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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BLACKSHEEP! BLACKSHEEP! ***

BY MEREDITH NICHOLSON

BLACKSHEEP! BLACKSHEEP!

LADY LARKSPUR

THE MADNESS OF MAY

THE VALLEY OF DEMOCRACY

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



Her "Very glad, I'm sure," was uttered with reservations

Blacksheep! Blacksheep!

BY
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

ILLUSTRATED BY
LESLIE L. BENSON

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1920

Maybe, in spite of their tameless days
Of outcast liberty,
They're sick at heart for the homely ways
Where their gathered brothers be.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, "Blacksheep! Blacksheep!" we cry,
Safe in the inner fold;
And maybe they hear, and wonder why,
And marvel, out in the cold.

—Richard Burton.

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CHAPTER ONE

I

Mrs. Howard Featherstone spent much time thinking up things for her brother Archibald Bennett to do, and as Archie was the ideal bachelor brother, always remembering the children's birthdays and turning up dutifully for Christmas dinners, he accepted her commissions in the most amiable spirit and his services were unflinchingly satisfactory. He knew perfectly well that most of the jobs she imposed upon him had been politely but firmly declined by her busy husband, but this made no difference to Archie, who had all the time in the world, and infinite patience, and he rather enjoyed tracing express packages and matching ribbons.

"The agent who's been looking up a summer house for us says this is an unusual opportunity, as there are few places to let at Bailey Harbor and this one is unexpectedly on the market. The owner is obliged to leave just after settling in it, so it's all in perfect condition and if it meets our needs we can go right up. Howard's simply swamped with work—he's conducting some sort of investigation with night meetings and that sort of thing—and we'd all appreciate it if you could run up there for us."

The many preoccupations of his brother-in-law, who held a seat in Congress and took his job seriously, were well known to Archie. Featherstone was an important cog in the governmental machinery while Archie had nothing on earth to do, so it was eminently fitting that he, as an unattached and unemployed brother-in-law, should assume some of Featherstone's domestic burdens. Archie had planned to leave for the Canadian Rockies two days later, but as no urgent business called him in that direction, he obligingly agreed to take a look at the Bailey Harbor house that had been placed so providentially within reach of his sister.

"The owner belongs to that old New England Congdon family," Mrs. Featherstone explained; "they date from the beginning of time, and some of them are a trifle eccentric. You remember one of them—he must be the father or an uncle of the owner of this house—Eliphalet Congdon, who lives in Boston and is horribly rich but is always doing weird things. There was a perfectly killing article in the paper just the other day telling of his latest exploit, which was getting arrested for refusing to allow them to check his umbrella at the Metropolitan Museum. They thought, of course, that he was a crank who wanted to poke holes through the pictures, and he made such a fuss that they had to arrest him and he wouldn't give bail but had his lawyer get him out on a writ of habeas corpus."

"The same philanthropist who had a bus built just like the Fifth Avenue busses and wanted to run it himself to pick up women and children the regular busses wouldn't stop for," laughed Archie. "If you're renting a house from that family it's just as well to look into it carefully. All right, May; I'll inspect the premises for you."

In spite of his good-natured assent she continued to pile up excuses for her husband and explained in great detail the rundown condition of the children which made it necessary to get them out of Washington as quickly as possible. Archie was already mentally planning the details of his trip with his customary exactness. As he traveled constantly in the interest of his health, which had been a cause of solicitude to himself and all his relatives as far back as any one could remember, he knew train schedules by heart, and by catching the Federal Express the next night he would be able to connect with a train at Boston that would land him at Bailey Harbor at two o'clock the same day.

With any sort of luck he could escape from the Harbor, reach New York the following morning and proceed immediately westward. A few telegrams would readjust matters so that he would lose only a day in setting out for Banff, which his newest doctor had told him was an ideal spot for him. Many other doctors had posted him off to numerous other places in pursuit of the calm or stimulus or whatever it was he needed to make him a sound man capable of taking some part in the world's affairs. Archie's condition was always a grateful topic of conversation and now that his sister had told him how many bedrooms her menage required, and warned him particularly to be sure that there was a sleeping porch and a garage, and not to forget to look carefully into the drainage system of the entire Maine coast; having watched him make notes of these matters, Mrs. Featherstone, in her most sisterly tone, broached the subject of his health.

"Your troubles, Archie, are all due to the scarlet fever you had when you were a child. I've thought that if you could ever get into some active work it would cure you. These sanatoriums you live in most of the time never do you any good. They just keep you thinking about yourself. What you need is a complete upsetting,—something that would give a new turn to your life. And, you know," she went on softly, "I'd hoped, Archie, that the right girl would turn up one of these days and that that would prove the panacea. But the girls I've picked out never pleased you, and here you are, the finest brother in the world, and the most conscientious man alive, always

doing generous things for people—you know you do, Archie—with nothing ahead of you but just one sanatorium after another. I haven't much faith in this idea of your going to the Rockies; you know you tried the Alps five years ago and the altitude nearly killed you."

"I seem doomed to sit on the sidelines and watch the game," Archie agreed gloomily.

"But sometimes, I think you yield too easily to discouragement. Please don't think I mean to be unkind or unjust, but if at some turn of the road you were obliged to put your back to the wall and fight for your life! Really, dear, I think you would win the battle and be a very different man afterward."

Archie smiled wanly. He had the lively imagination of the neurasthenic and very often he had dreamed of vanquishing single-handed a dozen enemies, or plunging into a burning house and staggering out half dead bearing a helpless child in his arms. To look at him no one would believe that he had a nerve in his tall frame. Once a friend carried him off to a farm where an autocratic athletic trainer rejuvenated tired business men; and Archie survived the heroic treatment and reappeared bronzed and hardened and feeling better than he had ever felt in his life. But a winter spent in an office and leisure to think of himself as an invalid brought back the old apprehensions, and there being no one at hand to drag him again to the trainer's, he renewed his acquaintance with the waiting-rooms of specialists. 7

"There will be a few people in for dinner tonight," remarked Mrs. Featherstone as he rose to go; "very simple, you know; and Howard just telephoned that he can't possibly come, so if you can arrange it, Archie—"

"All right, May. Weld and Coburn are in town and I was going to have dinner with them at the Army and Navy, but if you really want me—"

"Oh, that's perfectly fine of you, Archie! You are splendid to break your engagement with them when you three don't meet very often; but it will be a real help to me to have you. It's so late now that I can't ask any one else in Howard's place. And Isabel Perry will be here; you know she's the dearest girl, and I always thought you really did like Isabel. Her father lost all his money before he died and she's had a position as gymnasium teacher in Miss Gordon's school. This summer she's to run a girls' camp up in Michigan and she can't help making a splendid success of it."

Archie did not at once detach Miss Perry from the innumerable host of young women his sister had introduced him to; they were a hazy composite in his memory, but when Mrs. Featherstone insisted that he couldn't have forgotten Miss Perry's smile and merry laugh, he promptly declared that he remembered her perfectly. When he found himself sitting beside her later at Mrs. Featherstone's table, with a lady on his right who was undoubtedly most distinguished in spite of the fact that he failed to catch her name and understood very little of her rapid French, he was very grateful for Miss Perry's propinquity. The smile and the laugh were both better even than Mrs. Featherstone's specifications, and her English had a refreshing Western tang and raciness that pleased him. 8

"I passed you on the street the other day and made frantic efforts to attract your attention but you were in a trance and failed to see my signals."

"I was taking my walk," he stammered.

"*My walk!*" she repeated. "You speak as though you had a monopoly of that form of exercise. I must say you didn't appear to be enjoying yourself. Your aspect was wholly funereal and your demeanor that of a man with a certain number of miles wished on him."

"Four a day," Archie confessed with an air of resignation; "two in the morning and two before dinner."

"Then you were doing your morning lap when I passed you. Only four miles a day?"

"By the doctor's orders," he assented with the wistful smile that usually evoked sympathetic murmurs in feminine auditors.

"Oh, the doctors!" remarked the girl as though she had no great opinion of doctors in general or of Mr. Bennett's medical advisers in particular. He was used to a great deal of sympathy and he was convinced that Miss Perry was an utterly unsympathetic person. 9

"What would you call a good walk?" he asked a little tartly.

"Oh, ten, twenty, thirty! I've done fifteen and gone to a dance at the end of the tramp."

"But you haven't my handicap," he protested defensively. "You can't be very gay about walking when you're warned that excessive fatigue may have disastrous consequences!"

She was not wholly without feeling for her face grew grave for a moment and she met his eyes searchingly, with something of the professional scrutiny to which he had long been accustomed.

"Eyes clear; color very good; voice a trifle weak and suggesting timidity and feeble initiative. Introspective; a little self-conscious, and unimportant nervous symptoms indicated by the rolling of bread crumbs."

"I've paid doctors large fees for telling me the same things," he said, hastily hiding the bread crumbs under the edge of his plate. "I wish you'd write those items down for me. I'm in earnest about that."

"When did you say you were leaving town?"

"Tomorrow evening. If you'll write out your diagnosis and any suggestions you may have as to my habits, diet and general course of life, I promise to put them into practice."

"Your case interests me and I'll consider this matter of advising you."

"I shall expect the document tomorrow afternoon!"

"I should want to be very sure," she laughed, "that you were really leaving town and that I shouldn't see you for a long time—perhaps never again!"

10

"That has an ominous sound, as though you were going to give me a death sentence! Is my case as bad as that?"

"Not at all; but it calls for that disagreeable frankness we all dislike in our friends and very properly resent in mere acquaintances. I should be enormously embarrassed to meet you until after—"

She paused and surveyed him once more, questioningly. The French lady was telling a story to the whole company, and they were obliged to give heed to it; and as Archie failed to catch the point of it Miss Perry very kindly gave him the clue. The talk was general for a few minutes and then he begged her to finish the sentence that had been left in the air.

"Oh, it doesn't matter! I think I was going to say that it would be embarrassing to see you until after you had given my little hints a trial. I'll say now that just the orderly course of your life, with four miles a day, no more, no less, isn't a bit likely to get you anywhere. My treatment for such a case as yours would be very drastic. I'd set you some real stunts to do if you were my patient. May tells me that they won't have you in the army, the navy, or the flying corps, but I believe I could find some excitement for you," she ended musingly.

"As, for example—?" he asked, finding the French lady conspiring with an attaché of the Italian embassy. "To meet the competition of the nerve specialists, you'll have to be very explicit and tell me exactly what to do."

"Right there is one of your troubles—living by fixed schedules. You've never felt the world's rough hand; you don't know life! Clubs and sanatoriums and week-ends in comfortable houses don't count. You're a tremendously formal person, Mr. Bennett! What you really need is a good hard jar! Every morning you know exactly what you're going to do every hour of the day. It's routine that kills! Now just suppose when you're out on one of your walks you were to overpower the chauffeur of, we will say, the British ambassador, and drive the car bearing his Excellency into some lonely fastness of the Virginia hills, and hold him for a ransom, and collect the money in twenty-dollar gold pieces and escape with it and then come back to Washington and spend it all on a big party with the ambassador as the guest of honor. There would be a real achievement—something that would make you famous in two hemispheres."

11

"And incidentally lock me up for life if I escaped being shot! Such an escapade would very likely spoil our cordial relations with England and cause no end of trouble."

"There you are!" she exclaimed, "thinking always of the cost, never of the fun! Of course you would never do any such thing. Let me try again! Suppose you were to hold up a bank messenger in Wall Street and skip with a satchelful of negotiable securities and then, after the papers were through ragging the police for their inefficiency, you would drive up to the bank in a taxi, walk in and return the money, saying you had found it in the old family pew at Trinity when you went in to say your prayers! Here would be an opportunity to break the force of habit and awaken your self-confidence."

"Am I to understand that you practice what you preach? I don't mean to be impertinent, but really,—"

12

"Oh, I'm perfectly capable of doing anything I've suggested. I'm merely biding my time. Parents are pardonably fussy about the sort of person they turn their children over to, so I must have a care. I mean to dig for buried treasure this summer, realizing the dream of a lifetime."

"That appeals to me strongly. Perhaps you'd let me assist in that undertaking?"

"Impossible! I want all the glory and eke the gold if I find the hidden chests. Talk about romance being dead! My grandfather was a planter in Mississippi before the Civil War. In about 1860 he saw trouble ahead, and as he was opposed to secession he turned everything he had into gold, bought several tracts of land in Michigan and New York and secretly planted his money. His wife and children refused to share his lonely exile and he sent them to England but clung to America himself, and died suddenly and alone the second year of the war on the very acres my father inherited in Michigan. That's where I'm opening my camp."

"And the gold hasn't been found?" asked Archie deeply interested.

"Not a coin so far! You see grandfather made his will in war time and only divided the land, being afraid to mention the buried treasure in a document that would become a public record when he died."

"This is most exciting. It's only unfortunate that it's not pirate gold to give zest to your enterprise."

"Oh, the pirate in the story is a cousin of mine, who inherited the land up near the St. Lawrence and has dug all over it without results. My father gave the Michigan scenery to me, but this cousin has been digging on my land, most unwarrantably! He's rather a dashing young person!"

13

Archie was so enthralled that he forgot the typewritten dietary he always carried in his pocket

and ate most of his portion of beef tenderloin before he remembered that red meats were denied him. He laid down his fork so abruptly that she asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing; only you've interested me so much that I've eaten a whole lot of stuff that's positively forbidden. You've already scored a victory over my specialists!"

"Splendid!" she cried. "Eat when you're hungry and never think about your food. Don't let a mere piece of beef know that you're a coward. Have you ever committed murder? You pale at the suggestion and yet a pleasant little murder might be the very thing to set you on your feet again!"

From time to time he caught Mrs. Featherstone's eyes fixed upon him approvingly, and he knew that she was thinking that at last he had met a girl who interested him. The impression that he was an invalid in imminent peril of death caused his friends and acquaintances to talk to him as though he were a sick child, and it was refreshing to find a girl who openly chaffed him about his health and went the length of prescribing a career of riotous crime as a cure for his ills. This was enormously amusing for in prep school and college he had been guiltless of the traditional pranks and in the six years that had elapsed since he emerged into the world he had walked circumspectly in the eyes of all men.

Isabel Perry was not afraid of him and she didn't treat him as girls did who had an idea that if they talked to him very long he might faint or even die on their hands. He noted her fine rounded arms and supple fingers that spoke for strength, reflecting that very likely she could pick him up and pitch him through the window. He had always disliked athletic girls, fancying that they nodded to him patronizingly as they passed him on country club verandas all aglow from golf or tennis. This amiable Isabel was quite capable of making him dance through a set of tennis and with her high spirits and strong will might even bring him out alive. It was obvious that the sudden sweeping away of her father's fortune had not troubled her in the least. He marveled at this, for he had a great deal of money that had been conferred upon him in the cradle and what he should do if he lost it was a depressing possibility that had contributed not a little to his neurasthenia.

When it came time for Isabel to say good-night to her hostess Bennett was hovering near to offer his services in calling her car.

"Nothing like that for me! I brought walking shoes and shall foot it home, thank you. But—" she hesitated and said with mock gravity, "if you're not afraid of the night air or the excessive fatigue, you might take me home. That will add a mile to your prescription but you can ride back!"

The other guests had gone when she reappeared, wrapped in a long cloak and bearing a party-bag containing her slippers. She spoke of her plans for the summer with charming candor as they set off at a brisk pace. Little bits of autobiography she let fall interested him immensely. She was born in Wyoming, where her father had been a ranchman, and she had first known Mrs. Featherstone in college. She was enthusiastic about the summer camp; if it succeeded she meant to conduct an outdoor school for girls, moving it from Michigan to Florida with the changing seasons.

"People have been so kind to me! And I shall have a wonderful lot of girls—just think of it,—one hundred dear young beings from all over the country. It's a big responsibility but that land of my grandfather's is a lovely site for the camp. It's on a bay, where the swimming will be perfectly safe, and there's a wonderful forest, with Indian trails that run back to Marquette's time. We shall have a doctor—a woman, of course—and two trained nurses and some splendid young women to act, as councilors."

There was no question of her making a success of it, he said, marveling at her vitality, her exuberance, the confidence with which she viewed the future.

"I wish you all good luck," he said when they reached the house of the friend she was visiting. "The camp will be a great success,—I'm sure of that."

"Oh, it's a case of sink or swim—I've got to make it go!" she replied with her buoyant laugh. "If I don't succeed I can't emerge from the woods next fall and face my creditors!"

"There's the buried treasure; you mustn't neglect that! I'm greatly your debtor for all the interesting things you've told me. This has been the happiest evening I've spent since——"

"Since you began taking everything so hard? Please quit looking on your life as a burden; try to get some fun out of it!"

The door opened to the key she gave him and the light of the hall lamp fell upon her face and glinted her brown hair as she put out her hand.

"Don't forget me in the rush of things! And particularly don't forget that note of instructions. I'm counting on that!"

"Not really?" she exclaimed. "I was just in fun, you know."

"If I don't get it before I leave tomorrow evening, I shall be terribly disappointed. I shall take it as a sign that you don't think me worth bothering about!"

There was a pleading in his voice that held her for a moment; she surveyed him gravely, then answered lightly,

"Oh, very well! You shall have it, sir!"

Archie didn't know that the note caused Isabel a great deal of trouble. It was one thing to promise to tell a man who was all but a stranger just how to alter his way of life with a view to a happier existence, but to sit before a sheet of white paper and compose a letter on the subject was a very different matter, as Isabel's waste-paper basket could have testified. Her first experiments had been very serious, with urgent recommendations of hard physical labor; but this proved unsatisfactory. Then she attacked it from an ethical angle and suggested social service as a means of destroying the selfishness which she honestly believed to be one of his troubles. 17

She scribbled on a pad the titles of half a dozen hooks designed for weary and disconsolate souls, but they hardly touched his case and besides he had probably been deluged with just such literature. Moreover, she must write a note that would not require an answer; this she felt to be imperatively demanded by the circumstances. She thought Archibald Bennett a nice fellow and she was sorry for him, but no more and no less sorry than she would have been for any one else who failed to find the world a pleasant place to live in. Something a little cryptic, yet something that would discourage further confidences without wounding him—this would solve the problem—and she spent an hour turning over the pages of a book of quotations searching for some stirring epigrammatic utterance. The wise of all the ages seemed to have been strangely unmindful of the needs of neurasthenic young men, but finally she hit upon these lines and copied them in her best hand:—

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.

She wondered who the Marquis of Montrose was who had lived in the seventeenth century and bequeathed this quatrain to posterity, but this didn't matter, and after reading the lines aloud several times she decided that they would serve her purpose admirably. If Mr. Bennett took them seriously, well enough; and if he didn't like them it made no difference as she would probably never meet him again. 18

She wrote on a calling card, "Best wishes and good luck," and put this inside the note sheet, and as the hour was late she despatched it to Mr. Bennett by special messenger.

The note reached Archie just as he was leaving his sister's house. When he was seated in the train he drew it out and inspected the envelope carefully, held it to the light and speculated fearfully as to the nature of its contents. His thoughts had played about Isabel Perry most of the day and he had listened to his sister's enthusiastic praise of her with an unusual attention that had not been lost upon Mrs. Featherstone. He had hoped for a long letter in the vein of the girl's chaffing humor, and the size of the missive was a distinct disappointment.

He opened it guardedly, and his face fell as he pondered the verse. It was a neat, well-bred slap at him as a man without initiative or courage. At the dinner table she had expressed much the same thought that was condensed in the verse, but the quotation, unrelieved by her smile, carried a sting. He read it over until the lines marched with a nimble step through his memory. There was something oddly haunting in them, and he experimented with a variety of emphases and pauses, particularly as to the last line, which he found might be read in a great number of ways. He decided finally that it was best interpreted by a little pause after "gain," with the remaining words vanishing in a despondent sigh. Perhaps this was the way Isabel Perry thought of him, as a loser in the game of life; but he experienced a pleasant tingle in the blood when he reflected that this may have been the wrong reading and very different from the sense she meant to convey. His spirits soared as he decided that the last line was intended to be read unbrokenly and that it constituted a challenge, flung at him with a toss of her head, a flash of the brown eyes. 19

This thought was wholly heartening and he dwelt upon it a long time. She must have thought him capable of deeds of high emprise or she would not have chosen this fragment as her last word to him. Her choice of a message implied a certain faith that he might, if he chose, break the shackles of fear and custom that bound him and do something that would lift him out of himself. The card with the good wishes gave a soothing, saving personal touch to the communication. She had drawn the pen across a Chicago street number and supplied no other address; but after a dark moment in which he accepted this as a delicate hint that the incident was closed, he concluded that very likely she had deleted the address hastily for the reason that she was to disappear into the woods for the summer. Still, she might have substituted the camp address and he fretted over this for an hour. She left him without excuse for a reply, and he gravely reflected that the Marquis of Montrose was the only person to whom he could protest, but as she had copied from the quotation book the figures "1621-1640" and added them to the name for his illumination, it was clearly impossible to ask the author for an interpretation of his stanza.

Archie was lulled to sleep by the encouraging thought that what she had done was to give him a commission to redeem himself by strange and moving adventures, and he dreamed that he had climbed to the remote fastnesses of the Rockies, and captured a mountain sheep alive and walked into his sister's house with the animal under his arm and presented it to Miss Perry at the tea table. 20

He changed trains at Boston and again at Portsmouth, where he checked his bag. At two o'clock he reached Bailey Harbor, where he verified his memorandum as to the return trip and found the telegram he expected from the New York brokerage office in which he was a silent partner, saying that his booking for Banff had been changed as requested. He never took the chance of being stuffed into an upper berth, or riding in a day coach, and he congratulated himself upon his forethought and the ease with which he was proceeding upon his sister's errand.

He stepped into the only taxi in sight and drove to the village druggist's for the key to the Congdon house.

"Just go in and take your time to it," said the man. "Lights and water haven't been turned off and if you take the house your folks can step right in. Mrs. Congdon left only yesterday. Suppose you'll be going on the five eleven; it's your only chance of getting back to Boston tonight. If you don't find it convenient to stop here again, just leave the key under the door mat."

"I guess you'll find the place all shipshape," said the driver, as they set off. "Folks came up early but didn't stay long. Left in a hurry; kind o' funny, skippin' the way they did."

"There hadn't been sickness in the family?" asked Archie, apprehensively thinking that he might be stumbling into infection. 21

"Lord no! Family troubles, I reckon! They been comin' here a long time and usually came earlier and stayed later than anybody else. I don't know nothin', mind ye, but there's talk she had trouble with her husband."

"You mean Mr. and Mrs. Congdon have separated?"

"I'm sayin' nothin'! But the Congdons are all queer. His pap used to have a house here and he was the worst ole crank on the shore. Young Putney's a pretty decent fellow. Mighty fine woman, his wife. Ever'body likes *her*."

The confidences of the weatherbeaten chauffeur only mildly interested Archie, who was bent upon inspecting the house as quickly as possible with a view to footing it back to the station, and thus crediting two miles to the day's exercise account. It was unseasonably warm and the air was lifeless and humid.

"Think it will rain?" asked Archie.

"Yep," replied the driver with a glance at the sea. "There's goin' to be a lively kick-up before mornin'."

Archie eyed his top-coat and umbrella with the pardonable satisfaction of a man who travels prepared for all weathers. To follow the shore path in the teeth of a storm would do much toward establishing his self-confidence and prove that he was not a mollycoddle. Isabel Perry and her note were firmly imbedded in his subconsciousness and were causing curious slips and shifts of his mental machinery. Certain of her utterances at his sister's table rankled, and his thousandth conjecture about the note was that it mocked his weaknesses and defied him to prove that he was far from being the worthless social parasite she believed him to be. 22

III

He discharged the driver and in a moment was standing in a big living-room that exhaled an atmosphere of comfort and good taste. On every hand were the evidences of a hasty abandonment of the house by its recent occupants. A waste-paper basket by a writing table in one corner overflowed with scraps of discarded letters; the family had evidently snatched a hasty luncheon before leaving and the dining table had not been cleared. A doll lay sprawled on the landing as he made his way upstairs, and in the bed chambers empty chiffonier drawers gaped as though from surprise at their hasty evacuation. He made a survey of the whole premises and then went through again from cellar to garret checking off his sister's queries. There was something disconcerting in the intense silence of the place broken only by the periodic thump of the sea at the base of the cliff.

The house would serve the Featherstones admirably. There was even the sleeping porch opening from the nursery that his sister had expressly stipulated and a tiny retreat back of the living-room with desk and shelves that would meet the requirements of his congressman brother-in-law at such times as he might find it possible to join his family.

Fully satisfied with his investigations, Archie picked up a book with a paper-cutter thrust through it to mark the place of its last reader, became absorbed and read until he, was roused by a clap of thunder that seemed to shake the world. Hurrying to the window he found that the storm had already broken. There was a greenish light over the sea and the waves had begun to smite the rocks with dismaying ferocity. To catch the five eleven he would have to leave at once, and he seized his belongings and opened the door, but upon stepping out upon the veranda the walk he had contemplated along the shore path to the village seemed a foolhardy thing to undertake. An unearthly darkness had fallen upon the world and a misstep in the rough path over the rocks might pitch him headlong into the sea. He had marked the presence of a telephone in the house and decided to summon a taxi, but as he clapped the receiver to his ear he was startled by a blinding glare and the crack of a mighty whip overhead. He snatched the instrument again and bawled into it, but it was buzzing queerly and he sprang away from it as another glare lit up the room. 23

He turned on the lights and sat down to think. He might return by the highway over which he had reached the house, but the driver had told him it was the longer way. The roof and walls rang under the downpour and he decided that after all to spend the night in an abandoned house would be fully as heroic as to subject himself to the ruthless fury of the hurricane. It would be a lark to camp in the Congdon villa, a break in the deadly routine of his days which Isabel Perry had pointed out as a possible cause of his invalidism. He made himself comfortable and studied the sheaf of time tables he had brought with him, methodically formulating the messages he would be obliged to despatch in the morning to change his westward passage.

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The storm showed no sign of abating and as nightfall deepened the gloom he set the broad fireplace in the living-room glowing, drew the shades, and feeling twinges of hunger explored the kitchen pantry. The Congdons had left a well-stocked larder and, finding bacon, eggs and bread, he decided that the cooking of a supper would be a jolly incident of the adventure. He laid aside his coat and rolling up his sleeves soon had a fire going in the range, which smoked hideously until he mastered the dampers. He removed the dishes that had been left on the dining-room table and carefully laid a cover for one. The roses in a bowl that served as a centerpiece were still fresh and were a pathetic reminder of the mistress of the house. In rearranging the table he found a telegram under a plate at what he assumed to be Mrs. Congdon's place. To read a message not intended for his eyes was decidedly against his strict code, but his curiosity overcame his scruples and these words met his eyes:

New York, June 10, 1917.

Mrs. Alice B. Congdon,
Bailey Harbor, Maine.

Your letter has your characteristic touch of cruelty. We may as well part now and be done with it. But the children you cannot have. Remember that I relinquish none of my rights on this point. I demand that you surrender Edith at once and I will communicate with you later about the custody of Harold until such time as he is old enough to come to me.

Putney Congdon.

The cautious hint of the taxi driver that domestic difficulties were responsible for the breaking up of the Congdon household found here a painful corroboration. He chivalrously took sides at once with the unhappy Alice; no matter how shrewish the absconding wife might be, only a brute of a husband would fling such a message at her head. Archie hated discord; the very thought of it was abhorrent. He had never had a care in his life beyond his health, and quarrels of every sort he left to underbred people with evil tempers. Here was a furious lunatic telegraphing his wife of the severance of the most sacred of ties and demanding the immediate transfer of one child to his possession and relinquishing only temporarily the custody of the other, presumably younger and the lawful owner of the doll he had picked up on the stair landing.

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He now visualized the whole scene that followed upon the receipt of the telegram; the hurried, tearful packing, the bewildered children, the panic-struck servants rushing about obeying the orders of a hysterical mistress. The more he thought of it the warmer became his defensive attitude toward the unknown Alice. She had met the situation like a woman of quick decisions,—perhaps she was a little too unyielding and this had caused the rupture; but no man worthy to be called a gentleman would commit to the wires so heartless a message directed at the mother of his children.

His attention had been arrested several times by a photograph of a young girl, of eleven or twelve, set in a silver frame on the living-room table, whom he assumed to be the Edith mentioned in the telegram. She was a lovely child, with a wealth of hair falling about her shoulders, and roguish eyes that looked at him teasingly. It was a thoroughly feminine face with an unusual perfection of line. Very likely the child was the reëmbodiment of her mother who must, he thought, be a very handsome woman indeed. His resentment hardened against the husband and father, the author of the brutal message that disposed of his marital obligations as coolly as though he had been canceling an order for a carload of merchandise, as he held up the picture for the joy of meeting the gaze of the merry eyes.

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Though the breaking of eggs into the skillet had proved a fearsome matter and the bacon sizzled strangely, the cooking had proved much simpler than he had believed possible. He burnt his fingers handling the toaster, but after ruining a considerable quantity of bread he produced three slices of toast that were the equal of any offered by his favorite club. As usual when frustrated in his plans (something that had rarely happened in his whole life) he made the most of the situation, eating slowly while the rain poured in an unbroken sheet down the windows. He wished Isabel could see him and know that for once the routine of his life had been interrupted only to find him resourceful and the easy master of his fate.

He made a point of washing the dishes and cooking utensils and putting them carefully away. These matters attended to, he roamed over the house which now had a new interest for him since the Congdon family skeleton had come out of its closet and danced round the dinner table. In one way and another he found it possible to make a fair acquaintance with the late inmates of the house. In a bedroom adjoining the nursery there were books in abundance, and very good books they were—essays, poetry, a few of those novels that appeal only to sophisticated readers, and children's books, including a volume of Bible stories retold for the young. He could readily imagine Mrs. Congdon reading aloud from these volumes to her youngsters as they stood beside

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the wicker rocker in the bay-window. Only a few hours earlier the house had rung with the happy laughter of children; he fancied he could hear them calling to their mother up the stair. Mrs. Congdon was a blonde, he decided, from the presence in a closet of a blue peignoir overlooked in her flight and a bolt of blue ribbon that had rolled under the bed as though seeking refuge from the general confusion.

In the adjoining room he sought traces of the hard-hearted husband, but in his departure, presumably sometime earlier, Congdon had made a clean sweep; there was nothing to afford a clue to his character beyond a four-in-hand tie whose colors struck Archie as execrable. Below in the snuggery fitted up for masculine use was a table, containing a humidior half filled with dried-up cigars, and an ill-smelling pipe—Archie hated pipes—and a box of cigarettes. A number of scientific magazines lay about and a forbidding array of books on mechanics and chemistry overflowed the shelves. He threw open a cabinet filled with blue prints illustrating queer mechanical contrivances. They struck him as very silly and he slammed the thing shut in disgust, convinced that Congdon was a crank, or he wouldn't have indulged in such foolishness. In a drawer of the desk was an automatic pistol and a box of cartridges. At a country house where he once week-ended a burglar scare had inspired feverish intensive pistol practice among the guests and Archie had learned to load and fire and even developed some skill as a marksman. There were three cartridges in the magazine and Archie thrust it into his pocket thinking it not a bad idea to be prepared for invasion.

28

He was oppressed with a fleeting sense of his isolation as he drew back a shade and pressed his face to the pane. The house stood at the edge of the summer colony and a considerable distance from its nearest neighbor. The landward horizon still brightened at intervals with a languid mockery of lightning, dimmed by the fog that was dragging in from the sea. The siren in the harbor had begun its mournful iterations, and he caught the occasional flash of the revolving light that gleamed now and then through breaks in the fog.

He switched off the lights in the lower rooms and established himself in the guest chamber. The bed had been dismantled but he found blankets and linen and addressed himself to the novel task of making a couch for himself. If he had consulted his pleasure in advance he would have shrunk from camping in a lonely seaside house for a night; but now that the experience was forced upon him he was surprised to find that he was not afraid. The revelation was an agreeable one. He, Archibald Bennett, was a perfectly normal being, capable of rising to emergencies; and when he saw Isabel Perry again, as he had every intention of doing at the end of the summer, this little trip to Bailey Harbor would make a very pretty story which could not fail to convince her of his fortitude and courage.

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Sleeping in his underwear was distasteful but this was only another small item that proved his resolute fiber and ability to accept conditions as he found them. He opened the windows and performed his usual before-retiring calisthenics, tested the reading lamp beside the bed, placed the pistol within easy reach and became absorbed in a volume of short stories.

He read the book through, put out the light and was half asleep when he was roused by footsteps on the veranda below.

IV

It was close upon midnight and the presence of a prowler on the premises caused his heart to gallop wildly. He seized the pistol, crept to the window and peered cautiously out. Between the crash of the breakers he listened intently and had decided that the steps had been the illusion of a dream when a sound in the room below renewed his alarm. He gained the door in two jumps. He could hear the opening and closing of drawers and see the flash of an electric lamp as the thief moved swiftly about, apparently taking it for granted that he had the house to himself. The swish of the swing-door between dining-room and pantry marked his investigations in the rear of the house. He evidently found nothing there, for he was back in the hall again in a moment. Then through the vast silence of the big house the unknown gave voice to his anger and disappointment:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

30

This, reaching Archie very clearly, added nothing to his comfort. He debated making a dash for the switch and flooding the lower rooms with light, but a burglar angrily damning himself for his stupidity in entering a house where plated silver was the only booty in sight was not a person to provoke unnecessarily. Then a series of quick flashes on the wall of the stair gave warning of the intruder's invasion of the upper rooms.

Archie drew back and waited. His thoughts and emotions in this hour of danger interested him. He had always imagined that he would collapse in any moment of peril. The fingers of his left hand sought the wrist of his right that grasped the automatic and while his heart was still beating quickly the pulse was regular. This was immensely gratifying and he resolved to report the fact to his medical counselor at the first opportunity.

The thief had become more cautious and was tiptoeing up the uncarpeted treads of the stair, still sending occasionally a bar of light ahead. All the doors of the bedrooms stood open, Archie remembered, and the thief would not be long in discovering that the recent occupants had left behind them nothing of the slightest value. His courage was mounting; he was enormously surprised to find that his hands were quite steady, and his mind had never functioned more perfectly. The burglar was now in Mrs. Congdon's room, where he stumbled over a chair that

rocked furiously until stilled by the invader. He was now coming boldly down the hall as though satisfied that the house was empty. A flash of his lamp fell upon the door frame just above Archie's left hand.

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He crawled hastily across the bed and swung round and waited with his back against a chiffonier in the corner, sternly resolved that not without a struggle would he be shot and his body left lying crumpled in a corner with no one to tell the tale. He had the advantage of the knowledge of the enemy's approach, and he raised the gun and covered the door in readiness. A flash clipped the dark for an instant. Then a hand groped along the wall seeking the switch. Archie could hear its soft rasping over the wall. As the switch snapped the room flooded with light. The bewildering glare leaping out of the darkness held the man in the doorway and he raised his arm and passed his hand over his eyes to shield them from the light.

Between the front windows stood a long mirror swung in a movable frame, and as he measured distances and calculated chances Archie found himself staring at the reflection of a tall man with a cap pulled low over his head and with the collar of a yellowish raincoat turned up about his face. The eyes of the two met, the gaze of each gripping and holding that of the other.

The burglar's shoulders drooped as he gaped at the mirrored apparition. Then swiftly he jerked a pistol from his pocket and fired point blank into the mirror. The report crashed horribly in the room, followed by the tinkle of fragments of glass. Archie aimed at the doorway, but his shot seemed only to hasten the man's flight. A rug slipped and the fugitive fell with a frightened yell that rang eerily through the house.

In the hall Archie turned on all the lights and gaining the landing fired at the retreating figure as it plunged toward the front door. At the crack of the gun the fugitive stopped short, clapped his hand to his shoulder and groaned, then sprang through the front door and Bennett heard immediately the quick patter of his feet on the walk.

32

The lock bore no evidence of having been forced. It was a curious business and Archie closed the door, placed a heavy chair against it, and feeling a little giddy he threw himself down on a davenport in the living-room. He began thinking very hard. He had shot a man and for all he knew the victim might be lying dead somewhere on the premises. To be sure the shooting of an armed housebreaker was justifiable, but the thought of coroner's inquests and dallyings with the police filled him with horror. The newspapers would seize upon the case with avidity, and his friends would never cease twitting him about his valor in firing a bullet into the back of a fleeing burglar.

The frame of the photograph of the young girl that had so charmed him lay on the floor face down. Bennett picked it up and found that the picture had been removed. He wondered a little at this but dismissed the subject from his mind to consider the graver business of how to avoid the disagreeable consequences of his encounter. He must leave the house and escape from Bailey Harbor before daybreak, and he went upstairs and hurriedly began dressing.



At the crack of the gun the fugitive stopped short

But for the tangible evidence of the smashed mirror (the bullet had pierced the wooden back

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and was imbedded in the wall behind it) he might have dismissed the whole thing as a nightmare. Instinctively he began building up an alibi and planning his flight. The druggist who had given him the key and the taxi driver both supposed that he had inspected the house and taken the evening train for Boston. As he got into his clothes he decided to make a wide detour of the town, perhaps tramping on to Portsmouth, and there recover his bag and be off for the Rockies.

At one o'clock he was drinking coffee and munching toast and jam to fortify himself for his journey. He had shot and perhaps killed a man, and his mind surged now with self-accusations. He needn't have fired the shot—the thief was running away and very likely would not have molested him further. He was sorry for the fellow, wounded or dead; but in a moment he was shuddering as he reflected that the bullet that splintered the mirror had really been meant for him, and it had struck with great precision just where the reflection of his head had presented a fair target to the startled marksman.

He turned out the lights and placing the key under the door mat stole through the garden. The man he had shot might even now be lying dead in his path, and he lifted his feet high to avoid stumbling over the corpse. But more appalling was the thought that the fugitive might be lying in ambush, and he carried his pistol before him at arm's length against such an emergency.

He gained the road, glanced toward the house and set off in the general direction of the New Hampshire border.

V

There was neither star nor moon, and a chill wet wind bore in from the sea. His immediate business was to get as far away from Bailey Harbor as possible. He started with a long swinging stride that was quickly arrested as he splashed through pools left by the rain or stumbled off the road where it turned sharply. Once he wandered into a driveway and seeking a way out crashed into a sunken garden. His feet were wet and his trousers flapped heavily about his legs. The shrubbery pricked him like barbed wire and a scratch along his cheek bled most disagreeably. He hurriedly felt his way along a hedge to the highway, hating himself with the greatest cordiality. If this was the adventurous life it was not for him, and he solemnly resolved that if he didn't die of pneumonia as the result of his indiscretions he would stick close to clubs and comfortable hotels for the remainder of his life.

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He had no way of keeping track of his progress, but on bumping into a cross-roads sign-board he struck a match and read "Bailey Harbor 5 M.," and the discovery that only five miles lay between him and the Congdon house filled him with rage and terror. A little later he caught the first glimmer of dawn breaking over a gray world. This was heartening but it brought also new dangers for he had no idea of where his tramp had brought him and mud-splashed as he was and with the scratch across his face stinging uncomfortably, he was in no haste to meet the strangers who would soon be passing him in the road.

A curious whistle, a long pipe and then a short quick one, in the roadside a little way ahead brought him to a halt. He drew the gun from his overcoat pocket and stood perfectly quiet. In a few seconds the whistle was repeated and Archie, grown suddenly bold, checked an impulse to fly and imitated it.

35

A man rose from behind a stone wall on the right and walked toward him.

"That you, Hoky?" he called sharply, peering through the mist.

Seeing that it was not Hoky but a stranger with a pistol, he sprang forward and wrenched the gun from Archie's hand.

"Stop squealing! Bad enough for you to fool me with that whistle without pulling a gun. Now you get right over there by the fence where I'm pointing and we'll consider matters a little!"

"I was just walking to Portsmouth," began Archie in a blithe tone he hoped would prove convincing.

His captor laughed ironically, and throwing open Bennett's coat, demanded:

"Where's your badge? Don't lie to me! You're one of these village constables or a plainclothes man from Boston. Either way you'd better show your hand."

"If you think I'm connected with the police," Archie faltered, "you were never more mistaken in your life!"

The man clapped his hands over Archie's pockets and then struck a match and surveyed his face with care. This done he stuck his nose close to his captive's mouth and bade him breathe.

"You haven't the bouquet of an inebriate, son. You stepped along like Hoky, my pal, and that's why I whistled; and you warbled the answer like a mockingbird. Now listen to me! You've been up to something, so don't tell me again that you're taking a little before breakfast stroll to Portsmouth to work up an appetite. In the first place, have you seen a man about your size along the road anywhere?"

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"Not a soul!" declared Archie solemnly.

"Mighty queer Hoky doesn't turn up! I warned the beggar against these seaside villas; they're all outfitted with fancy burglar alarms that make a deuce of a row when you step on the wire.

Electricity is the bane of the craft; you light a wire that rings a gong loud enough to wake the dead and then some chap jumps out of bed and turns on all the lights in the house and very likely opens up with a gun before you can say Jerusalem. But Hoky thought he knew better."

Archie clutched at the stone fence against which his captor had pushed him and his breath came in long gasps.

"You mean," he faltered, "that you fear your friend has been shot!"

"That, my dear sir, is exactly what troubles me! Hoky didn't need to do it; that's what rouses my indignation! He's been running free for two years, and not a thing against him—wiped out all his indictments with good time like an honest thief, and now very likely he's been potted by some large prosperous householder as he was trying to lift a bit of silver; and these country houses never have anything worth risking your life for! My dear boy, can you blame me for being peeved, enormously peeved, when I reflect that Hoky, one of the best pals in the world, is probably lying as dead as a pickled mackerel somewhere back yonder? Or if he has escaped death in his felonious enterprise he may have met the constable and be awaiting the pleasure of a grand jury of righteous farmers of the old commonwealth of Maine!"

Archie's tongue clung to the roof of his mouth as he tried to murmur his sympathy for the stranger's sorrow. The thought that he was probably talking to the accomplice of the man he had shot was terrifying; the stranger seemed enormously fond of Hoky and if he knew that he had within his grasp the person who was responsible for Hoky's failure to return from his visit to Bailey Harbor he would very likely make haste to avenge his friend's death. It seemed to Archie that the gods were playing strange tricks upon him indeed. The man's speech was not the argot he had assumed from his reading of crook stories to be the common utterance of the underworld. There was something attractive in the fellow. He carried himself jauntily, and his clean-shaven, rounded face and fine gray eyes would not have suggested his connection with burglary. He was an engaging sort of person, and overcoming his discomfiture at having sent a bullet into the foolish Hoky, Archie decided suddenly that the man might be of service to him. He was in pressing need of a change of clothes but he was in no condition to proceed to Portsmouth to redeem his suitcase; an impression that was confirmed unexpectedly by his captor.

"You will pardon my candor, but you certainly look like the devil. There's a rip in your trousers that needs explaining and that swipe on your face reminds me of a map of the Mississippi done in red ink. Let me introduce myself to you as the Governor. Among the powers that prey that is my proud cognomen, not to say *alias*. Now please be frank—what mischief brings you here at this pale hour?"

Archie gave serious thought to his answer. If he could convince this singular person that he was a crook he would be less likely to suspect that he had been the instrument of Hoky's undoing. And there was the possibility that if he met the Governor's friendly advances in a reciprocal spirit the man might help him out of his predicament. The Governor was waiting for his answer, humming pleasantly as he surveyed the heavens.

"I've got to make a getaway and be in a hurry about it," declared Archie with a confidential air that caused a humorous light to play in the Governor's eyes.

"A little trouble of some sort, eh? Perhaps fearing a collision with the revised statutes of this or adjacent states?"

"Something like that," Archie answered huskily.

"It rather occurred to me that you were not promenading for mere pleasure," replied the Governor, drawing his hand across his chin. "The causes that lead people to travel have been enumerated by no less an authority than Mr. Laurence Sterne as—

"Infirmity of body,

"Imbecility of mind, or

"Inevitable necessity.

"Unless my memory errs the same authority classifies travelers as the idle, the inquisitive, the lying, the proud, the vain, the splenetic; to which he added the delinquent and felonious traveler, the unfortunate and innocent traveler, the traveler without aim and the wandering sentimentalist. From the looks of your clothing I should judge that you belong to the necessitous group, though from a certain uneasy expression I might easily place you among the delinquent and criminal. A fashionable defaulter perhaps? No. Then let it go at murder, though I confess you don't look as though you'd have a stomach for homicide."

"I came damned near getting pinched!" asserted Archie stoutly. "The cops back there in that town gave me a hard run for it."

Feeling that he was making an impression on the Governor he warmed to his work.

"I was just crawling through the window of a drug store when here comes a chap tiptoeing through the alley flashing a dark lantern, and I bolted for the tall timber as hard as I could sprint. The fire bell rang and the whole town woke up and I got lost running through a garden back of one of those swell's houses on the shore. That's how I got this slash in the face, and I'm in a pretty pickle now. There'll be a whole army looking for me; and if your friend Hoky's been killed they'll be keen to pinch me as another member of the gang."

The Governor listened patiently as Archie jerked this out, nervously trying to conceal his

Harvard training in the use of the English language by resorting to such terms as he imagined bold bad men employ in moments of mental stress.

"An amateur, I take it?" remarked the Governor with the humorous twinkle that seemed to be habitual with him.

"Hell, no," grumbled Archie scornfully. "But I always play the game alone; I never had any use for pals. They get in the way."

"Wrong, my boy; wrong! A good partner like me is essential to the successful prosecution of the art or craft felonious. As for myself I rarely venture to expose myself in these little affairs; but I advise and counsel the brethren. I am their confidant and assist them in innumerable ways purely for the joy of it, I assure you. Now Hoky and I had been on the road all spring, and he made a good haul or two under my direction; but he wouldn't let well enough alone. I warned him against making an attempt back yonder last night. A stormy night always makes honest householders wakeful. Take it from me, son, there couldn't be a worse time for a burglary than a night melodious with rolling thunder. You haven't the judgment of a month-old infant. I bought a toothbrush at that drug store yesterday evening and there's a light right over the safe at the end of the prescription counter. Your attempt, my son, speaks for courage but not for discretion. You should always ask me about such things."

"I'm sorry," replied Archie meekly, "that I didn't run into you sooner."

"The loss is mine!" cried the Governor heartily. "But let us be practical. The coast will ring with this, particularly if Hoky is lying cold at the undertaker's. He must be dead or pinched or he'd be here by this time. We shall make a long jump, son, and ponder the future."

He walked off briskly with Archie close beside him.

"When Hoky persisted in his ill-chosen enterprise I felt a weariness upon me and lifted a little roadster that I've tucked away down here in a peaceful lane. Thought I'd be all ready to give the old boy a long pull for freedom when he came back, but alas—!"

Sure enough the roadster was there; a very handy little car indeed, and Archie was profoundly interested to know that it was in this fashion that a man who from his own confession was counselor extraordinary to thieves, toured the country. The Governor had become suddenly a man of action. Kneeling down he detached a New York license tag from the machine, drew from his pocket a Maine tag and attached it, humming meanwhile.

"The rural police haven't learned this simple device," he explained, as he sent the discarded tag skimming into a corn field. "I've got about forty miles to run inland. The back roads only and Providence our guide!"

He jumped in and bade Archie take the seat beside him. The car was soon bumping merrily over a rough road that wound through a pine wood. As near as Archie could reckon from the sun that was crawling into view they were bound for Halifax, but to be going anywhere was an infinite relief, and to be traveling with a man whose comrade he had shot and probably killed only a few hours earlier, imparted a piquant flavor to the journey. This astonishing person who called himself Governor might, for all he knew, be hurrying him to some lonely place to murder him, but if this was his plan he was most agreeable about it. He had taken off the mackinaw coat in which he had first appeared in the road and the brown coat underneath was of modish cut; and as his foot played upon the brake Archie noted that he wore silk hose. He had never dreamed that outlaws were so careful of their raiment. And the man's talk was that of a cultivated gentleman who wore his learning lightly and was blessed with an easy conscience; not at all like the philosopher and guide of criminals.

"You seem to know this country well," Archie remarked as they penetrated more deeply into the woods and followed a grass-grown trail that ended abruptly at an abandoned lumber camp.

"Oh, I know most of the whole United States just as well," remarked the Governor, steering the car slowly among the deep ruts. "We'll shoot the car around behind that pyramid of sawdust and walk a bit to stretch our legs."

There was no trace of a path where he struck off into the woods but he strode along with the easy confidence of one who is sure of his destination. They brought up presently beside a brook and in a moment more reached a log hut planted on the edge of the high bank.

"What do you think of that, Sir Archibald?" inquired the Governor carelessly.

Archie paused, wavering in the path. The man had called him by his right name, throwing in the prefix with a tinge of insolence.

"Oh, your name?" remarked the Governor turning from a leisurely survey of the dwelling. "Perfectly easy! Archibald Bennett was neatly sewed into your coat pocket by your tailor as I observed when I rubbed my hands over your waistcoat to see if you wore a badge. Your bill-fold is there intact—it's rather indelicate of you to feel for it! If I'd meant to rob you I'd have biffed you on the head long ago and thrown your carcass to the buzzards."

"I got these duds out of a suitcase I sneaked from an auto in Boston, and that's no name of mine," Archie explained hurriedly, still anxious to convince the Governor that he was a thief.

"A deft hand, son; but very careless of you not to rip out the label. Men have been hanged on slighter evidence. But Archibald is not a name to sneeze at, and I rather like Archie; and Archie I shall continue to call you. Now we'll see what we can do to shake up a breakfast."

He drew out a key and opened the door of the hut. On one side stood a dilapidated cook stove of

an obsolete pattern, surrounded by a few kitchen utensils. In the far end were two bunks, one above the other, and on a chair beside them a pile of blankets neatly folded. In the middle of the room was a table littered with old magazines.

"Not a bad place, Archie! I stumbled upon it a couple of years ago quite by accident and use it occasionally. The retreat of some artist who probably starved to death. When I first found the shack it was full of impressionistic studies that looked as though the poor boob stood on his head to paint. I made a burnt offering of the whole lot to outraged Nature." He opened a cupboard revealing a quantity of provisions. "Poor old Hoky was a great lover of ham; I never saw such an appetite for smoked pork, and he had just stocked us up with a few specimens he lifted somewhere."

Besides three hams there were coffee, cartons of crackers and cans of condensed milk.

"We fellows who live by our wits need the open air just as much as bank presidents, for our business makes a heavier drain on the nerves," continued the Governor after they had prepared breakfast. "Your pallor suggests that you may have emerged quite recently from one of those institutions designed for the moral reconstruction of the weak and erring."

Archie's eyes fell under the Governor's keen gaze. But he realized that he must firmly establish himself in the man's confidence by palming himself off as a crook with a prison record. In no other way could he be sure of the assistance and protection which the Governor alone could give him.

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"Three months' jail sentence," he replied smoothly.

"Ah! A minor felony, I judge, from the brevity of your incarceration," replied the Governor, emptying the coffee pot into Archie's cup. "I have never been in jail and to the best of my knowledge I have never been indicted; or if I have the sheriff has never caught up with me! My heart bleeds nevertheless for these poor devils who are always in the toils, and in my poor weak fashion I try to help them. Really, my dear Archie, thieves as a class are shockingly deficient in intelligence. Until I dropped into the underworld they were a peculiarly helpless lot—like dear old Hoky whose loss I shall mourn to my dying day."

Archie flinched, but he was beginning to feel at home in his new rôle of a fugitive from justice, and murmured his sympathy without a quaver.

"My friend," said the Governor soberly as they rose from the table, "we have dipped our hands in the same dish and broken bread together. I'm strong for the old traditions of Arab hospitality and that sort of thing. There's honor, you know, among thieves, and I'm rather keen for the sentimental side of the business. You may trust me, telling me as much or as little of yourself as you please. I don't mind saving that you're a likable chap, but pathetically helpless in emergencies like most of our brethren. It's well for you that you fell in with me, with that little episode of the drug store hanging over you. I'll be a good pal to you and I ask you to be straight with me. Are we friends or—"

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He put out his hand questioningly. Archie grasped it, meeting the gaze of the keen gray eyes squarely, but with something of an appeal in them.

