that

she should have just such an outfit as soon as we went back to New York.

"That child, properly dressed, would attract attention anywhere; she does not look at all bourgeois,' said my wife; and this from Elizabeth, whose grandmother was a Boston Higglesworth, was a concession indeed.

"Do not tell her so,' said I; 'it would certainly spoil her. She *is* uncommonly pretty, I'll admit; but unless something unforeseen happens she will probably marry within her own sphere of life, toil unceasingly, rear a brood of uncouth bumpkins—a hag at thirty, and thus fulfil her destiny.'

"Elizabeth looked exceeding wise, but said nothing.

"Ailsee came to us at that moment, and I looked at her closely as she stood in the sunlight, her bonnet dangling from her arm. She was undeniably beautiful—a dainty little head, crowned with a wealth of golden-brown hair, sweet hazel eyes, a lovely mouth, and the most bewitching dimples. There was nothing of the milkmaid style about her, for she lacked the vivid coloring and tendency to embonpoint of the typical rustic beauty. I pictured her to myself entering the room at one of the Bachelors' on the arm of the leader of the cotillion, and the subsequent sensation and heart-burnings.

"My reverie was interrupted by a hoarse voice calling, 'Ailsee! Ailsee!'—seemingly just over in the forest.

"Dad wants me,' she said with a smile. 'I'll go and fetch him back with me. Please you folks wait a moment.' And she tripped lightly down the garden and out into the wilderness beyond.

"Ten or fifteen minutes slipped by without the return of either Ailsee or her father. The footfalls in the forest died away, and the stillness was becoming oppressive.

"Remarkable, truly,' said my wife, with a puzzled expression. 'Where could she have gone? Do you think her father is keeping her? Dearest,' she added gravely, 'don't laugh, I feel—I feel—that something dreadful is going to happen. I don't know exactly what, but—'

"Of course you don't know exactly what,' I interrupted. 'Come now, be a sensible little woman. You surely don't believe in presentiments. It is the heat; this sticky, Southern heat! I feel a little queer myself.'

"But nothing I could say quite banished the singular fancy which had taken possession of my young wife. Womenkind cling tenaciously to absurd ideas, especially when they are of the worrying kind; and Elizabeth looked so troubled and sad that I soon caught the feeling and became melancholy too.

"It was long past noon and intensely sultry, and we were sitting on the porch where occasionally the faintest shadow of a breeze made life more endurable. Our horses, maddened by the flies and heat, chafed and stamped restlessly out at the gate. Elizabeth tried to amuse herself with a huge album of daguerreotypes which occupied the place of honor in the cabin parlor, and I smoked and lounged about, wondering what had become of Ailsee.

"Well,' said I at last, 'we can not wait here forever. If I am not greatly mistaken there will be a storm before night, and we had better get out of this at once. We can come down here some other day and renew our acquaintance with the mysterious child of the forest.' So back through the marsh we splashed our way, and arrived at Raven Hill barely in time to escape the storm, which broke with fury just as Uncle Ashby came around for our mud-bespattered steeds.

"Elizabeth went upstairs to change her dress and rest before dinner, and I settled down in the library with the *Country Gentleman*. There was a knock at the door, and Uncle Ashby came in.

"Marse Livingstone,' he asked huskily, 'whar has you been wif de horses?'

"I told him; and during the brief account of our adventures his face grew ashen and his eyes seemed about to start out of his head. When I was through he tottered over to the window, muttering, 'Gawd help us! Gawd help us!'

"What's the matter, Uncle Ashby?' I asked curiously. 'What on earth are you so excited about?'

"Boss,' said he entreatingly, 'doan' make me tell you—you'll be sorry ef you do. 'Deed, Marster, I really mus' go now, sah; dey's waitin' fer me at de stables. And youse been down dar an' seen it! Oh, Lordy, Lordy!'

"Come back here,' said I, my curiosity getting the better of me. 'Don't be a fool, old man; brace up. What's the trouble? You are not afraid to speak out, eh?'

"Well, Marse Livingstone, ef I mus' tell you, I 'spose I mus'—thar doan' 'pear to be no help fer it. But I'd ruther not, boss; 'deed, I'd ruther not.'

"Go on; tell your story,' said I impatiently. 'I guess I can stand it. Just try me, anyhow.' So in the semi-darkness a marvellous tale was unfolded to my ears.