"All right, Archie—for such you shall be to the end of the chapter, whether you lied about it or not. And now let's deal with practical affairs. I'm going to spend the afternoon on that stolen machine we've got back there; you'll hardly know it when you see it again. I'll paint'er white to symbolize our purity. There's an assortment of clothes the boys have left here from time to time—all sizes and ready for any emergency. You can pick'em over while I'm working on the car. I've got a bag of my own stuff stuck around here somewhere." He filled and lighted a pipe, walked toward the kitchen end of the room and kicked a long box. "If you'll just push that aside you'll find a door in the floor—quite a cellar underneath—made it myself. Candles on the shelf there. Don't break your neck on the ladder."

He gathered up several cans of ready-to-use paint, and paused in the doorway to deliver a final admonition.

"If Hoky *should* turn up—tall chap, a little bent in the shoulders, clean, sharp profile—call him Hoky and yell Governor before he shoots. He's very sudden with the gun, that Hoky; a lamentable weakness; spoiled him for delicate jobs, but I'm afraid that at last somebody's got the drop on him."

The cellar was really a cave gouged into the earth and piled with trunks and hand bags stuffed with all manner of loot. There was enough silverware to equip a dozen households, and Archie amused himself by studying the monograms, thinking that quite possibly he was handling spoons that he had encountered on happier occasions in the homes of his friends. The trunks contained clothing in great variety and most of it was new and of good quality. He carried up an armful and found a gray suit that fitted him very well. Another visit yielded shirts, socks and underclothing, a slightly used traveling case with shaving materials and other toilet articles.

46

He bathed in the brook, shaved, dressed and felt like a new being. Only a few hours had elapsed since he walked uprightly in the eyes of all men; now he was a fugitive, and for all he knew to the contrary a murderer. He had accommodated himself with ease to lying and the practice of deceit; and even the taking of human life seemed no longer a monstrous thing. If he were caught in the Governor's company he would have a pretty time of it satisfying a court of his innocence; but he considered his plight tranquilly.

In doffing the clothing he had acquired honestly and substituting stolen raiment, it was almost

as though he were changing his character as well. In transferring his effects from the old to the new pockets he came upon Isabel Perry's note, and grinned as he re-read it. He wondered what Isabel would say if she knew that he had already slipped the leash that bound him to convention and performed even more reckless deeds than she had prescribed for him.

"No callers? Well, I must say you're a credit to our gents' clothing department!" the Governor remarked on his return. "That stuff was accumulated early in the spring by a couple of the boys who had no more sense. Silver, yes; you can melt it and sell it like pig iron; but how absurd to risk your neck stealing mere raiment! Still the word's gone down the line and any of the brethren who're in need of shelter and a change of clothes will find what they want here. You've picked about the best of the lot. What do you make of this? Found it in the car." 47

He extended a crumpled telegram which read:

Bailey Harbor, Me.
New York, June 11, 1917.

Putney Congdon,
Thackeray Club, New York.

I am offering the house for rent. Shall take every precaution to protect my children from your brutality.

A. B. C.

Archie felt the hut whirling round him. What he held was beyond question the reply of Mrs. Congdon to her husband's telegram that had been left lying on the dinner table. And if Congdon had left New York for Bailey Harbor immediately to put into effect his threat to abduct his child, it might have been Congdon he had shot—not Hoky! The Governor, scrubbing the paint from his hands, called over his shoulder:

"An odd message! It had slipped under the seat. Good thing I found it."

"Where did you find that car?" asked Archie with an attempt at indifference.

"Oh, the bloomin' thing was run up under a clump of trees on the back road on the far side of Bailey. I thought maybe it was a stolen car. Hoky and I separated there when the storm started. So I drove the machine to the place you found me waiting for him. Mr. Congdon has probably notified all the world of his sad loss." He held out his hands for Archie's inspection. "This is certainly hard and fast paint, but it did the work all right. The owner of that machine wouldn't know it now. And not more than a spoonful of gas gone out of the tank; so we can make a long jump, Archie." 48

No jump they could make would be long enough, Archie reflected. He was afraid to ask further questions about the car and his senses were numbed by the effort to determine whether it was Hoky he had shot or Mr. Putney Congdon. If his bullet had impinged upon Congdon's person, the man would undoubtedly believe his wife had ordered him murdered, and Archie found no consolation in the conjecture that he had added to Mrs. Congdon's distress. If Congdon wasn't dead he would be sure to make diligent inquiries in the village as to his assailant and the stolen car. The druggist would know who had taken the key and Archie had stated his purpose to walk to the station and take the five eleven train. But beyond Bailey Harbor he saw his alibi crumbling.

The Governor's ceaseless flow of talk fortunately diverted his thoughts to more cheerful channels. He must stick to the Governor, who to be sure showed no inclination to desert him. Indeed the Governor evinced a sincere pleasure in his society, and if he behaved himself he might fill the void created in the man's life by the loss of Hoky. He would remain in hiding until the whole thing blew over, whether it was Hoky or Putney Congdon he had shot in Congdon's house. 49

He obeyed with alacrity a hint that he prepare luncheon; and after this had been consumed the Governor suggested a game of chess, produced a set of ivory chessmen from a cupboard and soon proved himself a skilful player.

"It's wonderful for sharpening the wits," he explained. "When I've got a difficult job on hand I find a game stimulating to my faculties. Let me see, who was that telegram addressed to? Congdon; yes, that's right. Dropped into a chess club in Boston about a month ago and watched a chap playing, highly nervous fellow but a pretty stiff player at that. They called him Congdon all right and he may be the owner of that car. The thought pleases me. Heard him asking for his father, Eliphalet Congdon, who's a chess fiend, too, it appeared. Had heard of him before—the old boy carries his will around in his umbrella just to tantalize his relations, who are all crazy to know what he's going to do with his money. Something pathetic in a man chasing his own father over the country; doesn't gee with our old ideal of the patriarchal system with father at the head of the table serving the whole family from one miserable duck. Ever notice a queer streak of eccentricity in people who toy with the chessmen? Of course you're thinking I'm no exception to the rule, but the thought isn't displeasing to me. That was a neat move—you're waking up, Archie! Well, sir, young Congdon was offering something handsome to any one who'd steal the old man's umbrella so he could get hold of the will. I've sunk pretty low, Archie, but stealing umbrellas is distinctly not in my line!" 50

At the end of two hours the Governor declared that they must take a nap before setting out and turned into one of the berths and was soon snoring. Archie was glad of a chance to be alone with his thoughts, but he found them poor company. After kicking about restlessly for a time he

slept but only to wander through a wild phantasmagoria of crime in which Isabel Perry, dressed precisely as he had seen her at his sister's, led him on from one wild scene to another, clapping her hands with delight at each exploit.

"You are doing splendidly," she laughed, as he turned to her, pistol in hand, after shooting a gigantic policeman with fiery red whiskers. "Really you exceed my expectations. I am proud of you, Mr. Bennett," she was saying when a vigorous shake brought him up standing.

"To gain or lose it all," he stammered rubbing his eyes. But it was not Isabel he was addressing but his confederate, blandly smiling.

"The boy quotes poetry!" the Governor exclaimed. "Archie, you've come in answer to my prayers! Together we shall drink of the fount of Castalia. We shall chum with Apollo and the Muses Nine! But the gods call us elsewhere! We'll snatch a bite and be off! And we've got a job all waiting for us. One of the brotherhood has commissioned me to dig up some boodle he's planted over in New Hampshire. You may recall the incident. Red Leary, a rare boy, who pulled off some big enterprises in Kansas and Missouri a dozen years ago, emerged from Leavenworth and floated into good old conservative New England where he held up an express messenger and sauntered off with fifty thousand dollars in new bank notes fresh from the Treasury. I've been in touch with Red lately—he's been up in Nova Scotia but doesn't like the climate, and he wants his boodle. Do you follow me?"

51

"He hid it somewhere and wants your help in recovering it?"

"Right the first time! In the summer there's a lot of travel north and south and Leary, who's had an honest job up there since he made the haul, is even now wandering down Lake Champlain to meet me. No, Archie, communication through the underworld is much less difficult than you imagine. Regular post offices and that sort of thing. That cash is tucked away in the cellar of a church and by this time tomorrow night we'll have it, all ready for old Red and check the item from our tablets."

"But the numbers of those notes are in every bank in the country," suggested Archie; "the police are only waiting for the bills to get into circulation to pounce on the thief."

"I am more and more delighted with you, my son! That point had given me no little worry. But something will turn up; there will be a way out of the difficulty. Chuck your old duds into the creek and close the windows. We'll hit the long trail!"

CHAPTER TWO

52

I

Out of the woods and once more on a smooth highway the stolen car sped like a frightened ghost through the starry night. The Governor drove with the assurance of a man who knows what he's about. Huddled in a long ulster he had found in the cabin, Archie, whose ideas of motoring had always been extremely conservative, yielded himself more and more to the inevitable. He was no longer a free agent but a plaything of circumstance. In no exaggerated sense he was a captive, a prisoner of the man beside him, whose friendliness was flattering and alarming in a breath!

At any moment they might be held up and subjected to scrutiny and questioning, and Archie experienced a tingle at the prospect; but the Governor had declared with apparent sincerity that he had never been in jail and this in itself was reassuring, for presumably a man who so keenly enjoyed his freedom was a skilled dodger of the law. The Governor, who would have passed anywhere for a successful banker or lawyer, had more of the spirit of the debonair swashbucklers of romance than any other man Archie had known. He might be a great liar, and Archie suspected that he was; and doubts of the man's sanity troubled him not a little; but it sufficed for the moment that his comrade was steering him rapidly away from Bailey Harbor, and so far had managed the business with excellent judgment.

53

Occasionally the Governor lifted his voice in songs of unimpeachable literary and musical quality that rang sonorously above the hum of the engine.

"Who is Sylvia? What is she?
That all our swains commend her,"

he sang through to the end to the old familiar air; followed by "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes."

They struck a stretch of road under repair and slowing up the Governor remarked carelessly as he picked his way through a line of red lanterns:

"Speaking of women, my dear Archie, do you share the joy of the lyric poets in the species?"

"Women?" gulped Archie, as surprised as though he had been asked suddenly his opinion of the *gazella dorcas*.

"The same, Archie. It occurs to me that you have probably had many affairs. A fellow of your coolness and dash couldn't fail to appeal to the incomprehensible sex. I'm thirty-four but I've loved only one woman—that's the solemn truth, Archie. Occasionally small indiscretions, I confess; and I sometimes weakly yield to the temptation to flirt, but with my hand on my heart I declare solemnly that only once have I ever been swayed by the grand passion. And strange as it may seem she's a bishop's daughter, though a saint in her own right! O wonderful! O sublime!"

This confidence, vague as to the identity and habitat of the lady of the Governor's adoration, nevertheless made it incumbent upon Archie to make some sort of reply. The Governor would probably be disappointed in him if he confessed the meagerness of his experiences, and he felt that it would be a grave error to jeopardize his standing with his companion.

"Well, I'm in the same boat," he answered glibly. "There's only one girl for me!"

"Magnificent!" cried the Governor. "I hope she's not beyond your reach like my goddess?"

"Well, I'll hardly say that," Archie replied. "But there are difficulties, embarrassments, you know."

"Possibly your choice of the open road as a career is a bar to marriage? Such situations are always deplorable."

"It is quite the other way round with me," Archie protested. "It was she who put me up to it!"

"What! Your inamorata wanted you to be a crook?" cried the Governor. "She must be a wonderful girl! Shoplifter, perhaps? There are some jolly girls in that business! Or, maybe she's one of these confidence women who play a sure game and usually get by with it?"

"Nothing like that!" cried Archie hastily. "She just fancies the life—thinks it offers me a good chance to prove my mettle. She hates conventionality."

This reference to Isabel Perry, remote and guarded as it was, he defended only on the ground that it was necessary in some way to meet the Governor half-way in his confidences. And what he had said was really true, though to be sure Isabel could hardly be held responsible for the shooting at the Congdon house. He wondered what Isabel would say if she could see him with a criminal beside him, joy-riding in a stolen car. And it was no lie that he sincerely believed that he loved her. No other girl had ever roused him so much, or given him so good reason for standing off and taking a look at himself. His thoughts of her had led him far afield when the Governor remarked ruminatively:

"Do you manage to see her? That's the devil of it in my case! The lady's forbidden to recognize me in any way and the right reverend father is a tart old party and keeps sharp watch of her. You'd think a girl of twenty-two or thereabouts who spends her time in good works for the heathen and runs a Sunday-school class in a slum would be indulged in her admiration for a jolly rogue like me! But the facts are decidedly otherwise. She's never quite brought her nerve to the point of breaking home ties and bolting with me; but she's declined to marry all the bachelor and widower dominies in the paternal diocese on my account. And a young bishop of the brightest prospects. Actually, my dear Archie! There's a steadfast soul for you! But I can't see her and the regular mails are closed to us. Nevertheless we have an arrangement—highly romantic, by which if she ever needs me or thinks I can serve her in any way she's to leave a note in a certain place. It's her own idea and very pretty. Savors of the good old times when bold knights went riding up to the castle and yelled to the flinty-hearted duke inside to lower the draw-bridge and send out his daughter to be married on the spot or he'd be dropped in the moat with all his armor for a sinker."

Archie thought it would be a fine thing if he could make an arrangement with Isabel by which he could hear from her on his travels and he mustered courage to ask the Governor how he managed his line of communication.

"The device is the simplest possible. In our jauntings we shall pass a town where she visits a good deal—the home of an ancient aunt. It's a jolly old place, big grounds, with elms and maples all round, and there's a tea house with a tile floor, and there's a particular blue tile under a bench that can be pried out with a pen knife. That's our post-office, and much safer than registered mail. Of course my business correspondence is a different matter. I pick that up in countless places between here and California—reports of the boys, their hopes and ambitions and hints of schemes for acquiring sudden wealth. If you'd like to use some of these addresses and have mail forwarded I'll be glad to oblige you. You know how fussy the government is about the use of the mail for irregular purposes? Well, it rather tickled me to get some envelopes with S. S. S. P. printed in the corner and the number of a vacant lot in Sioux City as the address. A careless eye would think the initials stood for some sort of learned society but the real translation is Society for the Segregation of Stolen Property. I always use these in communicating with the brotherhood."

"There's a good deal about the business I don't know," said Archie with twinges of envy and admiration. "My bridges are all burned behind me and I'm not getting mail anywhere; but I'll remember your offer."

Further conversation was ended by the swinging of a lantern across the road.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Governor, with a curious rising inflexion. "I've been looking for that."

He slowed up instantly and in a moment halted car. The headlights played upon two men standing belligerently in front of the roadster.

"Good evening, gentlemen!" cried the Governor. "Short of gas or what's the trouble?"

"We're from the Portsmouth police," answered one of the men while the other ran to the rear of the car and swung a lantern over the license tag.

"Maine tag," he shouted.

"Certainly a Maine license," replied the Governor. "We're deputy sheriffs from Cumberland County looking for two crooks who've been robbing houses up our way. Got blank warrants all ready to serve if we catch the scoundrels."

Archie shuddered at the Governor's assurance. The Portsmouth officers manifested the deepest professional interest and sympathy as the Governor with an authoritative air flourished two documents.

"Burglar shot at Bailey Harbor last night," explained one of the officers; "they found his body this morning and we're looking for his accomplice. Guess he didn't come this way; we been on the road all night."

"We've held up everybody that looked suspicious all the way down and haven't seen a soul," the Governor replied in official tones. "Think the chaps we're looking for skipped by train. What did the dead burglar look like?"

"I talked with the Bailey mayor over the telephone and he said the dead man was a big fellow, clean-shaven with the scar of an old knife wound under his left arm. One of the cottagers shot him in his house, but he got away—crawled down on the shore and died. Boston police department's sending a man up to look at the body. Never knew so many burglaries up this way. Must be a whole gang at work." 58

"Certainly looks like it," the Governor assented. "Well, if you see a tall chap and a short thick-set fellow anywhere nail 'em for us. Old criminals with long records. They've been enjoying themselves up our way. The tall one doesn't say much, but the little chap is a smooth talker—can talk himself right out of jail if you give him a chance."

"We'll shoot first and get an explanation afterward if we see 'em," declared the Portsmouth officer, as his companion buttoned up his coat preparatory to getting back into the car.

"Glad to see you, boys!" exclaimed the Governor, backing the stolen machine and then calling a cheery "Good luck!" as he passed their car.

Archie had been sitting pigeon-toed expecting that at any minute the two officers would discover points in the stolen car to arouse their suspicions; but the Governor's jaunty tone had evidently thrown them entirely off guard. He had hoped that the Governor would press for further details as to the killing of the burglar at the Harbor, but as matters stood he had learned nothing except that a burglar had been shot in one of the Harbor cottages and he was again torn with anxiety as to the identity of the man he had fired at in the Congdon house.

The Governor began to chortle after a quick glance at the vanishing red light of the Portsmouth car.

"Not the first time I've used warrants in that way! And they're good warrants too. I plucked a bunch of such literature from a deputy sheriff who got too inquisitive last summer and I had to grab and tie him to a tree up near Moosehead where I'd gone for a conference with some of the boys who were coming out of Canada. But I guess it's a sure thing those Portsmouth chaps were looking for me! I'd been strolling round quite freely with poor Hoky up the shore. If that chap had stuck his finger into the paint this machine would have gone no further. We'll do well to leave the main road for a while, then step briskly into a train somewhere." 59

"Your nerve in describing us—you and me, sitting right there before them—to those officers gave me a chill," confessed Archie. "If you'd talked to them much more we'd have been pinched for sure."

"You flatter the intelligence of the police. There are not a half a dozen detectives worthy of the name in the whole country. Possibly we may have a contest of wits with some of them before we close the season."

It had always been Archie's habit to greet courteously the policemen he passed at night in the Avenue, little dreaming that the day would come when he would view the policing of the world with contemptuous disdain. The Governor spoke of policemen and detectives with pity; they were so stupid, he said, though he admitted under Archie's cross-examination that they could be a nuisance at times.

"Make yourself as conspicuous as possible and they're hardly likely to bother you. There are times, of course, when one must hide, but the mistake our boys make is in hiding in places where the police can call them up by telephone and tell them to pay their own taxi fare to the nearest police station. I call on police chiefs in a purely social way now and then, and talk to them about the best way of reforming crooks. It's their philosophy that no crook ever reforms; an absurd idea, of course. But there's no surer way to ingratiate yourself with a big fat detective than to ask how you can help poor repentant sinners, which gives him a chance to discourage you. There's nothing in it, he warns you. You thank him for his advice and ask him out to lunch. I've bought expensive dinners for some of the highest priced crime-ferrets in the game just for the joy of hearing their pessimism. They're all swollen up with the idea of their superior 60

knowledge of human nature. But it serves a good purpose to cultivate them, for you're perfectly safe so long as you listen and don't try to tell them anything."

II

Toward morning the Governor again had recourse to the Elizabethan bards, then he lapsed suddenly into a meditative mood.

"It's always a bad sign when the season opens with the potting of some of the comrades. When there's one such catastrophe there are bound to be others. Now that Hoky's dead you'll hear of the killing of other burglars. Every householder on the coast will buy himself a gun and wait for a chance to shoot some misguided stranger he finds collecting bric-a-brac in the dark watches of the night. But Hoky's death is a loss to the underworld. At his best he could achieve the impossible. Once he spent a week on the roof of police headquarters in Cincinnati; really he did. Good weather and perfectly comfortable; used to stroll down through the building and go out for food; then back again. Chatted with the chief of detectives about his own crime, which was holding up the paymaster of a big factory. Bless me if Hoky didn't bury the money in a graveyard and hurry uptown and live right there with the whole police system right under him. He was a dear fellow, Hoky! By the way, you're mighty lucky that you didn't get a neat little chunk of lead right through the midriff, fooling with that drug store!"

61

In the rush of his thoughts Archie had forgotten his imaginary exploit at the Harbor drug store and realized that he must have his wits about him if he expected to retain the Governor's regard and confidence. The ease with which the supercreek rode around policemen vastly increased his feeling of reliance in his strange companion, and his only misgiving was that the daring resourceful rogue might abandon him.

As dawn broke the whistle and rumble of a train caused the Governor to stop the car and dive into his pockets for time tables of which he carried a large supply. He scanned one and hummed his satisfaction.

"We'll get rid of this machine right now as there's a station over there a little way where we can pick up a local right into Portsmouth. Don't be nervous. We'll pass for a couple of city men owning farms up here and just riding into town on a little business.

'Virtue is bold and goodness never fearful,'

as well said by old William of Avon. We shall be bold, Archie, but not too bold."

He stopped, opened a gate and ran the car—thoroughly disreputable from its nocturnal bath in mud—through a barnyard and into an empty shed.

62

"Now for a brisk walk! The owner of this place sleeps late—not a sign of smoke from the kitchen chimney. And yet so many students of farm life wonder at the meager earnings of the honest husbandman! However, we've given that chap an excellent roadster and if he keeps his mouth shut he can run it till it falls to pieces for all anybody will ever know it's a stolen vehicle."

They crossed the railroad and were soon buying tickets from a sleepy stationmaster. The Governor talked briskly through the window as the agent stamped their tickets while Archie cowered at the door marveling that any one could face the problems of a precarious existence so gaily.

They alighted at Portsmouth without mishap, and Archie, recalling the primary object of his travels, stepped to the telegraph office and wired his sister as follows:

"Have been motoring with friend; hence delay in reporting. The house will not do. Plumbing in wretched condition, and house generally out of repair. Sorry but you will have to look further."

Then he wrote a telegram to his office in New York explaining that he had been motoring, which accounted for his failure to call for his passage to Banff, thoughtfully adding that the cost of his unused sleeping car tickets should be charged to his personal account. After composing these messages he redeemed his suitcase in the check room and dropped it beside the Governor's battered kit bag on the platform.

"Ah! Burning the wires a little? I hope you are committing no indiscretion, son. I was admiring your baggage; that suitcase of yours would hold a king's wardrobe. We'll drive to the hotel, get a bath and a solid, old-fashioned breakfast, a hearty meal such as old Ike Walton recommended to fishermen eager for the early worm, and plan our further travels."

63

The Governor commanded the best service of the inn, obtaining two adjoining rooms with bath. He registered elaborately as Reginald Heber Saulsbury and wrote Archie down as Ashton Comly, dashingly indicating the residence of both as New York. In response to an inquiry for mail for Mr. Saulsbury the clerk made search and threw out a letter which the Governor opened indifferently and after a glance crumpled into his pocket.

"A note from Red Leary," he explained when they had reached their rooms. "He's slipping along slowly toward Brattleboro, where we're to deliver that loot we've got to pick up. You will pardon my cheek in registering for you; unwarrantable assumption. I choose Ashton Comly as a dignified and distinctive *alias*; sounds a little southern; you may consider yourself for the present a scion of an ancient house of the Carolinas. As for me, Saulsbury's a name I saw chalked on a box-car in the Buffalo yards and Reginald Heber is a fit handle to it. When I was in

prep school we had a lecture by an eminent divine on the life of Reginald Heber, hymn writer, and that sort of thing. I'm rather ashamed of myself for borrowing the name of a man of singularly pure life, but it's the devil in me, lad! It's an awful thing to be born with a devil inside of you, but it could hardly be said that my case is unique. Here you are, also the possessor of a nasty little devil, and obviously, like me, a man of good bringing up. That's why I've warmed to you. You tried pulling rough talk on me at our first meeting, but you've got Harvard written all over you. No, not a word! We are two brunette sheep far astray from the home pastures and not apologizing for our color or previous condition of servitude."

64

Archie had always enjoyed the ease of good inns, and being in a comfortable house with his own effects at hand, he might have forgotten that he was a fugitive if it hadn't been for the propinquity of his companion, who was addressing himself with elaborate ceremonial to the preparation of his bath. The Governor's bag contained an assortment of silk shirts and underwear, a dress suit, a handsome set of toilet articles, and as Archie scrutinized them approvingly the Governor smiled, stepped to the door, and locked it.

"The property of a fastidious gentleman of breeding, you would say! You would never dream that thing has a false bottom!"

Archie would not have dreamed it, but the Governor dumped the remaining contents on the bed, fumbled in the bottom of the bag, lifted a concealed flap, and drew out a long fold of leather.

"You might think it a surgeon's pocket-kit, son, but you would be greatly in error. Drills, jimmies, even a light hammer—and here's a little contrivance that has been known to pluck the secret from most intricate combinations—my own invention. The common yegg habit of pouring an explosive fluid into the cracks of a strong box is obsolete. I hold that such a procedure is vulgar, besides being calculated to make an ugly noise when not perfectly muffled. By George, Archie, it occurs to me that you must have left your kit behind you in that absurd drug store at the Harbor! It is just as well that you are no longer encumbered with those playthings. Trust the Governor in future. I'm yearning for a cool grapefruit, so bestir yourself."

65

"I want to learn all the modern improvements," said Archie, fingering the burglar tools. "I've been playing the game wrong—decidedly wrong!"

"My favorite pupil!" cried the Governor, from the tub in which he was already rolling and splashing. "You shall be my successor when I pass on to other fields. Destiny has thrown you in my path for this very purpose. You will rank high among the crooks of all history, the king of the underworld, feared and loved by the great comradeship who prey upon the world by night!"

Archie felt very humble under these promises and prophecies, and wondered whether there was really deep down in his soul some moral obliquity that the acute master crook had detected and responded to. There had been clergymen and philanthropists among Archie's forebears, but never murderer or thief, and he was half-persuaded that he was the predestined black sheep that he had always heard gave a spot of color to the whitest flock.

At the breakfast table the Governor scanned a local paper and with a chirrup passed it to Archie, pointing to a double-column headline:

A CARNIVAL OF BURGLARY IN MAINE

Archie's eyes fell upon the bizarre photograph of a dead man with which the page was illustrated, and he choked on a fragment of grapefruit as he read the inscription: "Dead Thief, Identity Unknown."

66

It was a ghastly thing with which to be confronted; and his perturbation increased as he read an account of the killing. It was in the house of Mr. Waldo S. Cummings, a cottager, that the man had been shot, the mortal wound being inflicted by the householder's son, after an exciting battle. The dead body of the burglar had been found on the shore and the whole coast was being searched for his accomplice.

"That's poor old Hoky all right," murmured the Governor, buttering a piece of toast reflectively. "How indecent to prop up a corpse that way and take a snapshot merely to satisfy the morbid curiosity of a silly public! As you seem to be entranced with the literary style of our Bailey Harbor correspondent, I shall take the liberty of helping you to a fried egg."

However, Archie's appetite was pretty effectually spoiled by this paragraph:

An odd circumstance, more or less remotely connected with the killing of the burglar in the fashionable colony still remains to be explained. Officer Yerkes shortly before two o'clock, the hour at which the thief was shot in Mr. Cummings's home, saw a man hurrying through Water Street. He bore the appearance of a gentleman, and the officer did not accost him, thinking him a yachtsman from one of the boats in the harbor who had been visiting friends ashore. Yerkes says that the man walked oddly, pausing now and then as though in pain, and was carrying his right hand upon his left shoulder. Owing to the poor lighting of Water Street—a matter that has been a subject of frequent complaint to the city authorities—Yerkes was unable to catch a glimpse of the stranger's features. This morning drops of blood were found on the board walk crossed by the stranger where Officer Yerkes had seen him, and it is believed that this was another of the burglar-gang who was wounded in a struggle somewhere in the interior and was seeking the help of his confederate, presumably the man shot in the Cummings house.

67

As the paper fell from Archie's hand the Governor took it up.

"You seem agitated, Archie! You must learn to conceal your feelings!"

When he had read the paragraph he glanced quickly at Archie, whose fork was beating a queer tattoo on his plate.

"Your work possibly?" murmured the Governor. "Compose yourself. That old lady over there has her eye on you. I'm afraid you lied to me about the drug store, for if you'd done any shooting in that neighborhood you would never have got out of town alive! No!"—he held up his hand warningly—"tell me nothing! But if we've got a murder behind us, we shall certainly be most circumspect in our movements. That's all piffle about Hoky having any confederate except me. And there's not a single one of the great comradeship on this shore—I know that; no one who knows the password of the inner door. You interest me more and more, Archie! I congratulate you on your splendid nerve."

Archie's nerve was nothing he could admire himself, but a second cup of coffee put warmth into his vitals and he recovered sufficiently to pay the breakfast check. If it was Congdon he had shot there was still the hope, encouraged by the newspaper, that the wounded man was in no haste to report his injury to the police. But Archie found little comfort in the thought that somewhere in the world there was a man he had shot and perhaps fatally wounded. 68

He must conceal his anxious concern from the Governor; for more than ever he must rely upon his strange friend for assistance in escaping from the consequences of the duel in the Congdon cottage.

III

"I was thinking," remarked the Governor, after a long reverie, "that it would be only decent for me to run back to Bailey Harbor and attend poor Hoky's funeral."

Archie stared aghast.

"Hoky was my friend," the Governor continued. "The newspaper says he's to be buried in the Potter's Field this afternoon, and it will only set us back a day in our plans. I can imagine how desperately forlorn the thing will be. Some parson will say a perfunctory prayer for a poor devil he believes to have gone straight to the fiery pit and they'll bury him in a pauper's grave. There will be the usual morbidly curious crowd hanging round, wagging their heads and whispering. I shall go, Archie, and you can wait for me. It will take only a few hours and we can spend the night here and resume our journey tomorrow."

"But a stranger appearing there! It's dangerous!" Archie protested. "I wouldn't go back there for a million dollars!"

"Hoky would have taken the chance for me," said the Governor, firmly. "The whole shore teems with tourists, and I'll leave it to your judgment whether any one would take me for a crook. Be careful of my feelings, Archie; I'm just a little emotional today. Hoky and I have run before the hounds too often for me to desert him now. The people up there may think what they please and go to the devil! Hoky had ideals of a sort; he never squealed on a pal; he was as loyal as the summer sun to ripening corn." 69

The Governor's interest in Hoky's obsequies was chivalrous beyond question, but Archie resented being left alone. The Governor's departure struck him in all the circumstances as a base desertion, and forlorn and frightened he locked himself in his room, expecting that any moment the police would batter down the door. The waiting for this catastrophe became intolerable and after an hour of it he went downstairs meditating a walk to the wharves. A young woman stood at the desk talking to the clerk, who scanned the pages of the register and shook his head.

"No Mrs. Congdon has registered here within a week, I'm sure. Will you leave any message?"

She said no and asked about trains.

"Did you want something, Mr. Comly?" the clerk asked courteously.

Archie had paused by the desk, staring open-mouthed at the young woman, who was asking the boy who held her bag to summon a taxi. If he was still possessed of his senses the girl in the gray tailored suit was Isabel Perry. The walls of the hotel office appeared to be tipping toward him. Isabel might have come to Portsmouth in answer to the prayer of his heart, but not Isabel asking for Mrs. Congdon. Isabel had glanced carelessly in his direction as the clerk addressed him as Mr. Comly and he had promptly raised his hat, only to be met with a reluctant nod and a look of displeasure with connotations of alarm. Having dramatized himself as appearing before her, a splendid heroic figure, to receive her praise for his exploits, this reception was all but the last straw to his spirit. Moreover, she was walking toward the door as though anxious to escape from him. 70

He darted after her, resolved to risk another snub before allowing her to slip away ignorant of the vast change that had been wrought in him since their meeting in Washington. A taxi was not immediately forthcoming and she frowned impatiently as he appeared beside her. A frowning Isabel had not entered into his calculations at all; it was a mirthful, light-hearted Isabel he was carrying in his heart. He would affect gaiety; he would let her see that he was a dare-devil, the man she would have him be.

"Really!" he exclaimed, twittering like an imbecile, "isn't it jolly that we've met in this way?"

"I'm not so sure of that! May I ask just why you are here under an assumed name?"

"Well, you know," he began, his lips twitching as he mopped his face, "you told me to throw a brick at the world and I've been following your advice." Under her stoical scrutiny his voice squeaked hysterically. "It's perfectly jolly, the life I'm leading! You never heard of anything so wild and devilish! Miss Perry, behold your handiwork!"

Perspiring, stuttering, with the glitter of madness in his eyes, he was not on the whole an object to be proud of, and there was no pride or joy manifest in Miss Isabel Perry as she observed him critically, with the detachment of one who observes a wild animal in a menagerie. Her silence moved him to further frantic efforts to impress her with the fact that he was now a character molded to her hand. 71

"You were asking for Mrs. Congdon; Mrs. Putney Congdon, I suppose? Well, I certainly could tell you a story if you would give me time! What I don't know about the Congdon family wouldn't make a large book! Ha, ha! But if I had known Mrs. Congdon was a friend of yours I should have acted differently, very differently indeed."

He was attracting attention. The porter, the bell-boy supporting Isabel's bag, and a few passers-by paused, amused by the spectacle of a heated gentleman earnestly addressing a young woman who seemed greatly annoyed by his attentions.

The taxi drew up and she stepped into it, but he landed beside her, flinging a handful of silver on the walk and taking her suitcase on his knees.

"This is unpardonable! If it hadn't been for making a scene I should have told the porter to throw you out!"

His teeth chattered as he tried to throw a conciliatory tone into his speech without losing his air of bravado.

"You know you're responsible for everything! I see life differently, really I do! And this is so beautifully romantic, running into you here, of all places!"

"I think," she said, sweeping him with a look of scorn, "that you've been following me or were put here to watch me!"

"Oh, that's unkind, most unkind! Purely chance,—the usual way, you know! How do you imagine I should be watching you with anything but the noblest intentions?" 72

"You went to Bailey Harbor to look at a cottage for Mrs. Featherstone, didn't you? Putney Congdon was there, wasn't he? And why are you loitering here when you were so eager to get away to the Rockies?"

At the mention of Putney Congdon a laugh, the sharp concatenation of a lunatic caused the driver to glance round apprehensively.

"That's the scream of it, you know!" Archie cried. "I don't know for the life of me whether it was Putney Congdon I shot at the Congdon house or Hoky, the burglar. They're burying Hoky today and my partner in crime—wonderful chap—insisted on going to the funeral. You couldn't beat that! And it's so deliciously funny that you should be looking for Mrs. Congdon, who may be a widow for all I know!"

"A widow!" Isabel, with her hand clutching the door, swung upon him with consternation and fear clearly depicted in her face.

Her astonishment moved him to greater hilarity. Seeing that he had at last impressed her, he redoubled his efforts to be entertaining.

"Oh, that's the mystery just at present, whether poor old Putney is dead or not! No great loss, I imagine! But where do you suppose Mrs. Congdon went to hide her children from the brute?"

"That's exactly what I suspected!" she exclaimed furiously. "You are waiting here to find that out! How can you play the spy for him! You talk about shooting a man! Why, you haven't the moral courage to kill a flea! The kindest interpretation I can put upon your actions is to assume that you are hopelessly mad." 73

They had reached the station, and she jumped out and snatched her bag. He gave the driver a five dollar bill and dashed across the platform only to see her vanish into the vestibule of a Boston train just as it was drawing out.

He walked to the water front firmly resolved to drown himself, but his courage failing he yielded himself luxuriously to melancholy reflections. Instead of expressing delight at finding him reveling in villainy, Isabel had made it disagreeably clear that she not only was not delighted but that she thought him a dreadful liar, a spy upon her actions and possibly other things equally unflattering. Why she should think him capable of spying upon her movements, he did not know, nor was he likely to learn in the future that hung darkly before him. As he pondered there was nothing more startling in the fact that he had not hurried on to Banff than that she should be in Portsmouth when she had told him she was leaving Washington immediately for the girls' camp in Michigan.

Congdon was a name of evil omen. What business could Isabel have with that unhappy lady that would cause her to delay her departure for the West? His intimations that Putney Congdon might be dead had filled her with horror, and yet she had hinted at his sister's dinner that the taking of human life was a small matter. That a girl so wholly charming and persuasive at a dinner table could be so stern and unreasonable at a chance meeting afterward, shook his

confidence in her sex, which that memorable meeting had done much to establish upon firm ground. He had been wholly stupid and tactless in pouncing upon her with what he realized, under the calming influences of the brisk sea air, must have struck her as the vaporings of a dangerous lunatic. He had never been clever; he smarted now under the revelation that all things considered he was an immitigable ass.

74

He went back to the hotel bitter but fortified by a resolution that nothing should check him now in his desperate career. He had quarreled with the inspiration of his new life, but in the end Isabel should have reason to know how unjust she had been. It was something after all to have seen her, perplexed, anxious and angry though she had been. She was still the most wonderful girl he had ever met, the more remarkable for the fact that now she had gone he had not the slightest idea of what had brought her into the strange world inhabited by the quarreling and fleeing Congdons. But men had suffered before for love of woman and he would bear his martyrdom manfully, keeping the humiliating interview carefully from the Governor.

The Governor returned from Hoky's funeral somewhat wistful, but he described the burial with his accustomed enthusiasm.

"It will be one of the satisfactions of my life that I went," he declared. "They didn't have the decency to bring in a minister—fancy it! Blessed if I didn't step into the breach and make a few remarks myself! I did, indeed, Archie, right there in the undertaker's joint, with a lot of bumpkins staring! No man sinks so low that he hasn't got some good in him; that was the burden of my argument. The sheriff came up and wrung my hand when it was all over. He had heard my little sermon and I suppose thought I was some rich and influential philanthropist; so I let it go at that."

75

IV

The next morning he announced Cornford as their next stopping point, a town, he explained, whose history thrust far back into colonial times. When they were seated in the parlor car he tossed a bundle of magazines into Archie's lap.

"It will amuse you to know that one of the policemen we met on the road looking for Hoky's accomplice is standing on the platform. He's just inspected the day coaches;—never occurs to him that knaves of our degree travel de luxe."

He yawned as the train started and drew a small volume from his pocket.

"I shall lose myself in old Horatius Flaccus for an hour. It's odd but I always do my best concentrating with a poet before me. And what you said yesterday about those new bank notes Leary has hid up here disturbed me just a little. You can't trust fellows of old Leary's type with a matter so delicate as launching new money, where the numbers, as you so sagely remarked, are being looked for by every bank teller in America. I have a hunch that something unusual will happen before the summer's over, and we must be primed for every emergency."

Archie saw that it was really a volume of the Horatian odes in which his singular companion had become engrossed. The Governor was utterly beyond him and he stared out moodily at the flying landscape, hating himself cordially as he thought of Isabel Perry and living over again the exciting moments in the Congdon house that preluded this strange journeying with a scholarly criminal who evidently derived the deepest satisfaction from the perusal of Latin poetry. The Governor broke in upon his reflections occasionally to read him a favorite passage or to ask questions, flattering to Archie's learning, as to possible interpretations of the venerated text.

76

The Cornford Inn proved to be a quaint old tavern, modernized, and its patrons, the Governor explained, were limited to cultivated people who sought the peace and calm of the hills. After a leisurely luncheon they took their coffee in a pleasant garden on one side of the house.

"One might be in France or Italy," remarked the Governor, lighting a cigar. "An ideal place; socially most exclusive, and I trust we shall have no reason to regret our visit."

"That depends," said Archie, inspecting the end of his cigarette, "on whether we are transferred to the county jail or not."

"Your apprehensions are as absurd as they are groundless, my dear boy. We could cash checks for any reasonable sum in this caravanserai merely on our appearance as men of education and property. Even in stolen clothes you look like a capitalist."

Two men came into the garden and seated themselves at a table on the other side of a screen of shrubbery. They ordered coffee and one of them remarked upon the recent prevalence of crime in New England.

"A thief was shot at Bailey Harbor night before last and there seems to be a band of crooks operating all along the coast."

77

"We need a better type of men in Congress," said the Governor in a loud tone, with a wink at Archie. "There's a steady deterioration in the quality of our representatives in both houses."

"You are right," Archie responded, remembering with a twinge of conscience his congressman brother-in-law.

The Governor nodded to Archie to keep on talking, while he played the rôle of eavesdropper.

"You oughtn't to have carried that cash up here," came in a low tone from the hedge. "The old

man is a fool or he wouldn't have suggested such a thing."

"Well, he wrote that he was coming here to spend a week and in his characteristic fashion said if I wanted his stock I could bring the currency here and close the transaction. The Congdons are all a lot of cranks, you know. This old curmudgeon carries a small fortune around with him all the time, and never accepts a check in any transaction."

The Governor grew more eloquent in his attempt to convince Archie of the decadence of American statesmanship, while their unseen neighbors, feeling themselves secure, continued their discussion of the errand that had brought them to Cornford.

"You're paying the old skunk a big price for his shares!"

"Well, I've got to keep them out of hostile hands," said the second voice irritably. "I don't like the idea of carrying yellowbacks around in a satchel just to humor a lunatic. And he's had the nerve to write that he won't be here until tomorrow!"

"But the cash—"

"Oh, it's all safe enough. No one knows but that I'm here just for a rest."

"Let's stroll about a little," said the Governor. "We're not getting our usual amount of exercise and there's a good bit of colonial history tucked away in Cornford."

He led the way through the garden to the street, and bade Archie proceed slowly to the post office while he walked toward the main entrance of the inn.

Archie was buying stamps for which he had no immediate use when the Governor joined him.

"These chaps were quite providentially in the office calling for their keys so I had no trouble in identifying them. Seebrook and Walters are the names. Seebrook, the older chap, has his daughter with him. They have rooms on the floor below us."

"You don't think they've got any considerable sum of money with them, do you?" asked Archie breathlessly.

"That remains to be seen! Did you notice their reference to a man named Congdon? Singular how I keep running into members of that tribe. I'm beginning to think there's a fatality in the name!"

Archie glanced at him covertly. He too felt that there was something decidedly strange in the way the name haunted him, but the Governor had picked up a local guide book and was pointing out objects of interest as they wended their way along the street. Archie's wits had never been so taxed as since he had fired a pistol, more or less with intent to kill, in the house of Putney Congdon, but it was incredible that the Governor could know aught of that matter. The Governor, however, was manifesting the greatest interest in Cornford history, halting citizens to propound inquiries as to landmarks, and pausing before the town hall to make elaborate notes of a tablet struck in memory of the first selectmen.

When they reached the green, which the town's growth had left to one side, he sat down on a bench and directed attention to a church whose history he read impressively from the book.

"That carries us back quite a way beyond the Revolution. No longer used but reverently preserved for its associations. And in the cellar of that simple edifice where the early colonists used to hide from predatory Indians, is hidden fifty thousand dollars. A suitcase all ready to snatch, thrust under the bin where the worshippers of old kept the Sunday wood!"

"I suppose it might rot there and nobody be the wiser?" muttered Archie, glancing at the venerable meeting house with awakened interest.

"Quite true! But it must be saved from destruction. We mustn't fail Leary; he's put his trust in me. It's our job to recover the funds, and if I never ask you to join me in anything more perilous you'll have occasion to congratulate yourself. There are two automobiles at the church door now—tourists, having a look at the relic, and their presence will neatly cover our visit."

They found half a dozen visitors roaming through the church, opening and closing the doors of the old pews. Archie was accosted by a stout lady in quest of just the information he had gained from the guide book. He courteously answered her questions and found the other sightseers pressing round to share in his lecture on the Cornford meeting house. When he had imparted everything he knew and added a few fanciful touches to improve the story, he turned to look for the Governor.

"If you want to see the cellar, don't tumble down the steps as I did," called a cheery voice from the entry; "it's an abominable hole!"

Being an abominable hole the visitors laughingly surged toward the door to explore it, and the Governor struck matches to light their descent.

He brushed the dust from his knees and mopped his face until the voices below receded.

"All safe and sound! Stuck it out through a back window into a lilac bush, and we'll pick it up at our leisure. You may not have noticed that this old pile is built up against an abandoned mill. We shall loiter back to the inn carrying the loot quite boldly with us. You might lug it yourself as I'm a little warm from digging the thing up—Leary had burrowed under the wood bin and hidden it for keeps."

To be sauntering in broad daylight through the principal thoroughfare of a serene New England town carrying a suitcase filled with stolen money was still another experience that made Archie

feel that he had indeed entered upon a new manner of life. The Governor with a spray of lilac in his lapel had never been in better spirits.

"That's a very decent suitcase and you can hand it to a bell hop and bid him fly with it to your room. You were a little short of linen and made a few purchases—the thing explains itself. Who could challenge us, Archie! We'd make a plausible front in Buckingham palace." 81

They followed the suitcase upstairs, where the Governor unlocked it with an implement that looked like a nut pick. Archie's last vestige of doubt as to the Governor's powers vanished when he saw that the bag was filled with packages of bank notes in small denominations.

"One might object to so many of the little fellows," remarked the Governor, "but on the whole we have no reason to complain of Leary's work. The rascal is anxious to settle down in some strictly moral community and open a confectionery shop—one of these little concerns where the neighborhood children bring in their pennies for sodas and chewing-gum, with a line of late magazines on the side. A kind, genial man is Leary, and he swears he'll abandon the road for good."

Archie picked up several bundles of the bills and turned them over, reflecting that to his other crimes he had now added the receipt and concealment of stolen money.

"Dinner in an hour, Archie," said the Governor, who was drawing a diagram of some sort on a sheet of inn paper. "The evening meal is rather a ceremonial affair here and as I notice that you carry a dress suit we shall follow the conventions. Meanwhile I wish you would look in at Barclay & Pedding's garage, just around the corner, and ask if a car has been left there for Mr. Reginald H. Saulsbury. You needn't be afraid of getting pinched, for the machine was acquired by purchase and I'm merely borrowing it from Abe Collins, *alias* Slippery Abe, the king of all con men. Abe only plays for suckers of financial prominence who'd gladly pay a second time not to be exposed and he's grown so rich that he's retiring this summer. He was to send a machine to me here so I could avoid the petty annoyances of travel in a stolen car. We'll leave here like honest men, with the landlord bowing us away from the door." 82

That there should indeed be a handsome touring car at Barclay & Pedding's, awaiting the pleasure of Mr. Saulsbury, increased enormously Archie's respect and admiration for the Governor. It was a first-class machine worth four or five thousand dollars as it stood, and Archie was cheered by the thought that he enjoyed the friendship of a man who satisfied all his needs with so little trouble.

When he returned the Governor was dressing and manifested no surprise that the car awaited his pleasure.

"Yes, of course," he remarked absently. "You can always rely on Abe. It's time for you to dress, and we must look our prettiest. I caught a glimpse of Miss Seebrook strolling through the garden with her papa a bit ago. It may be necessary for you to cultivate her a trifle. A little flirting now and then is relished by the wisest men."

"If you think—" began Archie warily.

"Of course I think!" the Governor interrupted. "We've got fifty thousand dollars of nice new bills here and we're not going to the trouble of staining and mussing them up for safe circulation if we can dispose of them *en bloc*, so to speak, in all their pristine freshness. There's to be a dance in the dining hall as soon as dinner is over. The house is quite full and we shall mingle freely in the merry throng. I'll go down ahead of you and test the social atmosphere a little." 83

When Archie reached the parlors half an hour later he found the Governor engaged in lively conversation with a gentleman he introduced immediately as Mr. Seebrook.

"And Mr. Walters, Mr. Comly, and—"

"Mr. Saulsbury and Mr. Comly, my daughter, Miss Seebrook."

The girl had just joined her father and his friend. She acknowledged the introduction with an inclusive smile and nod. Archie's spirits, which drooped whenever he was deprived of the Governor's enlivening presence for a few minutes, were revived by this fresh demonstration of the rascal's daring effrontery. Seebrook and Walters were apparently accepting him at face value in the fashion of socially inclined travelers who meet in inns. To Archie's consternation the Governor began describing Hoky's funeral, which he did without neglecting any of its poignant features or neglecting to mention the few remarks he had offered to relieve the bleakness of the burglar's obsequies.

"That was pretty fine, wasn't it?" Miss Seebrook remarked to Archie. "Any one would know that Mr. Saulsbury is just the kind of man who would do that."

"There's no limit to his kindness and generosity," Archie replied with unfeigned sincerity.

"You are motoring?" asked the girl. "We drove through here last fall to see the foliage,—it's perfectly wonderful, but I didn't know it could be so sweet at this season. I adore summer; don't you adore summer, Mr. Comly?"

Miss Seebrook was the most obvious of sentimentalists and Archie thought instantly how different she was from Isabel. But being thrown in the company of any girl made possible the concrete comparison of Isabel with the rest of womankind very greatly to Isabel's advantage. Miss Seebrook was about Isabel's age, but she spoke in a languid purring voice that was wholly unlike Isabel's crisp, direct manner of speech. Her father had come up on some tiresome business matter, bringing Mr. Walters, who, it seemed, was his attorney, and she confessed that 84

they talked business a great deal, which bored her immensely.

"I judge, Mr. Comly, that you are one of those fortunate men who can throw business to the winds and have a good time without being bothered with telegrams from a hateful office."

Her assumption flattered Archie. As his immediate concern was to escape the consequences of his folly in shooting a fellow mortal, he assured her that he was always glad of an opportunity to fling business cares aside. She explained that the inn was much affected by cottagers in neighboring summer settlements and that many of the diners had motored in for the dance. Seebrook and Walters were undoubtedly enjoying the Governor, proof of which was immediately forthcoming when Seebrook suggested that they should all dine together.

"You do us much honor," said the Governor. "Mr. Comly and I shall be pleased, I'm sure."

Archie had often eaten alone in just such pleasant little inns from sheer lack of courage to make acquaintances, but it seemed the most natural thing in the world for the Governor to establish himself on terms of intimacy with perfect strangers. Their party was the merriest in the room, and Archie was aware of envious glances from other tables that were not enlivened by a raconteur so affable and amusing as the Governor. 85

"It's so nice to stumble into a place like this where every one may speak to every one else and be *sure*, you know!" said Miss Seebrook.

"It does rather strengthen one's faith in the human race," Archie agreed, reflecting that if she had known that upstairs in the amiable Mr. Saulsbury's room reposed fifty thousand dollars of stolen money her confidence in the exclusiveness of the Cornford Inn would have been somewhat shaken. But the ironic humor of the whole thing overmastered his sense of guilt and he managed to hold the table for a little while without the Governor's assistance as he talked of the French chateaux with honest knowledge. The Seebrooks had motored through the chateau country the year before the war and as Archie had once made the excursion with an architect he was on firm ground.

"There's a thorough man for you!" exclaimed the Governor proudly when Archie supplied some dates in French history for which Miss Seebrook fumbled.

They continued their talk over coffee served in the garden. When the music began Seebrook and Walters recalled a bridge engagement and the Governor announced that he must look up an old friend who lived in Cornford. He produced a piece of paper on which he had scratched one of the diagrams he was eternally sketching as though consulting a memorandum of an address.

"I shall be back shortly," he said as they separated in the office.

Seebrook and Walters found their bridge partners and Archie and Miss Seebrook joined the considerable company that were already dancing. Only a few days earlier nothing could have persuaded Archie to dance, but now that he was plunged into a life of adventure the fear of dropping dead from excessive exercise no longer restrained him. Miss Seebrook undoubtedly enjoyed dancing and after a one-step and a fox-trot she declared that she would just love to dance all night. It had been a long time since Archie had heard a girl make this highly unoriginal remark, and in his own joy of the occasion he found it tinkling pleasantly in remote recesses of his memory. As Miss Seebrook pouted when he suggested that she might like him to introduce some of the other men and said that she was perfectly satisfied, he hastened to assure her that the rôle of monopolist was wholly agreeable to him. In this mad new life a flirtation was only an incident of the day's work, and Miss Seebrook was not at all averse to flirting with him. 86

She thought it would be fine to take a breath of air, and gathering up her cloak they went into the garden for an ice. This refreshment ordered he was conscious of new and pleasant thrills as he faced her across the table. His youth stirred in him again. It was reassuring to have this proof that one might be a lost sheep dyed to deepest black and yet indulge in philandering under the June stars with a pretty girl—a handsome stately girl she was!—unrestrained by the thought that she would run away screaming for the police if she knew that he was a man who shot people and consorted with thieves and very likely would die on the gallows or be strapped in an electric chair before he got his deserts. His mind had passed through innumerable phases since he left his sister's house in Washington, and now as he shamelessly flirted with Miss Seebrook he knew himself for an unmoral creature, a degenerate who was all the more dangerous for being able to pass muster among decent folk. He had always imagined that citizens of the underworld were limited in their social indulgences to cautious meetings in the back rooms of low saloons, but this he had found to be a serious mistake. It was clear that the élite among the lawless might ride the high crest of social success. 87

His only nervousness was due to the fear that he might betray himself. It was wholly possible that Miss Seebrook knew some of his friends; in fact she mentioned a family in Lenox that he knew very well. She was expert in all the niceties of flirtation and he responded joyously, as surprised and delighted as a child with a new toy at the ease with which he conveyed to her the idea that his life had been an immeasurable dark waste till she had dawned upon his enraptured vision. Her back was toward the inn and across her shoulders he could see the swaying figures in the ball room. The light from a garden lamp played upon her head and brightened in her fair hair.

Miss Seebrook was speaking of music, and reciting the list of operas she loved best when Archie's gaze was caught and held by a shadow that flitted along an iron fire escape that zigzagged down from the fourth to the first story of the long rambling inn.

"You seem very dreamy," remarked Miss Seebrook. "I know how that is for I can dream for

hours and hours."

88

"Yes; reverie; just floating on clouds, on and on," Archie replied, though the shadow moving on and on along the side of the inn was troubling him not a little.

"The stars were never so near as they are tonight," she said. "Was it Shakspere or Longfellow who said, 'bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art!'"

It was neither, Archie knew, but he said he thought the line occurred in Hamlet.

"Do you think Hamlet was insane?" she asked.

"I sometimes think I am," replied Archie, watching the shadow on the inn wall.

"Why, Mr. Comly, how absurd!"

It was really not so absurd at the moment, but he again had recourse to the poets, devoutly praying that she would not look toward the inn. He had surmised that the Governor's declared purpose to call on an old friend in Cornford was merely to cover his withdrawal from the party; but that he could have meditated a predatory excursion through the inn had not entered into Archie's speculations as to his friend's absence. There was no mistaking the figure that had moved swiftly down the ladder. The Governor for a man of his compact build was amazingly agile and quick of foot and hand. He was now creeping along the little balcony at the third floor. He paused a moment and then vanished into an open window. The Governor had said that the Seebrook party had rooms just under their own; but—

"I have chosen a star for you," Miss Seebrook was murmuring.

Archie, in his preoccupation with the Governor's strange performance, was so slow to respond that Miss Seebrook, thinking that he was deliberating as to which star he should bestow upon her in return, generously broadened the scope of her offer.

89

"You shall have Orion or Arcturus with his sons."

"I never could find Orion even with a sky map and a telescope," Archie roused himself to protest.

Something very unlike a star but more like the glimmer of a match in a room on the third floor held his fascinated gaze, and it was difficult to be interested in the conversation of even so pretty a girl as Miss Seebrook when an audacious thief was at work only a little way beyond her. For all Archie knew it was her own room that the venturesome Governor was ransacking and at that very moment he might be stuffing his pockets with her belongings.

Venus, Archie gravely announced, had always been his favorite star; and he set her to searching for it in the bright expanse while he watched the Governor reappear, bending low as he crept out of the window and ascended rapidly to the fourth floor. He had risked detection by a dozen people who were idling about the garden. The intermission was over and music floating through the open windows again invited to the dance.

"We must go back, I suppose," said Miss Seebrook with a sigh.

"I shall never forget this," declared Archie, hoping with all his heart that there would be no occasion for regretting the hour spent in the garden.

They danced again, and in the handclapping that followed the first number he turned to find the Governor, calm and with no marks of his escapade upon him, bowing before Miss Seebrook.

90

"Really, I must break in! Just a little fragment of this waltz! More capricious and jazzy measures have their day but the waltz endures forever! Don't frown at me that way, Comly! My old friend kept me longer than I expected and the night grows old."

The Governor danced with smoothness and ease. Archie, his back to the wall, saw the rogue laughing into his partner's face as lightheartedly as though he had not, within a few minutes, imperiled his freedom in an act of sheerest folly.

He brought the girl back to Archie, and then ingratiated himself with a shy elderly woman who was having a difficult time finding partners for her granddaughters. The Governor introduced himself with a charming deference, a winning courtesy, that gained her heart at once. He not only danced with her young charges but found other partners for them. Archie marveled; a man of the Governor's intelligence and address could hardly have failed to gain a high place in the world, yet his performance on the fire escape proved all the man had said of himself as an outlaw. The Governor was not one man but a dozen different men and in despair Archie gave up trying to account for him.

V

At midnight Seebrook and Walters came in from their card game.

"We've certainly had the best of you, papa! It has been a wonderful evening!" exclaimed Miss Seebrook.

"I knew it was going to be a good party," said the Governor warmly. "I regretted every moment I had to spend with my friends in Putnam Street. And yet should auld acquaintance be forgot, you know!"

91

"You were perfectly lovely to that nice old lady and her frightened little granddaughters. They

will never forget you as long as they live! And I'm afraid Mr. Comly will always remember me as the girl who kept him all to herself for a whole evening."

"I didn't make it a hard job for you," Archie protested. "I shall mark the evening with a white stone on the long journey of life."

"I hope, papa, you will add a word to my invitation to these gentlemen to come and see us at home."

"Certainly," Seebrook assented cordially, drawing out his card-case.

"We shall be ready for a little sociability," remarked the Governor, "when we return from the West. We are motoring from Portland to Portland, with a few little side trips like this, and we ought to have some good yarns to tell when we get back."

"You are not running off immediately?" asked Walters. "Mr. Seebrook and I are really here on business, but we've been delayed and may have another day's time to kill. We'd be glad to play around with you."

"It's most lamentable," replied the Governor, "that we've got to run away tomorrow. It's now the hour when ghosts walk but we shall see you in the morning."

In Archie's room the Governor hummed one of his favorite ballads as he slipped out of his coat and picked a speck from his snowy waistcoat. Then he produced a tiny phial from his pocket and touched his upper lip with a drop of the contents.

"It's a very curious thing about perfumes," he said meditatively. "I carry an assortment of these little bottles. The psychology of the thing is most interesting. Fragrances differ astonishingly as to their reactions upon the nerves. Only two hours ago I fortified myself for a little foolishness that required nevertheless a steady hand by sniffing the bouquet of a rare perfume known only to a few connoisseurs,—a compound based upon attar of roses. But this that I have just had recourse to is soothing and sedative. It is made from a rare flower found only in the most inaccessible fastnesses of the Andes, and is believed by the natives to be a charm against death. At some time I shall be glad to show you a treatise on the plant written by an eminent Spanish botanist. Its effect upon me is instantaneous and yet it might serve you quite differently, as our sensitiveness to these reactions of the olfactory nerve are largely idiosyncratic. Let me tap your upper lip with the cork—ah!"

92

There was nothing more repulsive to Archie than perfumes and he impatiently jerked his head away. The odor proved, however, to be exceedingly delicate and not the miserable chemical concoction he dreaded. But he was not to be thwarted in his purpose to learn just what the Governor meant by endangering their security so recklessly. He slammed the transom tight and drew down the shades.

"Well?" he demanded sharply.

"It is evident," remarked the Governor good-humoredly, "that you do not react to the soothing influences of the *rosa alta*. You seem perturbed, anxious, with slight symptoms of *paralysis agitans*. Pray be seated and I will do my best to restore your peace of mind."

93

"You needlessly exposed yourself to observation by sneaking down the fire escape of this hotel—I know that!"

"My dear boy, I was merely gathering a few blossoms of the crimson rambler from the ancient walls of the inn. You may have noted that I wore a spray of buds in my lapel when I joined you in the ball room."

"You had no right to plunder the house without warning me! I don't relish the idea of being jailed for your foolishness. And those people were mighty decent to us! If they knew we were two crooks—!"

"They merely yielded to our charms! They feel themselves honored by our acquaintance! Now seat yourself on the bed and I'll tell you the whole story. When I left you I hastened into the village, bought a stick of shaving soap in a drug store and a few cigars in a tobacconist's. In each place I conversed with the clerk, thus laying ample ground for an alibi. Hurrying back to the inn I avoided observation by entering by the side door, skipped up to our rooms—and there you are! I did run a chance, of course, in climbing down the ladder, but all's well that ends well. I exchanged our new bank notes for sixty well-worn one-thousand-dollar gold certificates negotiable in all parts of the republic. That means a net gain in the Red Leary trust fund of ten thousand dollars. Seebrook had the stuff in the collar tray of his trunk. As the trunk was otherwise empty and the lock a special one that gave me a bit of trouble he's not likely to bother with it until old man Congdon turns up to close the stock transaction. When he opens it he will find fifty thousand dollars of good bills neatly piled there and if he has the imagination of a canary he will think the fairies have played a trick on him!"

94

"My God!" moaned Archie. "You don't think you can get away with this!"

"I think," returned the Governor imperturbably, "that we must and will get away with it." His emphasis on the plural pronoun caused Archie to cringe. "It strikes me as highly amusing that we have unloaded those bills of Leary's on a good sport like Seebrook. As I locked that stuff in his trunk I got to laughing—really, I did—and a chambermaid roaming the hall must have heard me, for the key rattled in the lock just as I slipped out of the window. There's Leary's suitcase and I've packed it with our soiled linen and stuck in a pair of shoes for weight. Seebrook's legal tender is neatly rolled up in my best silken hose in my kit bag. Hark! There's Seebrook tumbling

into his bed, which is just beneath mine!"

"You're getting me in pretty deep," mumbled Archie dejectedly.

"How about those blood stains on the sidewalk at Bailey Harbor?" asked the Governor in his blandest tones. "When you speak of getting in deep you forget that some one besides Hoky was shot back yonder. You came to me red-handed from a deed of violence, and I took you in and became your protector, asking no questions. It's the basest ingratitude for you to whimper over a small larceny when you have added assault or murder to the liabilities of our partnership! But don't forget for a moment that we're pals and pledged to see each other through."

The reference to the blood stains reported by the Bailey Harbor police threw Archie back instantly upon the Governor's mercy. Complicity in the robbery of Seebrook was as nothing compared with the haunting fear that the man he had shot in the Congdon house had died from the wound. Unable to determine this question he was floundering in a veritable sea of crimes. The Governor was undressing with provoking indifference to his companion's perturbation.

95

"Sleep, lad, sleep! You may be sure that nothing will harm us tonight, and I have faith that more stirring adventures are ahead of us. I forgive you your qualms and quavers, the pardonable manifestations of youth and inexperience. We walk in slippery places but we shall not stumble, at least not while the Governor keeps his head!"

Nothing appealed to Archie as of greater importance than the retention by his companion of the head that now lay chastely upon a snowy pillow. A handsome, well-formed head, a head suggestive of family and the pride of race, though filled with the most complicated mental machinery with which a human being had ever been endowed.

"Put out the lights and get you to your couch!" the Governor muttered drowsily.

The man certainly wore his crimes lightly. He was sound asleep before Archie had got into his pajamas.

VI

When they reached the dining-room at ten the next morning they found Seebrook and Walters just finishing breakfast. Miss Seebrook was having coffee in her room, her father explained in response to Archie's polite inquiries.

96

"We're hoping to get away this afternoon," he continued. "It will take only a few minutes to transact our business when the man I'm waiting for appears; but he's an uncertain quantity, and there's no telling when he'll show up. But we're having a good time and I shan't mind another day or two. If only you gentlemen would bear us company!"

"Ah, you are very kind!" said the Governor; "but we must resume our ramble toward the Pacific. We are more or less dated up for little entertainments on the way."

"I certainly envy you," said Walters ruefully. "Seebrook and I belong to the large class of men who work for a living."

"Well, Comly and I have our own small jobs," the Governor protested. "We're interested in some water power schemes through the West and hope to make our expenses."

Seebrook and Walters lingered in the office as Archie and the Governor paid their account. As they waited for their car to be sent round from the garage a machine drew up and discharged a short, wiry, elderly man in a motor coat that was much too large for him. He was accompanied by an enormous amount of luggage and from the steps of the inn gave orders in a high piping voice as to the manner of its disposal. As the various pieces were hustled into the office he enumerated them in an audible tone as though inviting the cooperation of all the loungers in making an inventory of his effects. When this had been concluded Seebrook stepped up and accosted the newcomer.

"Mr. Congdon, I am very glad to see you. I hope you are not worn out by your drive."

97

"Worn out!" snapped the little man. "Do you imagine a run of a hundred miles would fatigue a man of my constitution? I assure you that you are greatly mistaken if you think I am feeling my age. Seventy! And I don't feel a day over fifty, not a day, sir. But I shall rest for a few hours as a precaution, a mere precautionary measure and be able to meet you for our little business at two-thirty sharp."

"That will suit me perfectly," replied Seebrook.

Archie hung about impatiently waiting for the Governor to make his farewells to the old lady and her granddaughters on whom he had expended his social talents at the dance. Mr. Congdon was quarreling with the clerk over the location of the room he had reserved; he wanted no room with a western exposure as such rooms were always so baked by the afternoon sun that they were as hot as tropical jungles at night. Having frightened the clerk into readjusting the entire registration to accommodate him, he demanded to know whether his son, Mr. Putney Congdon, was stopping in the house.

"Mind you, I have no reason to believe he *is* here, but I've been asking for him everywhere along the road."

Assured that Mr. Putney Congdon was not in the inn and hadn't been there within the recollection of the office staff, the senior Congdon exploded violently upon Seebrook and

Walters.

"Things have come to a pretty pass in this topsy turvy world when a man can't find his own son! For three days I've been wiring his clubs and all other places he could possibly be without result. And I have learned that his wife has left Bailey Harbor and the house there is closed. Closed! How dare they close that house when I was about to pay them a visit? I spent thirty-five dollars last night in telephoning trying to find out what's become of my son and his family and I got nothing for my money—nothing!"

Seebrook and Walters expressed their sympathy in mild tones that roused the old gentleman to greater fury.

"Can a whole family be obliterated and no trace left behind? Is it possible that they've been murdered in their beds, servants and all, and the police not yet aware of it?"

At the mention of murder Archie began stealthily feeling his way along the cigar counter to a water cooler. He drank two glasses of ice water while he listened to Eliphalet's grievances against all things visible and invisible. There seemed to be no escaping from the Congdons and here was the father of Putney boldly publishing to the whole state of New Hampshire his fear that his son had been murdered.

"I called up everybody I could think of at Bailey Harbor, that dismal rotten hole, and got nothing for my trouble. Nothing! A fool druggist, who pretended to know everything about the place, had the effrontery to tell me Putney hadn't been there for a week and declared that his family had left! Why should they leave? I ask you to tell me why my daughter-in-law should leave a comfortable house at the shore at this season and tell nobody her destination?"

As no member of his growing audience of guests, clerks and bell-hops could answer his questions, Mr. Congdon swept the whole company with a fierce, disdainful glare and began mobilizing the entire day watch of porters and bell-boys to convey his luggage to his room. One of the young gentlemen was engaged at the moment in winking at the girl attendant at the cigar counter when the agitated traveler thrust the point of an enormous umbrella into his ribs with a vigor that elicited a yell of surprise and pain.

The concentration of the hotel staff upon the transfer of Mr. Congdon's luggage to his room left the Governor and Archie to manage the removal of their own effects to the waiting car. Seebrook and Walters obligingly assisted, laughing at Congdon's eccentricities.

"The arrival of that enchanting old crank increases my grief at leaving," declared the Governor. "A delightful person. The son he mentioned with so much feeling was in Boston looking for *him* a month ago."

Seebrook seized the Governor's kit bag containing the sixty thousand dollars and carried it out to the car. The sight of it in Seebrook's hand gave Archie sensations of nausea that were not relieved by the grin he detected on the Governor's face. Within an hour or two at most the substitution and robbery would be discovered and the country would ring with the demand for their detention. But the Governor was carrying off the departure with his usual gaiety. It was clear that he had made the most favorable impression upon Seebrook and Walters; and in the cordial handshaking and expressions of hope for future meetings Archie joined with the best spirit he could muster. A cheery good-by caused him to look up. Miss Seebrook with a red rose in her hand waved to him from her window.

As he lifted his cap she dropped the rose with a graceful sweep of the arm.

"Like the old stage coach days!" cried the Governor, applauding Archie's catch.

He jumped into the machine and Archie scrambled after him. Archie's last impression of the inn was the blur of a waving handkerchief in Miss Seebrook's window.

"We are a success, my boy! You bore yourself marvelously well," said the Governor testing the gears. "As I remember we pass town hall on right and cross railroad at bridge; then follow telephone poles. We don't need the guide book; it's all in my head. Ah, that little touch of the rose was worth all our perils; nothing in my experience was ever prettier than that! A lovely girl; you might do worse if you were not already plighted. If she had come down to say good-by it would have been much less significant. But the rose, the red, red rose! It wouldn't be a bad idea to stick it in an envelope and mail it to the girl you were telling me about—the one who sent you forth to shatter kingdoms. I guess that would jostle her a little, particularly if you were to enclose a line telling her that it had fallen to your hand from a curtained lattice."

"I don't know her address," mumbled Archie, fastening the flower in his buttonhole.

He still martyrized himself in his thoughts of Isabel. Her contumelious treatment of him at Portsmouth rankled; but he had satisfied himself that it was all his fault. In some way the curse of the Congdons lay upon her as upon him. If he had not burst upon her so idiotically she would probably have listened to his story with some interest if not with admiration. He meant to be very loyal to Isabel in spite of the disheartening contretemps at Portsmouth and he drew the rose from his coat and cast it from him.

"So soon!" exclaimed the Governor. "I rejoice in your fidelity. Hope rides a high horse and I'm confident that in due season we shall find our two adorable ones. But it will do you no harm to indulge in a little affair now and then on the way; merely practice at the approach shot, you know, to keep your hand in. You are undoubtedly thinking of your beloved with a new tenderness because you found Miss Seebrook kind. Such, lad, is the way of love, true love, the love that never dies."

Love as a subject for discussion seemed wholly incongruous in view of the fact that they were running off with Seebrook's money and pursuers might already be hot on their trail. He suggested the dangers of their situation, thinking that here at last was something that would sober the Governor. But the Governor merely laughed as he swung the car round a sharp corner.

"Don't you believe that I hadn't a care for our safe flight! You must learn to use your eyes, son. There was one of the brotherhood of the road right there in the office when we left. I gave him instructions last night. He's a sneak thief of considerable intelligence who gave me the sign as I was pretending to leave for that call on my old friend. I smuggled him upstairs to keep watch for me and he proved himself a fellow of decided merit. He'll be hanging round Cornford today and as the absurd police will be obliged to make an arrest to save their reputations he will put himself in their way and encourage the idea by subtle means that he *might* have been the malefactor who robbed Seebrook's trunk and left Leary's bills behind. They will be unable to make a case against him but he'll probably get thirty days for loitering. Then he'll walk out and draw a thousand dollars from one of our little private banks further along the road for so chivalrously throwing himself into the breach! There are wheels within wheels in our game, and these fellows who make sacrifice hits are highly useful. They also serve who only go to jail, as John Milton almost said. Even the police recognize the sacrificial artists; and encourage them—on the quiet, of course. It calms public complaint of their inefficiency. I can find you men who will do a year's time to save the men higher up. This satisfies the public as to the zeal of its paid protectors and makes it possible for men of genius like you and me to walk in high places unmolested. A damnable system, Archie, but we learned it from the greedy trust magnates. You take the wheel; it just occurs to me that you said you were a fair driver."

102

Archie had always imagined that men slip gradually from the straight and narrow path, but he felt himself plunging down a steep toboggan with all the delirious joy of a speed maniac.

Of one thing he was confident: if he ever returned to his old orderly, lawful life, he would be much more tolerant of sinners than he had been in the old tranquil times. He had always found it easy to be good but now he was finding it quite as easy to be naughty, very naughty indeed. His speculations as to just how long he could be imprisoned for his crimes and misdemeanors to date resolved themselves into a question with which he interrupted the Governor in a sonorous recitation of Tennyson's Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.

103

"If you shoot a man but don't kill him, and pile on top of that receiving stolen goods and complicity in burglary, how much can they hand you?"

The Governor answered with disconcerting promptness.

"Shooting with intent to commit murder—they always put it that way whether you meant the shot as anything more than a little pleasantry or really had murder in your heart—that would be a minimum of ten years in many of the American states and a hard-hearted judge might soak you for twenty. Then pile on that from one to five years for hiding stolen property; and then a first-class burglary, might run you pretty high, particularly if they landed you on all three charges and showed that you were viciously hostile to the forces of society. But there's no cause for worry. If you behaved yourself they'd knock off a generous allowance and a fellow of your enlightenment and tact might be put to work in the warden's office, or set to collecting potato bugs in the prison garden patch. But it's highly unprofessional to bother about such trifles. We haven't been nabbed yet, and if you and I are not smart enough to keep out of trouble we ought to be locked up; that's my philosophy of the situation. You must conquer that morbid strain in you that persists in looking for trouble. I find it highly depressing."

He sang a bar of "Ben Bolt" to test his memory of the words and then urged Archie to join him in the ballad, which he said was endeared to him by the most sacred associations. Archie hadn't indulged in song since he sang "Fair Harvard" at his last class reunion, but the Governor praised his singing and carried him through "Robin Grey" and a few other classics with growing animation.

104

"You respond to treatment splendidly! The sun and air are bringing a fine color to your face until you don't even remotely suggest a doleful jail bird. We'll soon be able to stroll along Fifth Avenue and pass for members of the leisure class who live on the golf links. You need hardening up and if you stick to me you'll lay up a store of health that will last you forty years."

The Governor was amazingly muscular, and his shapely hands seemed possessed of miraculous strength. When a tire went bad he changed it with remarkable ease and dexterity, scorning Archie's offer of assistance.

"No lost motion! The world spends half its time doing things twice that could as well be done once. I am blessed with an orderly mind, Archie. You will have noticed that virtue in me by the time the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock, to quote the Hoosier Theocritus."

And so, to the merry accompaniment of old tunes and mellow rhymes, they crossed the Connecticut.

CHAPTER THREE

I

With all his outward candor the Governor had, Archie found, reserves that were quite unaccountable. He let fall allusions to his past in the most natural fashion, with an incidental air that added to their plausibility, without ever tearing aside the veil that concealed his origin or the manner of his fall, if, indeed, a man who so jubilantly boasted of his crimes and seemed to find an infinite satisfaction and delight in his turpitude, could be said to have fallen. Having mentioned Brattleboro as the point at which they were to foregather with Red Leary, the Governor did not refer to the matter again, but chose routes and made detours without explanation.

As a matter of fact they swung round Brattleboro and saw only the faint blue of its smoke from the western side. It was on the second afternoon out of Cornford that the Governor suddenly bade Archie, whom he encouraged to drive much of the time, pause at a gate.

"We linger here, son. May I suggest that you take your cue from me? Bill Walker is an honest dairyman to all intents and purposes, but really an old crook who got tired of dodging sheriffs and bloodhounds and bought this farm. A sober, industrious family man, you will find him, with a wife and one daughter. This is one of the best stations of the underground railroad; safe as a mother's arms, and you will never believe you're not the favored guest of a week-end party. Walker's an old chum of Leary's. They used to cut up in the most reprehensible fashion out West in old times. You've probably wondered what becomes of old crooks. Walker is of course an unusual specimen, for he knew when the quitting was good, and having salted away a nice little fortune accumulated in express hold-ups, he dwells here in peace and passes the hat at the meeting house every Sunday. You may be dead sure that only the aristocracy of our profession have the entrée at Walker's. His herd on the hillside yonder makes a pretty picture of tranquillity. The house is an old timer, but he's made a comfortable place of it, and the wife and daughter set a wonderful table. Here's the old boy now."

106

A gray-bearded man with a pronounced stoop, clad in faded blue overalls, was waiting for them at the barn.

"Just run the machine right in," he called.

The car disposed of, the Governor introduced Archie as one of his dearest friends, and the hand Archie clasped was undeniably roughened by toil. Walker mumbled a "glad-to-see-ye," and lazily looked him over.

"Always glad to meet any friend of Mr. Saulsbury's," he drawled with a mournful twang. "We've got plenty o' bread and milk for strangers. Somebody's spread the idea we run a hotel here and we're pestered a good deal with folks that want to stop for a meal. We take care o' 'em mostly. The wife and little gal sort o' like havin' folks stop; takes away the lonesomeness."

107

There was nothing in his speech or manner to suggest that he had ever been a road agent. He assisted them in carrying their traps to the house, talking farmer fashion of the weather, crops and the state of the roads. The house was connected with the barn in the usual New England style. In the kitchen a girl sang cheerily and hearing her the Governor paused and struck an attitude.

"O divinity! O Deity of the Green Hills! O Lovely Daughter of the Stars! O Iphigenia!"

The girl appeared at a window, rested her bare arms on the sill and smilingly saluted them with a cheery "Hello there!"

"Look upon that picture!" exclaimed the Governor, seizing Archie's arm. "In old times upon Olympus she was cup-bearer to the gods, but here she is Sally Walker, and never so charming as when she sits enthroned upon the milking stool. Miss Walker, my old friend, Mr. Comly, or Achilles, as you will!"

A very pretty picture Miss Walker made in the kitchen window, a vivid portrait that immediately enhanced Archie's pleasurable sensations in finding a haven that promised rest and security. Her black hair was swept back smoothly from her forehead and there was the glow of perfect health in her rounded cheeks. Archie noted her dimples and the white even teeth that made something noteworthy and memorable of her smile.

"Well, Mr. Saulsbury, I've read all those books you sent me, and the candy was the finest I ever tasted."

108

"She remembers! Amid all her domestic cares, she remembers! My dear lad, the girl is one in a million!"

"You'd think Mr. Saulsbury was crazy about me!" she laughed. "But he makes the same speeches to every girl he sees, doesn't he, Mr. Comly?"

"Indeed not," protested Archie, rallying bravely to the Governor's support. "He's been raving

about you for days and my only surprise is that he so completely failed to give me the faintest idea—idea—"

"Of your charm, your ineffable beauty!" the Governor supplied. "You see, Sally, my friend is shy with the shyness of youth and inexperience and he is unable to utter the thoughts that do in him rise! I can see that he is your captive, your meekest slave. By the way, will there be cottage cheese prepared by your own adorable hand for supper? Are golden waffles likely to confront us on the breakfast table tomorrow at the hideous hour of five-thirty? Will there be maple syrup from yonder hillside grove?"

"You have said it!" Sally answered. "But you'd better chase yourselves into the house now or pop'll be peeved at having to wait for you."

On the veranda a tall elderly man rose from a hammock in which he had been reading a newspaper and stretched himself. His tanned face was deeply lined but he gave the impression of health and vigor.

"Leary," whispered the Governor in an aside and immediately introduced him.

"The road has been smooth and the sky is high," said the Governor in response to a quick anxious questioning of Leary's small restless eyes. 109

"Did you find peace in the churches by the way?" asked Leary.

"In one of the temples we found peace and plenty," answered the Governor as though reciting from a ritual.

Leary nodded and gave a hitch to his trousers.

"You found the waters of Champlain tranquil, and no hawks followed the landward passage?"

"The robin and the bluebird sang over all the road," he answered; then with a glance at Archie: "You gave no warning of the second pilgrim."

"The brother is young and innocent, but I find him an apt pupil," the Governor explained.

"The brother will learn first the wisdom of silence," remarked Leary, and then as though by an afterthought he shook Archie warmly by the hand.

They went into the house where Mrs. Walker, a stout middle-aged woman, greeted them effusively.

"We've got to put you both in one room, if you don't mind," she explained, "but there's two beds in it. I guess you can make out."

"Make out!" cried the Governor with a deprecatory wave of his hand. "We should be proud to be permitted to sleep on the porch! You do us much honor, my dear Mrs. Walker."

"Oh, you always cheer us up, Mr. Saulsbury. And Mr. Comly is just as welcome."

The second floor room to which Walker led them was plainly but neatly furnished and the windows looked out upon rolling pastures. The Governor abandoned his high-flown talk and asked blunt questions as to recent visitors, apparently referring to criminals who had lodged at the farm. They talked quite openly while Archie unpacked his bag. The restless activity of the folk of the underworld, their methods of communication and points of rendezvous seemed part of a vast system and he was ashamed of his enormous interest in all he saw and heard. The Governor's cool fashion of talking of the world of crime and its denizens almost legitimized it, made it appear a recognized part of the accepted scheme of things. Walker aroused the Governor's deepest interest by telling of the visit of Pete Barney, a diamond thief, who had lately made a big haul in Chicago, and had been passed along from one point of refuge to another. The Governor asked particularly as to the man's experiences and treatment on the road, and whether he had complained of the hospitality extended by any of the agents of the underground. 110

"You needn't worry about him," said Walker, with a shrug. "He asks for what he wants."

"Sorry if he made himself a nuisance. I'll give warning to chain the gates toward the North. Is he carrying the sparks with him?"

"Lets 'em shine like a fool. I told 'im to clear out with 'em."

"You did right. The brothers in the West must be more careful about handing out tickets. Now trot Red up here and we'll transact a little business."

Leary appeared a moment later and Archie was about to leave the room, but the Governor insisted stoutly that he remain.

"I'm anxious for you and Red to know that I trust both of you fully." 111

"What's the young brother,—a con?" asked Leary with a glance at Archie.

To be referred to as a confidence man by a gentleman of Leary's professional eminence gave Archie a thrill. The Governor answered by drawing up his sleeves and going through the motions of washing his hands.

"Does the hawk follow fast?" Leary asked, as he proceeded to fill his pipe.

"The shadow hasn't fallen, but we watch the sky," returned the Governor.

The brushing of the hands together Archie interpreted as a code sign signifying murder and the subsequent interchange of words he took to be inquiry and answer as to the danger of

apprehension. He felt that Leary's attitude toward him became friendlier from that moment. There was something ghastly in the thought that as the slayer of a human being he attained a certain dignity in the eyes of men like Leary. But he became interested in the transaction that was now taking place between the thief and the Governor. The Governor extracted the sixty one-thousand-dollar bills from his bag, and laid them out on the bed. He rapidly explained just how Leary's hidden booty had been recovered, and the manner in which the smaller denominations had been converted into bills that could be passed without arousing suspicion.

"Too big for one bite, but old Dan Sheedy will change 'em all for you in Bean Center. You know his place? You see him alone and ask him to chop some feed for your cattle. He makes a good front and stands well at his bank."

112

Leary picked up ten of the bills and held them out to the Governor.

"If that ain't right we'll make it right," he said.

"Not a cent, Red! I haven't got to a point yet where I charge a fee for my services. But our young brother here is entitled to anything he wants."

Archie grasped with difficulty the idea that he was invited to share in the loot. His insistence that he couldn't think for a moment of accepting any of the money puzzled Leary.

"It's all right about you, Governor, but the kid had better shake the tree. If his hands are wet he's likely to need a towel."

"Don't be an ass, Comly," said the Governor. "Leary's ahead of the game ten thousand good plunks and what he offers is a ridiculously modest honorarium. Recovering such property and getting it into shape for the market is worth something handsome."

"Really," began Archie, and then as the "really" seemed an absurdly banal beginning for a rejection of an offer of stolen money, he said with a curl of the lip and a swagger, "Oh, hell! I'd feel pretty rotten to take money from one of the good pals. And besides, I didn't do anything anyhow."

The Governor passed his hand over his face to conceal a smile, but Leary seemed sincerely grieved by Archie's conduct and remarked dolefully that there must be something wrong with the money. The Governor hastily vouched for its impeccable quality and excused Archie as a person hardly second to himself for eccentricity.



"It's all right about you, Governor, but the kid better shake the tree"

"No hard feeling; most certainly not! My young friend is only proud to serve a man of your standing in the profession. It is possible that later on you may be able to render us a service. You never can tell, you know, Red."

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Leary philosophically stowed the bills in his clothing.

"You're done, are you?" asked the Governor; "out of the game?"

"I sure have quit the road," Leary answered. "The old girl has got a few thousands tucked away

and I'm goin' to pick her up and buy a motion picture joint or a candy and soda shop somewhere in the big lakes—one of those places that freeze up all winter, so I can have a chance to rest. The old girl has a place in mind. The climate will be good for my asthma. She knows how to run a fizz shop and I'll be the scenery and just set round."

"On the whole it doesn't sound exciting," the Governor commented, inspecting a clean shirt. "Did your admirable wife get rid of those pearls she pinched last winter? They were a handsome string, as I remember, too handsome to market readily. Mrs. Leary has a passion for precious baubles, Archie," the Governor explained. "A brilliant career in picking up such trifles; a star performer, Red, if you don't mind my bragging of your wife."

Leary seemed not at all disturbed by this revelation of his wife's larcenous affection for pearls. That a train robber's wife should be a thief seemed perfectly natural; indeed it seemed quite fitting that thieves should mate with thieves. Archie further gathered that Mrs. Leary operated in Chicago, under the guise of a confectionery shop, one of the stations of the underground railroad, and assisted the brotherhood in disposing of their ill-gotten wares. A recent reform wave in Chicago had caused a shake-up in the police department, most disturbing to the preying powers.

"They're clean off me, I reckon," said Leary a little pathetically, the reference being presumably to the pestiferous police. "That was a good idea of yours for me to go up into Canada and work at a real job for a while. Must a worked hard enough to change my finger prints. Some bloke died in Kansas awhile back and got all the credit for being the old original Red Leary."

This error of the press in recording Leary's death tickled the Governor mightily, and Leary laughed until he was obliged to wipe the tears from his eyes.

"I'm going to pull my freight after supper," he said. "Walker's goin' to take me into town and I'll slip out to Detroit where the old girl's waitin' for me."

The Governor mused upon this a moment, drew a small note-book from his pocket and verified his recollection of the address of one of the outposts of the underground which Leary mentioned.

"Avoid icy pavements!" he admonished. "There's danger in all those border towns."

Walker called them to supper and they went down to a meal that met all the expectations aroused by the Governor's boast of the Walker cuisine. Not only were the fried chicken and hot biscuits excellent, but Archie found Miss Walker's society highly agreeable and stimulating. She wore a snowy white apron over a blue gingham dress, and rose from time to time to replenish the platters. The Governor chaffed her familiarly, and Archie edged into the talk with an ease that surprised him. His speculative faculties, all but benumbed by the violent exercise to which they had been subjected since he joined the army of the hunted, found new employment in an attempt to determine just how much this cheery, handsome girl knew of the history of the company that met at her father's table. She was the daughter of a retired crook, and it had never occurred to him that crooks had daughters, or if they were so blessed he had assumed that they were defectives, turned over for rearing to disagreeable public institutions.

The Governor had said that they were to spend a day or two at Walker's but Archie was now hoping that he would prolong the visit. When next he saw Isabel he would relate, quite calmly and incidentally, his meteoric nights through the underworld, and Sally, the incomparable dairy maid, should dance merrily in his narrative. In a pleasant drawing-room somewhere or other he would meet Isabel and rehabilitate himself in her eyes by the very modesty with which he would relate his amazing tale. It pleased him to reflect that if she could see him at the Walker table with Red Leary and the Governor, that most accomplished of villains, eating hot biscuits which had been specially forbidden by his physician, she would undoubtedly decide that he had made a pretty literal interpretation of her injunction to throw a challenge in the teeth of fate.

Walker ate greedily, shoveling his food into his mouth with his knife; and Archie had never before sat at meat with a man who used this means of urging food into his vitals. The Governor magnanimously ignored his friend's social errors, praising the chicken and delivering so beautiful an oration on the home-made pickled peaches that Sally must needs dart into the pantry and bring back a fresh jar which she placed with a spoon by the Governor's plate.

At the end of the meal Walker left for town to put Leary on a train for Boston. The veteran train robber shook hands all round and waved a last farewell from the gate. Archie was sorry to lose him, for Leary was an appealing old fellow, and he had hoped for a chance to coax from him some reminiscences of his experiences.

Leary vanished into the starlit dusk as placidly as though he hadn't tucked away in his clothing sixty thousand dollars to which he had no lawful right or title. There was something ludicrous in the whole proceeding. While Archie had an income of fifty thousand dollars a year from investments, he had always experienced a pleasurable thrill at receiving the statement of his dividends from his personal clerk in the broker's office, where he drew an additional ten thousand as a silent partner. Leary's method of dipping into the world's capital seemed quite as honorable as his own. Neither really did any work for the money. This he reflected was both morally and economically unsound, and yet Archie found himself envying Leary the callousness that made it possible for him to pocket sixty thousand stolen dollars without the quiver of an eyelash.

The Governor, smoking a pipe on the veranda and chatting with Mrs. Walker, recalled him from his meditations to suggest that he show a decent spirit of appreciation of the Walkers' hospitality by repairing to the kitchen and helping Sally with the dishes. In his youth Archie had been carefully instructed in the proper manner of entering a parlor, but it was with the greatest embarrassment that he sought Sally in her kitchen. She stood at the sink, her arms plunged into a steaming dish pan, and saluted him with a cheery hello. 117

"I was just wondering whether you wouldn't show up! Not that you had to, but it's a good deal more fun having somebody to keep you company in the kitchen."

"I should think it would be," Archie admitted, recalling that his mother used to express the greatest annoyance when the servants made her kitchen a social center. "Give me a towel and I'll promise not to break anything."

"You don't look as though you'd been used to work much," she said, "but take off your coat and I'll hang an apron on you."

His investiture in Mrs. Walker's ample apron made it necessary for Sally to stand quite close to him, and her manner of compressing her lips as she pinned the bib to the collar of his waistcoat he found wholly charming. His heart went pit-a-pat as her fingers, moist from the suds, brushed his chin. She was quite tall; taller than Isabel, who had fixed his standard of a proper height for girls. Sally did not giggle, but acted as normal sensible girls should act when pinning aprons on young men.

She tossed him a towel and bade him dry the plates as she placed them on the drain board. She worked quickly, and it was evident that she was a capable and efficient young woman who took an honest pride in her work. 118

"You've never stopped here before? I thought. I didn't remember you. Well, we're always glad to see the Governor, he's so funny; but say, some of the people who come along—!"

"I hope," said Archie, turning a dish to the light to be sure it was thoroughly polished, "I hope my presence isn't offensive?"

"Cut it out!" she returned crisply. "Of course you're all right. I knew you were a real gent the first squint I got of you. You can't fool me much on human nature."

"You've always lived up here?" asked Archie, meek under her frank approval.

"Certainly not. I was born in Missouri, a grand old state if I do say it myself, and we came here when I was twelve. I went through high school and took dairying and the domestic arts in college and I'm twenty-three if you care to know."

He had known finishing-school girls and college girls and girls who had been educated by traveling governesses, but Sally was different and suffered in no whit by comparison. Her boasted knowledge of the human race was negligible beside her familiarity with the mysterious mechanisms of cream separators and incubators. Fate had certainly found a strange way of completing his education! But for the shot he had fired in the lonely house by the sea, he would never have known that girls like Sally existed. As he assisted her to restore the dishes to the pantry, she crossed the kitchen with queenly stride. Isabel hadn't a finer swing from the hips or a nobler carriage. When he abandoned his criminal life he would assemble somewhere all the girls he had met in his pilgrimage. There should be a round table, but where Isabel sat would be the head, and his sister should chaperone the party. When it dispersed he would tell Isabel, very honestly, of his reaction to each one, and if she took him to task for his susceptibility it would be a good defense that she was responsible for sending him forth to wrestle with temptation. 119

When the kitchen was in perfect order they reported the fact to Mrs. Walker and Sally suggested that they stroll to a trout brook which was her own particular property. The stream danced merrily from the hills, a friendly little brook it was—just such a ribbon of water as a girl like Sally would fancy for a chum.

"We must have a drink or you won't know how sweet and cool the water is!" She cupped her hands and drank; but his own efforts to bring the water to his lips were clumsy and ineffectual.

"Oh you!" she laughed. "Let me show you!"

Drinking from her hands was an experience that transcended for the moment all other experiences. If this was a rural approach to a flirtation, Miss Seebrook's methods were much safer, and the garden of the Cornford tavern a far more circumspect stage than a Vermont brookside shut off from all the world.

He had decided to avoid any reference to the secrets of the underground trail, but his delicacy received a violent shock a moment later, when they were seated on a bench beside the brook.

"Do you know," she said, "you are not like the others?" 120

"I don't understand," he faltered.

"Oh, cut it out! You needn't try to fool me! When I told you awhile ago I thought you were nice, I meant more than that; I meant that you didn't at all seem like the crooks that sneak through here and hide at our house. You're more like the Governor, and I never understand about the Governor. It doesn't seem possible that any one who isn't forced by necessity into crime would ever follow the life. Now you're a gentleman, any one could tell that, but I suppose you've really

done something pretty bad or you wouldn't be here! Now I'm going to hand it to you straight; that's the only way."

"Certainly, Miss Walker; I want you to be perfectly frank with me."

"Well, my advice would be to give yourself up, do your time like a man and then live straight. You're young enough to begin all over again and you might make something of yourself. The Governor has romantic ideas about the great game but that's no reason why you should walk the thorny road. Now pop would kill me if he knew I was talking this way. It's a funny thing about pop. All I know about him I just picked up a little at a time, and he and ma never wanted me to know. Ma's awful nervous about so many of the boys stopping here, for she hung on to pop all the time he was shooting up trains out West, and having a husband in the penitentiary isn't a pleasant thing to think about. Ma's father ran a saloon down in Missouri; that's how she got acquainted with pop, but ma was always on the square, and they both wanted me brought up right. It was ma's idea that we should get clean away from pop's old life, and she did all the brain work of wiping the slate clean and coming away off here. We were a couple of years doing it, trying a lot of other places all over the country before they struck this ranch and felt safe. Pop's living straight; you needn't think he isn't, but he's got a queer hankering to see the sort of men he used to train with. It's natural, I suppose."

121

"I suppose it is. But you must have suffered; I can imagine how you feel," said Archie, who had listened to her long speech with rapt attention.

"Well, I don't know that I've suffered so much," she replied slowly, "but I do feel queer sometimes when I'm around with young folks whose fathers never had to duck the cops. Not that they've any suspicions, of course; I guess pop stands well round here."

"I can understand perfectly how your father would like to see some of the old comrades now and then and even give them shelter and help them on their way. That speaks highly for his generosity. It's a big thing for me right now to be put up here. I'm in a lot of trouble, and this gives me a chance to get my bearings. I shall always remember your father's aid. And you don't know how wonderful it is to be sitting beside you here and talking to you just as though nothing had ever happened to me; really as though I wasn't a lost sheep and a pretty black one at that."

"I'm sorry," she answered. "When I told you you'd better go and do your time and get done with it, I didn't mean to be nasty. But I was thinking that a man as sensitive as I judge you to be would be happier in the long run. Now pop had an old pal who drifted along here a couple of years ago, and pop had it all figured out to shoot him right up into Canada, but, would you believe it, that man simply wouldn't go! The very idea of being in a safe place where he was reasonably certain of not being bothered worried him. He simply couldn't stand it. He was so used to being chased and shot at it didn't seem natural to be out of danger, and pop had to give him money to take him to Oklahoma where he'd have the fun of teasing the sheriffs along. And he had his wish and I suppose he died happy, for we read in the papers a little while afterward that he'd been shot and killed trying to hold up a bank."

122

Archie expressed his impatience of the gentleman who preferred death in Oklahoma to a life of tranquillity in the Canadian wilds.

"Oh, they never learn anything," Sally declared. "I wouldn't be surprised if pop didn't pull out some time and beat it for the West. It must be awful tame for a man who's stuck pistols into the faces of express messengers and made bank tellers hand out their cash to settle down in a place like this where there's nothing much to do but go to church and prayer meeting. I don't know how many men pop's killed in his time but there must be quite a bunch. But pop doesn't seem to worry much. It seems to me if I'd ever pumped a man full of lead I'd have a bad case of insomnia."

"Well, I don't know," remarked Archie, weighing the point judicially. "I suppose you get used to it in time. Your father seems very gentle. You probably exaggerate the number of his—er—homicides."

123

He felt himself utterly unqualified to express with any adequacy his sympathy for a girl whose father had flirted with the gallows so shamelessly. Walker had courageously entered express cars and jumped into locomotive cabs in the pursuit of his calling and this was much nobler than shooting a man in the back. Sally would probably despise him if she knew what he had done.

She demurred to his remark about her father's amiability.

"Well, pop can be pretty rough sometimes. He and I have our little troubles."

"Nothing serious, I'm sure. I can't imagine any one being unkind to you, Sally."

"It's nice of you to say that. But I'm not perfect and I don't pretend to be!"

Sympathy and tenderness surged within him at this absurd suggestion that any one could harbor a doubt of Sally's perfection. Her modesty, the tone of her voice called for some more concrete expression of his understanding than he could put into words. Her hand, dimly discernible in the dusk of the June stars, was invitingly near. He clasped and held it, warm and yielding. She drew it away in a moment but not rebukingly. The contact with her hand had been inexpressibly thrilling. Not since his prep school days had he held a girl's hand, and the brook and the stars sang together in ineffable chorus. It was bewildering to find that so trifling an act could afford sensations so charged with all the felicity of forbidden delight.

"I wonder," she said presently; "I wonder whether you would—whether you really would do something for me?"

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"Anything in my power," he declared hoarsely.

"What time is it?" she asked with a jarring return to practical things.

She bent her head close as he held a match to his watch. It was half past eight.

"We'll have to hurry," she said. "When I told you pop and I didn't always agree about everything I was thinking—"

"Is it about a man?" he asked, surmising the worst and steeling himself for the blow if it must fall. He would show her how generously chivalrous a man could be toward a girl who honored him with her confidence and appealed for his assistance.

"It would be a long story," she said sadly, "and there isn't time to tell it, but the moment I saw you were so big and brave and strong, I thought you might help."

To be called big and brave and strong by so charming a person, to enjoy her confidence and be her chosen aid in an hour of need and perplexity profoundly touched him. He wished that Isabel could have heard Sally's tribute to his strength and courage—Isabel who had said only a few days ago that he wouldn't kill a flea. He had always been too modest and too timid, just as Isabel had said, but those days were passed and the man Isabel knew was very different from the man who sat beside Bill Walker's daughter under the glowing Vermont stars. Drums were beating and bugles sounding across the hills as he waited for Sally to send him into the lists with her colors flying from his spear.

"I wouldn't trust the Governor; he's too friendly with pop for that. It's just this way," she went on dreamily. "There's a young man, Abijah Strong, who owns a farm just a little way down the road. He and I have been in love with each other ever since we went to school together, really and truly lovers. He was at college when I was, so I know him very well. But pop doesn't like him, and when he found how matters stood he refused to allow me to see him any more. And he's been very hard about it. We've been waiting for a chance to run away and get married. I met him last night in the lane and everything's arranged for us to leave tonight, run into Brattleboro and be married there and then go on to Boston and wait till pop's disposed to be reasonable."

125

"He will be very angry, of course," said Archie, his ardor somewhat chilled now that he knew the nature of the project in which she asked his cooperation.

"Yes; pop will be perfectly crazy," she affirmed with a lingering intonation that seemed to imply a certain joy in the prospective disturbance of her parent's equilibrium. "He wants me to marry a preacher at Saxby Center who's almost as old as pop, and has three grown children. I thought maybe you could pretend to take me out for a little ride in your car, and pick up Abijah and give us a lift. My things are all packed and hid away in the garage; so all I need to do is to get my hat."

"Of course I couldn't come back here," Archie suggested. "Your father would be sure to vent his wrath on me."

"Oh, I'd thought of that!" she exclaimed. "But you could go on and wait somewhere for the Governor to catch up with you."

"I'd have to make sure he *didn't* catch up with me! He'll be mighty sore about this."

126

"Well, if you're afraid of him—"

"Pooh! I certainly am not afraid of him," he declared contemptuously. "He and I were bound to part sometime."

In the half hour they had spent together by the brook he had forgotten his dependence upon the Governor and his earlier fears that the master crook might desert him. Through the cajoleries of a girl he had known only a few hours he was ready to break with his comrade by mischievously upsetting the domestic affairs of a host who doubtless had not forgotten how to kill men who incurred his displeasure. Sally had affected him like a strong cordial and as they walked to the house he grew increasingly keen for the proposed adventure. Sally, like Isabel, had dared him to be brave, and he screwed his courage to the sticking point.

"If you don't mind I'll take Sally for a little run down the road," he suggested casually when they found the Governor and Mrs. Walker still gossiping on the veranda.

No objection was raised by Mrs. Walker beyond an injunction not to be gone long and a warning not to go without her jacket. The permission was given so readily that Archie was moved to make the polite suggestion that they might all like to go and his heart sank when the Governor promptly seconded the invitation. But to his immeasurable relief Mrs. Walker professed weariness and quickly disposed of the matter.

"No joy riding," the Governor called after them. "Sally's a valuable asset of this family and I'll hold you personally responsible, Comly, for her safe return."

127

III

At the garage Sally produced a satchel which Archie tossed into the car, and they were quickly humming through the lane and into the highway.

"Abijah expected me to walk down to meet him if I could get away tonight, so he'll be surprised when I come in a machine," she said as they emerged into the open road. "He was to wait for me

every night until I saw a good chance to skip. His car is only a little dinky thing and he'll be tickled to death to see this fine machine."

A quick spurt of ten minutes and Sally bade him drive slowly.

"Run by the school house when we come to it and then stop. Abijah will be there."

When the car stopped Sally jumped out and was immediately joined by a young man to whom she spoke rapidly out of Archie's hearing. Her explanations finished she brought him to the car and presented him as Mr. Strong.

"Mr. Comly is going to the minister's with us and then give us a lift toward Boston. That's ever so much better than anything we'd thought of, 'Bijah!"

"Whatever you say, little girl! I'll shut off the lights on my machine and get my traps."

Archie, testing his searchlight, let its beam fall upon Abijah as though by accident and found Sally's lover a very well-dressed, decent-looking fellow. All his life he would be proud of his daring in saving Sally Walker from marriage with the odious widower and mating her with the youth of her choice. The bride and groom elect were established in the back seat and he experienced a sharp jealous twinge, when, turning to ask her a question about the road, he caught them in a rapturous kiss. This was what it meant to be young and free, and youth and freedom were things he had never until now appraised at their true worth. Having captured and mounted destiny he would ride with a tight rein and relentless spur. The immediate affair was much to his taste, and he meditated making it his business in future to befriend lovers in difficulties.

128

"How long do we stop at Brattleboro?" he asked over his shoulder.

"Only long enough to get the knot tied," Abijah answered. "I was in town this afternoon and everything's set."

"I hope," said Sally, "you'll give the bride away; it would be just fine of you, Mr. Comly."

"I was hoping you'd ask me," he flung back. "I want to be as prominent in the wedding party as possible."

The last time he had figured in a wedding he had been best man for a college friend who had been married at high noon in Grace Church, before an audience notably distinguished in New York society. Sally's nuptials were blest in a little parsonage, with the minister's wife and daughter and Archie as the sole witnesses. The minister had only lately come to town and therefore confined his inquiries to the strict requirements of ecclesiastical and Vermont law. When he lifted his head to ask who giveth this woman Archie bestowed Sally upon Abijah with just the touch of grace and dignity he had long noted as the accepted manner of giving a woman in marriage in the most exacting circles.

129

The groom sheepishly dug two one-dollar bills out of his trousers pocket and the sum striking Archie as a pitifully inadequate fee he slipped a ten-dollar bill into the minister's hand as the bride and groom were hurrying from the house.

"Well, Sally," Archie remarked, as he joined them, "for better or worse you are married. I certainly wish you all good luck."

"We'll be back in a week and everything will be smooth as butter," Sally declared lightly.

The wedding journey from Brattleboro to Bennington was marred by tire trouble and freakishness on the part of the engine, and as neither of his passengers knew the roads Archie's good nature was severely tested by the exigencies of the night drive.