"In the first place, Uncle Ashby solemnly assured me that I had that day seen a ghost. The flesh-and-blood Ailsee, he declared, had been dead many years. Her father, Coot Harris, was a rough customer who took up his abode in the marsh—'mash,' Uncle Tucker called it—at the close of the Civil War. Here he gained a precarious livelihood by 'pot-hunting'; for Harris and others of his ilk

paid but little attention to the poorly enforced game laws of the section. Coot Harris, the marshman, had a daughter, who, as Uncle Ashby contemptuously remarked, 'was peart enuff, as pore white trash folkses go.'

"This daughter was named Ailsee. Thwarted by her father in some love affair with a swain of the neighborhood, she had drowned herself in a gloomy pool in the very darkest part of the forest. The body was found shortly afterward and buried in the cottage garden. Harris then left the country and has never since been heard of. All this, according to Uncle Ashby, happened twenty years ago. The ghost of the ill-starred Ailsee had occasionally been seen by the country folk, but always with dire results. Bad luck, disease, and in some cases death, had been the fate of those who saw the 'ha'nt.' One man lost his house by fire within forty-eight hours after the shadowy form crossed his path. The body of another unfortunate was found floating in the creek; his eyes wide open, staring horribly. The drowned man had but the day before made known the fact that he had seen the wraith of the marshman's daughter. Still another poor fellow had been taken, raving and violent, to the asylum. Numerous additional instances, equally as harrowing, were cited by Uncle Ashby, whose fervent belief in all that he said was rather impressive than otherwise.

"I listened patiently to the old man until he finished. By that time the storm had ceased and the sky, suddenly clearing in the west, revealed the last rays of the setting sun, which brightened the room for a few moments. I laughed softly when Uncle Ashby went out, and all that I had heard of the ignorance, credulity, and superstition of the Southern negro came into my mind. I sat for a while, musing in the gathering dusk, and then went up to my room.

"The lamps had not been lighted in that portion of the house, and it was quite dark. The atmosphere was stifling, as all the windows had been closed at the approach of the storm. I raised them, and the cool, damp air, heavy with the odor of jessamine, floated into the room. Elizabeth, evidently greatly fatigued by the day's exertions, had thrown herself upon a lounge at the foot of the bed. She was in her dressing-gown, and her face was framed in masses of wavy brown hair which had become uncoiled in her restless movements. I hesitated to awaken her, but as sounds from below indicated the near approach of dinner I called her—at first softly, and then in louder tones, an indefinable fear stealing over me as I did so. I approached the couch, and tremblingly placed my hand upon her forehead.... Ah, God, I cannot tell the rest!

"Seven years have dragged their weary length along since I lost my dear young wife and the light of my life was extinguished forever! Now, all is darkness! darkness!

"Subsequent investigation, supported by the testimony of well-known and thoroughly reliable residents of the country, confirmed in every particular the truth of Uncle Ashby's story. A visit to the marshman's cottage some days after my wife's death revealed a ruinous mouldering habitation, in the midst of a wilderness of weeds and vines. A mournful, desolate spot, shunned and avoided by all for the past twenty years, and yet had I not seen——" Tippettt paused abruptly, with bowed head and eyes tear-dimmed.

"Here, old chap, take this," said Colonel Manysnifters, hastily pouring out and handing him a stiff drink. Tippettt, obeying, was somewhat revived, and continued.

"I returned to Brooklyn with the body of my wife. My mother followed her to the grave a few months later. All in the world that was dear to me was now lost. I took to drink; I sunk lower and lower, dissipated my little fortune, friends forsook me; and by quick stages in the descending scale I found myself, as I said before—an outcast! Yet, through all my troubles I have never entertained the thought of self-destruction. I have no desire whatever to seek—

"The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveler returns,—puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than to fly to others we know not of."

It was long after midnight when Tippettt concluded his story and the gathering broke up; not, however, before sleeping-quarters had been found for the unfortunate man, and a promise given by Senator Bull to put him on his feet again in the far West—an offer gladly accepted in all sincerity, and a venture which proved highly successful, as most of the long-headed Senator's usually did.

Morning brought relief, the track was cleared, and our train proceeded on its way, arriving at Washington many hours behind schedule; its occupants but little the worse for their experience—Colonel Manysnifters, I believe, with a slight headache.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE STATESMEN SNOWBOUND ***

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