Abijah helped with the tires but only stared helplessly while Archie poked at the engine. Sally was far more resourceful and lent her assistance with her usual good cheer, a cheer which Archie felt he would miss when he bade them good-by at Bennington. As a mark of special favor she moved to the front seat to keep him company and facilitate the study of sign posts.

"We're only making half time," said Archie after a long interruption. "We'll not get into Bennington before daylight."

"I've put you to an awful lot of trouble," Sally remarked with real contrition. "And you've left your friend the Governor far behind. I suppose they started out to look for us in pop's machine when we didn't show up and they may be close behind us now. The only thing I'm sorry about is missing hearing pop swear when he found I had skipped. It would be funny if they thought I'd run off with you, wouldn't it! I'd just love that!"

130

"I don't think it's so funny you didn't," Archie answered. "I think it was my mistake!"

The groom had drawn up his knees and was attempting to sleep on the back seat. It was quite improper to flirt with the newest of brides but Sally gave tolerant ear and even encouraged Archie's protestations of admiration while Abijah bumped about in the tonneau and now and then rolled off the seat when the enraptured driver negotiated a sharp turn. But for Sally's disposition to make the most of her last hours with him the drive would have bored Archie exceedingly. By two o'clock he was hungry and at three he was bringing all his powers of eloquence to bear upon the obtuse owner of a village garage who was stubbornly hostile to the idea of leaving his bed to provide a lunatic with gasoline. Archie's vociferous oratory had the pleasing effect of filling all the windows in the neighborhood with unsympathetic hearers and the village policeman appeared and made careful note of car and contents.

"I guess you're used to getting what you go after in this world," said Sally as they resumed their

journey. "You certainly told that man where to get off."

"Just a little firmness will go a long way with such a chap," Archie answered, marveling at his newly discovered command of the unattainable. A week earlier he would have been incapable of threatening a whole village with frightful reprisals unless it responded to his demands.

"I didn't like that cop poking round the car," Abijah complained. "He took your number all right." 131

"Don't you worry about policemen," Archie answered scornfully. "If they fool with me I'll knock their blocks off!"

"I'll say you would!" cried Sally in a tone of conviction that made him regret that no policeman's head was in reach that he might demonstrate his valor on the spot.

Sally and Abijah were eager to leave Bennington as soon as possible.

"Don't think we're not appreciating what you've done for us," said Abijah, "but Sally and I had better shake you and that machine right here. Sally's folks'll be sure to be after us and they'll just about argue we came this way."

Archie laid to his soul the flattering unctiousness that Abijah was jealous. Justification of this suspicion was supported by the bridegroom's sudden anxiety to depart out of Vermont with the utmost expedition. Archie had every intention of ordering as gorgeous a breakfast as Bennington's best hotel could provide, but Abijah promptly vetoed this suggestion and they ate at a lunch counter, which Archie found a most disagreeable proceeding. Abijah left Sally and Archie eating scrambled eggs while he set forth to acquire information about trains. He returned while they were still at the counter to report that a train was almost immediately available. His haste annoyed Archie, who hated being hurried at his meals. At the station Abijah hung about the baggage-room, where he had no business whatever, as though trying to create the impression that he was traveling alone. When the train came along he climbed into the smoker with his own bag, leaving Archie to assist Sally into the chair car. 132

"Abijah's just a little afraid pop might have telephoned, you know, or be coming after us. He'll move in here when the train starts."

"I don't like to leave you like this," said Archie mournfully.

"Oh, it will be all right," Sally answered bravely. "Abijah's nervous; that's all. That was certainly some ride we had last night. I hope you'll go up to the hotel now and get a good sleep."

"Oh, I'll look out for that," Archie replied.

His arrears of sleep did not trouble him; but the thought of losing Sally broke his heart. The hard night ride had left no traces on her face. Her cheeks were aglow and her eyes were bright. When he said again, a little tremulously, that he hated to leave her he had never made a more honest statement in his life.

"I suppose we'll hardly meet again," he said with a dejection which he hoped would elicit a promise of further meetings.

"I'm afraid it will be a long, long time before I see you," she said with a lingering tenderness and wistfulness.

"I hope you're going to be very happy, Sally. And I shall think of you always as you were last night. I shall never forget our talk by the brook."

"Neither shall I," she murmured. Her lashes were wonderful; not till that moment had he done justice to her lashes.

"I want to give you a little present—something you can hide away to make sure you are not embarrassed in any way until you get settled. I wish it were gold, but you won't mind. You understand, don't you, Sally?" 133

He always carried a five-hundred-dollar bill against emergencies and this he had clung to through all his adventures. He now produced it from his inner waistcoat pocket and slipped it into her hand.

Her brow clouded for an instant; then she smiled radiantly.

"I oughtn't to take it; but I know you mean it all right. It's dear of you," and her tone and the immeasurable kindness of her eyes were easily worth five hundred dollars.

Belated passengers were now brushing past them in the aisle. The conductor, walking briskly along the platform, shouted all aboard with heartless finality. It seemed like the voice of doom to Archie.

"Good-by, Sally!"

He put out his hand, but with a quickness that took his breath away she flung her arms round his neck and kissed him. The touch of her hand by the brook under the stars was as nothing to this. Two young girls seeking seats giggled at the frankness and heartiness of the salutation. In old times Archie would have perished of humiliation; but an overwhelming joy filled his soul. The giggles of bread-and-butter misses who knew nothing of life and love were beneath his notice. Sally's arms were still about his neck, her lips were parted expectantly.

"You must go, honey," she whispered and his kiss fell like a punctuation upon her last delectable word.

If she hadn't given him a gentle push toward the door he might never have reached the vestibule. Another person who shared his haste to leave the train materially assisted him by gentle pressure to the platform. His brain whirled from the intoxication of Sally's kiss—indeed the two kisses, or specifically the kiss received and the kiss returned. But his exaltation was of brief duration, for there beside him stood Isabel like an accusing angel, severe and implacable. It was she whose gentle impulsion had facilitated his exit from the parlor car, and beyond question she had witnessed the kissing, a disagreeable circumstance that fell smotheringly upon his ecstatic mood.

134

"You were on that train!" he exclaimed;—the most fatuous of questions and the poorest possible opening for a conversation.

She ignored his inquiry. It was now her turn to give way under the stress of emotion and the indignant tears shone in her eyes.

"I thought I had made it sufficiently plain at Portsmouth that I resent your following me! The meeting there might have been by accident, but seeing you here I am convinced—I am convinced that you are spying upon me!"

"But, Miss Perry—"

"I should think," she interrupted, "that knowing or suspecting what I am trying to do you would show me some consideration!"

"But I can explain; really I can explain if you will give me a moment! It probably hasn't occurred to you that I'm a good deal mystified by these little journeys you are making over New England! My own dallying in these parts is due to circumstances I can easily explain. In fact, but for you I should not be here at all!"

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This, uttered with a conciliatory smile and quite calmly, not only failed to mollify her anger but produced quite the opposite effect. Her agitation increased, and for the second time they presented the picture of a man and woman involved in a quarrel in a public place.

"I understand perfectly that but for me you shouldn't be loitering here! And you practically acknowledged at Portsmouth that you were interesting yourself in the affairs of the Congdons!"

"We are playing at cross purposes quite unnecessarily," protested Archie. "Why not confess just what your interest is in that family? I told you quite plainly at Portsmouth that I had reason to believe I had shot Putney Congdon at Bailey Harbor! But for the courage you put in my heart I should never have done that!"

"If you did that you have ruined everything! A dastardly act for which I hope you will pay the full penalty of the law!"

This was wholly unreasonable and quite beside himself he shook his finger in her face.

"You seem to forget that you advised me to flout the law; to do just the things I have been doing, roving the world, shooting and plundering! There's a policeman at the other end of the platform; call him and turn me over to the authorities!"

She glanced hurriedly in the direction of a policeman who had nipped a banana from a bunch providentially exposed to his rapacity on a truck, and was hastily consuming it.

"Maybe he is watching me!" she gasped.

For a young woman who had prescribed outlawry as a cure for obstreperous nerves her alarm was astonishing.

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"May I ask, Miss Perry, what reason you have for fearing the authorities?"

"That of course is what you would like to know!" she replied tearfully. "But you know too much! If you have told me the truth your meddlesomeness will have far-reaching consequences too dreadful to think about! Your assumed name tells its own story and convinces me that you have not told the truth. I went aboard that train to look for some one I hoped I might meet, and you know perfectly well why I am here."

He could only stammer a futile expostulation at the gross injustice of this.

"Everything has gone wrong," she continued, "and you may have all the satisfaction you can get out of your interference, your intrusion upon affairs of the greatest delicacy, in which my assistance and my honor are pledged. That car standing yonder belongs to me and before I leave I want you to walk away from here as rapidly as possible and not turn your head!"

He did not even confirm her statement as to the propinquity of the car but crossed the platform with the crestfallen air of a child in disgrace. She had loftily ignored the kissing of Mrs. Abijah Strong. The osculatory adventure with Sally shrank at once in importance from the fact that Isabel had not only ignored it but had made it wholly unnecessary for him to explain that transaction.

He knew nothing save that he was enormously tired and he went to the hotel and crawled wearily into bed.

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IV

It was close upon six o'clock when a knock roused him from a sleep that had not been easily won.

"It's yo' baggage, boss!"

"Baggage?" repeated Archie.

He had told the clerk he had no baggage and had paid in advance for his room. His suitcase was at Walker's and it was hardly possible that Walker had forwarded his effects. He opened the door cautiously and saw at a glance that the bag was undeniably his. He groped for his trousers and gave the waiting porter half a dollar.

"How did it get here?" he asked with attempted indifference.

"Don't know nuffin' 'bout it, suh; gemmen tole me tote 'er up. If it ain't all right—"

"Oh, it's all right enough!" Archie exclaimed hastily, fearing to pursue the inquiry.

He opened the bag and found that it not only contained all his belongings but they had been packed neatly by an experienced hand. The unaccountable arrival of his luggage sent his thoughts flying to Walker's farm and the Governor.

Pleased as he was by the arrival of his effects, the reappearance of the bag brought him back to earth with a reverberating jar. He was confident that malevolent agencies were responsible; and to be reminded thus sharply of the powers of evil just when he craved nothing so much as slumber's oblivion was disturbing and ominous.

He was sitting on the edge of the bed idly smoothing the wrinkles out of a pet necktie when a gently insinuating knock unpreluded by a step in the hall caused him to start.

"Come!"

The door opened slowly, wide enough to permit a man's head to be thrust in. A face wearing an amused smile, a familiar face but the last he expected to see, met his gaze.

"Hist!"

The Governor widened the opening in the door and squeezed through.

"My dear Archie!" he exclaimed as he locked the door, "how infinitely relieved I am! I was afraid some harm had befallen you, but to find you here safe and sound fills my heart with gratitude."

He flung down his cap and linen duster, chose a chair by the window and seated himself with a little sigh.

"I hope," Archie ventured timidly, "that you came alone?"

"Oh, yes; I'm alone! Trust me for that; but my friend Walker was not easily shaken. A strong passionate nature, Walker; a man long habituated to the lethal knife, the unerring pistol. No easy task you may well believe to get rid of him. And his provocation! O my boy, his provocation to justifiable homicide and all that sort of thing!"

"Well, I only did what I thought was right," Archie declared doggedly. "I wasn't weighing the consequences."

The Governor, filling his pipe, lifted a hand to emphasize the "splendid" with which he received this statement.

"Splendid, my dear Archie, to see how beautifully you rose to the situation—a situation that spoke powerfully to your generous heart! If there has been any error it is mine. I should have known from the way you played up to the Seebrook girl that you were far too susceptible to be trusted with women. The error is mine; not yours, Archie; I don't blame you a particle. Indeed the incident warms my heart to you. Sally is a winsome lass; she has a way with her, that girl!"

"I would have done the same thing for any girl in like circumstances," Archie declared, pacing the floor with shoulders erect.

"I dare say you would! Your heart and your sword are at the command of any pretty jade who squints at you! But when I suggested that it might be well for you to keep in practice I didn't mean for you to make a monkey of yourself. Your true love—what did you say her name is?"

To recall Isabel to his memory was a greater mockery than the Governor knew, but Archie met the question with well-feigned unconcern.

"I didn't say," he answered; "but her name is Isabel."

"Ah! One of the few really perfect names in the whole list! Rather more style to it than Sally! And yet Sally has been used to good advantage by the balladists. To 'Sally in Our Alley,' we might add Sally at the Churn or Sally Softly Singing in the Corn, or Sally Leading Archie by the Ear. The possibilities are exquisite."

"If you don't mind," said Archie with dignity, "we'll stop talking nonsense. I want to know what happened."

"Just a little curious, are you, as to what followed your amazing breach of hospitality? Ran away with a pretty girl, assisted in marrying her to an undesirable son-in-law, and now you want to know how the old folks take it! Oh, Archie, for sheer innocence you are a wonder!"

"Walker had no right to force a girl like Sally to marry an old curmudgeon she hated. I never hesitated as to the course I should take after she told me her story. The marriage was in proper form and I haven't a single regret!"

The Governor rocked with delight.

"You didn't miss a stroke!" he exclaimed wiping the tears from his eyes. "The marriage satisfied all legal requirements. Your work was only too well done!"

"I'm glad you're satisfied," said Archie spitefully. "And if Walker is a sensible man he will welcome the young couple home and make the best of it."

"It saddens me to be obliged to speak the grievous truth when your conscience is so pleased with itself. Let me deal in surmises a moment before I hand you a few unhappy facts. Sitting with Sally down by the brook and probably holding her hand"—(Archie flinched)—"holding her hand perhaps, and strongly tempted to kiss her, you fell an easy prey to her fascinations. She told you a plausible yarn as to Walker's cruelty in wanting her to marry a tottering old widower and asked you to assist her to elope with a sturdy young farmer who was even then waiting for her by the old mill or the school house, or something like that. And your heart swelled to bursting with the thought of serving one so fair! Wholly natural, Archie, for I too have dwelt in Arcady! If that minx hadn't told you she had a lover loitering in the background, you'd probably have thrown yourself into the breach and eloped with her yourself. Yes, you would, Archie! I must have a care of you or your Isabel will never meet you at the altar!"

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"We're not talking of Isabel," Archie interrupted haughtily. "I'll trouble you to say all you have to say about Sally and Abijah."

"Abijah!" squeaked the Governor, again overcome by mirth.

For the first time Archie disliked the Governor. His unsympathetic attitude toward the elopement was intolerable. A round of abuse would have been more palatable than this ironic jesting. The Governor saw that he had gone too far and immediately shifted the key.

"What you did, Archie," he resumed paternally, "what you did was to marry Sally, the incomparable, Sally the divine, to Pete Barney, the diamond thief. He took refuge with Walker a couple of weeks ago, and the old man extended him his usual generous hospitality. Barney had been well vouched for and had all the pass-words and countersigns of the great fraternity, but Walker mistrusted him. A week is the usual limit for a pilgrim's stay, and seeing how Sally and Barney were hitting it off the old man gave the chap a hint to move along. He didn't go, it seems, but hung round the neighborhood waiting for a chance to pull off the elopement in which you so kindly assisted even to the extent of bolting with Slippery Abe's car."

"You mean—you mean I married the girl to a crook?" gasped Archie.

"One of the smoothest in the game! And Sally knew he was a crook! I suppose it was the diamonds that fetched her. If you'd looked at his hands you would have noticed that he hadn't the paws of an honest Green Mountain farmer. Pick-pocket originally and marvelously deft; but precious stones are his true métier. The trifling little necklace he had on his person when he struck Walker's is worth a cool hundred thousand. He'll have to break it up and sell 'em in the usual way and it will take time."

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Archie sank upon the bed, twisting his hands together. He had done a horrible thing, hardly second to murder, and his penitence weighed heavily upon him.

"You are not chaffing me! It doesn't seem possible that the girl would have deceived me!"

"We never know when they are going to deceive us, Archie! I hate to think that Sally inherited a strain of lawlessness and yet she hated the farm and was crazy to escape. I forgot to mention that she lifted a couple of hundred dollars the old man kept under a plank in the parlor floor—an emergency fund in case he ever had to run for it. A nasty trick, I call it; most unfilial on Sally's part. The Walkers are crushed by her conduct. They have tried to shield her from all the sorrow and shame of the world; and there was really a very decent young farmer wild to marry her, old New England stock, revolutionary stuff, aristocrats, you may say. And if you hadn't muddled everything it would have come about in time. But you will have your fling, Archie! You certainly spilled the beans. And I had vouched for you at the Walkers'; it's almost as bad as though I had betrayed them myself. You will not, of course, make the serious error of knocking at the Walker door again! That would be rubbing it in; but I hope you have learned your lesson. It probably didn't occur to you that I might have been sore enough to mention somewhere your connection with certain blood stains on the board walk at Bailey Harbor. You should have a care of yourself!"

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"I don't want you to think me ungrateful," Archie stammered. "The girl made a fool of me; I see it all now!"

"She made a fool of you but you in turn made a fool of me! And while I'm not caviling, you will pardon me, son, if I suggest that hereafter you play square with me. I'm no saint, but I wouldn't desert a comrade or stick a knife in his back. Please understand that I don't mean to curb your personal enterprise, or set any limit on your little affairs of the heart. You are not the first man who thought he understood women, and you are not the last victim of that deplorable delusion. But let's have no more foolishness."

"I haven't a thing to say for myself!" blurted Archie, who was at the point of tears. "I was weak, miserably weak. I had no idea that any one could lie as that girl did. And it's not fair for me to stay on with you. I can't ask you to trust me again. We'd better part company right here!"

"How completely you misjudge me, Archie! There's a charm in you begotten of your very innocence and helplessness, and I should be very unhappy if we parted now. We've shared some danger together and in spite of your weaknesses I'm fond of you. And if I left you to your own devices something quite disastrous might happen to you."

Discomfited and humiliated as he was the very thought of going out into the world alone filled Archie with horror. Under Sally's hypnotic influence he had concluded that the Governor was a negligible factor in his life; but away from the girl and rankling under her deceit he grasped at the Governor's friendship with the frantic clutch of a drowning man. The Governor drew out his bill fold and extracted from it a newspaper cutting.

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"Note this, Archie, from a Boston paper of today. Our old friend Congdon has stirred up the Boston police about the disappearance of his son. I don't ask you to make any comment on that item; I merely call your attention to the fact that Putney Congdon is on the missing list and like ourselves Putney Congdon was at Bailey Harbor. Nothing particularly startling in all this, as the police records show something like an average of one thousand four hundred and thirteen missing or unaccounted for persons in the United States every year. This paper says that Congdon was seen by one person and one only at Bailey Harbor. That was a garage man who sold him some gas—it was a stormy night—and incidentally that night poor Hoky set sail for the happy isles. And the date is further memorable from the fact that it was the occasion of our first meeting. And the blood stains on the board walk of one of the streets at Bailey—"

"Stop, for God's sake!" cried Archie. "I'll tell you everything; I'll—"

"You'll tell me nothing, because I refuse to listen! Confessing is a habit. If I encourage you to confess to me you'll be pouring your tale into the ear of the first policeman you meet. As things stand you are not suspected, and if we follow my program you are likely to walk the world in safety for the rest of your days. If I knew the circumstances I might become nervous and I must retain my poise or we perish. Your autobiography for the past week or so would make a ripping narrative, but you'd better learn to forget. Our yesterdays are as nothing; it's tomorrow we've got to think about. Those Congdons are rather a picturesque lot as I catch them in cinema flashes. It appears from the paper that young Putney's wife had left him, and there was some sort of row about the children. The old boy we struck at Cornford will probably be charging the absconding wife with killing Putney the first thing we know!"

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"Charge Mrs. Congdon with killing her husband! O my God!" wailed Archie.

"Control yourself, my dear boy! One would infer from that item that Mrs. Congdon dropped off the earth after she left Bailey Harbor. She and her children motored out of Bailey and haven't yet reached their house in New York, for which she was presumably bound. By Jove, it's woozy the way these Congdons keep bobbing up! I'd give something handsome to know how the old chap and Seebrook came out at Cornford. I learn that they're holding Silent Tim, the chap I told you would be arrested, and our part in the delicate transaction is already obscured."

Archie was giving the Governor only half attention. His nerves were unstrung by the bald, colorless report of Putney Congdon's disappearance, which shocked him all the more from the fact that it was so hideously commonplace, merely a bit of journalistic routine. He wished the Governor would stop reading newspapers. Now that the man's disappearance had been heralded the police of the entire country would be searching for him dead or alive and if his body were found there would be a great hue and cry until his murderer was apprehended.

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The Governor was unconcernedly sketching one of the diagrams with which he seemed to visualize his plans. These he made in small compass, any scrap of paper serving his purpose. Archie had supposed this was a means of recalling places and highways and determining the time required to reach a certain point, but the Governor was always at pains to conceal these calculations or memoranda. Archie was startled now to hear his companion muttering to himself:

"Aries, the Lamb, the Fishes! For a time I stumbled and walked in darkness but the leading light is clearer now. The moving finger writes—writes!" He dropped his pencil and gazed blankly into space.

Archie had caught one day a glimpse of several of the zodiacal signs drawn on the margin of a newspaper where the Governor had neglected to erase them; but he was astounded to find that he was in the company of a man who took counsel of the stars.

"*Né sous une mauvaise étoile!* You catch the sense admirably. Yes, I was born under an evil star; just that! But if I haven't pondered the mysteries unprofitably I shall emerge from the shadow in due season. When you see me scribbling I am calculating the potency of the dark fate that overhangs me and trying to estimate when if ever the cloud will pass. Don't trouble your head with those fancies; leave them to me. Hope is buoyed in me by the fact that never yet have my figures erred. The night before I picked you up in the road I knew that you were walking toward me out of nowhere, and I was charged by the planets to befriend you. So here we are, pilgrims under heavenly protection!"

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"I'm sorry; I don't want to leave you; I couldn't make it alone," Archie answered, awed and meek under these revelations.

"It's very curious, Archie," the Governor resumed, making a little pile of the scraps to which he had already reduced the sketch; "it's quite remarkable that the light still hangs in the west for us. Since you joined me it has been more brilliant. It may be that after all you are destined to bring me good luck!" He paced the floor for several minutes, then struck his hands together sharply. "All right!" he exclaimed. "It has never failed me! The light is mild, feminine, we shall say, gentle, persuasive, encouraging. It would be fatal to ignore its message."

Archie watched him for some gleam of humor, but the Governor had never been more serious. His face lighted as he found Archie's eyes fixed upon him.

"You were thinking just then that I've gone crazy; but I assure you that I'm perfectly able to give myself all the tests for insanity; I should recognize the symptoms immediately, from my ability to look into myself with the detachment of a man who stands at a window and peers into a lighted room. To return to practical affairs, we shall abandon Collins' machine and I'll wire him where to pick it up. Then we'll entrain at our leisure."

"If you don't mind my asking, I'd like to know where we're bound for?"

"New York, my dear boy; but you needn't be alarmed. It will be hot there and we'll only pause for a day or so. We both need to freshen up our wardrobe a bit."

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Archie shook his head stubbornly.

"I haven't told you this, but I'm supposed to be in the Canadian Rockies. It would be a risky business for me to show up in town! I might at any turn run into relatives or friends who know I left for a two months' absence in the Rockies. And incidentally, the same people *might* know I had been to Bailey Harbor."

"You're a frightful egotist, Archie! This is a large world and man's memory is short. The man you dine with most frequently at your club wouldn't remember in a week whether you told him you were going to the Rockies or the Himalayas and if you met him on the Avenue he'd merely nod and pass on trying to remember who the devil you were. But I renew my sacred promise to take care of you; you may rely on me, Archie. Now as always we invite the most searching scrutiny! If you see any old friends I beg of you do not attempt to dodge them; shake one and all heartily by the hand. We'll pretend that our black wool is as white as the drifted snow, and no one will run after us shouting, 'Blacksheep, blacksheep!'"

V

As the train flew along the Connecticut shore Archie realized with a new poignancy the tremendous change that had occurred in his life since he left New York, his birthplace and the home of his family for two hundred years. Instead of lounging in clubs and his luxurious apartment he would now go skulking through the streets with a master crook, and his imagination was already intent upon the character of the lair to which the Governor would guide him. He still swayed between the joys of his mad adventure and its perils. He might, he knew, bid the Governor good-bye at the Grand Central Station, step into a taxi and walk into the door of one or another of his clubs and bid the world defiance. The serenity of his life as known to his friends would be a sufficient refutation of any charge that might be made against him. No one would believe the mysterious Governor if he were to declare on oath that Archibald Bennett was a criminal who had left a scarlet trail across three states.

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It would be an interesting experiment to defy the Governor; but he dismissed this as foolish and hazardous. The Governor had a long arm, and having trifled with his good nature at the Walkers' it would certainly be ungracious and in all likelihood disastrous to offend him a second time. But the Governor's fantastic talk about the joining of their stars in the west had touched his imagination. With all his absurdities, and strange and unaccountable as he was, the Governor did make good his promises. If he wasn't in league with occult powers he at least possessed a baffling sort of prescience; and what was more to the point he had apparently reduced to a fine art the business of keeping clear of the authorities. If he could escape from the Governor it would be to take up his old eventless life, with a recrudescence no doubt of the ills that had so long beset him; and he had utterly forgotten that he had ever been an invalid. He grinned as he reflected that he had been obliged to shoot a man to find a cure for his nerves.

As the train drew out of New Haven the Governor, seemingly absorbed in a magazine, covertly kicked him. A man passed slowly through the car, carelessly eyeing the passengers. When he reached Archie's chair he paused as though steadying himself against the swaying train. For a moment he clung to the back of the Governor's chair, which was turned toward the window, and his eyes surveyed the luggage piled under the windows. The Governor swung round presently and remarked indifferently without changing his position:

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"Rawlings, the best man they have in the Department now. He's looking for some one but let us hope it's not us. A very keen eye has Rawlings. Not one of these sleuths in a black derby and false mustache you see in the movies, but a gentleman and a man of education. He's probably looking for that teller who cut a slice out of the surplus of a Massachusetts bank last week. It's not our trouble, Archie. Embezzlers and defaulters are not to my taste; we rather look down on that breed in the brotherhood. A low order of talent; no brains; they're not in our class."

"But it isn't necessary to advertise our sins to the whole train!" whispered Archie, eyeing apprehensively their nearest neighbors in the crowded car. "You haven't convinced me yet that we're not making a serious blunder."

"Cease grumbling! If we wanted to play safe we'd both enter some home for aged and decrepit men and sit among the halt and blind and toothless until we became even as they. Rawlings' defaulter is encumbered, most disgracefully, with the usual blonde, in this case the lily-handed cashier in a motion picture shop; and a man of Rawlings' intelligence would know at a glance that we are not villains of that breed. I haven't traveled by this route for some time and I mean to keep awake to enjoy the pleasant view. My historical sense is always tickled as I cut across Rhode Island and contemplate the state house at Providence. If we were not really upon business bent we might have run down to Narragansett Pier or even to Newport for a breath of

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air. Newport! Newport is adorable! I am far from being a snob, Archie, but Newport is really the loveliest place in America. I grant you that Bar Harbor has its points and even Bailey Harbor is not so bad—do pardon me, Archie! I forgot for the moment your unhappy memories of that place—but Newport alone is perfection gone to heaven! It would please me enormously to join you in a little excursion to Newport, by yacht preferably; but if it leaked out that we had been flying so high it would injure us with the simple-hearted comrades of the great brotherhood. You can imagine what a man like Red Leary would say if he knew we were dining at tables where the jewels run into millions. And your young friend Abijah, alias Pete Barney, would certainly cut our acquaintance if we failed to take advantage of such glorious opportunities."

"How are you going to know whether we're watched?" asked Archie in a frightened whisper when "Forty-second Street" flashed at him from the wall of the tunnel.

"In a few minutes we'll know the worst," replied the Governor blandly. "I beg of you be confident, be assured, be cheerful!"

At the station gates a man in gray livery stepped up and touched his cap to the Governor.

"Ah, Tom; glad to see you again!"

"Thank you, sir; is this all the luggage?"

"That's all, Tom. Have an eye to Mr. Comly's bag; he's stopping with me."

Archie dragged himself into a handsome limousine that was brought to the curb by a chauffeur as impeccably tailored as the footman.

"Well, George, how are things with you?" asked the Governor pleasantly.

"Very good, sir; things running very smoothly, sir."

"Drive directly home, please.

"We may wander to our hearts' content, Archie, but there's no place like home, particularly when it's little old New York," remarked the Governor, sinking back contentedly.

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CHAPTER FOUR

I

The car crossed to the Avenue and bore north. Archie was again left high in air. He had expected to be piloted by circuitous routes to some vile thieves' den in the intricate mazes of the East Side, but the car and the smartly appareled men encouraged the hope of a very different destination. The Governor, evidently enjoying his companion's befuddlement, talked of the changes that had taken place in the upper city in his memory. His reminiscences did not interest Archie greatly. He thought it likely the Governor was uttering commonplaces for the benefit of the men on the box, who could easily hear their passengers' conversation through the partition windows. The car passed two clubs in which Archie was a member in good standing and he caught a fleeting glimpse down an intersecting thoroughfare of the apartment house in which he was a tenant with a recurrence of the disagreeable questionings he had experienced so frequently as to whether he was himself or some other and very different person.

The Governor had not warned him to avoid marking the route, which was as familiar to Archie as the palm of his hand, but somewhere in the Seventies he did for a moment lose track of the streets, and the car, swinging east, stopped midway of a block of handsome residences. There was still the chance that this was all by-play, a trick for concealing their arrival in town; but the footman was already ringing the bell of a house whose facade was the most distinguished in sight. The door was opened by a manservant, whose face expressed pleasure as the Governor passed him with all the airs of incontestable proprietorship.

"I think we may as well go at once to our rooms," he said. "You understand, Baring, that we dine at seven-thirty—places for three?"

"Very good, sir: I received your telegram."

Amid the various phases of surprise through which he had passed since reaching the station Archie had kept his ears open, thinking the servants would address their employer by a name, but no such clue was forthcoming. The house exhaled an atmosphere of luxury and taste, and the furnishings were rich and consistently chosen. Archie recalled twenty houses in which he was frequently a guest that in nowise approached the Governor's establishment for comfort and charm. If he had been puzzled before he was stupefied now. The enormous effrontery of the thing overwhelmed him. He knew the general neighborhood too well not to be sure that it was not a region where a housebreaker of even the most exalted rank could live unchallenged. To be sure this was summer, and most of the houses along the street were boarded up; but the Governor would certainly not be invading in broad daylight premises to which he had no claim,

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and the retinue of trained and decorous servants disposed effectually of any such speculations.

On the second floor the Governor lingered in the drawing-room to call his guest's attention to some pictures, contemporary American work, which Archie recognized instantly. Indeed he knew several of the painters very well.

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"We must encourage our own artists," remarked the Governor. "It's the only way we shall ever develop an American art."

Continuing up another flight (there was an elevator, the Governor explained, but he preferred the stairs) Archie surveyed approvingly a lounging room, half library and half office.

"If you have a taste for old leather there's stuff here that will please you. No rubbish, you see; a man's room, a little quaint as to furniture, and the telephone and electric fan are the only anachronisms, a concession to the spirit of modern life. Here I have worked out some most abstruse problems in astrology. A capital place to ponder the mysteries. If anything on that tray interests you, help yourself."

Archie tottered toward the stand on which decanters, syphons, and a silver bowl of ice had been placed. He helped himself generously to Scotch; the Governor contented himself with a glass of mineral water—he never took anything else, he explained.

"Odd, but I've never used the stuff at all. Bless you, no fanatical notions on the subject! If you don't see what you like there just press a button and it will probably be found for you. And now, my dear Archie"—he closed the door and turned on the fan—"you are my guest, in every sense my guest. You wouldn't be human if you didn't wonder about me rather more than at any time since we first met; you had not the slightest idea that I should bring you to so decent a shack as this. It may have occurred to you that I may be an interloper here, but such is not the case. I own this house and the ground it stands on and everything in it. You are, of course, not a prisoner; not in any sense, and there's a telephone in your room—you shall see in a moment—by which you can talk to all the world quite freely,—no restrictions whatsoever.

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"My name is not Saulsbury, of course, but something quite different. The servants in this house do not know my true name. They might, of course, work it out, for I pay taxes here, and my family history is spread in the public records, but the people you see about here are trained to curb their curiosity; I trust them just as I trust you. They are all from under the crust,—the man who met us at the station is a daring housebreaker; the chauffeur a second-story man, the only one I ever knew who had the slightest judgment; the butler is a hotel thief, and a shrewd operator until he got too corpulent for transom work. Down to the scullery maid, who was a clever shoplifter, all the servants are crooks I've picked up and installed here until they can do what Leary's doing, invest their ill-gotten gains in some legitimate business. When Baring offers you the asparagus or serves your coffee you may derive a thrill from the knowledge that the man at your elbow has enough rewards hanging over him to make any one rich who can telephone his whereabouts to police headquarters in any town in America. As all branches of the profession are represented here my retainers repay my hospitality by keeping me in touch with their comrades everywhere."

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Archie wiped the perspiration from his face and groped for the decanter.

"You're not afraid—not afraid of *them*!"

"Ingratitude, my dear Archie, is reserved for the highbrow moralist; I trust these people with my life and liberty, and they know I'll not only protect them but that my facilities for shielding them and assisting in the liquidation of their loot is theirs to command. While they are here their lives are wholly circumspect, though they are not without their temptations. With a place like this to operate from they could raid this whole block and back vans up to my door and cart it away. Officious caretakers and hidden wires connected with detective agencies would only stimulate their wits. But nothing doing, Archie! A policeman on this beat suggested to Baring, over a bottle of beer in the basement, the lifting of plate in a house round the corner, but what did Baring do but show the fellow the door! And yet Baring has stolen thousands of dollars' worth of stuff of all kinds and has it well planted waiting for me to turn it into cash. By the way, you saw the chap who brought in the tray? You probably noticed his melancholy air? I had just told him of Hoky's death and he's all broken up. He and Hoky ranged the Missouri River towns a few years ago and the police out there are still trying to explain their plunderings."

"I suppose, I suppose," Archie timidly ventured, "you've told them about *me*?"

"Not a word! They'd be jealous: wouldn't understand how I made you a guest when all the rest of 'em have to work for a living. You will act exactly as though you were a visitor in the house of an old friend. And now I must go through this mail—I've got a chap who collects my stuff from some of the unofficial post-offices up-state and here it is all ready for inspection. The first room to the right is yours.

158

"A few pretty good pastels stuck around here," he continued, opening a door. "That 'Moonrise on the Grand Lagoon' is rather well done. Everything seems to be in order; if you want your clothes pressed poke the button twice."

Archie snapped his fingers impatiently. When he went to Washington to say good-bye to his sister he had ordered a trunk packed with the major portion of his wardrobe and held for orders. How to possess himself of the trunk without disclosing his presence in town to the valet of the Dowden Apartments was beyond his powers.

"If you have something tucked away that you'd like to get hold of—" suggested the Governor

with one of his intuitive flashes.

"It's a trunk at my—er—lodgings. A man who works there packed it for me—"

"Why don't you come out with it and say that the syndicate valet in one of these palatial bachelor chambers somewhere uptown packed it for you? I can tell a man who's been valeted as far as my eyes will reach. Now I have no curiosity whatever about your personal identity or affairs of any sort, as I've told you before. I'll ring for my own valet, who was an honest tailor before he became a successful second-story worker, and you may confide your predicament to him. He'll ride home on the trunk. There was never yet a valet who wouldn't steal the trousers off a bronze statue, and I'll lift the ban on crooked work here long enough for Timmons to call at your lodgings and either by violence or corruption secure your trunk. No! Not a cent. Remember that you are my guest." 159

The trunk was in Archie's room in just one hour. Timmons, who had received his instructions without the slightest emotion, gravely unpacked it.

"You've got to admit the service in this house is excellent. If you don't mind we'll dress for dinner," remarked the Governor lounging in the doorway. "I forgot to say that there's a lady dining with us—"

"A lady!" demanded Archie with a frown. He had assumed, when the Governor reminded Baring that dinner was to be served for three, that he was to be introduced to some prominent member of what the Governor was fond of calling the great fraternity. But the threatened projection of a woman into the household struck Archie unfavorably. The Governor's tale of his love affair with a bishop's daughter he had discounted heavily; it was hardly possible that any respectable woman would dine in the house. The Governor, with his usual quick perception, noted his companion's displeasure.

"Your qualms and your concern for the proprieties are creditable to your up-bringing. But how ungenerous of you to suspect me of wishing to mix you up with anything even remotely bordering upon an intrigue, a vulgar liaison! One thing I am not, my boy; one thing I may, with a degree of assurance, say for myself, and that is that with all my sins I am not vulgar!"

"Of course I didn't mean that," said Archie clumsily, knowing that this was exactly what he had meant. "But I thought you might be—er—more comfortable if I didn't appear." 160

"The suspicion had sunk deep! But once more I shall forgive you. Your presence will help me tide over a difficult situation. I am not only showing you once more the depth of my confidence and trust but, more than that, I pay you the compliment of asking your assistance. You bear yourself so like a gentleman that your presence at my table can hardly fail to reassure the lady and contribute to her own ease and peace of mind. And without you we might quarrel horribly. You will act as a buffer, a restraining influence; your charming manners will mitigate the violence of her resentment against me. The lady—"

Archie waited for what further he might have to say about the lady. The Governor had grown suddenly grave. He crossed the room, stared at the floor for a moment, and then said from the door:

"The lady, my dear boy, is my sister."

II

The Governor maintained so evenly his mood of irresponsible insouciance that the soberness with which he announced that it was his sister who was to join them at dinner sent Archie's thoughts darting away at a new tangent of speculation. He had so accommodated himself to the idea that the Governor was a man without ties, or with all his ties broken, that this intimation that he had a sister who was still on friendly enough terms with him to visit his house—an establishment which with all its conventionalities of comfort and luxury was dominated by a note of mystery—left Archie floundering. As the man himself had said, it would not be so difficult a matter to penetrate the secret of his identity. Archie knew several men in town who were veritable encyclopedias of the scandal of three generations, and if the scion of some old New York house had gone astray these gentlemen could furnish all the essential data. But he had given his word and he had no intention of prying into his friend's affairs. However, the sister might let fall some clue, and as he dressed he tried to imagine just what sort of woman the Governor's sister would prove to be. 161

"Julia is usually very prompt but she is motoring from Southampton and we must allow her the usual margin," the Governor remarked when they met in the drawing-room. Traces of the same nervousness he had manifested in announcing that it was his sister who was coming to dine with them were still visible.

The clock had struck the three-quarters when they heard the annunciator tinkle followed by the opening of the front door. The Governor left the room with a bound and Archie heard distinctly his hearty greetings and a woman's subdued replies.

"I'm sorry to be late, but we had to change a tire. No, I'll leave my wraps here."

"Won't you be more comfortable without your hat?"

"No, I'll keep it; thanks!"

The door framed for a moment a young woman who in her instant's pause on the threshold

seemed like a portrait figure suddenly come to life. She was taller than the Governor and carried herself with a suggestion of his authoritative bearing. Her face was a feminized version of the Governor's, exquisitely modeled and illuminated by dark eyes that swept Archie with a hasty inquiry from under the brim of a black picture hat. She might have been younger or older than the Governor, but her maturity was not an affair of years. She was a person of distinction, a woman to challenge attention in any company. Archie was not sure whether she had been warned of a stranger's presence in the house, but if she was surprised to find him there she made no sign.

162

As Archie advanced to meet them he moved slowly, and unconsciously drew himself up, as though preparing to meet a personage who compelled homage and was not to be approached without a degree of ceremony. She was entirely in black save for the roses in her hat. She might have retained the hat, he thought, for the sake of its shadow on her face; or from a sense that it emphasized the formal and transitory nature of her visit.

"Julia, this is my friend, Mr. Comly."

Her "very glad, I'm sure," was uttered with reservations, but she smiled, a quick sad little smile.

The Governor had introduced her as Julia, carelessly, as though of course Archie knew the rest of it. The whole business was as utterly unreal as anything could be. The Governor asked perfunctorily about her drive into town, and whether it had been hot in the country. Dinner was announced immediately and they sat down at a round table whose centerpiece of sweet peas brought a coolness into the room.

The dinner was served with a deliberation befitting the end of a summer day. Julia was the most tranquil of the trio and it was in Archie's mind that she was capable of dominating even more difficult situations. She was studying him—he was conscious of that—and it was clear that she was not finding it easy to appraise and place him. The Governor had given him no hint of the possible trend of the table talk but the woman took the matter into her own hands. As though by prearrangement she touched upon wholly impersonal matters, recent movements in European affairs, a new novel, the industrial situation; things that could be broached without fear of embarrassment were picked up and flung aside when they had served their purpose. The Governor was often inattentive, the most uncomfortable member of the trio. It seemed to Archie as he met a puzzled look in Julia's eyes from time to time that she was still trying to account for him, and her manner he thought slowly changed. Her first defensive hostility yielded to something much more amiable. It was as though she had reached a decision not wholly unflattering and might be a little sorry for her earlier attitude.

163

The Governor roused himself presently at the mention of a new book of verse she had praised, and threw himself into the talk thereafter with characteristic spirit and humor.

"Mr. Comly shares my affection for the poets. He has been a great resource to me, Julia. I'm sure you'd be grateful to him if you knew the extent of his kindnesses. A new friend, but it's not always the old ones, you know—"

"My brother is hard to please," said Julia. "You score high in meeting his exacting requirements."

164

A slight smile dulled the irony of this, but the Governor, evidently concerned for the maintenance of amity, introduced the art of the Aztecs, to which he brought his usual enthusiasm.

The Aztecs carried them back to the drawing-room, where Archie, feeling that the Governor and his sister probably had personal affairs to talk about, lounged toward the door; but the Governor was quick to detect his purpose.

"Julia, if you brought those documents with you I'll take them up to my room and look them over. It's only a matter of my signature, isn't it? You and Mr. Comly can give the final twist to prehistoric art. I'll be down at once."

"Very well; you will find them in my bag in the hall. I must start home very soon, you know."

"I had hoped you would spend the night here," said the Governor; "but if you won't I'm grateful even for this little glimpse."

If Julia was displeased by the Governor's very evident intention not to be left alone with her she was at pains to conceal the feeling. Archie turned toward her inquiringly, but he met a look of acquiescence that carried also an appeal as though she wished him not to interfere.

The Governor left the room and reappeared with a small satchel, took out several bundles of legal papers and glanced at their superscriptions.

"Those are chiefly deeds and leases," Julia remarked carelessly. "They're all ready to be signed by the trustees. There are forms for our approval attached to all of them and you'll find that I've signed."

The Governor shrugged his shoulders as though business matters were not to his taste and in a moment they heard his quick step on the stair.

165

The novelty of the situation that left Archie alone with a woman whose very name he did not know was enhanced by the sumptuousness of the background furnished by the house itself. It was the oddest possible place for such an adventure. Julia sat with one arm flung along the back of a low chair. She fell naturally into poses that suggested portraits; there were painters who would have jumped at the chance of sketching her as she sat there with the spot of red in the

big hat and the shadowed face and the white of her throat and arms relieving the long black line.

"It is no doubt clear to you," she remarked without altering her position and with no lowering of the habitual tone of her speech, "that my brother prefers not to be alone with me."

"I rather surmised that," Archie replied with an ease he did not feel. She might ask questions; it might be that she would cross-examine him as to the Governor's recent movements. He turned to drop his cigarette into the brass receiver at his elbow to avoid contact with her gaze, which was bent upon him disconcertingly.

"We have but a moment, and we must have a care not to seem to be confidential. He didn't close his door, I think."

The draperies at the end of the room swayed a little and Archie walked back and glanced into the dining-room. He nodded reassuringly and she indicated a seat a little nearer than the one he had left.

"Please don't be alarmed, but it's a singular fact that I know you; we met once, passingly, at a tea in Cambridge; it's a good while ago and we exchanged only a word, so don't try to remember. I much prefer that you shouldn't." Archie didn't remember; he had attended many teas at Cambridge during commencement festivities and had always hated them. "It was not until we were at the table that I placed you tonight. I'm telling you this," she went on, "not to disturb you but to let you know that I'm relieved, infinitely relieved to know that you are with my brother. How it came about is none of my affair. But you are a gentleman; in the strange phase through which"—her lips formed to speak a name but she caught herself up sharply—"through which he is passing I'm gratified that he has your companionship. I want you to promise to be kind to him, and to protect him so far as possible. I only know vaguely—I am afraid to surmise—how he spends his time; this is my first glimpse of him in a year, and for half a dozen years I have met him only in some such way as this. You have probably questioned his sanity; that would be only natural, but there is no such excuse for him. Once something very cruel happened to him; something that greatly embittered him, a very cruel, hard thing, indeed; and after the first shock of it—" She turned her head slightly and her lips quivered.

166

"That is all," she said, and faced him again with her beautiful repose accentuated, her perfect self-control that touched him with an infinite pity. She was superb, and he had listened with a shame deepened by the consciousness that, remembering him from a chance meeting, she attributed to him an honor and decency he had relinquished, it seemed to him, in some state of existence before the dawn of time. What she knew or did not know about her brother was not of importance; it was the assumption that he was capable of exercising an influence upon the man, protecting and saving him from himself that hurt, hurt with all the poignancy of physical pain. She did not dream that she had got the whole thing upside-down; that if the Governor was a social pariah he himself was no whit better, and had thrown himself upon the Governor's mercy.

167

"I shall do what I can," he said. "You can see that I am very fond of him; he has been enormously kind to me."

She gave little heed to this, though she nodded her head slowly as though she had counted upon his promise.

"You probably know that with all his oddities and whimsicalities he has some theory of life that doesn't belong to our day. It may help you to know that there's a crisis approaching in his affairs. He has hinted at it for several years; it's a part of the mystery in which he wraps himself; but I never know quite how to take him. He wears a smiling mask. Please understand that it is because I love him so much that I am saying these things to you; that and because I know I can trust you. You are remaining with him, I hope—"

"Yes; we plan to be together for some time."

"If anything should happen to him I should like to know." She paused a moment. "It was distinctly understood between us when he called me by telephone this morning that I was not to hint in any way as to his identity, or mine for that matter, and I shall not break faith with him. He would be greatly displeased if he knew what I have said to you; but I resolved after I had been in the house half an hour that I could count on your aid. We have but a moment more."

168

She mused a moment and then with quick decision stepped to a writing table, snatched a sheet of paper and wrote rapidly, while he filled in the interval by talking of irrelevant things to guard against the chance that the Governor might be on his way down and would note their silence.

She thrust the sheet into an envelope and sealed it.

"I trust you completely," she said, lingering with, a smile upon the last word. "I shall be at that address until the first of October. You can wire me in any emergency."

When the Governor reappeared they were seemingly in the midst of a leisurely discussion of the drama.

"Back into the bag they go," said the Governor. "Everything's all right, Julia. I checked up the items with my inventory and am entirely satisfied. I'm delighted that you two get on so well together; but I knew you would hit it off. Mr. Comly has been most kind and considerate, Julia. In my long pilgrimage I have never before met a man so much to my taste. The Wandering Jew and the Flying Dutchman had no such luck. Sweet it is to wander with a good comrade, taking no care for the morrow, but letting every day suffice unto itself."

He walked to a grand piano at the end of the room, sat down and began to play.

Surprise was dead in Archie where the Governor was concerned; he could only marvel at the ease and finish with which the man made the room vibrate with the most exquisite melodies of Schumann, Chopin, MacDowell. He played for half an hour without airs or affectations, things that bruised and hurt the spirit by their very tenderness and wistfulness. 169

"It's as though some one had been flinging handfuls of rose leaves into the room," said Julia softly when the last chords had died away.

The music had at least served the purpose of dispersing any unhappy hovering ghosts, and she was quick to seize the moment as a propitious one for her departure. The Governor did not demur when she asked him to see if her car was waiting.

"You are not afraid to drive out alone? I should be glad, you know, to make the run with you."

"Not in the least afraid," she answered lightly.

Fear, Archie thought, was not a thing one would associate with her. The Governor brought her coat, a long garment that covered her completely. She produced from the bag a cap which she substituted for the hat and Archie had thus his first view of her handsome head and abundant dark hair and her face freed of the baffling shadow.

In carrying her wrap into the room the Governor had frustrated any hope she may have had for a private word with him; but she betrayed no resentment.

"It's really much nicer changing indoors," she laughed, standing before a mirror to adjust the cap. "Coming in I shifted my headgear just before we reached town. Behold me now, a woman transformed!" 170

The Governor plucked Archie's sleeve as a sign that he was not to drop back and she walked to the car between them.

With a smile and a wave of the hand she was gone and they stood at the curb looking after her until the limousine was out of sight.

"Thank you, lad," said the Governor quietly.

They went up to his den, where they smoked for some time in silence. The Governor seemed to be gathering himself together after the strain of the three difficult hours and when he spoke finally it was with a deep sigh.

"Well, Archie, we must bear ourselves as men in all our perplexities. We are put into this world for a purpose, every chick of us, and there's no use kicking the shins of the high gods. I feel a leading; there's something pulling us both; unseen powers knocking us about. Tomorrow I shall be engaged most of the day; there are some of the brotherhood to meet and it must be managed with caution. I suggest that you stretch your legs in the park and feed the swans as a tranquilizer. Soon we shall be abroad on the eternal quest. The quest for what, I see written in your eyes! For peace, Archie; for happiness! It may be nearer than we think—there's always that to tie our hopes to!"

"It would be possible, I suppose," said Archie slowly, "for us to cut it all out, settle back into our old places—"

"Never!" cried the Governor., "I tell you we've got to complete the circle! If we stop now we're ruined, both of us! We've got to go right on. I know what's the matter with you; it's that dear sister of mine who has wakened in you all manner of regrets and yearnings for your old life. Ah, she couldn't fail to affect you that way; she's so wholly the real thing! Seeing her probably made you homesick for your Isabel. There! I thought you would jump! And maybe you think I haven't been troubled in the same way about my little affair! There would be something fundamentally wrong with us, lad, if we didn't feel, when we stood before a beautiful noble woman, as though we were in a divine presence. That's the test, Archie; so long as we are sensible of that feeling there's some hope for us in this world and the next." 171

III

Archie learned from Baring, who brought up his breakfast, that the Governor had left the house.

"It was our orders to take good care of you, sir; if there's any way we can serve you—"

"A morning paper; that will be all, thank you. I shall be going out presently."

"Very good, sir. The master thought it likely you would spend the day out. He will hardly be in himself before six."

Here again was an opportunity to abandon the Governor, but keen now for new experiences and sensations, Archie dismissed the idea. The appeal of the Governor's sister had imposed a new burden upon him, and the Governor's voluble prattle about fate and the inevitable drawing of destiny had impressed him. He could depart for Banff and take the chance of never being molested for any of his crimes, but to do this would be cowardice, just that fear of his fate that Isabel had twitted him about. 172

He chose a stick with care from a rack at the front door, walked to the Avenue and turned determinedly cityward, walking jauntily. Beyond Forty-second Street he passed several acquaintances, who nodded, just as the Governor had predicted, little dreaming that he was a

reckless criminal, a man with an *alias* and a fortnight's record that would make a lively story for the newspapers.

He was rather disappointed that no one followed him, no hand was clapped on his shoulder. He reached Madison Square unwearied, wondering whether the obliteration of his moral sense had destroyed also his old fears about his health. He climbed to the front seat of a bus and rode up the Avenue, a conspicuous figure.

He grinned as he saw seated in the upper window of the most conservative of all his clubs one of his several prosperous uncles, an old gentleman who for years was to be found in that same spot at this same hour of the day.

Having sufficiently exposed himself to the eyes of the world he determined to eat luncheon in the park restaurant. His appetite demanded an amount of food that he would have been incapable of consuming a month earlier, and having given his order he surveyed the pavilion tranquilly. Women and children were the chief patrons, with a sprinkling of sightseers resting from their contemplation of the city's wonders.

He watched idly a young woman with two children who occupied a table directly in his line of vision. He was sure she was their mother, and not a governess; she was smartly dressed, and her manner with the youngsters was charming. She occasionally glanced about nervously, and he detected several times a troubled look in her face. The children chattered gaily, but it was evidently with an effort that she answered their questions or entered into their talk. Children always interested him, and the boy was a handsome little fellow, but it was the girl who held Archie's attention, first as the embodiment of the beauty and innocence of youth, and then with a perplexed sense that he had seen her before. She suddenly turned toward him, her fair curls tumbling about her shoulders, and glanced idly across the pavilion. The fine oval face, the eyes dancing with merriment at something her brother had directed her attention to, sent his thoughts flying to Bailey Harbor. As though consciously aiding his memory, she fell into the relaxed pose so happily caught by the photograph, with the same childish archness and captivating smile.

Their luncheon had just been served and he continued to inspect them with a deepening conviction that the woman was Mrs. Congdon and these the children mentioned in the telegram he had found tucked under the plate of the Bailey Harbor house. The resemblance between the young woman and the child with the roguish smile was unmistakable. She might on occasion present the same smiling countenance, though in unguarded moments a tense, worried look came into her face, and she continued her anxious survey of her neighbors.

It was a dispiriting thought that there under his eyes, so close that the babble of the children occasionally reached him across the intervening tables, was the family of the man he had shot.

Their ignorance of that dark transaction gave him little comfort, nor was there any extenuation of his sin in the fact that the wife had fled to escape from her husband's brutality. He tried to console himself with the reflection that the thing had a ludicrous side. He might walk over to Mrs. Congdon and say: "Pardon me, madam, but it may interest you to know that I shot your husband at Bailey Harbor and you have nothing further to fear from him. I am unable to state at the moment whether the wound was a mortal one, but from my knowledge of your family affairs I judge that you would hardly be grieved if you never saw him again."

He was shocked at his own levity. The thing was not in any aspect a laughing matter. Amid other experiences he had freed himself for a few days of the thought of Putney Congdon lying dead in a lonely cleft of the Maine rocks, but meeting the man's family in this fashion was almost as disconcerting as a visit from Congdon's ghost.

The Congdons had eaten their meal hurriedly and were already paying their check. He watched them move away toward the interior of the park, marked their direction and chose a parallel course with a view to keeping them in sight.

Occasionally he caught glimpses of the children dancing ahead of their mother. The remote paths she chose for the ramble confirmed his suspicion that she was on guard against the threatened seizure of the youngsters by their father, and having been driven from Bailey Harbor was now in town to formulate her plans for the future, or perhaps only whiling away the hours until she could escape to some other place in the country. Unable to argue himself out of a feeling that Mrs. Congdon's troubles were no affair of his he was beset by the fear that he might be doomed for the rest of his life to follow them, to view them from afar off, never speaking to them, but led on by the guilty knowledge that he was a dark factor in their lives.

He became so engrossed that he lost track of them for a time; then a turn of the path brought him close upon them. Mrs. Congdon was sitting on a bench under a big elm and the children were joyously romping on the lawn in front of her, playing with a toy balloon to which a bit of bark had been fastened. They would toss it in the air and jump and catch it while the weight prevented its escape. A gust of wind caught it as Archie passed and drove it across his path, while the children with screams of glee pursued it. The string caught under his hat brim and he seized it just as the girl, outdistancing her brother, plunged into him.

"Edith!" called the mother, rising quickly. "Children, you mustn't go into the path. There's plenty of room here for you to play."

"The wind was a little too much for you that time!" laughed Archie, as the children, panting from their run, waited for the restoration of their plaything. He measured the buoyancy of the balloon against the ballast, and let go of it with a little toss that seemed to free it, then he sprang up and

caught it amid their excited cries.

The little girl curtsied as he put the string in her hand.

"Thank you very much!" they chorused.

Mrs. Congdon had walked a little way toward the path but now that the children were again scampering over the lawn she paused and made a slight, the slightest, inclination of the head as Archie lifted his hat and continued on his way. 176

Edith was the name used in the telegram he had found in the Bailey Harbor house, and this coupled with his closer view of the child disposed of Archie's last hope that after all it might not be Mrs. Congdon and her children he had stumbled upon. She had no business to throw herself across his path, he fumed. The appearance of Putney Congdon's father at Cornford had shaken him sufficiently, but that he should be haunted by the man's wife and children angered him. He wanted to fly from the park and hide himself again in his room at the Governor's house, but he was without will to leave. The decent thing for him to do was to take the first train for Bailey, and begin diligent search for Putney Congdon, dead or alive. He had no right to assume that the man's serious injury or death would be any consolation to the wife and children. And the quarrel between husband and wife might have been only a tiff, something that would have been adjusted without further bitterness but for his interference. There was no joy in the fate that kept continually bringing his crime to his attention. Thoroughly miserable, he threw himself upon a bench and lapsed into gloomy meditations. The light-hearted laughter of the children—Putney Congdon's children—was borne to him fitfully to add to his discomfiture, but he was held to the spot. There was something weirdly fascinating in their propinquity, and in the thought that he alone of all men on earth could ever tell them just what had happened in their house when their father went there to search for them. 177

He sat half an hour pensively, noting an occasional pedestrian or the flash of a motor that rolled through the unfrequented driveway. But for the hum of the cars the deep calm of a June afternoon lay upon the landscape.

Then a piercing scream, the shrill cry of a child in terror, brought him to his feet.

"Help! Help! Oh, Edith! *Edith!*"

The cries sent him at a run toward the place in which he had left the Congdons.

Rounding a curve in the path he saw a man rushing down the road with Edith in his arms. The mother was racing after him, while the little boy lay wailing where he had fallen in his frantic effort to follow. In the distance stood a car, with a woman waiting beside the open door.

Archie redoubled his pace, passed Mrs. Congdon and gained the car as the man with the child in his arms jumped into it. The woman, who had evidently been acting as watcher, stumbled as she attempted to spring in after them and delayed flight for an instant. The door slammed viciously on Archie's arm as he landed on the running board. The car was moving rapidly and a man's voice bade the driver hurry. Within the child's screams were suddenly stifled, the door swung open for an instant and a blow, delivered full in the face, sent Archie reeling into the road.

When he gained his feet Mrs. Congdon stood beside him moaning and wringing her hands. A mounted policeman rode upon the scene, listened for an instant to Archie's explanations and, sounding his whistle, set off after the car at a gallop. A dozen of the park police were on the spot immediately, followed by a crowd of excited spectators. Mrs. Congdon had fainted and several women were ministering to her. The little boy, sobbing plaintively, tried to answer the questions of the sergeant who took charge and despatched men in every direction to search for the kidnapers and send the alarm through the city. 178

Archie's nose bled from the rap in the face and his back ached where he had struck the earth. The sergeant plied him with questions which he answered carefully, knowing that in all the circumstances of his having loitered in the vicinity he might not unnaturally be suspected of complicity. When his name was asked, he answered promptly.

"John B. Wright, Boston; stopping at the Hotel Ganymede."

"Business?"

"Broker, Nanonet Building, Boston."

These items officially written down, he described truthfully how he had first seen the woman and her children in the pavilion, the subsequent walk, and the episode of the balloon. He pointed out just where he had been sitting when the screams attracted his attention.

"This is a serious case and you will be wanted as a witness," said the officer. "You didn't know these people—never saw them before?"

"No. I had come to the park to kill time until four o'clock, when I have an engagement at the Plaza Hotel."

The officer noted carefully his description of the woman who had assisted in the kidnaping and such meager facts as he was able to give as to the man who had carried off the little girl under the very eyes of her mother. 179

The sergeant glanced at Archie's ruddy handkerchief and grinned.

"Guess that let's you out! You didn't get the number of the taxi? That would help a little."

"There wasn't time for that. I was trying to hang on till help came, but this smash in the face

spoiled that."

To the jostling crowd anxious to hear his story Archie was a hero, or very nearly one. He heard their murmurs of admiration as he described the manner in which he had attempted to board the car. There were enormous hazards in the whole situation and every consideration of personal security demanded that he leave the park at once, but Mrs. Congdon was now recovering, and he was reluctant to abandon her and the frightened boy to the mercies of the park police and staring spectators.

She had recovered sufficiently to tell her story, and to Archie's relief corroborated his own version in a manner to dispose of any question as to his innocence.

The woman's composure struck Archie as remarkable and her replies to the officer's questions were brief and exact. Several times she appealed to him for confirmation on some point, and he edged closer and stood beside her defensively. Her inquisitor had neglected to ask her name and address in his eagerness for information as to the appearance of the kidnapers. Her reply gave Archie a distinct shock.

"Mrs. George W. Kendall, 117 E. Corning Street, Brooklyn."

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"Have you been threatened in any way? Have you any enemy who might have attempted to steal the child?"

"Nothing of the kind. I brought the children to the park just for an outing and with no thought that anything so horrible could happen."

It was incredible that any one could lie with so convincing an air. He was satisfied that she was Mrs. Putney Congdon, and that the child she had called Edith was the original of the photograph he had seen at Bailey Harbor. And the stealing of the child was in itself but the actual carrying out of her husband's threat. He knew far too much about the Congdons for his own peace of mind, but he was unwilling to desert her in her perplexities. When the owners of several machines offered to take her home, she glanced about uncertainly and her eyes falling upon him seemed to invite his assistance.

"Pardon me, but if I can serve you in any way—"

"Thank you," she said with relief. "I must get away from this; it's unbearable."

He put her and the boy into a taxi, whose driver had been early on the scene, and drove away with them, with a final promise to the sergeant to report later at the park station.

"Brooklyn!" he ordered.

For a few minutes she was busy comforting the child and Archie deep in thought turned to meet the searching gaze of her gray eyes.

"You are a gentleman; I am sure of that; and I feel that I can trust you."

That the wife of a man he had tried to kill and possibly had slain should be paving the way for confidences, gave him a bewildered sense of being whisked through some undiscovered country where the impossible had become the real.

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"I'm in a strange predicament, and I'm forced to ask your help. The name and address I gave the police were fictitious. I know it has a queer look; but I had to do it. I know perfectly well who carried away my little girl. The man and woman you saw at the car were servants employed by my father-in-law, who cordially dislikes me. There had been trouble—"

With a shrug she expressed her impatience of her troubles, and bent over the boy who was demanding to be taken to Edith.

"You'll see Edith soon, dear, so don't trouble any more," she said kindly.

Having quieted the child, she returned to her own affairs, glancing out to note the direction of the car. She had done some quick thinking in making her decision to hide her identity from the police. There was fight in her eyes and Archie realized that he had to do with a woman of spirit. He waited eagerly for a hint as to her plans.

"Of course I'm not going to Brooklyn," she said, as the taxi swung into Fifth Avenue. "Please tell the man to drive to the Altmore, ladies' entrance. I'll walk through to the main door and take another taxi. I mean to lose myself," she went on, after Archie had given the instructions. "I have every intention of keeping away from policemen and reporters, but there's no reason why you should bother any further. I'm only sorry your name had to be brought into it. The moment they find I've deceived them they'll be after you for further information, and I regret that exceedingly. I wish to avoid publicity and keep my domestic affairs out of the newspapers; but this of course will only center attention the more on you. If there's anything I could do—"

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"You needn't bother about that at all," replied Archie with a reassuring smile. "The name and address I gave were both false."

"You mean that really!"

"I mean that; just that! My reasons are of importance to no one but myself, and have nothing to do with the loss of your child, I assure you. I give you my word that neither the police nor the reporters will ever find me. I know nothing about you and of course it is quite unnecessary for me to know."

"Thank you; you are very kind," she murmured.

It struck him as highly amusing that he should be conspiring with the wife of a gentleman he had shot. In every aspect it was ridiculous and not since boyhood had he felt so much like giggling. And Mrs. Congdon was wonderful; it was a delight to be the repository of the confidences of so handsome a young matron and one who met so difficult a situation so courageously. They were both liars; both were practising a deceit that could hardly fail to bring them under sharp scrutiny if they should be caught.

Women were far from being the simple creatures he had believed them to be. The heart of woman was a labyrinth of mystery. Mrs. Congdon, altogether lovely and bearing all the marks of breeding, had lied quite as convincingly as Sally Walker. The ways of Isabel were beyond all human understanding; and yet her contradictions only added to her charm. Isabel's agitation over the affairs of the Congdons led him close to the point of mentioning her name to note its effect upon Mrs. Congdon, but to do this might be an act of betrayal that would only confirm Isabel's opinion of him as a stupid, meddlesome person. Nothing was to be gained by attempting to hasten the culmination of the fate that flung him about like a chip on a turbulent stream. Fiends and angels might be battling for his soul, and Lucifer might take him in the end, but meanwhile he was having a jolly good time.

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He looked at her covertly and they laughed with the mirth of children planning mischief in secret.

"The little girl," he ventured; "you are not apprehensive about her?"

"Not in the slightest. My father-in-law is most disagreeably eccentric, but he is very fond of my children. It was quite like him to attempt to carry off the little girl, always a particular pet of his. I was shocked, of course, when it happened. I thought I should be safe in the park for a few hours until I could catch a train. I meant to put the children quite out of my husband's way. I didn't know he was in town; in fact, I don't know now that he is or anything about him. But he's undoubtedly in communication with his father. It's rather a complicated business, you see."

It was much more complex than she knew, and not, all things considered, a laughing matter. He spent an uncomfortable moment pondering a situation which he viewed with the mingled joy and awe of a child watching the fire in a fuse approach a fire-cracker.

"I shall be glad to assist you if I can aid you in any way. You will try to recover the child—?" he suggested.

"It's generous of you to offer, but I think you had better keep out of it. Of course I shall have Edith back; you may be sure of that."

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"You have some idea of where they are taking her—?"

"No, I really haven't. But she will be safe, though I hate to think of her being subjected to so hideous an experience. It's rather odd, as I think of it, that my husband didn't personally try to take the child from me."

This, uttered musingly, gave Archie a perturbed moment. But the car had reached the Altmore. He lifted out the boy and accompanied them to the door.

"Thank you, very much," she said in a tone that dismissed him.

Archie drove to another hostelry for a superficial cleaning up, explaining to the brush boy who scraped the oily mud from his trousers that he had been in an automobile accident. He rode downtown in the subway, strolled past the skyscraper in which his office was situated and returned to the Governor's house feeling on the whole well pleased with himself.

IV

Refreshed by a nap and a shower he was dressed and waiting for the Governor at seven. On his way through the hall he ran into a man whose sudden appearance gave him a start. He was not one of the servants but a rough-looking stranger with drooping shoulders and a smear of dirt across his cheek. He would have passed him in the street as a laborer returning from a hard day's work. The man did not lift his eyes but shuffled on to the door of the Governor's room which he opened and then, flinging round, stood erect and laughed aloud.

185

"Pardon me, Archie, for giving you a scare! I couldn't resist the impulse to test this makeup!"

"You!" cried Archie, blinking as the Governor switched on the light.

"I went and came in these togs; not for a lark, I assure you, but because I had to go clear down under the crust today. Turn the water on in my tub and I'll be slipping into decent duds in a jiffy. Here's an extra I picked up downtown. The scream of the evening is a kidnaping—most deplorable line of business! Have you ever noticed a certain periodicity in child stealing? About every so often you hear of such a case. Despicable; a foul crime hardly second to murder. Hanging is not too severe a punishment. Clear out now, for if we begin talking I'll never get dressed!"

The account of the kidnaping in the park was little more than a bulletin, but Archie soon had it committed to memory. The police had not yet learned that the two most important witnesses had given fictitious names, for both pseudonyms appeared in the article.

In spite of the Governor's frequently avowed assertion that he wished to know nothing about him, Archie felt strongly impelled to make a clean breast of the Bailey Harbor affair, the two

encounters with Isabel and his meeting with Mrs. Congdon. His resolution strengthened when the Governor appeared, dressed with his usual care and exhilarated by his day's adventures. At the table the Governor threw a remark now and then at the butler as to the whereabouts and recent performances of some of that functionary's old pals. Baring received this information soberly with only the most deferential murmurs of pleasure or dismay at the successes or failures of the old comrades. Baring retired after the dinner had been served, and the Governor, in cozy accord with his cigar, remarked suddenly:

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"Odd; you might almost say singular! I've crossed old man Congdon's trail again! You recall him—the old boy we left to the tender mercies of Seebrook and Walters?"

"Yes; go on!" exclaimed Archie so impatiently that the Governor eyed him in surprise.

"It's remarkable how my theory that every man is a potential crook finds fresh proof all the time. Now old Congdon is rich and there's no reason on earth why he shouldn't live straight; but, bless you, it's quite otherwise! He's a victim of the same aberration that prompts people apparently as upright as a flagstaff to drop hotel towels into their trunks, collect coffee spoons in popular restaurants, or steal flowers in public gardens when they have expensive conservatories at home. You never can tell, Archie."

Archie, with the Congdons looming large on his horizon, was not interested in the philosophical aspects of petty pilfering.

"Stick to Eliphalet," he suggested.

"Oh, yes! Well, I met today one of the most remarkable of all the men I know who camp outside the pale. Perky is his name in Who's Who in No Man's Land. A jeweler by trade, he fell from his high estate and went on the road as a yegg. The work was too rough for him for one thing, and for another it was too much of a gamble. Opening safes only to find that they contained a few dollars in stamps and the postmaster's carpet slippers vexed him extremely and he then entered into the game of boring neat holes in the rim of twenty-dollar gold pieces, leaving only the outer shell and filling 'em up with a composition he invented that made the coin ring like a marriage bell. While he was still experimenting he ran into old Eliphalet sitting with his famous umbrella on a bench in Boston Common. Perky thought Eliphalet was a stool pigeon for a con outfit, but explanations followed and it was a case of infatuation on both sides. The old man was as tickled with the scheme as a boy with a new dog. He now assists Perky to circulate the spurious medium of exchange. Perky says he's a wonderful ally, endowed with all the qualities of a first class crook."

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"You'll appreciate that better," said Archie, "when you hear what I know about the Congdon family. You've been mighty decent in not pressing me for any account of myself but you've got to hear my story now. We'll probably both be more comfortable if I don't tell you my name, but you shall have that, too, if you care for it. So many things have happened since I left Bailey Harbor that you don't know about, things that I haven't dared tell you, that I'm going to spout it all now and here. If you want to chuck me when you've heard it, well enough; but I don't mind saying that to part with you would hurt me terribly. I never felt so dependent on any man as I do on you; and I've grown mighty fond of you, old man."

"Thank you, lad," said the Governor.

He listened patiently, nodding occasionally or throwing in a question. When Archie finished he rose and clapped him on the shoulder.

188

"By Jove, you've tossed my stars around like so many dice! I've got to consult the oracles immediately."

He darted from the room and when Archie reached his study the Governor was poring over a map of the heavens.

"Your Isabel's all tangled up in our affairs!" declared the Governor with mock resentment. "It's she who has upset the calculations of all star-gazers from the time of Ptolemy!"

"Isabel!" cried Archie excitedly. "I don't catch the drift of this at all!"

"I should be surprised if you did! Note that countless lines converge upon my diagram. Isabel will dawn upon your gaze again very soon—I feel it coming. Our next move was clearly outlined to me before we came to town, but I must verify the figures in the light of this pistol practice at Bailey." He covered many sheets of a large tablet with figures and threw down his pencil with a satisfied sigh.

"Rochester!" he muttered. "Rochester of all places!"

"Would you mind telling me just what Rochester has to do with all this?" Archie demanded testily.

"My dear boy, Rochester is one of the suburbs of Paradise! The commerce and manufactures of that city are nothing; it's an outpost of Romance, like Bagdad and Camelot, a port of call on the sea of dreams, like Carcassonne! You may recall that I told you of a certain tile in a summer house where my adored promised to leave a message for me if her heart softened or she needed me. Well, the secret post-office is at Rochester; there the incomparable visits her aunt and about this time of year she's likely to be there. And if you knew the way of the stars and could understand my calculations you'd see that your Isabel is likely to have some business in that neighborhood just about now."

189

"Rubbish! I happen to know that her business was all to be in northern Michigan this summer.

Your stars have certainly made a monkey of you this time!"

"Cynic! The thought seems to please you! You want to see me discomfited and defeated. Very well; you can drop me right here if you like, but I'll wager something handsome that you'll regret your skepticism all the rest of your days. Resistance to the course of events marked by the stars is bound to result in confusion. And here's another striking coincidence: You mentioned casually that Isabel spoke of buried treasure in the far north. I'm overpowered by that. The sweet influences of Pleiades have long beguiled me with the promise of a quest for hidden gold; for years, Archie, the thing has haunted me."

"You talk like a nonsense book! How much luggage are we taking?"

"Take everything you've got! This is going to be the most important of all my enterprises, Archie. It's just as well to be fully prepared."

He rang for Timmons to do their packing and fell upon a time table.

"We shall take it easy tomorrow, arriving at Rochester, the city of dreams, just as the shades of night are falling fast. Run along now; I've got a lot to think about."

Archie was roused the next morning by the Governor, who flung an armful of newspapers on his bed.

"The police have confessed with unusual frankness that they were duped in the park kidnaping. You and the attractive Mrs. Congdon both stepped into the void. The names and addresses are found to be imaginary and they're in the air! You stirred up a pretty row, you two."

"I'd give something handsome to know where she went," said Archie. "I ought to have stood by to help her instead of leaving her and her troubles at a hotel door."

"Having shot her husband, your concern for her safety and happiness does you credit! If the fellow died on the beach and his body was washed out to sea Mrs. Congdon is a widow. And in that event it's rather up to you to offer to marry her. The conventions of good society demand it. Your story gave me a restless night. I'm flabbergasted by the way things are happening. For a modest fellow you are certainly capable of stirring up a queer mess of situations. And the singular thing about it is that for thousands of years we've been moving toward each other out of the void! And all the other people who were to influence our destinies were on the way to join us—scores of 'em, Archie!"

"Detectives, policemen, and all the rest of them! Grand juries, prosecuting officers, judges of criminal courts and prison wardens!"

"You're going to bore me one of these days by that sort of prattle. On to Rochester!"

V

They wrote themselves down on the hotel register at Rochester as Saulsbury and Comly and were quickly in the rooms the Governor had engaged by wire.

"We dress, of course; unless I give you explicit directions to the contrary we always dress for dinner," said the Governor. "It's a lot more distinguished to be shot in a white tie than in a morning suit. Always keep that in mind, Archie—you who go about popping at men in their own houses with their own pistols."

"Not going with me!" he exclaimed after they had dined sedately in the main dining-room of the hotel. "This is truly the *reductio ad absurdum*! Three times I've invaded the premises of my beloved's aunt and twice nearly got into trouble with policemen and gardeners. I need you, Archie; really I do; and you're not a chap to desert a pal."

Under this compulsion Archie found himself whisked away to a handsome residential area where the Governor dismissed the driver at a corner and continued afoot for several blocks.

"Our silk hats would disarm suspicion in even more exclusive neighborhoods. In fact we lend a certain distinction to the entire Genesee Valley. Alleys are distasteful to me, but into an alley we must plunge with all our splendor."

Alleys were not only distasteful to Archie, but he thought the search for a message in the grounds of the handsome estate the Governor seemed bent upon exploring utterly silly and foolhardy. The Governor ran his stick along the top of a wall that grimly guarded the rear of the premises.

"Glass!" he exclaimed, and cleared a space with a sweep of his cane. He caught the edge of the wall and was quickly on top. When Archie hung back the Governor grasped him by the arms and swung him up and dropped him into a dark corner of the garden. The house at the street end of the deep lot was a large establishment that argued for the prosperous worldly state of the aunt of the Governor's inamorata.

The Governor left him with the injunction to remain where he was, and he saw in a moment the glimmer of a match in the summer house. He was gazing at the tender, wistful new moon that suddenly slipped into his vision in the west, when he felt the Governor's hand on his arm.

"Archie! Oh, Archie!" the Governor whispered excitedly, brushing an envelope across the bewildered Archie's face. "Strike a match before I perish."

He tore open the envelope, and his fingers trembled as he held the note to the light. He read the

two sheets to himself eagerly; then demanded a second match and read aloud:

... "If this reaches you, remain near at hand until I can see you. Please understand that I promise nothing, but it is very possible that you may be able to serve me. My aunt is giving a party for me Thursday night. I must leave it to you as how best to arrange for a short interview the day following. A very dear friend needs help. The matter is urgent. You will think it a fine irony that I should call upon you for a service that may be disagreeable if not dangerous, when your unaccountable way of life has caused me so much unhappiness."

The match curled and fell from Archie's fingers. A tense silence lay upon the garden. A bat slanted eerily through the warm air. The Governor clasped Archie's hand tightly. He seemed swayed by a deep emotion, and when he spoke it was in a husky whisper. 193

"It has come as I always knew it would come! And something tells me I am near the end. Even with all my faith, boy, it's staggering. And this is the very night of the dance. Ah, listen to that!"

They had moved out into a broad walk and Archie saw that the house was brilliantly lighted. Suddenly the strains of a lively two-step drew their attention to a platform that extended out upon the lawn from the conservatory, and at the same moment electric lamps shone in dozens of Japanese lanterns along the hedge-lined paths. The Governor looked at his watch. It was half-past nine.

"It's about time for us to clear out," Archie remarked.

"What! Leave this sacred soil when *she's* here? Not on your life, Archie! I shall not leave till I've had speech with her."

"She mentioned the day following the dance in the note," Archie protested. "You'd certainly make a mess of things if you tried to butt into the party."

"On the other hand the festal occasion offers an ideal opportunity for the meeting! It's going to be a big affair; already machines are dashing into the driveway in large numbers. We can merge in the happy throng and trust to our wits to get us out alive. The aunt is seventy and very wise; she'll know us instantly as men of quality."

He urged Archie, still resisting, through the grounds to the front entrance, where they were admitted with several other guests who arrived at the same moment. The gentlemen they found in the dressing room merely glanced at them carelessly or nodded. An old gentleman, mistaking Archie for some one else, asked assistance with an obstreperous tie and expressed his gratitude in the warmest terms. The Governor, primping with the greatest deliberation, had never been calmer. To Archie this intrusion in the house of perfect strangers was a culminating act of folly, bound to result in humiliation. 194

"We maybe a trifle early," the Governor remarked, lighting a cigarette and settling himself in a rocker. "We shall receive greater consideration if we linger a few moments."

As Archie had counted on slipping downstairs heavily supported by properly invited guests, he paced the floor for a quarter of an hour while the Governor imperturbably read a magazine.

The room had cleared when at last he expressed his readiness to go.

"The receiving line is probably broken up by this time. Our hostess doesn't know either of us from the lamented Adam but I shall introduce you quite casually, you know. Her name, by the way, is Lindsay. There are scads of people here; the very first families. We may mingle freely without fear of lowering our social standards."

The stately old lady they found in the drawing-room lifted a lorgnette as they approached, smiled affably and gave the Governor her hand.

"Mrs. Lindsay, my friend, Mr. Comly. He arrived unexpectedly an hour ago and I thought you wouldn't mind my bringing him along, so I didn't bother you by telephoning."

"I should have been displeased if you had hesitated a moment—any friend of yours, you know!" 195

"Ruth is with you, of course? I haven't seen her since the last time she visited you."

"She's the same wonderful girl! You will find her dancing, I think."

Other arrivals facilitated their escape. As they passed down the drawing-room the Governor directed Archie's attention to a portrait which he pronounced a Copley, and insisted upon examining closely. It was with difficulty that Archie persuaded him to leave it, so enraptured was the Governor with the likeness of a stern old gentleman in powdered wig, who gazed down upon them with anything but a friendly eye.

As they stepped into the conservatory the music ceased and there was a flutter as the dancers sought seats, or stepped out upon the lawn. Archie, acutely uncomfortable, heard the Governor stifle an exclamation.

"That is she! Stand by me now! That chap's just left her. This is our chance!"

A young woman was just seating herself in a chair at the farther corner of the conservatory and her partner had darted away toward a table where punch was offered. The Governor moved toward her quickly. Archie saw her lift her head suddenly and her lips parted as though she were about to make an outcry. Then the Governor bowed low over her hand, uttering explanations in a low tone. Her surprise had yielded to what Archie, loitering behind, thought an expression of relief and satisfaction. He moved forward as the Governor turned toward him.

"Miss Hastings, Mr. Comly."

The girl had risen, perhaps the better to hide her agitation, Archie thought. She absently accepted the cup of punch brought by her partner, who, seeing her preoccupied with two strangers, pledged her to another dance and left them.

196

"My name here," the Governor was saying, "is Saulsbury."

A slight shrug and a frown betrayed displeasure, but it was only for a moment and she smiled in spite of herself. The Governor's occasional references to the woman who had enchained his affections had not prepared Archie for this presentation to a Ruth who might have passed for seventeen in a hasty scrutiny and upon whose graceful head it seemed a wickedness to add the five years the Governor had attributed to her. She was below medium height, with brown hair and eyes. There was something wonderfully sweet and appealing in her eyes. Imagination had set its light in them and the Governor was a man to awaken romantic dreams in imaginative women. The tan of her cheeks emphasized her look of youth; she would have passed for a school girl who lived in tennis courts and found keen delight on the links. How and where the Governor could have known her was a matter of speculation, but in his wanderings just such a charming gipsy might easily have captured his fancy. The Governor had never, not even in the presence of his sister, been so wholly the gentleman as now. He was enormously happy, but with a subdued happiness. He was upon his good behavior and Archie was satisfied that he would in no way abuse the hospitality of the house he had entered with so much effrontery. The girl would take care of that in any event. The humor of the thing was appealing to her, and her eyes danced with excitement. How much she knew about the Governor was another baffling matter; but she knew enough at least to know that his appearance was an impudence and with all discretion she was enjoying her connivance in her lover's appearance. A wise, self-contained young person, capable of extricating herself from even more perilous situations. Archie liked Ruth. The Governor had said that she was a bishop's daughter but for all that she might have been the child of a race of swarthy kings.

197

"You couldn't have thought that I would wait when I knew that you were in a mood to tolerate me or that I might serve you!" said the Governor gravely. "If our presence is likely to prove embarrassing—"

"Oh, Aunt Louise doesn't know the names of half the people here. She never goes out herself; she merely asked old friends and the children of old friends. I really didn't want this party for I'm here on business, and it's about that that I want to speak to you, please!"

"I think," said Archie, ill at ease, "that the moment has come for me to retire."

"We shall not turn you adrift!" cried Ruth. "I have a very dear friend I must introduce you to. Oh —" she hesitated and turned to the Governor, "is Mr. Comly a roamer? Has he a heart for high adventure?"

"He speaks without accent the language of all who love the long brown road."

"Then let him come with me!"

She laid her hand on Archie's arm, and walked toward the wide-flung doors. The orchestra was again summoning the dancers.

"Oh, Isabel!"

198

Following her gaze he was glad of the slight pressure of her hand on his arm. Here at least was something tangible in a world that tottered toward chaos. For it was Isabel Perry who turned at the sound of Ruth's voice. She was just at the point of gliding away with her partner.

"Miss Perry, Mr. Comly!"

The eyes that had haunted him in his wanderings flashed upon him, then narrowed questioningly.

"Oh, Mr. Comly!" There was the slightest stress on the assumed name. "After this dance—"

She slipped away leaving him staring.

"Please take me back to Mr. Saulsbury," said Ruth. "I've got to cut this dance. I will introduce you to some other girls."

But as no other girls were immediately available he protested that he would do very well and guided her to the Governor.

"Isabel is very busy, as usual," said Ruth, "but if Mr. Comly is a good strategist, he will not fail to find her again. Isabel, you know—"

"Isabel!" exclaimed the Governor. "Not really—"

"Yes, really," Archie answered, his voice hoarse as he raised it above the music.

The Governor struck his gloved hands together smartly. Ruth, turning from a youth to whom she had excused herself, asked quickly:

"What has happened? You both look as though you had seen a ghost."

"It's more mysterious than ghosts. Come; we must make the most of these minutes. Your next partner won't give you up as meekly as that last one did."

199

Archie saw them a moment later pacing back and forth in one of the walks a little distance from the house. He stationed himself at the door with some other unattached men, and followed Isabel's course over the floor with intent, eager eyes. The dance, to a new and enchanting air,

was prolonged and he died many deaths as he watched her, catching tantalizing glimpses of her face only to lose it again.

No one in the happy throng seemed gayer than she; and once as she tripped by he assured himself that there was no hostility in the swift glance she gave him. Seeing her again rilled him with a great happiness untinged with bitterness. Among all the women of the bright company she alone was superb, and not less regal for his remembrance of her anger, the anger that had brought tears to her lovely eyes.

At the conclusion of the number, she remained, to his discomfiture, at the farther end of the platform, and when he hurried forward in the hope of detaching her from the group that surrounded her she did not see him at all, which was wholly discouraging. A partner sought her for the next dance and as the music struck up he made bold to accost her.

"I am not to be eluded!" he said. "I must have at least one dance!"

"My card is filled—but I am reserving a boon for you! You shall have the intermission," and added as by an afterthought, "Mr. Comly," with a delicious mockery.

He passed Ruth, returning to put herself in the path of her next partner.

"This is your punishment for coming late!" laughed the girl. There was happiness in her eyes. "How perfectly ridiculous you two men are!"

200

"Suppose we talk a bit," said the Governor when they had found a bench on the lawn. He was silent for several minutes, sitting erect with arms folded.

"It's nearing the end!" he said solemnly; "there are other changes and chances perhaps, but the end is in sight. The whole thing was unalterable from the beginning; it makes little difference what we do now. And it's you—it's you that have brought it all about. We are bound together by ties not of earthly making."

He laughed softly, turned and placed his hand on Archie's shoulder.

"You are beginning to believe at last?"

"I don't know what to believe," Archie answered slowly. "There's something uncanny in all this. Just how much do you understand of it?"

"Precious little! Your Isabel and my Ruth are friends; quite intimate friends indeed. In college together, I'd have you know, but I never knew it till now. That's news to you, isn't it?"

"Most astonishing news!"

"And this is the very Isabel who shattered your equanimity; told you to shoot up the world and then treated you like a pick-pocket the next time you met! But as old William said 'Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds.'"

"Don't jump at conclusions! I was just bragging when I gave you the idea that there was anything between us. The love's all on my side! She twitted me about my worthlessness that night in Washington; bade me tear down the heavens. And it oddly happened that from that hour I have never been a free man; I have done things I believed myself incapable of doing."

201

"You did them rather cheerfully, I must say! But on the whole, nothing very naughty. And I'll prepare you a little for what I prefer you should hear from Isabel—I got it from Ruth—you're not quite finished yet with that pistol shot in the Congdon house. It seems to be echoing round the world!"

202

CHAPTER FIVE

I

"In spite of my warnings you continue to follow me!" said Isabel when they were established in the supper room.

"Are we to have another row? I don't believe I can go through with it."

"No; for rows haven't got us anywhere. And Ruth whispered to me a moment ago to be very nice to you. While the gentleman on the other side of me is occupied we might clear up matters a little."

"It's not in my theory of life to explain things; I tried explaining myself at Portsmouth and again at Bennington but you were singularly unsympathetic. Please be generous and tell me why you were skipping over New England, darting through trains and searching hotel registers and manifesting uneasiness when policemen appeared. You recommended a life of lawlessness to me but I didn't know you meant to go in for that sort of thing yourself."

"It occurred to me after the Bennington interview that I might have been unjust, but I was in a

humor to suspect every one. When you said you'd shot Putney Congdon you frightened me to death. Of course you did nothing of the kind!"

"This is wonderful chicken salad," he said, hastily. "I beg you to do it full justice. The people about us mustn't get the idea that we're discussing homicide. Now, to answer your question, I *had* shot Mr. Putney Congdon and in edging away from the scene of my bloodshed I was guilty of other indiscretions that made me chatter like a maniac when I saw you. It was such a joke that you should turn up when I was doing just what you prescribed for me as a cure for my ills. I am quite calm now, and my health is so good that when the waiter brings those little pocket rolls this way I shall take a second and perhaps a third."

"My own nerves had gone to pieces or I shouldn't have flared as I did at Portsmouth and I was even more irresponsible when I saw you in that parlor car at Bennington."

"You saw me kiss a girl on the train. Miss Perry, I will not deceive you about that. She was all but a stranger, and I had assisted her to elope. Her husband was hiding in the baggage car."

"He would have thrown himself under the wheels if he had witnessed that ardent kissing! I confess that I hadn't done justice to your fascinations. And you were not her guardian, or anything like that?"

"Certainly not. She's a dairy maid I married to a diamond thief by mistake. My ignorance of women is complete. Sally Walker's duplicity wasn't necessary to convince me of that but your own conduct completely crushed my vanity."

"The crushing has improved you, I think. Please don't think that because I am showing you so much tolerance I am wholly satisfied that you weren't trying to thwart my own criminal adventures. When we met at Portsmouth I was trying to meet poor Mrs. Congdon somewhere to help kidnap her little girl!"

"Edith—a lovely child," Archie remarked, and picked up the napkin that slipped from her knees. He enjoyed her surprise. "Please don't scorn the ice cream; you will find it very refreshing. As you were saying—"

"If I hadn't been warned by Ruth that you were to be trusted in this business I should begin screaming. How did you know the child's name? What do you know about the Congdons?"

"Volumes! Let my imagination play on your confession. You were trying to find Mrs. Congdon and whisk the child away to your camp, when I ran into you. You had missed connections with the mother and thought I was trying to embarrass or frustrate you? I had troubles of my own and you couldn't have done me a greater wrong!"

"Mrs. Congdon was in a panic, skipping about with the children to avoid her husband; but it was really her father-in-law who was pursuing her. He's a miserly, disagreeable wretch! I came here to meet Ruth, who is an old friend of hers, hoping she might be able to deliver the little girl to me undetected. I met both Mr. and Mrs. Congdon once, several years ago, at a dinner in Chicago, but I can hardly say that I know them. Ruth's to be the chief counselor of my camp—so interested in my scheme that she insisted on going up there to help me. And Mrs. Congdon thought that would be a fine place to hide her Edith while the family rumpus was on. I was to run with Edith as hard as I could for Heart o' Dreams, my girls' camp, you know, up in Michigan."

"How stupid I am! With a word you might have made unnecessary our two altercations!"

"The matter, as you can see, is very delicate, even hazardous. I had never been a kidnaper and when you saw me on those two occasions I was terribly alarmed, not finding Mrs. Congdon where she expected to be. And I must say that you added nothing to my peace of mind."

"Please note that I am drinking coffee at midnight! I shouldn't have dared do that before your cheering advice in Washington. We have but a moment more, and I shall give you in tabloid form my adventures to date."

It was the Isabel of the Washington dinner party who listened. She was deeply interested and amused, and at times he had the satisfaction of reading in her face what he hopefully interpreted as solicitude for his safety. He confined himself to essentials so rigidly that she protested constantly that he was not doing his story justice. Of the Governor he spoke guardedly, finding that Isabel knew nothing about him beyond a shadowy impression she had derived from Ruth that he was a wanderer who had charmed her fancy.

"If he hasn't told you of the beginning of their acquaintance, I must have a care," said Isabel. "He and Ruth met oddly enough in a settlement house—I needn't say where it was—where Ruth was a volunteer worker. Your friend turned up there as a tramp and she didn't know at once that he was masquerading. Afterward he threw himself in her path, most ingeniously, in his proper rôle of a gentleman, in a summer place where she was visiting, and that added to the charm of the mystery. I can see that he's very unusual. You've told me more than she knows about him, but even that leaves a good deal to be desired. In all the world there's no girl like Ruth; there must be no question of her happiness!"

"You needn't be afraid. In spite of his singular ways I'd trust him round the world. We can't stay here longer, I suppose; there's a young blade at the door looking for you now. Is there any way I can serve you?"

"Ruth has explained all that to Mr. Saulsbury by now. She felt sure that he would help; and, believe me, I have confidence in you."

"The first thing is to find Edith Congdon and you may trust us for that. I will seize this moment to say," he added quietly, "that you are even lovelier than I remembered you!"

"You are very bold, sir! You wouldn't have said that a very little while ago."

"You complained once that I wasn't bold enough! Now that I come to you red handed and for all you know with stolen silver in my pocket, you can't complain of my forwardness. I am a rascal of high degree, as you would have me be. And I now declare myself your most relentless suitor! I trust my frankness pleases you?"

"Your adventures in rascality have added to your plausibility. I almost believe you—but not quite. You seem to be extremely vulnerable to feminine blandishments. There's Sally, the milkmaid. Remember that I saw you kiss her with rather more than brotherly warmth. Still, I suppose you'd earned some reward for your daring."

"A bluff old man-at-arms ought to be forgiven for pausing in his wild career to kiss a pretty lass at the wayside!" he growled.

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His mock-heroic attitude toward his exploits kept her laughing, until she said, quite soberly:

"Please don't think I'm so awfully frivolous, for I really am not. And to be sitting in a place like this among all these highly proper people talking of the dreadful things you've done is simply ridiculous. When I undertook to hide Edith Congdon from her father I couldn't see that there would be anything wrong in it! And yet I would have been a kidnaper, I suppose."

"And you've cheerfully turned the job over to me," he said, finding it now his turn to be amused. "When you gave me your warrant to destroy all the kingdoms of the world you forgot that there might be unpleasant consequences. But I assure you that after a few days you don't care much!"

"It's so deliciously dreadful! And only the other day you were in mortal terror of sudden death."

"I've forgotten I ever had a nerve. To be sure our little misunderstandings nearly broke my heart, but now that you've smiled again I'm ready for anything. I might say further that in the end I shall expect my reward. If there are other men who love you they will do well to keep out of my path. We shall meet somewhere or other soon, I hope!"

"From what you say of your friend's faith in the stars there's no use planning. I shall remain here a day or two in the hope of hearing from Mrs. Congdon. She loves her husband and from what Ruth says he's really devoted to her, but the father-in-law is a malicious mischief maker."

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"If I shot the wrong man I shall always deplore the error. I hope you take into consideration the fact that he might have shot me! He thought he had a man at the end of his gun when he popped away at the mirror."

"I'm ashamed that I find it all so funny. Shooting any one can't really be a pleasant performance for a gentleman of your up-bringing; and yet you speak of it now as though it were only a trifling incident of the day's work. The Marquis of Montrose would certainly be vastly tickled if he knew what his little rhyme has done for you."

"The Marquis isn't in the sketch at all; it's far more important that you should approve of me in every particular. You spoke of buried treasure at that never-to-be-forgotten dinner at my sister's. I've kept that in mind as rather a pretty prospect."

"That cousin of mine is a great nuisance. He's not only bent upon finding my grandfather's buried money, but he thinks he is in love with me."

"I have a rival then?" asked Archie, with a sinking of the heart.

"You may call him that," she laughed. "A girl always likes to think there are others."

"Your camp—you haven't yet told me how to find it?" he said eagerly.

"It's a girls' camp, you know, and the male species is rigidly excluded. But Ruth will give Mr. Saulsbury full particulars."

"Crusoe found a footprint in the sand! By the way, did my sister May ever find a summer cottage?"

"She found a house at Cape May, which is much more accessible from Washington than Bailey Harbor. Do you imagine you can ever tell her all you've just told me?"

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"There are certain confidences permissible between sisters-in-law, so it's really up to you!" he replied glibly. "Don't trouble to answer; the Governor's waiting for me."

They walked back to the hotel in the best of humor. As they crossed the lobby the Governor suddenly slapped his pockets and walked to the cigar stand. A tall man in a gray traveling cap was talking earnestly to the clerk, meanwhile spinning a twenty-dollar gold piece on the show case. The Governor purchased some cigarettes and while waiting for change nodded to the stranger, who absently responded and began tapping the coin with the handle of a penknife.

"Not many of those things in circulation nowadays," the Governor remarked, thrusting the cigarettes into his pocket. The stranger carelessly inspected the two gentlemen in evening dress and handed the coin to the Governor.

"What d'ye think of that?" he asked.

The Governor turned the gold disk to the light and then flung it sharply on the wooden end of the counter, where it rang musically. He handed it back with a smile.

"The real thing, all right! Wish I had a couple of million just like it."

"It's a good thing you haven't!" the man remarked with a grin.

He resumed his talk with the clerk, speaking in a low tone, while the Governor loitered at the magazine counter. Archie went to the desk for their keys and received a bundle of mail for Mr. Saulsbury, who walked slowly toward him apparently absorbed in the periodical he had purchased. 210

"It doesn't seem possible we can lose!" he said when they reached their rooms. "There will be cross-currents yet; but a strong tide has set in, bearing us on."

He threw the magazine with well-directed aim into a desk in the corner, and meditatively smoothed his hat on his sleeve.

"That chap was Dobbs, a Government specialist in counterfeiters, and that twenty-dollar piece had almost the true ring, but not quite. The man who turned it out showed me the difference only yesterday. Perky? Certainly! He said Eliphalet Congdon had taken a bagful to pass on the unwary. The old boy had changed a lot of them in New England and the Government is not ignoring the matter. Eliphalet Congdon presents just such a case as we find occasionally where some perfectly sound conservative country banker feels the call of the wild and does a loop of death in high finance."

"You don't think old man Congdon has been here lately?" asked Archie.

"Only a day or two ago! I picked that up while I was buying my magazine. Congdon bought some stogies at the cigar stand and changed that twenty. We're all loaded for Eliphalet, Archie. After you told me your kidnaping story, I telegraphed to Perky for all the possible places where the old man might be. Perky has ranged the country with him and from his data we can keep tab on the old boy. Dobbs knows nothing of the kidnaping; it's the gold piece that interests him. I overheard enough to know we're on the right track. Eliphalet Congdon owns a farm in Ohio. Perky spent a month there boring out gold pieces. What we've got to do, Archie, is to find the Congdon child and turn her over to your Isabel and my Ruth. A very pretty job, demanding our best attention." 211

He paced the floor for a moment, his hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets, his silk hat tipped rakishly on one side of his head.

"A strange thing is happening; something the stars gave no hint of. We're being driven by circumstances utterly beyond our control from the side of the lawless to the side of the lawful and benevolent. In spite of ourselves, you understand!"

"But we're not leaving here until—"

"You were about to say that we can't shake the dust of Rochester from our sandals before we've made our party calls. Alas, no! We shall not communicate with our ladies again. First we must justify their confidence in us and find the Congdon child. Our wool can only change from black to white when we have performed some act of valor in a good cause. That is clearly indicated by my latest pondering of the zodiacal signs. Let me say that your Isabel is beyond question a girl worth living or dying for. I am delighted that she and Ruth speak the language of those of us who love the life adventurous, children of stars and sun. I shall be up early to make a few discreet inquiries as to the recent visit of Eliphalet and then I must buy a machine powerful enough to carry us far and fast. Luckily I brought a bundle of cash for just such emergencies."

"But a day's delay can't matter," Archie pleaded. "Every hour matters when the woman I love sets a task for me. It's still the open road for us, Archie. Good-night and pleasant dreams!" 212

II

The new car proved to be a racer and the Governor drove it with the speed of a king's messenger bearing fateful tidings. Occasionally from sheer weariness he relinquished the wheel to Archie, whose disposition to respect the posted warnings against lawless haste evoked the Governor's most contemptuous criticism.

"We ride for our ladies! Let the constables go hang!"

Constables were not to Archie's taste but now that they were bent upon a definite errand and one that promised another meeting with Isabel at the end of the journey he shared the Governor's zest for flight. It was a joy to be free under the broad blue arch of June. Spring is a playtime for fledgling fancy but in summer the heart is strong of wing and dares the heavens. It was Archie who now initiated vocal outbursts, striking up old glee club catches he hadn't thought of since his college days. He was in love. He bawled his scraps of song that the world might know that he was a lover riding far and hard at the behest of his lady. His thoughts skipped before him like dancing children. The life he was leading was not the noblest; he had no illusions on that score; but he was no longer a loafer waiting in luxurious ease for the curtain to fall upon a dull first act in a tedious drama, but a man of action, quite capable of holding his own against the world! 213

"You've caught the spirit at last! We're the jolliest beggars alive!" exulted the Governor.

He dropped from the clouds at intervals; proved his possession of a practical mind; received telegrams in towns Archie had never heard of before, and tossed the fragments to the winds.

"All the machinery, the intricate mechanism of the underworld is at work to assist us! I tell you as little as possible, but I neglect nothing. All communications in cipher, and you can see that

the telegraph clerks think we are persons of highest importance."

He dashed off replies unhesitatingly, emphasizing the urgency for their prompt despatch. Skirting the shores of Erie, he produced from a hollow tree a bundle of mail, wrapped in oil-skin. Soiled envelopes with the addresses scrawled awkwardly in pencil were reenlosed in brown envelopes neatly directed in typewriting and bearing the S. S. S. P. in one corner. The humor of his Society for the Segregation of Stolen Property tickled the Governor mightily and when Archie asked what would happen if these packets of mail went astray and fell into the hands of post-office inspectors, he displayed one of the notes which consisted of a dozen unrelated words, decorated with clumsy drawings,—a tree, a bridge, a barred window.

"Only twenty men out of our hundred million could read that! Code of our most exclusive circle. The silly wretch has been raiding country banks in the middle west and carried his playfulness too far. He's in jail now but not at all worried—merely bored. He'd safely planted his stuff before they nabbed him, and he had fixed up his alibi in advance; that's the import of that oblong in the corner, which means that he can show a white card—a clean bill of health, legally speaking, and isn't afraid."

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"I suppose he expects you to find the stuff and turn it into non-taxable securities," Archie remarked ironically.

"Precisely the idea! But I may not be able to serve him there. It will grieve me to leave the boys in the lurch; they've confided in me a long time."

The Governor had lapsed into moods of silence frequently since they left Rochester. The imminence of his release from whatever power had dominated him might, Archie thought, have subdued him to this unfamiliar humor with its attendant long periods of sober reflection. The meeting with Ruth had worked this change, he believed, no longer marveling at the fate that had linked their lives and their loves together. But the hints the Governor let fall of an approaching climacteric, a crisis of significance in his affairs, filled Archie with apprehension.

"Don't be foolish!" exclaimed the Governor, when Archie broached the matter. "Haven't I told you time and again that we shall stand together to the end of the trail!"

This was in a town where they paused for a quick overhauling of the car. At their table in a cafeteria he rioted in figures and expressed satisfaction with the results.

"If only the stars continue kind!" he said.

Nothing was to be gained by pressing inquiries upon a gentleman who ordered his affairs by the zodiac. At Buffalo the Governor made earnest efforts to rent a yacht, without confiding to Archie just what use he expected to make of it. No yachts being in the market, the Governor set about hiring a tug, and did in fact lease one for a month from a dredging company, paying cash and the wages of the crew in advance, and reserving an option to buy. The *Arthur B. Grover* was to be sent to Cleveland and held there for orders. He might want to negotiate the lakes as far as Duluth, he told the president of the company, who was surprised and chagrined when the singular Mr. Saulsbury readily accepted a figure that was intended to be prohibitive. The Governor was proud of the tug and expatiated upon its good points, which included sleeping quarters for the men and a nook where the captain could tuck himself away. He deplored his previous inattention to tugs; he believed more fun could be got from a tug like the *Arthur B. Grover* than from the best steam yacht afloat.

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"We must be ready for anything," he remarked to Archie. "The signs point to a disturbance of great waters, and there's nothing like being prepared."

At Cleveland Archie's last doubt as to his mentor's connection with the underworld of which he talked so entertainingly was removed. Reaching the city at midnight the car was left at a garage downtown, their trunks expressed to Chicago, and they arrived by a devious course at an ill-smelling boarding house. Here, the Governor informed him, only the aristocracy of the preying professions were received.

The arrival of another guest, a tall man of thirty, who had been taking a porch-climbing jaunt through mid-western cities, added to Archie's pleasure. In his clubs he had lent eager ear to the tales of such of his acquaintances as had slaughtered lions in Africa, or performed fancy stunts of mountaineering, and more lately he had listened with awe to the narratives of scarred veterans of the Foreign Legion; but this fellow "Gypsy," as the Governor called him, who had mastered the art of scaling colonial pillars and raiding the second story chambers of the homes of honest citizens, seemed to Archie hardly less heroic. "Gypsy" recounted his adventures with a kind of sullen humor that Archie found highly diverting. He sheepishly confessed that the net reward of a fortnight of diligent labor in his specialty was only three hundred dollars. The Governor was very stern with "Gypsy," advising him to abandon porch-climbing as a hazardous and unprofitable vocation. Archie was dragged from the hardest bed he had ever slept in early the next morning.

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"No more scented soap!" cried the Governor. "No more breakfast-in-bed! Here's where we get down to brass tacks and let our whiskers flourish!" He threw a rough suit of clothes on a chair and bade Archie get into it as quickly as possible. "Jam the other suit into your bag and Wiggins will ship it with mine to a point we may or may not touch. We shall leave this thriving city as farm hands eager to step softly upon the yielding clod. We go by trolley a little way, and if you have never surveyed the verduous Ohio Valley from a careening trolley car you have a joy coming to you. A democratic conveyance; plenty of chances to plant your feet in baskets of fresh-laid eggs or golden butter! But don't assume that we shall ride all the way; it's afoot for

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us, Archie! We shall be tramps seeking honest labor but awfully choosy about the jobs we take!"

An ill-fitting suit, with a blue flannel shirt and tattered cap completely transformed him. He surveyed himself with satisfaction in a cracked mirror while urging Archie to greater haste.

"We'd cut a pretty figure on Fifth Avenue now!" he exclaimed, delighted to see Archie apparelled in a suit rather less pleasing to the eye than his own. "We'll roughen up considerably in our travels and by the time we reach Eliphalet Congdon's broad acres he'll never recognize us as gentlemen he's met before."

"You don't expect to see the old man, do you?" demanded Archie with a sinking of the heart. "I thought we were going to find that little girl and hurry with her to Isabel's camp? This tramping stuff will merely cause us to lose time."

"We're not going to lose any time. I'm as anxious to be on with the business as you are; but we're not going to make a mess of it. I've got some ideas I don't dare tell you about; you might get panicky and run! Steady, Archie, and trust the Governor."

Trusting the Governor had been much easier while they were traveling in fast motors or in parlor cars. The trolley with its frequent stops, the proneness of the plain folk to lunch upon bananas and peanuts and cast the skins and shells thereof upon the floor pained Archie greatly.

The first night they slept in a barn, without leave, begged a breakfast and walked until Archie cried for mercy.

"What's a blistered foot more or less!" cried the Governor, producing an ointment which he forthwith applied with tenderest solicitude. 218

From his ingenuity in foraging and the philosophy with which he accepted the day's vicissitudes, Archie judged that his companion was by no means new to the road. He showed the greatest familiarity with the region they traversed, avoiding farmhouses where no generosity could be expected by the tramping fraternity, leading the way through quiet woods to "swimming holes" where they bathed and solaced their souls. They must not get ahead of their schedule, he explained. When Archie, knowing nothing of schedules, timidly asked questions the Governor, feigning not to hear, would deliver long lectures on Ohio history, praising the pioneers of the commonwealth, and enthusiastically reciting the public services of her statesmen.

At the end of the fourth day as they kicked their heels against the pier of a bridge that spanned the Sandusky, watching the stars slip into their places in the soft tender sky, the Governor's quick ear detected the step of a pedestrian approaching from the west.

"Unless we've missed a turn somewhere, that's Perky. A punctual chap; this is the exact time and place for our meeting and he should bear tidings of interest in our affairs."

The man, who was dressed like a farm laborer, responded carelessly to the Governor's greeting, and swung himself to a seat beside him on the abutment.

"The young brother knows the wisdom of silence," remarked the Governor, laying his hand on Archie's knee. "It's a pleasure to bring you two together. He and I follow the leading of the same star. What news of the lamb in the pasture?" 219

As though taking time to accommodate himself to the Governor's manner of speech Perky lighted his pipe and flicked the match into the river.

"The little lamb is not happy. The father is expected tonight. I've got orders to chop wood while he's on the reservation."

"The son is not wise to the metal trick and you drop into the background?"

"The true word has been spoken, brother."

"The son has been long upon the road. What caused him to linger?"

"A broken arm, so the old man has it; and repairs have been made in a hospital at Portland by the eastern sea."

The Governor dug his elbow into Archie's ribs. Archie caught a gleam. Putney Congdon had been in a hospital recovering from the bullet wound received at Bailey Harbor, but was now arriving at his father's Ohio farm, where his child, the lamb referred to, was concealed. Putney was to be kept in ignorance of the lure of the tampered coins that had brought Perky into alliance with his father, and Perky was to interest himself in wood-chopping during the son's visit. In the privacy of the bridge with only an uninterested river for auditor, there seemed to be no reason why these matters should not be discussed openly; but the Governor evidently enjoyed these veiled communications, though it was clear that Perky found difficulty in fashioning the responses.

"Is there work in the fields for willing hands? Shall we find welcome as laborers keen for the harvest?" asked the Governor.

"The slave driver weeps for lack of help and the pay is high. You will be welcome. When the sun makes its shortest shadow tomorrow you will sign papers for the voyage." 220

This penetrated to Archie's consciousness as assurance that he and the Governor would find employment on Eliphalet's farm, where Edith Congdon was being concealed from her mother, and that the most fortunate time to apply for employment was at noon the next day.

"The lamb must be carried to more northern pastures. We must guard against snares and

pitfalls."

"The old ram is keen but only one eye may be used at a knot-hole. He suspects nothing. We have spoken enough?"

"Longer speech would be a weariness; you may leave us."

Perky waited for a motor to clatter over the bridge and with a careless "So long!" walked away whistling.

"A pretty decent chap, that," remarked the Governor, "with a highly developed bump of discretion. A man I hope to see with his feet on honest earth when I leave the road. There must be no slip, Archie. The responsibilities of the next fortnight are enormous. The happiness of many people depends upon us. We'll stroll back to that big farm we passed awhile ago. It's starred in the official guide books of the dusty ramblers and the milk and bread and butter there will be excellent. And the barn is red, Archie! A red barn is the best of all for sleeping purposes. An unpainted barn advertises the unthrift of the owner, and the roof is always leaky. The scent of moldy hay is extremely offensive to me—suggests rheumatism and pneumonia. And a white barn stares at you insolently. Whenever I see a white barn I prepare for bad luck. But a red barn, Archie, warms the cockles of your heart. It enfolds you like a canopy of dreams! I wouldn't have the red too glaring;—a certain rustiness of tint is desirable—"

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"Here endeth the lecture," Archie interrupted. "I am starving in a land of milk and honey. Do I understand," he asked as they crossed the bridge, "that tomorrow we're going to find jobs on Eliphalet's plantation and kidnap his granddaughter?"

"Much as I hate to anticipate, Archie, it's not only little Edith we're going to kidnap! We're going to steal the old man too!"

III

"I never saw a tramp yet that was worth his breakfast," snarled Grubbs, the foreman of Eliphalet Congdon's farm. "But don't you bums think y' can loaf round here. It's goin' t' be work from now right through till the wheat's cut. Jail birds, both on y', I bet. Well, there ain't nothin' round here to steal. Y' can both sleep in the hands' house back yonder and hop to meals when the bell rings. There's some old hats in the barn; shed them pies y' got on yer heads and try t' look like honest men anyhow."

They partook of the generous midday meal provided in a big screened porch adjoining the kitchen. Half a dozen other laborers, regularly attached to Eliphalet's section of rich land, eyed the newcomers with the disdain born of their long tenure. Perky was a capital actor; no one would have imagined that he had ever seen either of the new hands before. In the near-by fields the wheat shimmered goldenly in the sun, quivering into the perfection that would bring it under the knife a few days later. Help was scarce and the scorn of the foreman was assumed. He had every intention of clinging to the latest comers, inexperienced vagabonds though they might prove, until the pressing need was passed.

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The Governor was set to work with two other men ripping out an old rail fence and replacing it with wire. Archie's task was the rather more disagreeable one of trundling gravel in a wheelbarrow and distributing it in holes staked for his guidance in the road that ran from the highway gate to the barn. The holes were small; it seemed to Archie absurd to spend time filling such small cavities; and a wheelbarrow filled with gravel is heavy. The foreman explained the job and departed, reappearing from time to time for the pleasure of criticizing Archie's work. When Archie suggested that there would be an economy of time in loading the gravel into a wagon and effecting the distribution by that means the foreman stared at him open-mouthed for a moment, then burst into ironical laughter.

"Give *you* a team to handle—you!"

The thought of trusting Archie with a team when teams were needed for much more important matters struck the cynical foreman as a gross impiety. The humor of the thing was too tremendous to be enjoyed alone; he yelled to a man who was driving by in a motor truck filled with milk cans to stop and hear the joke. Archie's soul burned within him. That a man of education who belonged to the best clubs on the continent should be proclaimed a fool by a hatchet-faced farmer in overalls, before a fat person on a milk truck was the most crushing of all humiliations. The foreman jumped on the truck and rode away, and Archie bent his back to the barrow, resolving that never again would he complain of bumps in a road now that he knew the heart-breaking and back-breaking labor of road-mending.

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On the whole he did a good job; it was remarkable how interested one could become in so contemptible a task. He tamped the gravel into the holes with the loving care of a dentist filling a tooth, and struck work with reluctance when the bell sounded for supper.

The Governor was already on terms of comradeship with his fellow toilers, and as they splashed in the basins set out on a long plank near the kitchen, his quips kept them laughing. Two college boys had just arrived to aid in the harvesting. Farmers are not much given to humor and the young fellows were clearly pleased to find a jester on the premises. At the supper table the Governor gave his conversational powers free rein. This was the only life; he had rested all winter so that he might enjoy farm life the more. He subjected the collegians to a rigid examination in Latin, quizzed them in physics and promised the whole company a course of

lectures on astronomy.

Perky strolled away in one direction; the Governor in another and Archie, left to his own devices, fumed at this desertion. The two would meet somewhere and plan the next strategic move, Archie surmised, and he was irritated to find himself denied a place in their councils. He refused an invitation to sit in at a poker game that was being organized in the farm hands' house and wandered idly about the premises. The residence was a two-story farmhouse, with a broad veranda evidently quite recently added. As Archie passed the windows he noted that the rooms were handsomely furnished. This was not an establishment where the employees were admitted to social intercourse with the family of the owner. As Archie stole by, the voices from the veranda sounded remote as from another world. An aristocrat by birth and training, he found here a concrete lesson in democracy that disturbed him. The world was not all club corners and week-end parties. For a few hours at least he was earning his bread by the sweat of his face—a marvelous experience—and feeling very lonesome indeed at the end of his day's labor.

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"I don't want to stay with papa; I want to see mama!"

A child's voice plaintively uttering this as he slunk round the house reminded him of the real nature of his sojourn on Eliphalet Congdon's acres.

"Papa's sick; you must be nice to your papa. You must help him to get well, and then you can see your mama!"

Through the parlor windows he saw the stolen Edith rebelliously confronting the tall woman who had been a party to the kidnaping in Central Park.

Eliphalet Congdon entered the room clutching a newspaper and Archie heard him exclaim angrily:

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"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Edith. Your papa's just come and is sick and tired and your fretting's keeping him awake. Take her upstairs, Sarah, and put her to bed."

As he surveyed the upper windows he caught a glimpse of a woman in a trained nurse's uniform. Putney Congdon was established on the farm and though it was nearly three weeks since the fateful night at Bailey Harbor, he was still feeling the effects of his injury. Afraid of being caught loitering Archie hurried down to the meadow that stretched away from the house and stumbled into a flock of sheep.

He left the sheep, rather envying their placid existence, and was on his way to the laborers' shack when the Governor stepped into his path.

"Mooning? Perky and I have been smoking our pipes off yonder in the woods. He's as sore as a boil because Putney's blown in and he's got to make a feint at honest labor. Perky has a very delicate touch with the tools of his trade and he'd just got his laboratory fixed up in the garret where he's been doctoring gold pieces to beat the band. He says old Eliphalet is more and more delighted with his work. The more he's delighted the better the sport for us."

"I don't see where the sport comes in!" said Archie testily, pausing at the fence of the chicken yard. "It's a long way to that camp in Michigan where we've got to take the child; and you needn't think it's going to be so easy. The old man will be hot after us. Putney's still got a nurse looking after him, but if he's traveled this far he's not going to let go of the little girl without a fight. You've got to take this thing seriously; a mistake will be fatal and after all I've gone through I don't just relish making a mess of it."

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"Make a wish!" cried the Governor. "There goes a star sliding merrily toward the Pacific."

But a shower of meteors would not have stopped Archie's questions as to the manner in which Edith Congdon was to be snatched from her grandfather's farm in Ohio and transferred to the inland seas. He resented his exclusion from the conference with Perky and said so.

"My dear boy, suspense is good for the soul; I'm merely cultivating in you the joy of surprise. The discipline of waiting will sharpen your wits, which is important, as I mean to honor you with considerable responsibility and leave you here when I depart, which will be tonight as dewy eve spreads her sparkling robe—"

"Leave me here! My God, man, I'm not going to be stranded in this wilderness! You've lost your senses if you think you can shake me now and leave me to get pinched and do time for your foolishness!"

"Patience, little brother, and not quite so vociferous! You have a good natural voice with strong carrying powers but it shows a sad lack of cultivation. This much will I impart: tomorrow morning Perky will whisper to Eliphalet that the Government is wise to the gold piece trick and that they are watched. The old boy will be scared to death—his son on the place and all that sort of thing, besides the chance of facing a hard-hearted Federal judge for tampering with the Republic's coin. Perky will throw a scare into him that will stand him on his head and then he'll advise him to beat it and the old chap will throw his arms around Perky's neck and beg for protection. And Perky, with a reputation for never deserting a pal, will seize him firmly by the hand and away they'll go."

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"Where will they go?" Archie demanded tartly.

"That would be telling! Let it suffice that they depart in some haste. Next I take the little girl into my care and start for the camp. You, Archie, will remain here to watch Mr. Putney Congdon."

"I didn't come here with you, did I? They won't suspect me of complicity or anything—oh, no!" moaned Archie.

"Bless you, my boy, I'm far less stupid than you think. I'm leaving here at once and the little girl will be carried off with all circumspection. My lines of communication are working splendidly and some of the keenest wits in the underworld are assembling here and there to assist in my various enterprises. The part I'm assigning you flatters your intelligence. You are to watch Putney Congdon and follow him when he leaves."

"Cut that rubbish and listen to me," said Archie, his voice quavering with anger; "you can't play the fool with me in this fashion. You mean to leave me here with a man I shot; and you think I'm going to *follow* him! What if he never goes; what if he stays all summer!"

"He won't," the Governor answered. "He's going to follow that child of his if it leads him to kingdom come. If you want to see your Isabel again, follow Putney Congdon. You will of course be a model of discretion, but—"

"Do you mean to say you'll tell him where you're taking his child? If I didn't know you for a sober man I'd swear you'd been drinking!"

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"Never more sober in my life, Archie. I shall not of course spoil the joy of the kidnaping by taking Putney into my confidence, but after the child's well out of the way I shall send him a wire telling him where his daughter may be found—a gentle hint, but sufficient to tease his curiosity."

Archie stamped his foot in impotent fury.

"You're leaving me here on this infernal farm, with a man I shot and nearly murdered! And you'll wire him where you're headed for when you haven't told me!"

"Steady, lad; steady! Don't forget that the underworld is a labyrinth of mystery. I'm utilizing all my power among the brotherhood to pull off this undertaking. All about us—" he waved his hand—"with their functions duly assigned, are men I can trust and who trust me—some of them utter strangers to one another but bound by the same tie. But I'll just whisper the address in your ear and you'll do well to remember it. Heart o' Dreams Camp, Huddleston, Michigan; post-office, Calderville. When the victim of your ready gun rises from his couch and strikes out for the northwest you will not lose sight of him. If you do you'll muddle everything. Your hand baggage has been planted safely with the baggage master at the railway station at Tiffin, seven miles from where we stand, and here's the check for it. Once more you shall renew your acquaintance with scented soap. Observe my instructions strictly, Archie; meet all difficulties with a confident spirit and you will neither stumble nor fall. Good-by and God bless you!"

The Governor's blessing failed to dispel the gloom that settled upon Mr. Archibald Bennett as he crept through the shed where the laborers were housed and found his cot. It was a hot humid night, with the chirr of queer insects outside mocking with weary iteration the lusty snores of the weary farm hands. He might bolt, now that he had Isabel's address, and suffer the Governor to manage in his own fashion the foolhardy enterprises, of which he had spoken so lightly; but to do this would be only to prove himself a deserter. The business of delivering Edith Congdon into Isabel's hands was his affair as much as the Governor's. And having twice had a taste of Isabel's anger his appetite was sated. To win her applause he must appear before her a heroic figure, but the part the Governor had assigned him was little calculated to develop his chivalric qualities. He found himself warmly hating Putney Congdon. If Congdon had only had the decency to die there would not be all this bother, and in his bitterness he resolved that if he got another chance he would make an end of him. Soothed by this decision he fell asleep.

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IV

The morning opened auspiciously with a raking from Grubbs, who, finding that the Governor had decamped, most ungenerously held Archie responsible for his departure.

"I swear every year," he declared, "I'll never hire another tramp and hereafter I'll let the crops rot before I'll have one on the place."

Archie replied with heat that he knew nothing about the Governor or the reason for his precipitate passing. As the scolding the foreman had given him the day before still rankled, he protested his ignorance of the Governor and all his ways with a vigor strengthened much to his own edification by oaths he had never employed before. The foreman, taken aback by his onslaught, mumbled and then asked humbly as though ashamed of his lack of confidence in his employee: "Well, you two landed here together and I thought you might be gettin' ready to play the same trick. Look here, d'ye know anything about horses?"

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"Well, I've ridden some," Archie answered guardedly, fearing the imposition of some disagreeable task as a punishment for his violent language.

"Ridden; where th' hell have you rode?"

Archie's knowledge of horses had been gained by cautious riding in park bridle paths with a groom, but to confess this would be only to increase the wrath and arouse the suspicions of the farmer.

"Oh, I've always been around horses," said Archie. "I guess I can handle 'em all right."

The foreman meditated, gave a hitch to his trousers, inspected Archie from head to foot and

spat.

"Humph! I gotta find somebody t' watch the old man's granddaughter ride 'er pony, and I guess I'll give you the job if y' got sense enough to set on a horse and keep th' kid from breakin' 'er neck. What y' think o' that! I gotta waste a horse right now when I could use a dozen more, so a grown man can play with a kid! The old man's skipped this morning without sayin' whether he'd ever be back again!"

"Mr. Congdon has left?" asked Archie, with all the innocence he could muster.

"Not only has he gone but he's took a scrub I was usin' as handy man on the place. You can't beat it! There ought to be a law against city men ownin' farms an' makin' farmers do their work." 231

Archie thought this sound philosophy and he expressed his agreement heartily.

"Well, go to the barn and clean up that pony, and clap on a boy's saddle you'll find there; and there's a sorrel mare in the last stall on the left you can take. The kid'll be out lookin' fer y', and y' want to take mighty good care of 'er; she's the ole man's pet and he'll kill y' if anything goes wrong with 'er. Keep 'er out about an hour and be partickler careful. Between you and me there's somethin' queer about the kid bein' here; row o' some kind between her pa and ma. Her pa's here sick. Guess all them Congdon's got something wrong with 'em!"

Archie restrained an impulse to affirm the last statement and set off stolidly for the barn. He felt himself a better man for his interview with the foreman, who proved to be human and no bad fellow after all. His appointment as groom for the daughter of Putney Congdon was only another ironic turn of fate. The child might remember him as the man who had rescued her balloon in Central Park, but in his shabby clothes and with his face disguised by a week's growth of beard this was unlikely. A more serious matter for concern was the possibility that the Governor or his agents might attempt to steal her away from him while she was in his care. But so far in his stormy pilgrimage he had gained nothing by yielding to apprehensions and he whistled as he rubbed down the pony and got his own mount ready.

The child came running into the barn lot followed by the woman who had been a party to her abduction, and danced joyfully toward the pony. 232

"Edith mustn't stay out too long; an hour will be enough for the first day. And please keep close to the gate. You're sure you understand horses?"

Archie satisfied her on all points, submitting himself to her critical gaze without flinching. In his big straw hat he was not even remotely suggestive of the man who had attempted to frustrate the seizure of the child in the park. In her ecstatic welcome of the pony Edith hardly gave Archie a glance. A riding costume had been improvised for her out of a boy scout's suit, and with her curls flying under her broad hat she was a spirited and appealing figure. The woman followed them down the lane to the road, where she indicated the bounds to be observed during the lesson. The pony was old and fat, and only with much urging could he be brought to a trot. Archie delivered himself of all the wisdom he could recall from the instruction of his riding teacher as to seat and carriage. The companionship of the child cheered him; and as they patrolled the road she prattled with youthful volubility. When a traction engine passed towing a threshing machine the sorrel mare showed her mettle in a series of gyrations that all but landed Archie in a fence corner.

Edith, watching him with trepidation, cried out in admiration of his horsemanship. The woman, satisfied that the groom was really a master horseman, sat down on the grass by the gate to read.

Archie, in his anxiety to save the child from mishap, had given little attention to the traffic on the road until he awoke to the fact that the same touring car had passed twice within a short period. It was a smart vehicle with a chauffeur in gray livery whose figure tantalized his memory. It flashed upon him in a moment that this was either the Governor's New York chauffeur or some one who bore a striking resemblance to that person. The Governor had hinted at the summoning of many assistants to aid in his undertaking, and it was not at all unlikely that he had drawn upon his New York establishment. But for the child to be abducted during the progress of the riding lesson might lead to unpleasant consequences and was not at all to Archie's taste. 233

The woman's attention was wholly relaxed and she scarcely glanced up as he passed her. There could be no better opportunity for the seizure, as the laborers were widely distributed over the farm. A stretch of woodland opposite the Congdon gate precluded the possibility of interruption from that quarter.

The gray-clad chauffeur passed again, this time in a more powerful car. He made no sign but Archie caught a glimpse of the Governor busily talking with a strange man. Convinced now that the Governor's plans were culminating and that the car was making these circuits of the farm to enable the occupants to get their bearings, Archie awaited anxiously the next appearance of the machine. When at the end of a quarter of an hour it shot into view he was at the farthest point from the gate indicated by the woman as the range of Edith's exercise.

"That girth needs pulling up a little; let's dismount here," said Archie, drawing up under a tree at the roadside. The woman was deeply preoccupied with her book and apparently oblivious to the traffic on the road. Archie pretended to be having trouble with the saddle, as he filled in the time necessary for the car to reach him. It passed the gate more rapidly than on previous occasions, but slowed down at once and a familiar voice greeted him. 234

"Pardon me, but is this the road to Tiffin? I'm afraid we've been running round in a circle."

"Straight ahead! And I suggest that you be in a hurry about it!" said Archie, seeing that the woman had risen and was now moving rapidly toward them. The Governor stepped jauntily from the running board, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his duster. There was a twinkle in his eyes as he noted Archie's trepidation. He glanced toward the woman indifferently, removed his cap and addressed the little girl, who stood beside the pony with her hand on the bridle. A second car drew up just behind the Governor's machine. The woman was calling loudly to Edith to come to her immediately.

"Edith—Miss Edith Congdon," said the Governor, smiling. "Your mother wants you very, very much and I've come to take you to her. If you will jump into the car you will see her very soon. We must be in a hurry or that woman will catch you. You needn't have a fear in the world. Will you trust me?"

The child hesitated, and Archie, enraged at the deliberation with which the Governor was managing the abduction, really leaving it to the child whether she should go or not, saw the look of fear she bent upon the approaching woman—a look that yielded to wonder and amazement and hope as she jumped nimbly into the machine.



"We must be in a hurry or that woman will catch you"

At the same moment two men sprang out of the second car and rushed at Archie. One of them flung a carriage robe over his head and twisted it round his throat, then they gathered him up, head and heels, and tossed him over the fence. The thing could not have been managed more neatly if it had been rehearsed. The Governor leaned over the fence and gazing upon Archie, wriggling in a patch of briars, unconcernedly recited:

"She who comes to me and pleadeth
In the lovely name of Edith
Shall not fail of what was wanted;
Edith means the blessed, therefore
All that she may wish or care for,
Shall, when best for her, be granted!"

The two cars were enveloped in a cloud of dust when Archie, tearing the blanket from his head, rose to confront the screaming woman. Twice he had seen the child stolen, and the first occasion had not been without its drama, but the Governor had made of the second the sheerest farce. The woman berated him roughly for his stupidity while he attempted to explain.

"The man who talked to the little girl knew her—called her by name. They've probably just gone for a ride."

This only increased the woman's indignation and he roused himself to placate her.

"I had better run to the house and telephone to the Tiffin police," he suggested.

To his infinite surprise she declared in alarm that this must not be done; she would go herself

and tell the child's father what had occurred and let him deal with the matter. This was wholly beyond his comprehension and to conceal his emotions he fell back heavily upon his rôle of the country bumpkin, complaining of imaginary injuries and vowing that he would have the law on the men who assaulted him. The woman glanced carefully about, as though to make sure they had not been observed and then set off for the house. She took several steps and then turned to say:

"Don't talk about this—do you understand? You're not to say a word about it. I'll see Mr. Putney Congdon and tell him just how it happened."

"But if the police should ask me—"

"Don't be a fool! The police are not going to know about this. Those were Mr. Putney Congdon's orders in case anything like this happened. And you needn't talk to the other hands about it either. I'll fix the foreman; all you've got to do is to keep your mouth shut."

Her assumption that Mr. Putney Congdon would not be greatly aroused by the abduction of his daughter was anything but clarifying. Archie returned the pony to the barn and was sitting in the door brooding upon the prevailing madness of the human race when Grubbs found him.

"Well, it certainly beats hell!" the man remarked, wiping his brow with the back of his hand.

"There's a good deal in what you say," Archie mournfully assented. "I want you to know that it wasn't my fault. Those fellows—there were about six of 'em—jumped on me and tried to choke me to death and then pitched me over the fence and it was all over in half a second. I apologize if that's what you expect." 237

"I don't expect a damned thing! That fool woman said I wasn't to pester you about it as you wasn't to blame, which makes me sore, for at the first jump I was goin' to call the sheriff and turn y' over. But from what she says we're not to say a word—not a word, mind y'! Y' can't beat it!"

"I certainly shan't attempt to beat it," replied Archie sadly. "I'd like to catch a March hare just to tell him that some human beings are a lot crazier than he is. We haven't done justice to the intellectual powers of the rabbit."

The foreman blinked but the remark penetrated and he burst into a loud guffaw. That a child should be picked up in the road and carried away was startling enough but that nothing was to be done about it was so egregious that words failed to do justice to it. It was only eleven o'clock and he told Archie that he might spend an hour at the woodpile, even guiding him to that unromantic spot and initiating him into the uses of saw and ax.

V

Three days in the harvest field brought Archie to a new respect for his daily bread. He found joy in the discovery that he had strength to throw into the scale against man's necessities. He was taking a holiday from life itself; and he was content to bide his time until the vacation ended. He was passing through an ordeal and if he emerged alive he would be a wiser and better man. He planned a life with Isabel that should be spent wholly in the open. Cities should never know him again. Isabel lived now so vividly in his mind that trifles he had not thought of in their meetings became of tremendous importance; foolish things, lover's fatuities. There was a certain grave deliberation of speech, more deliberate when the sentence was to end in laughter; this he knew to be adorable. There was the tiniest little scar, almost imperceptible, over one of her temples; it was the right one, he remembered. An injury in childhood, perhaps; he grieved over it as though he had seen the cruel wound inflicted. And she had a way of laying her hand against her cheek that touched him deeply as he thought of it. Her hands were the most wonderful he had ever seen; useful, capable hands, slim and long. 238

When he thought of the castigation she had given him in those dark days when they so miserably misunderstood each other, it helped to remember her hands; they were hands that could be only the accompaniment of a kind and generous heart. There was the troublesome cousin who loved her; but he consoled himself with the reflection that she would not have mentioned the man if she had really cared for him; and yet this might be only a blind. He would have an eye to that cousin. The buried treasure he hadn't taken very seriously. In spite of all the remarkable things that had happened to him he still had moments of incredulity, and in the midst of an Ohio wheatfield, with the click and clatter of the reapers in his ears and the dry scent of the wheat in his nostrils, to dream of buried gold was transcendent folly. 239

Gossip from the farmhouse reached him at the back door and he was alert for any sign that Putney Congdon meditated leaving. Eliphalet had not returned; he judged that Perky, probably inspired by the Governor, had frightened the old man into taking a long journey. The woman who had cared for Edith had left; he got that direct from Grubbs, who poured out confidences freely as they smoked together after the twilight supper.

"Say, I guess I sized you up all wrong. You don't act like a bum at all; I guess you and me might rent a farm round here somewhere and make some money out of it next year. You're the first hobo I ever saw who could do a day's work without cryin'."

The queer ways of the Congdons had not been referred to between them until the third evening, when they took counsel of their tobacco apart from the other men, sprawling on the grass in a friendly intimacy that Archie found flattering. A plain, hard-fisted farmer liked him and showed

a preference for his society; the thing was unbelievable.

"I get it through the kitchen that the old man's son's goin' to clear out tonight. Orders was sent to have a machine ready to take him to town at eleven o'clock. Guess there was nothing the matter with him nohow—y' know what these rich young fellas are, and they say the old man's worth a mint. The idea of a big grown man havin' a nurse take care of him makes me sick. I ain't seen that fella since he came. Telegram phoned out this evenin' made 'im jump out o' bed, they say, and he's off for somewhere tonight. Sees a chance to make a lot of money most likely."

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Archie cautiously changed the subject, but he was already planning his departure. The Governor had bidden him follow Congdon and here were his marching orders. The prospect of playing the spy upon Congdon had grown no less disagreeable since the Governor had told him that this was to be his next duty. The only thing that reconciled him to the unattractive task was the assurance that Congdon would set out at once for Heart o' Dreams Camp, where Isabel presumably was now established. To bother himself further with the Congdons was not to his liking; he had ceased wishing that he had killed Putney; he wished now that the whole family were at the other side of the world where they wouldn't so persistently interfere with his affairs.

Grubbs complained bitterly because upon him fell the duty of getting Putney into town to catch a west-bound train at midnight.

"You'd think we run a taxi joint here! Where am I goin' to get a night's rest, I'd like to know!"

With the seven-mile tramp to town before him Archie was unable to sympathize with Grubbs' longing for slumber. He left the foreman tinkering the machine in which Putney was to be borne to the station, changed his hat for his cap and stole out of the sleeping quarters to the road.

The thought that he was on his way to Isabel lightened his step, and he trudged along with frequent invocations of the stars. He carried nothing in his pockets but the sealed address the Governor's sister had given him; the verse in Isabel's writing, and a roll of bills the Governor had pressed upon him when they parted.

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Reaching town, he found himself with an hour to spare. He got his bag from the station and bought a ticket. There was only one upper available, said the agent with the usual optimistic suggestion of ticket agents that something better might be found when the train came in. He spent half an hour at a hotel cleaning up and changing to the clothing he had discarded at Cleveland.

... Grubbs carried Putney's luggage across the platform with dogged stride, passing Archie without a sign of recognition. He was followed by a tall man in a gray suit whose left arm was supported by a sling. Grubbs took hasty leave and the two travelers were left alone.

"A warm night," Congdon remarked.

Archie agreed to this, a trifle huskily. Congdon was not a bad looking fellow; his tone and manner, and his face, as revealed by the platform lights, encouraged the belief that he was a gentleman.

"No red caps here, I suppose," said Congdon with a glance toward the station.

"I fancy not," Archie replied. "I'll be glad to help you with your bags."

"Oh, thank you! I have a game shoulder,—nearly well now, but it gives me a twinge occasionally. The train's on time, I believe."

A blast from the locomotive and a humming of the rails woke the station to life. Archie grabbed the larger of Congdon's bags and led the way toward a voice bawling "Chicago sleeper." Congdon showed his ticket for lower three and climbed in; Archie remaining behind to negotiate for space.

"Nothing left but uppers; you can take upper three."

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He found Congdon in the aisle disposing of his effects.

"I've got the upper half of the section," said Archie, "But I promise not to be a nuisance to you."

"That will be all right. I asked for a stateroom but you can never get what you want at these way stations. I'm going to smoke for a while."

Archie threw his suitcase into the upper berth and clung to the curtains as the train started with a jerk. Here was a situation so utterly confounding that his spirit sank under the weight of it. He was not only traveling with a man he had shot; he was obliged to sleep over him. The propinquity made it possible to finish the business begun at Bailey Harbor and be done with him. He felt the perspiration trickling down his cheeks. The possibilities of the next few hours were hideous; what if he were unable to resist an impulse to give Putney Congdon his quietus; what if—

He staggered toward the smoking compartment and found it unoccupied save for Congdon, who had planted himself in a chair and was trying to light a cigarette. Archie sank upon the leather divan and struck and held a match for him.

Congdon thanked him with a nod and remarked that the weather was favoring the farmers.

Archie, satisfied that the rather melancholy blue eyes had found in him nothing familiar or suggestive of their earlier and tragic meeting, heartily commended the weather as excellent for the crops. Congdon gave a hitch to his shoulder occasionally and flinched when a sudden jerk of the car threw him against the window frame. The glint of pain in his eyes sent a wave of

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remorse through Archie's soul. Congdon bore his affliction manfully. There was about him nothing even remotely suggestive of Eliphalet Congdon's grotesque figure or excited, choppy speech. He had suffered and perhaps his wound was not alone responsible for his pallor or the hurt look in his eyes. As Congdon played nervously with his watch chain, he inspected Archie with quick furtive glances.

"I'm all banged up—nerves shot to pieces," he said abruptly, turning his gaze intently upon Archie.

"That's rough. Used to be troubled a good deal myself."

The sound of his own voice and the consciousness that the victim of his bullet was reaching out to him for sympathy brought back his courage. He would be very kind to Putney Congdon. Even apart from the disabled shoulder there was a pathos in the man. Archie felt that in happier moments he could become very fond of Putney Congdon. He looked like a chap it would be pleasant to sit with at a table for two in a quiet club corner.

"Chicago?" Congdon asked. It seemed to Archie that he threw into the question a hope that they were to be fellow travelers to the end of the journey. Here was something, a turn of the screw, that even the Governor could not have foreseen.

The conductor came for their tickets and Archie took advantage of the interruption to ponder the ethics and the etiquette of his predicament; but there was no precedent in all history for such a synchronization of two gentlemen who had recently engaged in a midnight duel. Archie was appalled by the consciousness that he and Congdon were really hitting it off. 244

The tickets surrendered, Congdon drew out his watch, said that he had been sleeping badly and hated to go to bed. He sat erect and tried to reach his coat pocket. His face twitched with the pain of the effort.

"I had a bottle of dope I'm supposed to take to help me sleep; must have left it in my bag. Will you poke the button, please?"

"Can't I get it for you?" asked Archie.

"You are very kind. It's the small satchel—a lot of stuff in it all mixed up. A bottle about as long as your hand."

Opening the bag in Congdon's berth Archie's hand fell upon a photograph that lay on top. The face swam before his eyes and he pitched forward in his agitation, bumping his head viciously against the window. It was a photograph of Isabel Perry, an Isabel somewhat younger than the girl he knew, but Isabel—indubitably Isabel! Another dive into the bag's recesses brought up the photograph of Edith Congdon that had been snatched from the frame in the Bailey Harbor cottage. This was explicable enough, but the likeness of Isabel in Congdon's satchel was utterly inexplicable and astounding. He groped for the bottle and crept back to the smoking compartment.

"That's right; thanks. One teaspoonful in water if you don't mind. This is really quite unpardonable. You are very good to bother with me; I'd counted on the porter's help. Had a trained nurse for a while but you can't go traveling over the country with a nurse, and the woman had begun to bore me to death. I'd rather die than have doctors and nurses trailing me about." 245

"They're odious," Archie assented. "There! Now have a cigarette to kill the taste."

"Good idea! One more and I'll turn in."

A cigarette is the most insignificant of peace offerings, and yet Archie experienced a pleasurable thrill as Putney Congdon accepted one from his case. They were very good cigarettes, of a brand with which Archie had supplied himself generously at Tiffin and Congdon expressed his approval of them.

Congdon, the custodian of a photograph of Isabel Perry, demanded a more careful inspection, and Archie studied him with renewed interest. Isabel had in no way indicated that she knew Congdon; it was Mrs. Congdon that she was trying to serve, and Isabel was hardly a girl to bestow her photograph upon a married man. Congdon had no business with the photograph and Archie bitterly resented its presence in the man's luggage.

He jumped when Congdon announced that he was ready to turn in, followed him to the berth, and helped him to undress, even touching the wounded shoulder.

"That little scratch there's coming along all right now, but the bone's sore; suppose I'll feel weather changes as old chaps do who have rheumatism."

"Whistle if you need anything in the night," said Archie, and allowed the porter to push him into the upper berth, the first he had ever occupied. Wakened now and then by unusual jars, he heard nothing of Congdon. He stifled a desire to steal Isabel's photograph and in time slept the sleep of exhaustion. 246

When they were roused by the porter he helped Congdon into his clothes, chose a clean shirt for him and laughingly offered to shave him.

Congdon regarded him quizzically.

"You're a mighty good fellow! It's about time I was introducing myself. My name is Congdon. I live in New York; just taking a little trip for my health; going up into the lakes."

"Comly's my name. No particular plans myself. Just knocking about a bit."

By the time Archie had made his toilet they were running into the Chicago station.

"Suppose we have breakfast in the station restaurant?" Congdon suggested. "If I go up to the University Club I'm likely to run into somebody who'll want me to do things. And I'm not up to it; really I'm not."

"I understand perfectly," said Archie.

"And see here, old man; I don't want to force myself on you, but you've been awfully decent to me. Don't be alarmed, but to tell you the honest truth my nerves are in such a state that I'm afraid to be alone. If a poor neurasthenic won't bore you too much I wish you'd let me tag you till my train leaves tonight. I promise not to be a nuisance and if it becomes unbearable, just chuck me!"

They not only breakfasted together, but after motoring through the parks they spent an hour at the art institute and then Archie acted as host at luncheon. The fear of being accosted by an acquaintance made him nervous, and his anxiety seemed to be shared by Congdon, who chose an eating place unfrequented by travelers. By this time Archie was fully committed to the further journey into Michigan and contributed his half to the purchase of a stateroom for the trip. 247

"I'm using you; you can see that I'm using you, making a valet of you, dragging you into the wilderness!" exclaimed Congdon. "But I always was a selfish whelp."

He made the confession with a grim smile, and an impatient sweep of his free arm as though brushing himself out of existence.

Archie's intimate friends were few; men thought him difficult, or looked upon him as an invalid to be left to his own devices; and yet he felt that he had known Putney Congdon for years.

On a bench in Grant Park Congdon swung himself into a confidential attitude.

"Life's the devil's own business," he said with a deep sigh. "I've got to a place where I don't care what happens—everything black anywhere I look. I've been trying for the past four or five years to do things God Almighty never intended me to do. I was happily married; two beautiful children; none finer,—but I'll shorten up the story so you can see what a monkey fate has made of me. My father's a crank, a genius in his way, but decidedly eccentric. My mother died when I was a youngster and as I was an only child father tried all sorts of schemes of educating me, whimsical notions, one after another. The result was I've never got a look in anywhere; unfitted for everything. After I married he still tried to hold the rein on me, wanted to put me into businesses I hated and kept meddling with my domestic affairs. All this made me weak and irresolute. I have a mechanical turn—not a strong bent but the only thing that ever tugged at me very hard. Almost made some important inventions, but only almost. About the time I'd get a good start father would shoot me off into something else, and if I refused he'd cut off my allowance. Never set me up for myself; keeps me dependent on his bounty. Humiliating; positively humiliating!" 248

"I can imagine so," Archie agreed. He had now got the explanation of the blue prints in the Bailey Harbor house and found himself deeply interested in Congdon's recital.

"Well, sir, I was about to offer myself as exhibit *A* on a slab in the nearest morgue," Congdon continued, "when I met a young woman who *seemed* to understand me, and right there's where I made the greatest mistake of my life. It was last spring when that happened. Talk about plausibility, Comly! The word never had any meaning until that girl came along. She made a fool of me; that's the short of it. I took her into dinner at the house of some friends right here in Chicago—I lived here about a month trying to learn a patent medicine business father had gone into. The thing was a fake; a ghastly imposition on the public. Such things have a weird fascination for father; it's simply an obsession, for he doesn't need the money."

He was wandering into a description of various other dubious businesses that had attracted Eliphalet Congdon when Archie, nervously twisting a folded newspaper, brought him back to the girl who had played so mischievous a part in his life.

"Oh yes! Well, I was ready to jump at anything and she diagnosed my case with marvelous penetration. Really, Comly, it was staggering! She said I faced life with the soul of a coward; she'd got an inkling, I suppose, of my father's freakishness and injustice; and she told me I lacked assurance and initiative. Suggested that I go armed and shoot any one who stepped on my toes. All this with a laugh, of course; but nevertheless I felt that she really meant it. She said a man can do anything he really determines to do; it's up to him. She recited a piece of verse to the effect that a man fears his fate too much if he won't put his life to the test. I was fool enough to believe it. I tried to follow her advice. It ended in my having a row with my father that beat all the other rows I ever had with him and he turned against my wife—said she was trying to estrange us. And when I ran away to escape from the nasty mess he sent her telegrams in my name threatening to kidnap the children and he did in fact kidnap my little daughter. Snatched her away from her mother and carried her out to one of his farms in Ohio. But my wife's a great woman, Comly; one of the dearest, bravest women in the world. She's played a clever trick on the old gentleman and got the child back again and I'm damned glad of it. I got a message that the little girl's up in Michigan, so that's really where I'm headed for. I don't dare believe that *she* sent me the message, but I hope to God she did. That's the way things have gone with me ever since I listened to that girl. Everything all upside down. She's a siren; a dangerous character; I ought to have known better!" 249

"She's beautiful, I suppose," Archie ventured, fanning himself with his hat.

"Devilishly handsome!" Congdon exclaimed.

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Archie had suffered a blow but he was meeting it bravely. Having believed that Isabel had given him this same advice quite spontaneously, it was with a shock that he realized that she had offered it in similar terms to Congdon. There was no question as to the identity of the girl who had bidden Congdon plant his back to the wall and defy the world; no one but Isabel would ever have done that.

"And this young woman," Archie asked after a long glance at the lake, "pardon me if I ask whether she affected you in a sentimental way? Did you well, er—"

"If you mean am I in love with her," began Congdon, "I believe I can say honestly that it hardly amounts to that. And yet she made a curious impression on me. You know how it is, Comly! A man may love his wife with all his heart and soul and he may mean to be awfully square with her; and yet there may be a face or a voice now and then that will, well, you know, make him wobble a little. I did think about that girl a lot; it was damned funny how I thought of her. She'd pop up in my mind when I had absolutely willed that I would never think of her again. And yet the more I resolved to get her out of my mind the more stubbornly she'd keep coming into my thoughts.

"I suppose in a way it was my pride; I hated to think that a girl as pretty and clever and attractive as she is thought me a contemptible, slinking coward. We all want to be heroes to women; it's one of the damned weaknesses of our sex, Comly. I'd ceased to be a hero to my wife, who's the gentlest and most long suffering woman alive, but this other woman rather gave me hope that I might qualify for the finals in *her* eyes. Now, Comly, I see that you're a steady-going fellow; never thrown off your balance; not a chap to be made a fool of by a girl who amuses herself at your expense at a dinner party. I wish you'd tell me frankly just what you think of this?"

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"I'd say," replied Archie, attempting to meet this demand with a philosophic air, "I'd say that the girl probably played the game on every man she thought she could impose on. Merely a part of her social technique; a stunt, so to speak, which she'd found would make us weak males sit up and take notice. If I were you I'd clean forget the whole business; on the other hand there's the suspicion that you appealed to her strongly, a girlish fancy, perhaps, and she thought you were the sort of fellow that would be hit harder if she roused you to action. I tell you, Congdon, women are curious creatures. Just when you think you've got your hand on a pretty bird she flutters away and sings merrily in another part of the wood."

"Right!" ejaculated Congdon. "By George, that expresses it exactly!"

"About your child, up there in Michigan," said Archie, pleased that he was scoring as a man of wisdom, "it's wholly possible that your wife sent you the wire as an approach to a reconciliation."

"Oh, Lord, no! You don't know my wife, Comly. You see I got answers to the telegrams father sent her in my name and she hit right back at me! Don't you believe that she's coaxing me to come back to her. And here's the message I got out there in Ohio that caused me to jump for the train."

He produced from his pocket a crumpled telegram which read:

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Your daughter is in safe hands at Huddleston, Michigan. Proceed to that point with serenity and contemplate the stars with a tranquil spirit.

This was so clearly the Governor's work that Archie found it difficult to refrain from laughing.

"My wife," Congdon continued, "would never send a message like that; you may be sure of it. You may think it queer that I set off, when I was ill and not feeling up to the trip, on the strength of a message like that. But ever since that girl told me I oughtn't to hesitate when I heard the bugle I can't resist the temptation to act on the spur of the moment. I'm a fool, I suppose. Tell me I'm a fool, Comly."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. There's always the chance that the girl had sized you up right and gave you sound advice. Don't answer if you don't want to, but have you really done anything, anything you wouldn't have done if that girl hadn't told you to step on the world a little harder?"

Congdon's free hand worked convulsively; he bent closer to Archie and whispered:

"I've killed a man!"

"You murdered a man!" Archie gasped.

"Not a question about it, my dear fellow! It was up at my house on the Maine shore. After father had driven my wife away I went there to look at the ruins of my home. A sentimental pilgrimage, feeling that I'd made a mess of everything and mighty blue. I was mooning through the house when I ran into a burglar. The scoundrel had gone to bed in the guest room. I was scared to death when I opened the door and spotted him but I thought of that girl's advice and pulled my gun and shot him. Couldn't have missed the fellow across a bedroom. As I ran down the stairway he took a shot at me; that's what's the matter with my shoulder. I got up to Portland and a doctor I know there fixed me up and kept the thing dark. I passed at the hospital as the victim of a pistol wound accidentally inflicted."

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"Well, I'd say you're out of it easy. Of course you didn't kill him or he wouldn't have been able to

wound you. I congratulate you on your escape!"

"Thanks, Comly; but you see he didn't die immediately, but crawled off and breathed his life out in some lonely place. It's horrible! Of course he was a thief and had no business in the house; but as I sit here on this park bench I'm a murderer! I never got beyond the headlines in the Portland papers; simply couldn't bear it and haven't dared look at a newspaper since. I shot a poor devil who had quite as much right to live as I have. The thing will hang over me till I die! I don't know just why I am confiding in you, but something tells me that you can look at the thing straight. If you say I ought to go to Maine and surrender myself and tell what I know about the shooting of that man I'll do it."

"Most certainly not!" cried Archie with mournful recollection of his own speculations on the same point in the hours when he believed that he himself was responsible for Hoky's death. The emotional strain of the talk was telling on him. He had never expected to hear from Congdon's lips the story of their duel at Bailey Harbor. Congdon had no idea that he had fired not at a man but at a reflection in a mirror; and it was a question whether common decency didn't demand that he set Congdon straight. Congdon in all likelihood wouldn't believe him. Nobody would believe such a story! And certainly if he should tell all he knew of the Congdons and Isabel, and wind up by acknowledging that it was he who had been in the Bailey Harbor house on the night of the shooting, Congdon would probably be so frightened that he would run away in terror to seek police protection.

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Congdon, unaware of his companion's perturbation, rose and suggested a walk to freshen them up before train time.

"I thank God I fell in with you," he said with feeling. "Just talking to you has helped me a whole lot!"

Archie, his guilt heavy upon him, walked up Michigan Avenue beside the man he had shot.

CHAPTER SIX

255

I

They breathed deep of the tonic air of the North as they left the sleeper. Huddleston was a forlorn village with one street that displayed a single line of buildings against a background of saw mill and sawdust. An unpainted structure bearing the inscription, "Grand Hotel; Fishermen's Resort" presented a picture of complete desolation to the travelers. The further arm of the bay was a strip of green in the distance.

A fisherman posed in monumental majesty on a weatherbeaten pile of lumber on the wharf was the only human being in sight on the water side of the town. Just as the train pulled out he jerked up his pole, flinging a perch high in air and catching it with a yell of delight. Archie sighed with relief as the fisherman, now standing erect to unhook the perch, turned toward them. It was the Governor, rakishly trigged out in knickerbockers, with a cap smartly tilted over one ear and a scarf snapping about his face in the lively wind.

"This looks like the end of the world," Congdon remarked dejectedly as they walked toward the hotel. "I was a fool to come here and drag you along."

"Don't worry about me," said Archie cheerfully. "We'll make a lark of it. Your daughter's probably around here somewhere. We'll lay low and see what turns up."

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A man emerged from the hotel and crossed the street. Archie identified him at once as Red Leary, to whom the Governor had delivered the stolen money at Walker's farm. Leary made no sign of ever having seen Archie before but picked up the luggage and led the way to the hotel. Archie's admiration for the Governor soared to new heights at this manifestation of the thoroughness of his preparations. Something had been said at Walker's about Leary's retirement to northern Michigan, but at that time Huddleston had not, he was sure, figured in the Governor's plans. Leary walked round the counter and turned the register for their signatures.

"We jes' opened the house last week; she's been shet up quite a spell but they're goin' t' open the mill ag'in. Jest now there ain't a soul in town. Those houses and the store are boarded up tight. The railroad agent stays here to run the water tank and sleeps in the station. Yep; one other gent's registered." He placed his finger on "Reginald Heber Saulsbury" in the Governor's flowing autograph. "All the way from New York. I guess you'll find him all right. Blew in a couple of days ago; says he come out here seekin' peace for his soul; them's his very words."

"I judge there's a large surplus of soul stuff hereabouts," remarked Congdon. "By the way, you haven't seen anything of a little girl about here, have you—a child of eleven?"

"Not one of 'em but a whole passel," replied Leary lifting his head after scrawling the numbers

of the rooms against their names. "They's a camp o' city girls across the bay. The day I got here a whole trainload of 'em was hauled up from Chicago. Y' never saw such a lively bunch. And yestiddy I was over that way lookin' up fishin' places to recommend to our guests and saw the whole outfit swimmin'. A cute lot o' youngsters. Mos' likely th' camp'll bring considerable business to the hotel; folks comin' up to visit their kids."

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"Well, I suppose that's the trick," said Congdon as Leary started upstairs with their bags. "Edith has been put in a camp; her mother's work, of course. Not a bad idea. All I want to be sure of is that the child's in good hands. This is a beastly hole but I guess we can make out for a day or two and I'll see if I can get a glimpse of Edith."

"Oh, we'll have to study the situation a little," Archie answered. "I don't question your daughter's all right. We can make out here for a few days anyhow."

The house had been renovated and their rooms were better than the grim exterior promised.

"There'll be dinner at twelve," said Leary; "and if you want to try your hand at trollin' for pickerel I'll fix you up later in the afternoon. Mr. Saulsbury's been snatchin' up perch all mornin'. I'm tired out jest from settin' on the porch and watchin' 'im."

Mrs. Leary, in spite of the fact disclosed by the Governor at Walker's, that she had conducted a fence in Chicago and was prone to view precious stones with a covetous eye, bore all the marks of respectability. She entered the dining-room briskly, her motherly face heated from the range, and placed a large platter of fried chicken on the table.

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"Jes' help yerselves, gents. We've hardly got goin' yet but I got a waitress on the way from Chicago and she'll spare me some steps."

"Ah!" ejaculated the Governor, pausing dramatically in the door and eyeing the newly arrived guests as though their presence filled him with astonishment. He bowed to them and remarked upon the fineness of the day.

"I guess you folks'll get acquainted without bein' introduced," observed Mrs. Leary. "It's always nicer in a summer resort when folks get together sociable-like. You wanted radishes, Mr. Saulsbury, and you'll notice I got 'em fer you."

"Madam," said the Governor in his most elaborate manner, "I knew you at once for a woman of kind heart! I am not in the least surprised to find myself in the presence of the noblest radishes I have ever seen."

In a moment more he had introduced himself to Archie and Congdon. He had spent a jolly morning, he announced. Not in years had he enjoyed himself so hugely. He delivered a lecture on fish only to celebrate in sonorous periods the humble perch, scorned by epicures. It was the most delectable of all the finny genus, superior even to the pompano. Congdon, first irritated by the Governor's volubility, was soon laughing at his whimsical speeches and by the time they moved to the narrow veranda to smoke he was both puzzled and amused. Archie had been with the Governor so constantly and was so familiar with his tangential mental processes that he was glad of an opportunity to watch the effect of his patter upon a man of his own world. It was clear that the Governor was at pains to make himself agreeable to Congdon. He touched upon public affairs, sensibly and convincingly, then turned handsprings through the arts and sciences.

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"Rather odd my being here," he rippled on; "and I need hardly say that it's a pleasure to meet on this bleak shore two gentlemen of your caliber. I told a friend of mine in Chicago that I was enormously fed up with cities and the general human pressure and wanted to go to the most God-forsaken spot in America. And he answered without a moment's hesitation that Huddleston, Michigan, would satisfy my loftiest ideal of godforsakenness. He had been here straightening up some land titles and camped out for a week with a surveyor and ate out of a skillet. He's one of these fussy fellows who sends an order of chops back to a club kitchen a dozen times before he's satisfied,—you know the type. He's probably laughing himself to death right now thinking how miserable I am. But I refuse to be bored; never in my life have I been bored! Even the sawdust pyramids and the stumps are magnificent in their desolation. I feel it in my bones that something extraordinary is going to happen. Something's got to happen or the lake will rise in one vast wave and destroy Huddleston. I hope you gentlemen share my feeling that our meeting has been ordered by the gods and that we shall stand or fall together."

"If we've got to put the responsibility somewhere the gods may have it," laughed Congdon. "I'm a cripple, as you see, but as Comly and I haven't a thing to do we'll give you a day or two to kick up some excitement. It may entertain you to know that my coming here was due to an anonymous telegram."

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"Excellent! I'm delighted to know that there's some of the old romantic spirit left in the world! It pleases me clear through to meet a man who will act on an anonymous telegram and not ring up the police to ask their stupid advice."

With a wave of the hand he left them, declaring it to be his purpose to spend the afternoon in the woods.

"What do you make of that chap?" Congdon asked as the Governor strolled away, swinging a stick, and disappeared at the end of the street.

"He talks like a nonsense book," Archie replied. "I hope he won't become a nuisance!"

"A cheerful soul, I should call him. He's likely to make the place more tolerable."

When Congdon pleaded weariness Archie put him to bed and then sauntered away, following a

dirt road that wound through the timber. In a little while he came upon the Governor lying with his back against a tree, reading Horace.

"You arrive most opportunely!" he said, without lifting his eyes from the book. "I was pining for some one to read this ode to."

He not only read the ode but expounded it, dwelling upon felicities that had eluded him before. With countless questions crying for answer Archie was obliged to feign interest in the poem until the Governor thrust the book into his pocket with a sigh and led the way to the beach.

"Well, you landed him here!" he remarked, seating himself on a log and producing his pipe. "Or did he bring you? One would think you were old chums to see you together. Not a bad fellow, I should say."

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"He's really a good sort," said Archie; "but I'll tell you the whole story."

The Governor listened placidly, interrupting only when Archie repeated what Congdon had said of Isabel.

"A wonderful girl!" he ejaculated. "Makes it her business to tease the world along. Laughing in her sleeve all the time. I must say it's odd that both you and Congdon should be the victims of her wiles. My burdens are heavier than I knew, for I've got to get you both out of your scrapes."

"You don't seem to appreciate how horrible I felt when I found myself liking that fellow. To say I was embarrassed doesn't express it! And I nearly gave myself away when he told me he'd killed a man, your friend Hoky, you know. I nearly confessed all I knew of that business just to ease the poor chap's mind."

"But you didn't, Archie! You couldn't have done anything so foolish. My tutoring hasn't been wholly wasted on you, after all. You managed the trip admirably; I haven't a point to criticize; but now to get down to brass tacks. What you learned of old Eliphalet Congdon's meddlesomeness jibes exactly with what I know of his character. Let me show you something, Archie."

He walked out upon the gravelly shore and pointed through the wide-flung arms of the bay.

"Do you see a little blur of smoke out yonder in the open lake? That's the *Arthur B. Grover* proceeding under her own steam, with all the dignity of a transatlantic liner. I took up my option and the bloomin' thing is mine. It's got a crew of the smartest crooks in all America. Men of genius in the field of felony, and a few of them talented in other lines. One chap a navigator, able to sail a ship round the Horn, and yet he prefers to play the shell game at rural fairs. And Perky's on board with old Eliphalet Congdon! Yes, sir; the old boy is right there as safe as King Arthur when the dark barge bore him away to the sound of wailing. Perky sent me a wire from Mackinac this morning saying that all is well on our frigate. They have orders to hang around out there till I signal them to come in. But, my dear Archie—"

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He refilled his pipe and when he had it going to his satisfaction waved his arm toward the camp.

"There's a queer business going on over there. Ruth told me at Rochester that when I brought Edith up here I'd better leave the train at Calderville, the first station south of Huddleston, and drive to Heart o' Dreams Camp through the woods. Well, the road over there was only a trail and I had a hard job getting through, but made it all right. Ruth and Isabel were delighted with our success. That's all easy. But those girls are in trouble."

"Well, hurry on!" said Archie, sitting up straight.

"Oh, that cousin of Isabel's is not a myth at all as I rather thought he might be; and that money may be buried over there somewhere, you know. And the cousin's laying himself out to annoy the camp in every way possible, even going the length of trying to starve 'em out. There's a stack of supplies at the Huddleston station that they can't move."

"You forget," cried Archie excitedly, "that there are laws even in the wilderness! If that fellow's looking for trouble all we've got to do is to telephone for the sheriff and land him in jail. The jails up in this neck of woods are probably highly uncomfortable."

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"I grant all that," said the Governor sprawling at ease. "But the notoriety of the thing would kill the camp. Once it got into the newspapers every father and mother who has a child out yonder would go right up in the air. It would make a great first page story—buried treasure—a war for hidden gold centered about a girls' camp. That whole yarn about the haughty southerner planting his money in safe territory till he saw which way the cat jumped is fruity stuff for our special correspondent on the spot. No, Archie; ladies of quality like our Ruth and Isabel must be protected from vulgar publicity, and we don't want any sheriffs or newspaper reporters nosing around. It's up to you and me to smooth out their troubles without resorting to bothersome legal apparatus. The camp has no telephone; the road round to that peninsula is all but inaccessible. They have a launch they're in the habit of using to carry stuff across from Huddleston, but Mr. Richard Carey blocks the way! I got all this when I was delivering Edith over there at the back door. And Carey is camped at the land entrance, with an army of lumberjacks to help him maintain a blockade. On my way out I ran the gantlet, and if you think Carey is only fooling about this buried treasure business, gaze on this!"

He took off his cap and pointed to a hole through the baggy top.

"A bullet, Archie, fired from ambush with murderous intent."

"But she said her cousin was in love with her! It can't be possible that he's resorting to violence to drive her off land that belongs to her, with the idea that she'll meet him at the altar

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afterwards."

"There's no loving touch in that bullet hole! Heart o' Dreams Camp is in danger as long as that lunatic runs loose. They can't communicate with Huddleston or Calderville in their launch because Carey patrols the shore. It's a siege, Archie, and they're going to be hard put for provisions in another day or two."

"Then it's our duty to relieve the beleaguered garrison?"

"Nothing less than that! When I took Edith over to Heart o' Dreams, Isabel and Ruth wouldn't let me stay long enough to plan anything. They were pretty anxious, of course, with Carey trying to smoke them out; and they were afraid Putney would try to take Edith away from them. But from what you say it's only Eliphalet who's made the trouble and we don't need to fear anything from Putney. If it comes to a showdown I rather think he'll play with us. You're sure he doesn't suspect that Isabel's the head of Heart o' Dreams?"

"He hasn't the ghost of an idea of it. I tell you his spirit's broken anyhow. With Hoky's murder on his mind and the general muddle of his family affairs he doesn't care much which way the wind blows."

"That man needs occupation and we may find some way of using him. He looks as though he had red blood in him; a fighter if he was thoroughly aroused. If he knew the trick I've played on his father I guess that would tickle him considerably. The idea of old Eliphalet with his millions cruising the lakes with a band of the most accomplished outlaws in America is funny, Archie; real comedy I should call it. He's a prisoner on the *Arthur B. Grover*, only he doesn't know it. I mobilized that outfit thinking we might need some help up here and incidentally to keep Eliphalet where I could put my hand on him; but the whole thing's complicated, Archie. It's far more of a mess than I expected."

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He found a smooth patch of sand and with a stick drew a number of diagrams, carefully effacing them after they had served his purpose.

"Humph! This is no time for weakening! Over there, Archie,"—he pointed toward Heart o' Dreams—"are the two finest women in the world. We're going to stand by them no matter whose head gets cracked."

He spoke lightly, but his brow clouded. It was evident that something of unhappy augury had been, revealed in his last appeal to the heavens.

"I want to be alone for a while," he said brusquely, "I'll turn up at supper time."

II

At the supper table a new direction was given to Archie's thoughts, for a time at least. Fortunately his nerves had grown accustomed to shocks and he was only dazed now by the intrusion of a new figure on the scene. The Governor and Congdon were already at the table when he reached the dining-room. Mrs. Leary had referred to an assistant she was expecting on the afternoon train, and as Archie appeared at the door a neatly attired waitress walked sedately before him to his place.

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Sally Walker had faded in a long perspective of crowding memories. He never expected to see Sally again, but if the girl who stood by his chair was not Sally she was her twin. He sank into his seat, watching her out of the corner of his eye as she passed through the swing door with a flutter of her snowy apron. He replied feebly to the Governor's bantering salutation and nervously played with his fork. The Governor was soaring and Archie's bewilderment was evidently affording him secret delight.

Sally was not merely a past mistress of dissimulation; she was the undisputed reigning queen in that realm. She served the table with a strictly professional air, in no way betraying the fact that two of the guests had lately enjoyed the hospitality of her father's house or that she had beguiled one of them by the grossest misrepresentations to assist her to elope.

"There's custard and apple," she recited finally, "or you may have wheat cakes with syrup," and as Archie covertly met her eyes she winked, a wink not sly or vulgar but a wink expressive of mischief on a holiday and quite content with itself.

He was enormously curious to know how she had reached Huddleston and what her adventures had been on the way—matters as to which the suave Governor was no doubt fully informed, though he showed no disposition to disclose them.

For a gentleman, the guest of an inn, to lurk round the kitchen door waiting for a chance to address a waitress is wholly undignified, but Archie was doing this very thing the moment he could escape from the Governor and Congdon. Mrs. Leary was upstairs preparing additional rooms against the chance of further arrivals and Sally was alone in the kitchen.

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"Well, I've got the same old job," she remarked carelessly, as Archie paused uncertainly on the threshold. "You're a pay guest here and I can't let you swing a towel, so if you want to talk take a chair on the side lines."

Sally was as handsome as ever; he had not been mistaken in thinking her a very handsome and attractive girl with a distinct charm. It seemed æons ago that he had kissed her; in fact it was almost unbelievable that he had ever kissed so radiant a being. She received him as an old friend, without a trace of embarrassment. Her ease put him at serious disadvantage. He was at

a loss to know how to impress upon her the heinousness of the deceit she had practised upon him.

"Sally," he began in a tone that he meant to be sternly paternal, "I hope you realize that you treated me very shabbily up there at your father's. You not only behaved disgracefully, but you threw away your life, and the bright promise of your future. I was very stupid to fall into your trap. If things go wrong with you I shall always blame myself. And I don't see any chance for happiness for you unless you change your ways."

She deliberately concluded the drying of a plate, put it down, and threw the towel aside.

"Look here," she began, folding her arms and walking slowly toward him; "I'm not the worst girl in the world and I'm far from being the best. I lied to you and it was a nasty trick; but I had to get away from that farm; I simply couldn't stand it any longer. And I'd worried a lot about being the daughter of a crook; I honestly had. I always knew it would come out in me some way, and I thought the sooner the better. I just had to do some rotten thing to satisfy myself as to how it feels. You can understand that, can't you?"

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"I think I can, Sally," he stammered. "But—"

"There's no butting about it! I just had to try it once, and you came along just when I needed you. Yes, sir; I took advantage of you because I saw you were a gentleman and sympathetic and full of that chivalry stuff; and I played on your feelings and made you the little goat. It wasn't nice of me."

"It certainly approached the unpardonable, Sally. And you not only ruined your own life but nearly caused me to lose my best friend. I'm still pretty sore about that. But what hurt me most was that you sacrificed your opportunity to be somebody in the world, to be a noble, useful woman. You linked yourself for life to a slinking, scoundrelly thief!"

Sally laughed mockingly. Then, her hands on her hips, she regarded him pityingly.

"You poor goose! You sure didn't get my number right! If you thought I was going to be tied up for the rest of my days with a miserable little wretch like Pete Barney you certainly had me wrong. I just had to turn a few handsprings, and you needn't tell me how disgusted you are when I say that all I wanted was to know how it feels to lie and steal."

"Yes; you stole some money from your father; that was very wrong, Sally."

"Say, you make me tired! What I borrowed from pop I'll pay back. The low-down thing I did was to take that string of diamonds away from Barney. He slipped 'em to me that night as we were on the way to the preacher's to get married. Married! Do you think I really wanted to marry that man! Do you think I *am* married to him now? Why, I gave him the slip at the first station after I kissed you good-by and I haven't seen him since. And I never intend to see him again! I ducked round till I got to a place on the underground railroad I knew about from pop; and they took good care of me. Then I slid to Petoskey where the Learys were starting up their refreshment shop and was just learning how to make soft drinks look wicked when the Governor jerked a wire to Red and that grand old girl his wife to come here and open up this moldy old joint. My folks know where I am now and as soon as they coax me a little I'll go home and be a nice little girl for the rest of my life."

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"But the diamonds—"

"Don't be so tragic or I'll burst out crying! I've got the sparklers hidden safe; and I'm going to get the Governor to help make a deal to give 'em back to the owner if he won't prosecute Barney. I wouldn't want that man, even if he's only my husband on paper, to go over the road on my account. I'm satisfied with my kick-up and you needn't be afraid I'll break any more Commandments."

"Where's Barney now?" demanded Archie suspiciously.

"In jail in Buffalo, if you must know! They pinched him on an old case, so you needn't blame me. I tell you I'm clear done with him. Love that worm! He just gave me an excuse to let my blacksheep blood ripple a little and it's all over now. And I'm sorry I played you for a sucker; honest I am. You gave me a lot of money for a wedding present and as the wedding doesn't count I'm going to give it back. You'll find it tucked away in your collar-box in the top drawer of your bureau. I guess that's about all, so you can trot back to the front of the house."

270

With a finality that closed discussion she fell energetically upon the dishes, and he left her to join the Governor and Congdon. His enlightenment as to the complexity of human nature was proceeding. Sally was wonderful, astonishing, baffling. He did not question that this time she had told him the truth. He was touched by her confession that her escapade was merely an experiment to test her blood for inherited evil. There was an enormous pathos in this; Sally needed help and guidance. He would discuss the matter with the Governor the moment they had disposed of their more urgent affairs.

III

At nine when Congdon announced his intention of going to bed Archie assisted him as usual.

"This air's setting me up," said Putney, as Archie inspected the crippled shoulder. "The doctor told me to begin exercising that arm as soon as the soreness left it. How does the wound look?"

"Like a vaccination mark in the wrong place; that's all. You certainly had a close call, old man. Only a few inches lower and it would have pierced your heart."

In their hours together Archie had never been able to free his mind of the disagreeable fact that he had so nearly killed Congdon; and he was beset now by the thought that sooner or later he must confess his culpability in the Bailey Harbor shooting. Congdon was accepting him at face value, and the thing wasn't square. Every time he touched the injured shoulder his conscience pricked him. 271

"I've got to tell Congdon I shot him and that he was in no way responsible for Hoky's death," he announced determinedly to the Governor, whom he found pacing the street in front of the hotel.

"Of course you'll tell him, but not yet. I'm mistaken in the man if he acts ugly about it. The proper way to tell a man you've tried to kill him and that he's carrying the scar of your bullet is to mention it incidentally, when you're walking home from church with him, or allowing him to sign the check for your lunch. Seriously, it was merely a deplorable error on both sides and I believe he'll see it that way. But until we get some other things cleared up we'll let him think he killed Hoky, just to keep him humble. And now that he's off the invalid list we'll let him share some of the little adventures that lie before us. Tonight we've got a matter on hand that's better done by ourselves. If you think he's safe for a few hours we'll go ahead."

He stopped on the way to the wood-bordered shore and produced from a fence corner an electric lamp and two revolvers.

"Stick one of these in your pocket. We're not going to add to our crimes if we can help it, but I owe somebody a shot for that nip in my cap."

A stiff wind from the open lake was whipping up battalions of whitecaps that danced eerily in the starlight. At a point half a mile from the village the Governor flashed his lamp along a bank that hung over the beach and found a canoe and a row boat hidden in a thicket. 272

"We're all fixed. Good old Leary planted these things for us while we were at supper."

He gave the whistle Archie remembered from his first encounter with the Governor, and in a moment Leary stood beside them.

They had carried the boats to the water's edge when the Governor suddenly stood erect. The monotonous tum tum of a gasoline engine was borne to them out of the darkness.

"Carey has a boat of some power," the Governor remarked, "and as he carries no lights we've got to take the chance of sneaking round him or getting run down. We must impress it on Ruth and Isabel that they're not to attempt to run the blockade. Then we've got to get rid of Carey; put him clean out of business. You and Red take the row boat and trail me; I'll scout ahead with the canoe. If one of us gets smashed the other will pick up the casualties."

The canoe shot forward, the Governor driving the paddle with a practised hand. The row boat followed, Leary at the oars and Archie serving him as pilot. As they moved steadily toward the middle of the bay they marked more and more clearly the passage of the launch as it patrolled the farther shore.

Leary pulled a strong stroke and Archie was obliged to check him from time to time to avoid collision with the Governor's craft. At intervals passing clouds dimmed the star-glow and in one of these periods a dull bump ahead gave Archie a fright.

"Steady! I'll be all right in a moment!" the Governor called reassuringly. 273

He had run into a log that lay across his path and the canoe had attempted to jump it. When he reported himself free they went ahead alert for further manifestations from the launch, which for some time had given no hint of its position.

They were two-thirds of the way across the bay when the Governor gave the signal to stop and they drew together for a conference.

"They must be keeping watch," said Archie calling attention to lights on the shore. "If we could land without frightening the girls to death—"

The Governor whistled through his teeth. Somewhere to the left of them as they lay fronting the camp, a sharp blow was struck upon metal. It was repeated fitfully for several minutes.

"It's Carey tinkering his engine. He's been playing possum off there."

The launch was so near that they heard the waves slapping its sides. Archie and Leary gripped the canoe tight while the Governor listened for any indications of a change in Carey's position.

Suddenly Leary sprang up in the tossing boat.

"Look ahead!" he exclaimed, leveling his arm at a shadow that darted out of the darkness and passed between them and the launch. The Governor saw it and stifled a cry of dismay.

"Two women in a canoe! They're going to run for it!"

"They are fools!" growled Leary settling himself to the oars and swinging the boat round.

The Governor had already turned the canoe and was furiously plying his paddle. A lantern shot its beams from the phantom craft, but the light vanished immediately. 274

"There goes his engine," the Governor called as he took the lead. "He spotted that light and will try to run them down."

Isabel and Ruth, attempting to elude Carey's blockade and seek help at Huddleston, were

forcing a crisis that might at any minute result in disaster. It was close upon midnight, and there was no help to be had from either shore. A fierce anger surged through Archie's heart. There could have been no safer place to commit murder than the quiet bay at the dead of night. Ultimately the bodies would be washed up; there would be the usual inquiries and a report of accidental drowning.

It was incredible that Carey would attempt to run down two women on the dark bay and it was apparently his intention to circle round them and drive them back to the camp. Neither the canoe of the adventurous women nor the launch was visible from the row boat, though the engine's rapid pulsations indicated the line of Carey's pursuit. To shout to the daring women that help was at hand would only alarm them, and Archie crouched in the bow, peering ahead for the silhouette of the Governor as his canoe rose on the waves.

The launch executed a wide half-circle, stopped and retraced its course. Leary, refusing to relinquish the oars, swore between strokes, the object of his maledictions being the invisible Carey, whom he consigned to the bottom of the lake in phrases that struck Archie as singularly felicitous. In spite of their steady advance and the frequent turns and twists of the launch, the canoe and row boat seemed to approach no nearer to the enemy. There was no doubt but that Carey knew a craft of some kind had put off from the camp and he was determined to intercept it; but he was still unconscious of the presence in the bay of the three men from Huddleston. 275

The Governor called to Archie to stop following and move in the direction of the town, independently of his own movements, thus broadening the surface they were covering with a view to succoring the canoe. As though with malevolent delight in the fear he was causing, Carey rapidly changed the course of the launch, urging it backward and forward with a resulting wild agitation of the waters. In one of these evolutions it passed within oar's length of the row boat.

"Keep on swearing!" cried Archie. "He's not a man; he's the devil!"

The launch passed again, like a dark bird skimming the water, and he took off his shoes and threw aside his coat.

"If that blackguard keeps this up we may have to swim for it! Give me the oars; I want to warm up!"

They were changing positions when the launch, executing another of its erratic evolutions, again swept by. A second later they were startled by a crash followed by screams and cries for help. Leary whistled shrilly to attract the Governor's attention and bent to the oars.

Carey shut off his power the moment he struck the canoe, whether in sudden alarm at the success of his design or in the hope of picking up the victims of his animosity was a question Archie left for a more tranquil hour's speculation. A shout from the Governor announced that he was hurrying toward the scene of the collision. 276

The launch, running full speed, had struck hard and it was sheer good luck that the camp canoe had not been cut in two and the occupants killed. The drumming of the engine had ceased but a searchlight sweeping the water indicated the launch's position. The beam fell for a moment upon the Governor, paddling madly; another sweep of the light disclosed two heads bobbing on the waves some distance away from him.

"Bear left!" cried Leary, seizing an oar. "Slow down! Stop!"

Archie backed water and the bow sprung high as Leary plunged into the bay.

The light playing upon the scene from the launch fell in turn upon the struggling women, the Governor and Leary swimming toward them, and Archie steadying the row boat ready to aid in the rescue. The appearance of unknown men evidently frightened Carey, for he turned off his light and retreated toward the inner recesses of the bay.

The rescuers were now dependent upon sound and the starlight in the urgent business of marking the position of the young women. A hand grasped Archie's trailing oar and in a moment with Leary's assistance he had gotten one of the women into the boat. The men now redoubled their efforts to find the second victim of the catastrophe, shouting to keep track of one another and to hearten the girl who was somewhere battling for her life.

A faint cry, hardly distinguishable above the commotion of the waves, caught Archie's ear and he jumped into the water and swam toward it. In making a stroke his arm fell upon the side of the overturned canoe. A pitiful little whimper startled him; he touched a face and his fingers caught in a woman's hair. The canoe still retained enough buoyancy to support him, and his lusty cries brought the Governor to his side, followed an instant later by Leary, laboriously pushing the boat before him. 277

They worked in silence save for the sharp commands of the Governor. The boat had to be balanced against the lifting of the second figure over the side, and Leary managed this, while Archie and the Governor, after twice failing, with a supreme effort, got the second girl aboard.

Leary was running the ray of an electric lamp over the faces of the two young women when one of them sat up and muttered in a choking, frightened tone, "Oh, Isabel!" Whereupon she began to laugh hysterically.

"Thank God Ruth is safe!" cried the Governor. "But Isabel—?"

"They were both taking care of themselves when we picked them up," said Archie, holding to the side of the boat. "We haven't a case of drowning to deal with."

"We'll make for the camp as fast as possible. I'll take the oars," said the Governor. "You and Leary follow in my canoe."

The Governor sent the boat swiftly toward the camp with Archie and Leary close behind. Ruth, protesting that she was only chilled by her ducking, vigorously manipulated the arms of her prostrate companion. When she hailed the shore a lantern flashed in answer and the camp doctor and Isabel's mother met them at the landing. They had heard the crash of the collision and the reassuring cries that had announced the rescue.

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"Lungs all clear; a case of exhaustion or shock," announced the doctor crisply, and Archie formed a high opinion of her as a capable person whom he should always remember gratefully.

Ruth declared that she was able to walk but Isabel became the object of their immediate concern. She lay in the boat muttering incoherently. Archie gathered her up in his arms and bore her to the hospital tent where a nurse awaited them.

"You gentlemen must go at once to the bath house on the shore," ordered the doctor with a brisk professional air. "Take one of these lanterns, and strip and rub yourselves dry. Hot coffee will be sent you shortly. As there isn't a man on the place we can't offer you dry clothing, but if you need medical attention let me know."

The tent flap fell.

"We're lucky devils," said the Governor, as they wrung the water from their clothes in the bath house. "If we hadn't been just where we were those girls would have drowned. In their skirts they couldn't have made the shore. Lucky I say!"

"We have some unfinished business," remarked Archie. "We're going to take up this little matter with Mr. Carey before I sleep again."

"Patience!" cried the Governor, now in high spirits though his teeth chattered. "It was his inning; he kept them from reaching Huddleston, but we don't want to waste our chance of scoring when we go to bat. Patience; and then more patience!"

"You don't mean to say that you're not going to notify the authorities now?" demanded Archie. "It would give me the greatest satisfaction to send him over the road for attempted murder."

279

"We could do that beyond question; but I've already told you, my dear boy, that we are going to be the sole judge of the law and the evidence in these matters. I mean to end my career as the prince of villains with a flourish. There shall be no loose ends. My time is short. Before the week is out I've got to tie all pending matters up in neat packages adorned with pink ribbons. Moon, stars and all other influences are just right for a successful termination of my seven years of servitude to the powers of darkness, and if I don't shake 'em off at the exact moment ordained by the heavens I'm committed to another seven years of wandering. There you have it in a nutshell. Marriage, home, a life of tranquil respectability with the women we love; that's ahead of us if we play the cards right. When you speak of calling sheriffs into consultation you make me slightly ill. Old sinners like Leary and me have no confidence in the law's benevolence; and it may occur to you that inquiries as to our immediate past might be embarrassing. We shall hold to our course, Archie!"

A pot of coffee and a basket of sandwiches were left at the bath house door and they partook with the zest of shipwrecked mariners. At the end of an hour, reclad in their wet clothes, they huddled at the landing waiting for news from the hospital tent. Mrs. Perry came down presently to report that Isabel and Ruth were asleep.

"Isabel has a badly bruised hand—no bones broken but it was an ugly smash. She will have to carry it in a sling for a few days."

"Her hand," Archie murmured, so quaveringly that Mrs. Perry looked at him curiously.

280

That one of Isabel's adorable hands should be injured enraged him; he felt the hurt in his own heart, and he resolved that Carey should pay dearly for an offense that surpassed all other crimes that had ever been committed from the beginning of time.

"We have taken every precaution to guard against any unhappy consequences of their immersion," Mrs. Perry continued. "There's some danger of cold, but Dr. Reynolds is a skilful young woman, and of course Isabel and Ruth are strong, vigorous girls. They will be laughing at their misadventures by noon tomorrow."

"You're lifting our spirits a lot," said Archie, and Leary, standing a little behind him, chokingly ejaculated a heartfelt "thank God!"

"I wish," said Mrs. Perry, "we might proclaim to the world your gallant conduct; but for any report of this matter to get abroad would be disastrous, a dire calamity, as you can see. The camp day begins early, and it would be best for you to return to Huddleston and keep silent as to the accident."

"We appreciate all that, and you may count on our discretion," said the Governor. "Let me say first that as to the danger of starvation, you need have no fear on that score. I wired yesterday for a tug I'm somewhat interested in to pick up supplies at Harbor Springs and it will put in here some time during the afternoon."

"You are wonderful!" exclaimed Mrs. Perry. "After you ran past the barricade so successfully and delivered the little Congdon girl I've been sure Ruth's confidence in you isn't misplaced."

"That was a trifling matter. I wish you'd tell me before we leave just how much credence you

give this buried treasure story? While we're about it we must go to the bottom of that."

281

The rays of the lantern Archie held disclosed an incredulous smile on Mrs. Perry's face. She was a tall handsome woman, very like Isabel, even in the tones of her voice and in an occasional gesture; and she had Isabel's fine eyes.

"I've never thought that more than a fairy tale," she said. "I should not want you gentlemen to waste time or run the risk of bodily injury in looking for chests of money that may never have been buried here at all. There was, to be sure, a considerable fortune, but my father-in-law, whom I never saw, would have been much likelier to distribute it among banks in the northern states or in Canada. Richard Carey evidently believes the story, though from his actions I'm inclined to think him utterly mad. He's going to desperate lengths to search for the treasure. His conduct is tinged a good deal with resentment because Isabel has repeatedly refused to marry him. He's a ne'er-do-well, a blacksheep and a disgrace to his family."

The Governor sighed deeply.

"I sometimes wonder that there's any white wool in the world; there are so many of these skittish little black lambkins scattered over the pastures!"

"They make uncomfortable neighbors!" Mrs. Perry exclaimed, so heartily that they all laughed.

On the silent shore with the tents of Heart o' Dreams Camp slowly emerging from the shadows of the surrounding wood in the first glimmering of dawn, Archie wondered just what Mrs. Perry's feelings would be if she knew that she had been countenancing three rogues, two of whom were far-wandering sheep with badly spotted fleeces and the third, the solemn, silent Leary, with a trail of crime that reached from ocean to ocean.

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She walked with them to the landing and waved the lantern in farewell as they set forth across the brightening waters for Huddleston.

IV

When the Governor and Archie went down to breakfast at nine o'clock they learned that Congdon had risen early and, declaring that his arm was fully recovered, was fishing from the wharf.

The Governor drew from his pocket a telegram which Leary had carried up to him while he was dressing.

"A cipher from Perky at Harbor Springs. He's got the provisions aboard but reports that he suspects the tug is being watched. It's possible of course that he and old Eliphalet were spotted at Cleveland when they boarded the boat and that the Government is keeping an eye on the *Arthur B. Grover*."

Archie fidgeted uneasily.

"We've got enough trouble on hand right here without bucking the Federal authorities. Of course you'll warn him at once not to put in here!"

"My reply was sent instantly. I wired him to hold on to Eliphalet but to drop all the men he didn't need to handle the tug at the first convenient point and send them singly into the woods beyond Calderville to await instructions. This is a dead port; nothing but driftwood has landed here since the mill shut down three years ago."

283

"I tell you I don't like this at all! You can't run a pirate ship through the Great Lakes without attracting attention. A policeman can stand on the shore anywhere and throw a brick on board anything afloat."

"Really, you exaggerate, Archie," replied the Governor gently. "These wide and beautiful waters invite the adventurous mariner and if piracy appealed to me at all I'd rather enjoy levying tribute upon the unprotected cities of the saltless seas."

Sally brought in a fresh pot of coffee and they waited for her to leave the room.

"Only one thing interests me," declared Archie, "and that's the immediate cleaning up of Carey. The Congdons have begun to bore me, if you'll pardon my saying it! The old man and his plugged gold pieces and the will he's reported to carry in his umbrella and the family row are none of my business. If you want to give me a thrill of delight you'll chuck everything connected with the name Congdon and concentrate on Carey."

"Not so easy, with our friend Putney living here under the same roof. Again I warn you that we must practise patience. Here comes Putney now."

They had reached the veranda, where Congdon joined them, proudly displaying his string of perch. When Leary had borne his catch to the kitchen Congdon became serious.

"Something's happened that bothers me a little. A man motored up here awhile ago, looked the place over and asked me a lot of questions about the hotel and its guests. You understand, Comly—"

He hesitated, glancing questioningly from Archie to the Governor.

284

"You may trust Saulsbury. We have knowledge of some other things that make it necessary for us all to stand together."

"This fellow seemed to have no business here," Congdon continued. "He said he was staying at Calderville, farther down the road, and pretended to be looking for a quiet hotel to bring his family to. He thought Huddleston might do. He looked me over in a way I didn't like. You remember, Comly, I took you into my confidence about a little difficulty I had before I came here —"

"That little affair on the Maine coast? It was a shooting, Saulsbury," Archie explained soberly.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the Governor. "Mr. Congdon, you may command my services in any manner whatsoever. Now and then it has been my fortune to be able to pull a friend out of trouble. Pray consider me wholly at your service."

He listened gravely while Congdon described the shooting at Bailey Harbor. He was convinced that he had shot a burglar who died of the wound, and that the injury from which he had just recovered had been inflicted by his victim.

"You have troubled about this matter quite unnecessarily," the Governor declared with a wave of the hand. "I can see that yours is a sensitive nature, with imagination highly developed. You were in your own house, and had every right to be there; and certainly no jury would ever convict you of murder where you were only defending yourself against a scoundrel who did his best to kill you."

Congdon brightened perceptibly at this broad-minded view of the matter and flashed a look of relief at Archie, who was quietly smoking.

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"It's most fortunate that we three have met here, gentlemen and murderers all!" the Governor went on airily. "Comly tells me that he too has been dodging the police. To make you both feel perfectly at ease I'll be equally frank and say that for nearly seven years I've been mixed up with the leading crooks of this country; not for profit; no, decidedly not; but merely for the fun of the thing."

Archie pretended to share Congdon's surprise at this confession, delivered without the quiver of an eyelash.

"I should never have guessed it," said Congdon. "I had sized you up as a college professor, or perhaps a lecturer on applied ethics," he added with a laugh; "we hardly look the black wretches we are!"

"Let us hope not! But now to business. We seem to be fellows with a pretty taste for adventure, and I'm going to appeal to your chivalry right now to help me in a very delicate and dangerous matter that calls for prompt attention. Comly and I had a little brush with the enemy last night and in our further tasks we shall be glad of your help."

He bade Archie tell the story, interrupting occasionally to supply some detail. When Isabel's name was mentioned as the head of Heart o' Dreams Camp Congdon sprang to his feet excitedly.

"Isabel Perry! Why," he flung round upon Archie, "that's the girl I told you about in Chicago, who gave me the bad advice that got me into all my trouble with my wife. So it's Isabel who's the custodian of my daughter! This is a queer business, gentlemen."

"Highly interesting, I must confess!" the Governor ejaculated. "But you must bear no grudge against Miss Perry; she's wonderful. She all but lost her life last night. Comly and I have solemnly pledged ourselves to clear up this whole situation, and we invite your fullest cooperation."

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"Certainly; I enlist right now. With my own child over there at the mercy of that scoundrel I couldn't refuse. I assure you that I cherish no resentment against Miss Perry. I was a fool, I suppose, ever to have let her influence me. I was pretty miserable at the time and she is a very attractive girl, and we men, well—"

"Man," said the Governor, "is only a xylophone upon which any woman may exercise her musical talents. At times her little hammers evoke the pleasantest harmonies, but when it pleases my lady she can produce the most painful discords. To get back to business, the tug that's bringing the supplies for the camp is also towing a launch for our use. We'll meet Mr. Carey on land or water, or in the air if he chooses. Now, Congdon, if you've no objection to taking orders from me, I'll ask you to lie off Heart o' Dreams in the row boat, while the supplies are unloaded. Our landlord, a trustworthy person in every particular, will go with you. Comly and I will meet the tug and pick up the launch."

"But how about this fellow from Calderville who's nosing round?" Congdon asked anxiously. "I'll say right here that I have no intention of being hauled back to Maine to be tried for murder."

"Take my word for it, that Comly and I will die rather than give you up. We'll stand or fall together. That chap may not be looking for you at all. He may be on the lookout for me or some pal of mine on the tug; they're all outlaws, desperadoes!"

287

"You're fooling, aren't you?" demanded Congdon incredulously.

"Not in the least! Fugitives from justice, every mother's son of 'em! Only a few will be aboard when the *Arthur B. Grover* puts into Heart o' Dreams, but there are enough crooks in the woods about here to plunder all Michigan. If that chap from Calderville's looking for trouble he's going to have his hands full."

Congdon went into Archie's room just before noon and laid an automatic pistol on the dresser.

"See that? That's the gun I shot the thief with at Bailey Harbor. Guess I'll take it with me this afternoon for I know the infernal thing works!"

"It's always best to tote a gun you've tested," Archie answered, examining with unfeigned interest the weapon Congdon had discharged into the mirror in the Bailey Harbor house. The gun with which he had shot Congdon was in a drawer of his bureau, and the instant Congdon left he examined it for any marks by which its owner might identify it. He was relieved when the Governor came in and assured him that there was nothing to distinguish the pistol from a thousand of its kind.

While they waited for the tug's appearance they hung off Heart o' Dreams shore, and the Governor and Archie paddled close enough to talk with Ruth at the wharf.

"Everything's all right," she reported cheerily. "The doctor is keeping Isabel in bed today but merely to rest. The bruised hand is doing nicely and will probably heal without a scar. The camp's running smoothly and the girls don't know that they ate our last bread and butter for luncheon." 288

"You're safe in putting cookies on the evening bill of fare," said the Governor. "Has Carey made any sign today?"

"No, except that I went through the woods this morning toward Calderville and found the road piled with logs there at the bridge over the little brook. I peeped through the barricade and saw some men with guns—"

"Don't you dare go near that place again!" exclaimed the Governor. "There's a good mile between that point and the camp boundaries and you have no business going off your reservation."

"How terribly you scold! I was just reconnoitering a little."

"That little might mean the end of the world! But it's worth while to know that you pout when you're scolded."

The hazards of the night had left no mark upon her, and in the khaki Heart o' Dreams uniform she would have passed for a carefree boy.

"You look shockingly young," the Governor remarked with mock resentment, as he fended the canoe away from the wharf. "It doesn't seem possible that a venerable relic like me would ever have any chance with a beautiful young goddess like you."

"Maybe you haven't!"

"Don't taunt me, woman, or I'll let you starve to death! Archie," he went on, his delight in her bright in his eyes, "this might be just the right moment to propose marriage. Your presence is a little embarrassing, but all the conditions here are unusual. Ruth, I'm so proud of myself for loving you that I feel like proclaiming it to all the world." 289

She picked up a chip and threw it at him with a boy's free swing. He caught it and placed it tenderly in his pocket.

"The first gift you ever made me!" he cried rapturously. "I shall ask you to autograph it later. I shall treasure it always!"

"Who are those gentlemen out yonder?" she asked, spying Congdon and Leary in the row boat.

"The gentleman idling at the oars is Mr. Leary, the honest innkeeper from Huddleston; the other is Mr. Putney Congdon!"

"Not really! Please don't tell me we're to have another kidnaping!"

"Certainly not! Leary was a valuable member of our rescue party last night and he's wholly friendly to our cause. Mr. Congdon came up with Mr. Comly merely to be near his daughter."

"How did he know she was here? Please don't jest; this is very serious!"

"He knew because he got a mysterious message from me hinting that his wife had sent the child here. He's a charming fellow—not at all the brute we've been thinking him; and while we've told him only what it's best for him to know about ourselves he cheerfully enlisted in our campaign to protect the camp. He's even now—"

An exclamation from Ruth caused Archie and the Governor to turn toward the lake. The *Arthur B. Grover* was steaming slowly into the bay. A moment later Leary whistled to call attention to the Carey launch, which was running rapidly toward the camp. 290

"Keep out of sight," said the Governor, "and send your young charges to play in the woods. We don't want witnesses if anything disagreeable happens while we're unloading."

"Please," she cried, turning to go, "take care of yourselves! We'd better give up the fight right now than have you hurt!"

"It was pretty nice of her to say that, Archie," said the Governor soberly, watching her as she disappeared down a long lane of tents. "We'll see some fun now if Carey cuts any capers."

"He'll hardly ram the tug, though he may be fool enough to try it."

The *Arthur B. Grover* had rounded the point and was feeling its way toward Heart o' Dreams.

Archie recognized Perky, industriously taking soundings and lazily giving orders to the man at the wheel.

"How much does she show?" called the Governor.

"A coupla clothes lines deep," replied Perky without taking the pipe from his mouth.

His air of unconcern, his complete absorption in the business of getting the tug in position to unload, the nonchalant manner in which he directed the pilot, greatly enhanced Archie's admiration for Perky.

Two men were rigging up a crane to land the bags, boxes and crates that were piled on deck in prodigal profusion.

"There's our new launch trailing behind like clouds of glory," said the Governor. "A very snappy little affair it is."

"And a very snappy little man is hanging over the rail of the tug gripping an umbrella. How do you suppose Perky's explaining all this to Eliphalet?"

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"Trust Perky to be plausible. Wait till father Congdon sees Putney and you'll hear an imitation of the ichthyosaurus singing its song of hate."

Carey's launch had effected a half circle round Heart o' Dreams landing and was now drawing nearer. There were two men aboard and Leary, having put himself between the launch and the tug, signaled the Governor by lifting one arm high over his head, and then extending it horizontally. A careless observer would have thought he was only stretching himself.

"That means," the Governor explained, "that there's a suspicious person on Carey's launch; and," he continued, after watching Leary's further telegraphing, "that Congdon has identified him as the gentleman who interviewed him at Huddleston this morning. Everything's going smoothly."

By the time the *Arthur B. Graver* had warped in, Carey had brought his launch to within a dozen yards of the tug, and his companion was standing up anxiously scrutinizing the men on board.

"Prisoners!" he bawled; "every one of you a prisoner! I know you, Perky; and you needn't try any tricks on me or it'll be the worse for you. And don't you fellows on that wharf try any funny business with me!"

Perky, busily getting the crane in working order, paid no heed whatever to these threats uttered in the authoritative tone of one who is confident of the support of the army and navy of the United States. Carey loudly seconded the detective's demand for the immediate and unconditional surrender of the tug.

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"Trapped! Lost!" cried Eliphalet, tragically.

"You're mighty right you're lost!" yelled the officer. "You're a nice old scoundrel, to be circulating plugged gold pieces, and a rich man at that! You're pinched; do you understand? You're under arrest!"

The effect of this shot was to cause Eliphalet to attempt to climb from the tug to the wharf but the Governor seized a paddle and gently urged him back.

"I beg of you, Mr. Congdon, don't be disturbed. That person in the launch can't harm you in the least. He may be annoying, yes; and his voice is extremely disagreeable, but really his utterances are unworthy of the attention of honest men."

"Who the deuce are you?" demanded Eliphalet, leveling his umbrella at the Governor. "It occurs to me we have met before."

"Thanks for the compliment!" the Governor answered, dodging a heavy crate, the first of the freight to be swung ashore.

Perky was thoroughly prepared for the expeditious delivery of his cargo, even to wheelbarrows in which three men now began trundling supplies up the wharf and along the beach to the camp store house. The work was proceeding rapidly, without noise or confusion, and Archie and the Governor were busily assisting when the shore was startled by a yell.

Leary and Congdon in the row boat had been stealing up behind Carey's launch. Leary sprang aboard while the two occupants were watching the landing of the stores.

Carey, diving under Leary's arms, seized a club and knocked him overboard. The detective jumped into the water and swam to the wharf, where he was immediately overpowered and hauled aboard the tug. By this time Carey was steering for the middle of the bay, where he watched the tug for a while and then retired toward his camp.

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Leary had crawled upon the pier and was disconsolately shaking the water out of his shoes.

"It was a good try, old man," said the Governor cheerily. "That fellow's not going to be easy to bag, but we've got a detective on our hands," he chuckled, "and I don't know just how we're going to let loose of him."

Putney Congdon had rowed close to the wharf to pick up Leary. As the Governor had predicted, Eliphalet Congdon emitted a loud and not wholly melodious howl as he recognized his son.

"Hey there! You've been following me! I told you to stay at the farm and here you come sneaking after me away up here where I've come for rest."

"You were never more mistaken in your life!" replied Putney. "I came up here to see Edith and found that that fellow you saw in the launch was trying to starve out this camp."

"Edith here? Who says Edith's here? You're out of your senses! You know perfectly well the

child's in Ohio!"

"Break in on that dialogue," said the Governor to Archie. "Those men will never get anywhere yelling at each other. I'll attend to Eliphalet after we land the freight."

"If that wife of yours has stolen Edith I'll have the law on her!" screamed Eliphalet. "She's not fit to have the care of children!"

Archie walked to the edge of the wharf and commanded Eliphalet to hold his peace.

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"Putney, row out a few hundred yards and watch Carey. You needn't worry about your father. We'll find some way of getting him out of his scrapes."

The detective, who had been lashed to the pilot house, reused himself to shout:

"You'll make a nice mess of it trying to get him away from the Government. The whole lot of you are crooks, and you're holding me at your peril."

The discharge of freight had not ceased during this colloquy. The crane swung over the wharf at regular intervals, and the men with the wheelbarrows trotted back and forth with the spirit and agility of men intent upon finishing an honest day's work. As Putney Congdon, mystified but obedient, rowed away, his father began begging Perky to leave the place and steer for Canada.

"You promised to protect me but you've made a fool of me," the old man wailed. "You betrayed me to the police; you—"

The Governor flung a sack of potatoes into a wheelbarrow, and surveyed the infuriated Eliphalet for a moment.

"Pray calm yourself, Mr. Congdon, and please be careful how you charge people with serious crimes. It seems to be an obsession with you that everybody on earth is a crook. The proposition interests me psychologically. When I get through with this freight I'll look at your data. Meanwhile I solemnly warn you to make no charge against me or any friends of mine that you can't prove."

It was five o'clock when the last of the cargo was landed in the store house. The engineer (a gentleman whose grimy face and mournful eyes belied his record as a hold-up man) sounded the whistle.

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Ruth ran down to the shore and Archie and the Governor went to meet her.

"O you angels!" she cried. "I've just taken a peep into the store house and you've given us enough food to last all next summer. It's perfectly splendid. I wasn't watching—really, I wasn't—for I had to keep the girls busy; but you did have trouble of some sort?"

"Nothing of the slightest consequence," the Governor answered. "We tried to catch Carey but he was too quick for us. But we did pick up a friend of his—the gentleman you see giving an exhibition of haughty disdain out there on the tug. Keep everybody well under cover tonight and don't be alarmed by anything you hear. We'll soon be through with this business."

"Who's that funny little man on the tug? He seems anxious to attract attention!"

Eliphalet Congdon was engaged in an argument with the detective, who, being helpless, was obliged to endure a tirade the old gentleman was delivering to the accompaniment of an occasional prod of the inevitable umbrella.

"That," said the Governor, "is Edith Congdon's paternal grandfather; an estimable person fallen upon evil times."

"You don't mean Mr. Eliphalet Congdon!"

"Most emphatically I do."

"And have he and his son settled their differences?"

"Not so you would notice it! But they'll be loving each other when I get through with them."

"Do you know," said the girl, looking wonderingly into the Governor's eyes, "I don't suppose I could ever learn to know when you're fooling and when you're not."

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"After we're married I shall never attempt to fool you. By the way," he added hastily as she frowned and shrugged her shoulders, "when does the camp close?"

"August twenty, if Mr. Carey doesn't close it sooner."

"The date shall stand without reference to Carey's wishes, intentions or acts. Please write your father to be here on that last day and bring his episcopal robes with him. And by the way, you spoke of your embarrassments about mail. We'll send to the Calderville post-office for all the Heart o' Dreams mail; a boat will deliver it tonight and pick up the camp mail bag. Have you anything to add, Archie?"

"You might say to Isabel," said Archie slowly, "that August twenty strikes me as the happiest possible date for our wedding."

"You two talk of weddings as though we were not in the midst of battle, murder and sudden death!"

She folded her arms and regarded them with an odd little smile, half wistful, half questioning, playing about her lips. The tug was drawing away from the wharf. Perky sat on the rail placidly sucking an orange, a noble picture of an unrepentant sinner. From the woods floated the far, faint cries and light-hearted laughter of the camp youngsters at play. In spite of his attempt to

imitate the Governor's jauntiness Archie felt again, as so often since he left Bailey Harbor, the unreality of the events through which he had been projected with his singular companion, who had drawn him so far out of his orbit that it was hard to believe that he would ever slip into it again. Their affairs had never presented so many problems as now, when the Governor was predicting and planning the end with so much assurance. In the few seconds that Ruth deliberated he plunged to the depths in his despair that Isabel would ever seriously consider him as a lover.

"I was just thinking," said the girl, stepping back a little into a path that led from the beach to the woods, "how we seem to be living in the good old times, when knights hastened by land or water to the rescue of ladies in distress. This is all very pretty and be sure we all appreciate what you have done for us. But I don't quite see through to the end!" The smile was gone and there was no doubt of the sincerity of the anxiety that darkened her eyes as she ended with a little, quavering, despairing note: "Something serious and dreadful threatens us, one and all of us maybe! It's only—what do you call such a thing—a presentiment!"

"Please don't think of it!" pleaded Archie; "things are bound to come out all right. You mustn't lose faith in us."

"Yes; it will be only a little longer," muttered the Governor listlessly.

He had responded instantly to Ruth's confession of her premonition of impending evil, and Archie, troubled by his friend's change of mood, hastened to end the interview.

"We're not going to lose!" he declared. "It's when the world is brightest that the shadow of a cloud sometimes makes us fear to trust our happiness. Good-by and good luck!"

She was not reassured, however, and as she shook hands with them there were tears in her eyes.

V

The Governor quickly recovered his spirits and with characteristic enthusiasm began putting the new launch through its paces. Like everything that pleased him, the launch was wonderful. He called upon Archie to bear witness to its unsurpassed merits, and they ran out to the row boat to invite the admiration of Putney and Leary. Putney, they found, was skilled in the handling of such craft, and the Governor cheerfully turned the launch over to him.

"You take it and run up to Calderville, where you'd better get supper. Pick up the Heart o' Dreams mail and bring it back to Huddleston, and meet us on the wharf at nightfall. We've got a heavy night's work ahead of us. Carey's probably jarred a good deal to find that we've got a tug and a launch to play with."

"That's all right, and I'll obey orders, of course," said Congdon, wiping the oil from his hands; "but don't forget that my father's out there on that tug. I don't know what trouble he's in, but I can't forget that he's my father—"

Archie, touched by his display of feeling, turned with a pleading glance to the Governor, but the Governor needed no prompting to be kind.

"My dear boy," he said, "you may rely upon me to extricate your father from his embarrassments. Archie and I are going aboard the tug to study his case carefully. If we don't do anything else this summer we're going to take the kink out of your family affairs."

"There's no reason why you should—" Putney began.

"Reason!" exclaimed the Governor, snapping his fingers contemptuously, "reasons for things are a horrible bore. In this pretty good old world we must apologize for our sins and weaknesses but not for our kind intentions."

As they boarded the *Arthur B. Grover* Eliphalet made no attempt to speak to Putney though he leaned over the side and shook his umbrella at the launch as it drew away. The Governor told Perky to produce food and invited Eliphalet and the detective to supper. The officer, churlish from his bath in the bay and his enforced appearance in jumper and overalls during the drying of his garments, replied to a polite inquiry that his name was Briggs but that his credentials had been lost in his tumble into the water.

"We shall waive all formalities," said the Governor, "as my guest your official connections, real or fictitious, concern me not at all."

Corned beef, crackers, fruit and coffee composed the supper, and Eliphalet Congdon, Briggs, Archie and the Governor sat cross-legged on the deck and partook of it picnic fashion.

"A truce to our difficulties, gentlemen!" the Governor cried, lifting his tin cup of coffee. "I'm sure there are misunderstandings involving all of us that time will clear up. It's mighty lucky for you, Briggs, that we succeeded in detaching you from that chap who brought you here. If you had remained in his company you would certainly have come to grief. With murderous intent he ran down two women right here in the bay last night. We saved their lives by sheer good luck. You were not with him, I suppose, and I'll charitably assume you don't know his purpose in attacking them."

"He says the girls' camp is on his land and he's only trying to drive 'em off," replied Briggs. "Whatever his game is it's none of my business."

"It's any man's business to protect women and innocent children from the malice of a madman. To let you into a dark secret, he's got the idea that there's buried treasure somewhere on the land occupied by Heart o' Dreams Camp."

"Treasure!" exclaimed Eliphalet. "Do you mean to say there's money buried there?"

"That's the idea," said the Governor with a grim smile at the sudden glint of greed in the old man's eyes. He told the story, told it with flourishes and decorations that pleased Archie immensely.

"It sounds pretty fishy," Briggs remarked, "but there may be something in it."

"You never can tell," muttered Eliphalet. "It would have been natural for one of those old southerners who hadn't any confidence in Jeff Davis to plant his money in some lonely place like this."

"In one way or another we are all seekers of buried treasure," remarked the Governor sententiously.

His story had cleared the air, giving, as Archie reflected, a fresh illustration of the power of romance to soften the harshness of even so realistic a situation as confronted the tug's passengers. Eliphalet's imagination had been stirred, and he asked many questions about the treasure. Briggs lost his hostile air and showed himself the possessor of an unsuspected amiability.

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"You seem to be a good fellow," remarked the Governor; "and your interest in the *Arthur B. Grover* is legitimate enough, I daresay. If you will promise to behave and not try to leave the tug or molest any one on board you're free to do as you like. But I want you to play fair."

"I seem to be at your mercy. You've got to consider that my reputation is at stake. It's my duty to land Mr. Congdon and that chap you call Perky in the nearest jail and report their arrest to Washington."

"Washington," replied the Governor, drawing his hand across his face, "is a beautiful city; but it's a long way from here. Be assured that I'm no anarchist and the delicate matter of your professional standing is something that shall engage my most earnest thought. Please make yourself comfortable."

He bade Archie follow him to the bow where Eliphalet was moodily gazing into the water.

"Mr. Congdon," the Governor began in his blandest tones, "as a mere looker-on at the passing show I'm persuaded that you're not getting much out of life. A mistake, sir; a mistake it grieves me to see you making."

"What I do or do not do," cried the old man, lifting his umbrella belligerently, "is none of your infernal business."

"An error, sir; an error of considerable magnitude, if you will pardon me! I wish my friend here to bear witness that I am qualified to offer you excellent advice based on exact information as to your intimate domestic affairs. You're a meddling person, Mr. Congdon, with a slight element of cruelty in your makeup, of which let us hope you are not wholly conscious. Morally you are skidding, but this I charitably attribute to your lack of a wholesome and healthy interest in life. Incidentally you've done all you could to destroy the happiness of your son, who is a fine fellow and a gentleman."

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"And his wife, your daughter-in-law, is one of the noblest women in the world!" interjected Archie, seeing that the Governor's arraignment was not without its effect on the odd, crumpled little figure. However, the mention of Mrs. Congdon instantly aroused Eliphalet's ire.

"That woman ordered me out of her house—a house I bought and paid for! She did her best to make my son hate me! She compelled him to quit the businesses I started for the sole purpose of providing him employment!"

"Your trouble is that you never knew when Putney grew up," declared the Governor. "You tried to boss him even after his marriage, and if Mrs. Congdon turned you out of her house she did only what any self-respecting woman would do. As the result of your miserly ways, your meddlingness and your selfishness, you've just about ruined your life. The penitentiary yawns for you." Eliphalet shuddered, and a look of fear not pleasant to see crossed his face. "But," the Governor went on, "in spite of your cowardly conduct I'm rather disposed to pull you out of the hole."

"You will help; you really will help me?"

"Not if you cringe and whine like that. If you will stand square on your feet and listen to me I'll make you a proposition. Don't flinch; I don't want any of your money! I've heard that you make a habit of carrying your will around in that umbrella, for the ludicrous reason that you think you are not one of us absent-minded mortals who forget our umbrellas. And you like to have the will handy so you can rewrite it when the mood strikes you. Give me that thing!"

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Eliphalet hesitated, but the Governor said, "If you please, Mr. Congdon," with all possible shadings of courteous insistence, and gently pried it from the old man's fingers.

It was a heavy, bulgy, disreputable-looking umbrella with a battered curved handle. The canopy was held together by a piece of twine. Rather than be seen with so monstrous a thing any self-respecting person would cheerfully take a drenching. The Governor opened it, shook out a number of manilla envelopes, all carefully sealed, and flung the umbrella from him as though it

were an odious and hateful thing. As it struck the water it spread open and the wind seized it and bore it gaily away. The Governor watched it for a moment with an ironic grin, then began opening the envelopes and scanning the contents.

"I began life as a lawyer," he said coolly, "so you needn't fear that I'll not respect the sanctity of these experiments in the testamentary art."

Archie, taking and refolding the wills as the Governor finished reading them, marveled at this unexpected revelation of his friend's profession let fall in the most casual fashion, as was the Governor's way.

"It's evident from the dates of these wills that you've been steadily cutting down the amount of your bequest to your son," the Governor was saying, "so that if you died tonight he'd receive only a hundred thousand dollars, the remaining million or two going to humane societies, and one fat plum, I notice, to the Home for Outcast Cats. The eccentricities of testators have never impressed me by their humor, particularly when hatred and revenge are behind them. You would malevolently cut off your own blood merely because your daughter-in-law doesn't like your manners, which are bad, or because your son wouldn't fall in with your fantastic schemes of making money dishonestly. I suppose you've had a good time flourishing these wills before your son and his wife when you were peeved, to let them know how you planned to punish them. Watch me, Archie, so you can bear witness to the destruction of these things; they're all going to feed the fishes except this earliest one, which divides the property in generous lumps between Putney Congdon and his children, with a handsome personal recognition of Mrs. Congdon. That shall be preserved."

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Eliphalet sullenly watched the Governor as he tore the papers into bits and flung them to the breeze, all save the one, which he again scanned with sophisticated care and stowed away carefully in his pocket.

"Now, sir; let us get down to business! If you will promise me never to make another will without consulting me, but will let this one I've kept stand, and if you agree not to interfere any further with your son's family or his wife or his children or his ox or his ass or anything that is his, for the rest of your natural life, I'll guarantee that in due season you'll leave this tug a free man."

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"You can do that; you are sure you can save me?" Eliphalet's voice shook and his hands, thrust out appealingly, trembled pitifully as he turned from the Governor to Archie.

"My friend can do what he says," said Archie. "You may trust him."

"I promise," said the old man steadily. "But I must see Putney and explain about the coins. It was more in a spirit of playfulness, a curiosity to know how such things are done that I got mixed up in that business."

"I daresay it was and I'm sure you'll not repeat the offense," said the Governor, lighting a cigarette. "As to Putney, I'll arrange the meeting as soon as possible."

Eliphalet Congdon was the last man Archie would have expected to yield to the Governor's wizardry, or hypnotism, or whatever it was that caused people to submit to him; but the old man's face expressed infinite relief now that the Governor had so insolently assumed the rôle of dictator in his affairs. The pathos of the weazened little figure now stripped of its arrogance, and the assertion of a long-latent kindness in his countenance, encouraged the hope that happier times were in store for all the Congdons.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

I

The Governor and Archie were waiting on the Huddleston wharf when Putney and Leary returned from Calderville, bringing two sacks of Heart o' Dreams mail. Putney had loafed about the Calderville post-office and made purchases in several shops to learn if possible whether Carey's purpose in establishing himself in the woods was known to the villagers. He had, it seemed, represented himself as an investigator for a lumber company engaged in appraising timber. This was the story he had told in Calderville and the villagers had not questioned it.

"That's all right," said the Governor, "and serves our purpose well. Archie, you and Leary take the launch and carry the mail over to Heart o' Dreams. The tug will be within call in case you need help. At twelve o'clock meet me about a quarter of a mile this side of Carey's barricade; Leary's got the place spotted so he can find it in the dark. Use a canoe; no noise and no lights. Hurry along but don't blow up the launch."

"I have a surprise for you," said Ruth when Archie delivered the mail at the camp office. "I'm going to be busy sorting this mail, but if you will step to the door, bear left ten yards and stop by

a bench under our tallest pine, some one you pretend to like rather particularly may appear, but just for a moment, remember! You ought to be eternally grateful to me for this; I had to overcome both the doctor and the nurse and the prejudices and suspicions of the particular person—"

"Isabel!" he exclaimed. He hadn't dreamed that he might see Isabel.

She came toward him out of the shadows, wrapped in a long cloak, carrying a lantern, and paused by the bench.

"These old-fashioned lanterns are a lot nicer than the electric flash things," she remarked.

They sat down with the lantern between them, her right hand resting upon its wire guard for a moment. The glow emphasized its fine length and firmness. The left hand was bandaged and he saw her thrust it quickly out of sight.

"You haven't let me say how happy I am that you are able to be up, or how grateful I am for this glimpse of you. It's always just glimpses."

"Maybe it's better that way! But so much happens between our meetings; there was never anything like it in all the world. Never was an acquaintance so pursued by storms! I wonder where the blow will fall next?"

"Not on your head," he answered decisively, "not if the Governor and I can prevent it. But let us not waste time on that; I want your assurance that you are really well."

"Oh, perfectly; not an ache from the ducking; only this little reminder my hand will carry for a day or two; but that's nothing to worry about!"

There was a restraint upon them, due perhaps to the calming influence of the stars, the murmurings of the shore in conference with the pines.

"The things that have happened since we first met would make a large book," he said with an accession of courage, "but a separate volume would have to be written about your hands."

She fell back at once upon her defenses.

"Oh, are they as large as that!"

"They are as dear as that!"

"How absurd you are! Here we are with only a few minutes to talk; not more than ten—that's official from the doctor; and you're talking foolishness. If I were extremely sensitive I might imagine that my face was displeasing to you!"

"The face is too remote, too sacred; I wouldn't dare let myself think about it. The hand encourages belief in our common humanity; but the face is divine, a true key to the soul. The hand we think of commonly as a utilitarian device of nature, and in your case we know it to be skilled in many gracious arts, but beyond its decorative values—"

"Dear me! Just what are you quoting?"

"Please suffer the rest of it! Your hands, I was about to say, not only awaken admiration by their grace and symmetry, but the sight of them does funny things to my heart."

"That heart of yours! How did it ever manage to survive the strain and excitement of last night?"

"Oh, it functioned splendidly. But it was at work in a good cause. Pray permit me to continue. Your hands are adorable; I am filled with tenderest longings to possess them. If I should touch them I might die, so furious would be my palpitations!"

"The minutes fly and you are delivering an oration on the human hand, which in the early processes of evolution was only a claw. If you are not careful you'll be writing poetry next!"

"The future tense does me an injustice. I've already committed the unpardonable rhyme! I never made a verse before in my life, and this hasn't been confided to paper. I thought it out at odd moments in my recent travels. The humming of the wheels on the sleeper coming up gave me the tune. If you will encourage me a little I think I can recite it. It needs smoothing out in spots, but it goes something like this:

"I view with awe and wonder
Her hands so slim and long,—
I must not make the blunder
Of clasping them—in song!
"But sweet the memory lingers
Of happy fleeting times
When I have kissed her fingers
And folded them in rhymes.
"Hands shouldn't be so slender,
So dear and white and strong,
To waken thoughts so tender
That fold them like a song!"

"Charming! I never thought when I talked to you that night at your sister's that I was addressing my inanities to a poet. Those are very nice jingles. I'm struck by the imagination they show—in the second verse I think it is—?"

He repeated the verse.

"Are you daring me?" he asked.

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"I dared you once and got you into a lot of trouble. Please remember that we are unchaperoned and the dear little girls asleep in those tents back yonder would be shocked—"

"I shall make the shock as gentle as possible," he said and kissed her unresisting hand.

"The poem seems in a way to have been prophetic!" she remarked. "I must run now or the doctor will scold me, or I shall be scolding you! I must say one thing before we part. I've had time today to do a good deal of thinking, and my opinion of myself isn't very high. Out of sheer contrariness that night in Washington I teased you into doing things that led you into grave danger—and the danger is still all about us. I'm sorry; with all my heart I'm sorry! If anything should happen to you, it would be my fault—my very grievous sin! And maybe there are other men that I may have said similar things to—oh, you were not the first!" she laughed forlornly. "They, too, may have plunged into the same pit I dug for you. Oh, how foolish I've been!"

There was no questioning the sincerity of her dejection and contrition, and he felt moved to tell her of Putney's confession in the park at Chicago, that they might laugh together at the curious fling of fate that had brought two of her victims together in deadly combat. But her mood did not encourage the idea that she would view the matter in a humorous light.

"I wish you could tell me truly," she went on, "that what I said that night really didn't impress you; that it wasn't responsible for your giving up your plans for going to the Rockies?"

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"Honestly, I can't say anything of the kind! And if we hadn't had the talk, and if you hadn't sent the verse, I shouldn't be here trying to help you now."

"But it was flirting; it was the silliest kind of flirting!"

"That is always a legitimate form of entertainment, a woman's right and privilege! Please put all this out of your mind!"

"It's not a thing to be dismissed so lightly. I'm very unhappy about it; I'm deeply ashamed of myself!"

"You exaggerate the whole matter," he urged. "You are making me out a miserable weakling indeed when you think I ambled off toward perdition just because you dared me to assert myself a little!"

"I want you to promise," she said slowly, "that you won't in any way interfere with my cousin here. I can't have you taking further risks. After last night I doubt whether he bothers us. Ruth feels as I do about it; you must go away. You will promise, please—"

"You would have us run just as the game grows interesting! Of course we're not going to quit the field and leave that fellow here to annoy you! He's a dangerous character and we're going to get rid of him."

She was depressed, much as Ruth had been a few hours earlier and his efforts to win her to a happier frame of mind were unavailing.

"I love you; I love you!" he said softly.

"You must never say that to me again," she said slowly and determinedly. "After my stupid, cruel thoughtlessness you must hate me—"

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"But, Isabel—"

She seized the lantern and hurried away, her head bowed, the cloak billowing about her. He watched the lantern till its gleam was swallowed up in the darkness.

It was ten o'clock. Leary had got the outgoing mail—a week's accumulation, and they crossed to Huddleston where one of Perky's men was waiting with a machine to carry it to Calderville.

"The Governor didn't want the launch goin' up there ag'in," Leary explained. "He dug up that car somewhere."

"The Governor's a great man," said Archie.

"The greatest in the world!" Leary solemnly affirmed.

II

Shortly before midnight Archie and Leary left the *Arthur B. Grover* and paddled cautiously toward the point fixed by the Governor for their rendezvous. They were fortified with a repeating rifle, a shotgun (this was Leary's preference) and several packets of rockets for use in signaling the tug. It was the strangest of all expeditions, the more exciting from the fact that it was staged in the very heart of the country. For all that shore or water suggested of an encompassing civilization, the canoe driven by the taciturn Leary might have been the argosy of the first explorer of the inland seas.

Archie, keenly alive to the importance of the impending stroke, was aware that the Governor had planned it with the care he brought to the most trifling matters, though veiled by his indifference, which in turn was enveloped in his superstitious reliance on occult powers. Whether through some gift of prevision the Governor anticipated needs and dangers in his singular life, or whether he was merely a favorite of the gods of good luck, Archie had never

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determined, but either way the man who called himself Saulsbury seemed able to contrive and direct incidents with the dexterity of an expert stage hand. The purchase of the *Arthur B. Grover* had seemed the most fantastic extravagance, but the tug had already proved to be of crucial importance in the prosecution of their business. The seizure of Eliphalet Congdon had been justified; Perky and Leary were valuable lieutenants and the crew of jailbirds was now to be utilized as an offensive army.

Leary, restless because he couldn't smoke, spoke only once, to inquire Archie's judgment as to the passage of time. The old fellow, long accustomed to lonely flights after his plunderings, possessed the acutely developed faculties of a predatory animal; and the point at which they were to debark having been fixed in his mind in a daylight survey he paddled toward it with certainty. He managed his paddle so deftly that there was hardly a drip that could announce their proximity to any one lying in wait on the bay. Several minutes before Archie caught the listless wash of calm water on a beach, Leary heard it and paused, peering at the opaque curtain of the woodland beyond the lighter shadow of the shore.

"We struck it right," he announced, returning from an examination of the shore markings.

They carried the canoe into the wood and lay down beside it, communicating in whispers.

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"That girls' camp's on th' right; Carey's place to the left. Hear that!" His quick ear caught the faint moan of a locomotive whistle far to the south. It was a freight crossing a trestle, he said, though Archie had no idea of how he reached this conclusion.

"Th' rest o' th' boys are away off yonder," and he lifted Archie's hand to point.

"How many?" asked Archie, who had never known the number of men dropped from the tug to make the swing round Carey's fortress.

"Ten; and a purty sharp bunch! You be dead sure they're right er ole Governor wouldn't have 'em!"

Leary's confidence in the Governor as a judge of character reënforced Archie's own opinion of the leader's fitness to command. That he should have been received into the strange brotherhood of the road, which the Governor controlled with so little friction, never ceased to puzzle him. He was amused to find himself feeling very humble beside Leary, a poor, ignorant, unmoral creature, whose loyalty as manifested in his devotion to the Governor was probably the one admirable thing in his nature.

"Somebody may get hurt if we come to a scrimmage," he suggested. "What do you think of the chances?"

"When ole Governor's bossin' things I don't do no thinkin'," the old man answered. He raised his head, catching a sound in the gloom, and tapped Archie's shoulder. "It's him, I reckon."

An instant later the Governor threw himself on the ground beside them. He was breathing hard and lay on his back, his arms flung out, completely relaxed, for several minutes. Archie had often wondered at his friend's powers of endurance; he rarely complained of fatigue, and very little sleep sufficed him. He sat up suddenly and said crisply:

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"Well, boys, everything's ready!"

One by one his little army assembled, rising from the ground like specters. They gathered stolidly about the Governor, who flashed his electric lamp over their faces,—evil faces and dull faces, with eyes bold or shrinking before the quick stab of the gleam.

"Remember, you're not to shoot except in self-defense," said the Governor. "It's Carey, the leader, we're after. Those poor fools he's got with him think there's big money in this; I've told you all about that. They may run and they may put up a fight, but Carey must be taken prisoner. Spread out four paces apart for the advance, and move in a slow walk. When you hear me yell I'll be on top of the barricade. That's your signal for the dash to go over and get him."

Leary was already deploying the men. The Governor laid his hand on Archie's shoulder. In the contact something passed between them, such a communication as does not often pass from the heart of one man to another.

"If it comes to the worst for me, you and Isabel will look out for Ruth. I needn't ask you that. Use the tug quickly to clear things up here; there must be nothing left to tell the tale. See that old man Congdon keeps his promise. That will of his is in my blue serge coat in the closet of my room. If I die, bury me on the spot; no foolishness about that. I died to the world seven years ago tonight, so a second departure will call for no flowers!"

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Tears welled in Archie's eyes as he grasped his friend's hand there in the dark wood under the world-old watch of the stars.

Leary reported everything in readiness, and the signal to go forward was given by a hand-clasp repeated along the line. Archie kept at the Governor's heels as they advanced, pausing every fifty paces for a methodical inspection of the company by Leary and Perky, the latter having left the tug in charge of the engineer and joined the party last of all.

When they reached the little stream that defined the boundary of Heart o' Dreams territory the Governor, Archie and Leary got in readiness for their dash across the bridge and over the barricade. The purl of water eager for its entrance into the bay struck upon Archie's ear with a spiteful insistence.

"There must be no chance of these fellows breaking past us and frightening the women at Heart

o' Dreams," said the Governor. "We've got to make a clean sweep. But it's Carey we want, preferably alive!"

There was not a sound from the farther side of the stream. They crawled across the bridge and Archie ran his hand over the frame of logs against which stones had been heaped in a rough wall, as the Governor had explained to him. Archie had determined to thwart his friend's purpose to lead the assault, but while he was seeking a footing in the crevices the Governor swung himself to the top. His foot struck a stone perched on the edge and it rolled down into the camp with a great clatter. 317

As though it had touched a trigger a shotgun boomed upon the night, indicating that Carey had not been caught napping. Orders given in a shrill voice and answering shouts proclaimed the marshaling of his forces. Archie and Leary reached the Governor as he was crawling over the stones. Some one threw a shovelful of coals upon a heap of wood that evidently had been soaked in inflammable oil, for the flames rose with a roar.

It may have been that Carey had grown wary of murder as a means of gaining his end after the escapade of the previous night, for the first move of his men was to attempt to drive out the invaders with rifles swung as clubs. Carey screamed at them hysterically, urging them to greater efforts.

"Fight for the gold, boys! Fight for the gold!"

It seemed impossible that the men he had lured to his camp with the promise of gold would not see that he was mad. He flung himself first upon one and then another of the attacking party, a fanatical gleam in his eyes. Once, with two of his supporters at his back, he directed his fury against Archie. This invited a general scrimmage in which weapons were cast aside and fists dealt hard blows. When it ended Archie lay with friends and enemies piled upon him in a squirming mass. He got upon his feet, his face aching from a blow from a brawny fist, and found the two sides taking account of injuries and maneuvering for the next move.

The great bonfire kept the belligerents constantly in sight of each other, skulking, dodging, engaging in individual encounters poorly calculated to bring victory to either side. One of Carey's men lay near the barricade, insensible from a crack over the head from a rifle butt. His plight was causing uneasiness among his comrades, who began drawing back toward the shadows. Carey, seeing that their pluck was ebbing, cursed them. Only seven of the Governor's party had entered the barricade, the others having been left outside to prevent a retreat toward Heart o' Dreams in case the enemy attempted flight. 318

"We ain't gettin' nowhere!" growled Leary at the end of a third inconclusive hand-to-hand struggle with only a few battered heads as the result.

"There's gold for all of you!" screamed Carey to his men, and urged them to another attack.

They advanced again, but Archie was quick to see that they came into the light reluctantly and precipitated themselves half-heartedly into the struggle. The Governor, too, was aware of their diminished spirit and got his men in line for a charge.

"We'll clean 'em up this time, boys!" he called encouragingly.

He took the lead, walking forward calmly, and in a low tone pointing out the individual that each should attack. The quiet orderliness of the movement, or perhaps it was a sense of impending defeat, roused Carey to a greater fury than he had yet shown. As the invaders broke line for the assault, he leaped at the Governor and swung at him viciously with a rifle. The Governor sprang aside and the gun slipped from Carey's hands and clattered against the barricade.

Angered by his failure, and finding his men yielding, Carey abruptly changed his tactics. He ran back beyond the roaring fire and caught up another rifle. Leary began circling round the flames in the hope of grappling with him, but he was too late. Without taking time for aim, Carey leveled the weapon and fired through the flames. 319

Archie, struggling with a big woodsman, beat him down and turned as the shot rang out. The Governor was standing apart, oddly and strangely alone it seemed to Archie, and he was an eternity falling. He raised himself slightly, carrying his rifle high above his head, and his face was uplifted as though in that supreme moment he invoked the stars of his dreams. Then he pitched forward and lay very still.

Carey's shot seemed to have broken the tacit truce against a resort to arms. There was a sharp fusillade, followed by a scramble as the belligerents sought cover. The men who had been left outside now leaped over the barricade. The appearance of reënforcements either frightened Carey or the success of his shot had awakened a new rage in his crazed mind, for he emptied his rifle, firing wildly as he danced with fantastic step toward the prone figure of the Governor.

Archie, his heart a dead weight in his breast, resolved that the Governor's last charge to him should be kept. He saw Congdon beyond the light of the conflagration taking aim at Carey with careful calculation. Carey must not be killed; no matter what the death toll might be, the man responsible for it must be taken alive. He raised his hand as a signal to Congdon not to fire, and waited, hanging back in the shadows, watching the wild gyrations of the madman. Carey seemed now to be oblivious to everything that was happening about him as he continued his dance of triumph. In the midst of this weird performance, suddenly widening the circumference of his operations, he stumbled. As he reeled Archie rushed in, gripping his throat and falling upon him. 320

The breath went out of the man as he struck the ground, and Archie jumped up and left him to

Congdon and Leary.

Perky was kneeling beside the Governor tearing open his shirt which was already crimson from a fast-flowing wound.

"He's hurt bad; it's the end of him!" muttered the old man helplessly.

"There's nothing to be done here," said Archie, tears coursing down his cheeks as he felt the Governor's faltering pulse. "We must cross to Huddleston as quickly as possible."

At Carey's downfall his men fled through the woods, pursued by several of the Governor's party. Perky seized the rockets and touched one after the other to the flames of the bonfire. The varicolored lights were still bright in the sky when the answering signal rose from the bay.

"The tug's moving up," said Perky.

A thousand and one things flitted through Archie's mind. The Governor had not opened his eyes; his breath came in gasps, at long, painful intervals. To summon aid through the usual channels would be to invite a scrutiny of their operations that could only lead to complications with the law and a resulting publicity that was to be avoided at any hazard. If a doctor were summoned from Calderville, he would in all likelihood feel it to be his duty to report to the authorities the fact that he had a wounded patient. It was hardly fair to call upon the young woman physician at Heart o' Dreams, and yet this was the only safe move. While Perky and Leary were fashioning a litter he knelt beside the Governor, laving his face with water from the brook. He despatched two messengers to Heart o' Dreams, one through the woods and the other in a canoe.

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They would make the crossing in Carey's launch, while the tug, now showing its lights close inshore could be sent for the doctor. Two men had already started for the beach with Carey bound and gagged and he was to be kept on the tug until some way could be found of disposing of him.

"I'll stay behind; I gotta clean up here; you don't need to know nothin' about it," said Leary gruffly.

One of Carey's men had been shot and instantly killed and another still lay unconscious near the barricade from his battering on the head early in the fight. Leary grimly declared that the others would not be likely to talk of their night's adventure.

It had been a foolhardy undertaking, with potentialities of exposure and danger that added fear to the grief in Archie's heart at the Governor's fall. At best the thing was horrible, and but for the coolness with which Leary and Perky were meeting the situation Archie would have been for abandoning any attempt at secrecy.

"It was th' ole Governor's way o' doin' it," said Leary, as though reading Archie's thoughts. "Ole Governor never made no mistakes. We ain't agoin' to make no mistakes now, doin' what he tole us not to do. I'll go back and bury that poor devil and cover up the place. I guess he's luckier bein' dead anyhow. An' then I'll wake up that other cuss an' get rid of 'im. All you gotta do is t' fergot about it and take care o' ole Governor."

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III

Archie was very humble as he reflected that he hadn't done justice to the intelligence and charm, to say nothing of the professional skill of Dr. Katherine Reynolds in his hurried glimpse of her at Heart o' Dreams. His fears that a woman doctor, who was really only a girl of the age of Ruth and Isabel, would not be equal to the emergency were dismissed an hour after she reached Huddleston. She brought the camp nurse with her and was fortified with bags of instruments and hospital supplies.

She went about her examination without a question; made it as though she were daily in the habit of dealing with wounded men; specifically called for boiling water, laid out sponges and bottles and oddly shaped trinkets of steel, and the Governor's room in the ramshackle hotel was quickly transformed into a surgery. Perky had gone aboard the tug, which was to remain in the bay until the outcome of the Governor's injury could be learned. Putney Congdon kept Archie company in the hall outside the sick room.

The morning was breaking when the door opened.

"There's about one chance in a thousand," said Dr. Reynolds, looking very tired but smiling bravely; "but we've taken the chance. There are reasons, I assume, why this matter should be kept quiet, and of course you know the danger,—to you and all of us!"

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"It's splendid of you to accept the responsibility; be sure I appreciate it!"

"But I have no right to take it. I've done all I know how to do, but there should be another head and a surer hand. Dr. Mosgrove of Chicago has a summer home twenty miles from Heart o' Dreams. He's an old friend of my family and one of the most skilful surgeons in America. I've written him a note and I'm sure he will come instantly."

The note was sent to the tug for delivery and at eight o'clock the surgeon was at Huddleston. He was in the sick room for a long, a very long time. Archie pounced upon him eagerly when he reappeared. He eyed the young man quizzically, apparently immensely amused about something.

"What does all this mean?" he whispered. "Pirates in these waters where I've been summering

for years! Men shot and the police not notified! A girl doctor attending the case! May I trouble you for your name, sir?"

Archie replied with all possible dignity that his name was Ashton Comly, and demanded a professional opinion as to the sick man's chances of recovery. The doctor became instantly serious.

"The bullet pierced the right chest wall and of course there was immediate and copious hemorrhage. You needn't trouble about the delay in getting to the doctor; nature went to work at once, forming clots that plugged automatically the gaping mouth of the severed vessels. You men were fortunate to find Dr. Reynolds; she has handled the case admirably. Dear me! I'm constantly astonished at these girls! You don't know perhaps that your attending physician is a society girl who studied medicine over the solemn protest of her family? Sat on my knee as a child, and it tickles me immensely to see how coolly she takes this. I approve of her work in every particular."

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"Thank you," cried Archie. "Oh, thank you for that! One thing more: would you advise me to summon the patient's sister, his only close relative, I believe? I must do it at once if you think, possibly—"

"Yes. There being always the uncertainties, I should certainly do so. I'll run up in my launch this evening."

Archie accompanied Dr. Mosgrove aboard the tug and gave Perky the hopeful news of the Governor's condition. Eliphalet Congdon demanded to know what had happened in the night, and when he was to be released, and Archie spent some time trying to satisfy him that his solemn covenant with the Governor would be carried out in every particular.

Leary, who had returned to the *Arthur B. Grover* shortly after daylight, showed the strain of the night.

"It was kind o' lonesome buryin' that poor devil over yonder. There wasn't a thing on 'im to tell who he was. That other chap came to and I did the best I could fer 'im, and gave him money; tole him to clear out and keep his mouth shet or he'd do a lot o' time for mixin' up with Carey. I tore down that lunatic's fort and Carey wouldn't know the place himself."

The old fellow's succinct report gave to the burial of the victim of the night's encounter an added gruesomeness. A dead man hidden away under cover of darkness, without benefit of clergy, meant nothing to Leary, who smoked his pipe, and asked in mournful accents what was to be done with old man Congdon and Carey. These questions troubled Archie not a little, but when he suggested that the detective had also to be disposed of Leary grinned broadly.

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"Ole Governor don't do nothin' like nobody else; y' must a-learned that by this time. That chap ain't no detective; he's a gun man we sent to chum with Carey."

Archie bared his head to the cool morning air. It was almost too much to learn that Briggs, who had so gallantly played the part of a government detective, was really an ally, shrewdly introduced into the Governor's strategy to awaken fear in Eliphalet Congdon.

"Perky ain't no baby," Leary said, "an' you don't ketch 'im runnin' into no detective."

"But Perky wired the Governor that he thought he was being watched?"

Leary grinned again.

"Ole Governor was foolin' you. That telegram was jes' to let Governor know Briggs was on the job. Got t' have his little joke, ole Governor. It tickles 'im t' fool us boys."

Archie went at once to the Huddleston station, where he satisfied himself that the lonely agent knew nothing of the transactions of the night. The receipt and despatch of telegrams by the Governor had been a welcome relief from the routine business of the office, and recognizing Archie as a friend of his patron Mr. Saulsbury, he expressed the hope that they were finding the fishing satisfactory.

Archie drew from the breast pocket of his waistcoat the envelope the Governor's sister had given him the night she dined in the New York house. In his subsequent adventures he had guarded it jealously as containing his one clue to the Governor's identity. Now that the evil hour the woman dreaded had come, Archie found himself hesitating as he listened to the agent's complaint of the fate that had stranded him in so desolate a spot. The man turned to answer the importunity of the instrument which was sounding his call and Archie tore open the envelope. In a flowing hand which expressed something of the grace and charm of the woman who had given it to him in circumstances so remarkable, he read:

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Mrs. Julia Van Doren Graybill
Until October 1, Southampton, L. I.

The agent was taking a train order and was unaware of the agitation of the man at the window. It was the Van Doren that burnt itself into Archie's consciousness. It was an old name of honorable connotations, one with which he had been familiar all his life. It was chiseled in the wall of the church near the pew held for a hundred years by his own family; it was a name of dignity, associated with the best traditions of Manhattan Island; and this, presumably, was the Governor's name. Graybill was unfamiliar, and this puzzled him, for he knew and could place half a dozen Van Dorens, probably relatives in some degree of the Governor, but he recalled no woman of the family who had married a Graybill. Julia had said at the Governor's that she remembered him; but even now with her name before him he could not place her.

He made his message as brief as possible:

Regret that I must act on my promise of several weeks ago and use the address given in confidence. Encouraged to believe that the patient will recover. Suggest, however, that you come at once.

To this he added instructions as to the most direct route to Huddleston, and signed himself Ashton Comly.

He and Congdon were at the supper table when he received the answer:

Thank you. I am just leaving. J. V. D. G.

Archie was not permitted to enter the sick room, but from time to time he received assurances that the patient's condition was "satisfactory," and at intervals Dr. Reynolds recited with professional brevity data as to temperature, respiration and the like. A second nurse was imperatively needed, but when they were considering the danger of adding to the number of persons who knew that a wounded man was fighting for his life in the abandoned village, Mrs. Leary suggested Sally—Sally who had been in tears from the moment the Governor was carried into the house. Dr. Reynolds accepted Sally on sight and the girl quickly adjusted herself to the routine of the sick chamber.

At eleven o'clock Archie saw the Heart o' Dreams launch approaching Huddleston and leaving Congdon to answer any call from the Governor's bedside, hurried to meet it.

Ruth and Isabel had crossed alone and their stress of mind and heart was manifest before they landed.

"I felt it; I knew that it would come!" cried Ruth. "If only you hadn't gone there! It wasn't worth the sacrifice."

"But we have every reason to hope! We must support him with our faith that he will come out of it!"

"I should never have permitted either of you to come to this place," said Isabel. "I shall always feel that it was my fault."

The obligation to cheer them raised his own spirits as he explained the nature of the Governor's injury while they sat on the hotel veranda. He described the fight at the barricade with reservations, mentioning not at all the fact that a man had died as the result. They understood as fully as he that the whole affair must be suffered to slip into oblivion as quickly as possible.

"The complications are so endless!" said Isabel with a sigh. "In that mass of mail you delivered last night I found a letter from Mrs. Congdon saying that she would arrive today—almost at once, in fact!"

"The prospect isn't wholly pleasing!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch. "I've played the very devil in the Congdons' affairs. I suppose I should lift my hat politely as she steps from the train and tell her that I'm the brute who attempted to make her a widow. She will of course recognize me instantly as the gentleman who escaped with her in a taxi after the kidnaping of her daughter."

"It seems to me," said Isabel soberly, "that from the very moment you and I unfolded our napkins on the tragic night of your sister's dinner the world has been upside down. If we should ever tell all that has happened, and how we have been whirled about and made to do things I'm sure we were never intended to do, there wouldn't be one sane person anywhere who'd believe it. I feel like crying all the time! And I'm not sure that I'm not responsible for all of it, every bit of it! Why, I may as well tell you now that I, poor, weak, foolish I, bade Putney Congdon take horse and ride gaily through the world, carving people with his stout sword! And I played the same trick on you!"

"Oh, he told me all about that!" laughed Archie, glad of something to relieve the tension. "He told me without shame that he had almost fallen in love with you as a distraction from his troubles. But I didn't confess that you had started me for the penitentiary. There's the train, and you must permit me to satisfy Mrs. Congdon that her husband is in a mood for immediate reconciliation before I break the news that he is here."

Mrs. Putney Congdon more than justified the impression he had formed of her in their encounter in Central Park by the manner in which she heard his story. He told it with all brevity on the station platform. First assuring her of Edith's safety, he made a clean breast of the Bailey Harbor visit, but skipped discreetly all that had occurred between that calamitous excursion and his meeting with her in New York.

It was so incredible that it was not until he described his journey to Huddleston in Putney's company that she was able to see any humor in the series of events that had led them all into the north.

"Poor dear Putney! And he doesn't know yet that you nearly killed him!"

"Oh, there are a lot of things he doesn't know. Your father-in-law has given his solemn promise that he will not again attempt to meddle in your affairs. The umbrella that symbolized his tyranny is at the bottom of the lake and if he should die you and your children wouldn't be thrown upon charity."

"This is all too wonderful to be true," she exclaimed. "After all the misery I've endured it can't be possible that happiness is just ahead of me. I had become resigned—"

"Your resignation after Edith was snatched away from you there in the park struck me as altogether charming! Your conduct pleased me mightily. We were both awful frauds, fooling the police and running away!"

"It was delicious! I had always had a wild wicked desire to fool a policeman. Isn't that a dreadful confession! What must you think of me for admitting such a thing!"

"My own derelictions make me very humble; it's only a survival of the primitive in all of us. I shouldn't worry about it. It's terribly easy to become a lost sheep, even a black one. But this is not an hour for philosophical discussion. Let me assure you that the nasty telegram that caused you to leave Bailey Harbor in so bitter a spirit was the work of your father-in-law. Putney had nothing to do with it."

"Oh, I rather guessed that; but I ran away thinking I might rouse my husband to a little self-assertion."

"And when he asserted himself sufficiently to go back to you I was right there to shoot him!"

"You are a highly amusing person! It would interest me a good deal to know your real name and a lot of other things about you."

"In due season you shall know everything. Just now I haven't the heart to keep you from your husband, and I'm going to send him to you immediately. And as I shrink from telling a man I like so much that I tried to kill him not so long ago, I'm going to turn that agreeable business over to you!"

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IV

That night the Governor's condition took an unfavorable turn and Dr. Mosgrove was summoned. He remained until the crisis was passed.

"We must expect progress to be retarded now and then; but now that we've got by this we may feel more confident. He hasn't been wholly conscious at any time, but he's muttered a name several times—Julia; is that the sister? Then the sight of her may help us in a day or two when his mind clears up."

Archie was beset with many fears as he waited the arrival of Mrs. Graybill. His utter ignorance of any details touching the life of his friend seemed now to rise before him like a fog which he was afraid to penetrate. And there was Ruth, with her happiness hanging in the balance; she was in love with a man of whom she knew nothing; indeed the mystery that enfolded him was a part of his fascination for her, no doubt; and if in the Governor's past life there was anything that made marriage with a young woman of Ruth's fineness and sweetness hazardous, the sooner it was known the better. But when he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Graybill in the vestibule of the train his apprehensions vanished. The poise, the serenity of temper, an unquestioning acceptance of the fate that played upon her life, which he had felt at their first meeting struck him anew.

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"Our patient is doing well. The news is all good," he said at once.

"I felt that it would be; I couldn't believe that this was the end!"

"We will hope that it is only the beginning!" he said gravely.

"A capital place for a beginning, or ending!" she remarked glancing with a rueful smile at the desolate street and shabby hotel.

Putney and his wife had moved to Heart o' Dreams for a few days. It would be a second honeymoon, Putney said. Mrs. Graybill was introduced into the hotel without embarrassment. It might have seemed that she had foreseen just such a situation and prepared for it. She won Dr. Reynolds' heart by the brevity of her questions, and expressed her satisfaction with everything that had been done. When she came down to the dining-room for luncheon she avoided all reference to the sick man. In her way she was as remarkable as the Governor himself. Her arrival had greatly stirred Mrs. Leary, who, deprived of Sally's services, served the table. Archie was struck by the fact that with only the exchange of commonplace remarks the two women, born into utterly different worlds, seemed to understand each other perfectly. He had merely told Mrs. Leary that the Governor's sister was coming and warned her against letting fall any hint of her knowledge of his ways.

"I've never been in these parts before," Julia remarked to Archie; "I should be glad if you'd show me the beach. We might take a walk a little later."

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The hour in which he waited for her tried his soul. The Governor was the one man who had ever roused in him a deep affection, and the dread of finding that under his flippancy, his half-earnest, half-boyish make-believe devotion to the folk of the underworld, he was really an irredeemable rogue, tortured him. These were disloyal thoughts; he hated himself for his doubts. It was impossible that a man of the Governor's blood, his vigor of mind and oddly manifested chivalry could ever have been more than a trifler with iniquity.

"I'm going to ask you to bear with me," said Mrs. Graybill when they reached the shore, "if I seem to be making this as easy for myself as possible. I know that my brother cares a great deal for you. He sent me little notes now and then—he always did that, though the intervals were sometimes long; I know that he would want you to know. Things have reached a point where if he lives he will tell you himself."

"Please don't think I have any feeling that I have any right to know. It's very generous of you to want to tell me. But first it's only fair to give you a few particulars about myself. You said in New York that you knew me and I must apologize for my failure to recall our meeting."

"It was fortunate you didn't! I've known some of your family, I think; your sister is Mrs. Howard Featherstone. Away back somewhere the Van Dorens and a Bennett owned some property jointly. It may have been an uncle of yours?"

"Yes; Archibald Bennett, for whom I was named."

"That's very odd; but it saves explanations. We are not meeting quite as strangers."

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"I felt that the moment I saw the name Van Doren. I had never seen your brother until we met in Maine; he was of the greatest service to me; I was in sorry plight when he picked me up."

He was prepared to tell the story of the meeting, everything indeed that had occurred. He had imagined that she would be immensely curious as to all the phases and incidents of his relationship with her brother.

"Just now I shall be happier not to know," she said, and added with a smile: "Later, when my heart is lighter than it is today you may tell me."

She was magnificent, a thoroughbred, this woman, who walked beside him with the air of a queen who might lose a throne but never the mastery of her own soul. She was far more at ease than he, walking with her hands thrust carelessly into the pockets of her coat, halting now and then to gaze across the water.

"My brother is Philip Van Doren, and there were just the two of us. An unusual sympathy bound us together from childhood, and there was never a closer tie between brother and sister. I married his most intimate friend. My husband betrayed him; it was the breach of a trust in which they were jointly liable. It was not merely a theft, it was a gross, dastardly thing, without a single mitigating circumstance. My husband killed himself."

She spoke without a quaver of the beautiful voice, meeting his gaze as she uttered the last sentence as though anxious to spare herself nothing in her desire to convince him of her perfect composure. One might have thought her an amiable woman attempting to entertain a dull companion by summarizing a tale she had read that had not interested her particularly.

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"It broke Philip's heart; it broke his spirit! It destroyed his generous faith in all men. He was a brilliant student in college and promised to go far in the law; but he felt keenly the dishonor. The financial part of it he of course took care of; that was the least of it. There was always a strain of mysticism in him; and he had gone deeply into astrology and things like that; and when the dark hour came he pretended to find consolation in them. He was born under an evil star, he said, and would not be free of its spell until he had passed through a period of servitude. It sounds like insanity, but it was only a grim ironic distortion of his reason. He said that if honor was so poor a thing he would seek a world that knew no honor. I dread to think how he has spent these years!"

"I have found him the kindest, the most loyal, the most lovable of men. He has simply mocked at life—the life he used to know."

"Yes; I suppose that was the way of it," she said pensively. "In one of his brief messages he spoke of a young woman who had interested him, but I never can tell when he's serious—"

Archie met the question promptly.

"A charming young girl, Ruth Hastings, whose antecedents and connections are the best. You need have no fears on that score. You shall see her, very soon."

She permitted him to describe the meeting with Ruth and Isabel at Rochester, and her face betrayed relief and pleasure as he made it clear that the Governor's romance was in no way discreditable.

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"It is curious, and in his own way of looking at things may be significant, that your telegram reached me on the day following the seventh anniversary of the beginning of his exile."

"He had looked forward to the seventh anniversary as marking the end of the dark influences; he believed there would be a vast change in his affairs."

"If only he lives!" she exclaimed. "Is it possible that he can ever step back into the world he left?"

"You may be sure he has planned a return, with marriage at the very threshold."

"Then God grant that he may live!" she said fervently.

The following evening, after Dr. Mosgrove's visit had left their hopes high, Archie carried her to Heart o' Dreams. Happiness shone in the stars over the northern waters. Putney Congdon and his wife were enjoying to the full the peace that followed upon the storms of their married life. They had established themselves in a tent on the outskirts of the camp and declared that they might remain there forever. A girl bugler sounded taps and the lights went out, leaving tired and happy youth to the fellowship of dreams.

Isabel gave Archie no opportunity to speak to her alone, and he found her aloofness dismaying. Her scruples against hearing protestations of love from a man she believed she had injured were creditable to her conscience, but Archie was all impatient to shatter them. She made a candid confession to Mrs. Congdon, with Putney and Archie standing by.

"With malice aforethought I practiced my vampirish arts upon these two men! And, Alice, the crudest thing you could do would be to forgive me! I couldn't bear it. I flirted with Mr. Congdon; not only that but I took advantage of his distress over his father's efforts to estrange you two to counsel him to lead a reckless, devil-may-care existence. And I tried the same thing on Mr. Bennett, only he was much more susceptible than your husband and took me more seriously. I want you, one and all, to be sure that I hate myself most cordially!"

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"The end justified the means, I think," said Mrs. Congdon.

"I found a friend I'm not going to lose as one result," said Putney. "And if the sick man across the bay recovers I hope I have another lifelong friend there."

"Oh, it's all so strange!" cried Mrs. Congdon. "One might think that we must suffer tribulation before we know what perfect happiness is! And I never expect to understand all that has happened to you men. Is it possible that you'll ever settle down again?"

"That depends—" Archie remarked, glancing meaningfully at Isabel,—a glance which Mrs. Congdon detected and appraised with that prescience which makes every woman a match-maker.

On the wharf they lingered, like a company of old friends reluctant for even a brief parting; Ruth, lantern in hand, stood beside Mrs. Graybill, looking like a child beside the stately woman. As Archie cried "All aboard," Julia caught Ruth in her arms and kissed her.

"Good night, little girl!" she said softly.

It was like a benediction and the very graciousness of act and word lightened Archie's vigil as all night he watched outside the Governor's door.

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V

On the eighth day Dr. Mosgrove announced that his visits were no longer necessary; he ran up to Huddleston, he told Archie, for the pleasure of meeting the agreeable people he found there. The Governor was making an extraordinary recovery, and the bracing northern air would soon set him up. Someone was always on the water between Leary's hotel and Heart o' Dreams, and clouds no longer darkened the bay.

Dr. Mosgrove had made a careful examination of Carey, and recommended that he be sent to a sanatorium for treatment. Perky undertook to carry him to a private institution near Chicago suggested by the doctor, and this became another of the series of strange errands that fell to the lot of the *Arthur B. Grover*. Eliphalet Congdon had been importuning Archie to release him, but it had seemed wise to give the erratic millionaire more time in which to meditate upon his sins.

When the tug returned Archie found that the old gentleman had taken advantage of a day's parole in Chicago to do considerable shopping. In a new suit of clothes he really looked, as Perky said, like a white man; but the change in him was not merely as to his outward person. He opened a bag on deck and displayed with pride a pearl necklace he had purchased for his daughter-in-law, a handsome watch for young Edith and another for his grandson, whom Mrs. Congdon had left with a friend in the east.

"I guess I haven't been square with Putney," he remarked, "and now's a good time to let him know how I feel about it. Here," he continued, producing a bulky envelope, "is two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in government bonds that he may use as he likes."

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"Grand; perfectly bully!" cried Archie. "Please consider yourself discharged from the ship. We'll go right over to Heart o' Dreams and spread the glad tidings."

Though so many vistas were brightening, Archie was still troubled by Isabel's persistent refusal to see him alone, or to give him any opportunity to break down the barriers she had raised against him. After luncheon at the camp, where Eliphalet Congdon proved himself a very likable human being, he sought her as she was leaving the dining hall.

Her young charges were skipping gaily about her; there was no question of their admiration and affection for her. He caught the spirit of their gaiety and took advantage of a moment when Isabel emerged smiling from an adoring group to plant himself before her.

"You are running away from me!" he said sternly. "And that's not fair."

"Oh, this is my busiest day! You mustn't think a place like this runs automatically."

"I think nothing of the kind. But your studied efforts to escape from me are embarrassing. Ruth, the Congdons, Mrs. Graybill—everybody is noticing it!"

"Certain matters are one's personal affair," she answered. "Really I must ask you to excuse me."

"I refuse to be snubbed again! You are trampling me under foot, and I refuse to be stepped on any more. I wish to assure you, Miss Perry, that my love for you is not to be spurned with impunity!"

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"Please be careful! Those girls over there are watching us."

"A wonderful opportunity for them to see a desperate man making love; an invaluable part of their education! They will never forget how I fell upon my knees and declared myself!"

"Oh, you wouldn't! You really wouldn't! You forget that these children are highly

impressionable!"

"So am I, and extremely sensitive. It would be fine if you'd join me in a little walk. If you refuse I shall follow you the rest of the day singing. The Governor and I did a good deal of singing in our travels and—"

As he filled his lungs as though about to burst into song she hastily turned toward the wood.

"You seem to forget that I'm mistress here while you're merely a guest! I hate to say it, but you're in serious danger of becoming a nuisance."

"You're not resentful and hateful enough yet to frighten me away."

'He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.'

"It's a fact we can't escape from that you and I are not free agents and we haven't been from the very moment we met at May's house. And the lines converge here; you've got to admit that!"

"But they lead away again in quite opposite directions. It is cruel of you to insist—"

"I insist that I love you! That's the only thing that matters!"

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"Except," she corrected, "your cheerful assumption that I reciprocate the feeling, when—"

"Let me begin all over again," he interrupted hastily. "You must realize that all the odd happenings that followed our meeting in Washington have come out pretty well; only this little affair of ours—"

"You call it an affair! Calamity would be a better term for it."

This silenced him for some time. Tradition held that the trail they followed was an inheritance from Indian times; it was like an inefaceable line drawn in the forest by the red men in assertion of their permanent title to the soil.

As she walked before him, carrying her head high, his heart ached with love for her. It would be best perhaps not to urge her further; to wait until the camp closed and then see her in a different environment. It might be that his sister would arrange this for him, and he took courage from the thought.

"It has been in my mind for a day or two that May must be wondering what's become of me. I always write to her, you know; and she imagines me in the Rockies. There must be a stack of mail waiting for me at Banff; I must wire to have it forwarded."

"You needn't necessarily give up the trip—"

She turned her head to dodge an overhanging bough and he caught a glimpse of her face; she was crying; and new and world-shaking emotions were stirred in him by the sight of her tear-wet cheek.

"Do you know," he said, "when we talk about clearing up things I'd forgotten about that buried treasure. I think it would be a mistake for me to leave without exhausting all the possibilities of finding your grandfather's buried gold. I wonder if poor Carey knew any more about it than you do!"

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"I'm sure he didn't. There are holes here and there in these woods that he dug in his search. He had an idea that it might be found in the ruins of grandfather's house, but that stood where I built the camp hall and I had the old cellar thoroughly explored. Why!" she exclaimed, stopping short and glancing about thoughtfully, "that's strange."

"We're lost, I hope!"

"Not lost; but there was a fork in the trail and I must have made the wrong turn. I don't remember that I ever saw that fallen tree before."

At some time, perhaps several years earlier, a storm had evidently centered its fury about the place where they stood, and a big hemlock crushing in its fall several smaller trees lay prone across the trail.

"That old fellow must have made a mighty crash when he went down. I'm sure that I never came this way before."

"Here's an old scar," said Archie, "where some one must have blazed the tree years and years ago. It's the mark of an ax or hatchet. And look! Three other big trees bear the same mark. They define a square and must have been made for some purpose!"

Discussion of the markings brought them immediately into accord. Isabel was perplexed to find herself in a spot she had never visited before though she had spent the previous summer on the land, planning the camp, and thought she knew every foot of it. She peered into the pit torn by the roots of the huge tree. The sunlight glinted brightly upon something that lay half hidden in the earth.

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"Oh, how wonderful!" she cried and placed a gold piece in his hands.

They knelt together, tearing up the weeds and loosening the earth. It was Archie who quickly found a second coin, a ten-dollar gold piece stamped 1859. With a stick he dug into the hole and soon they had made a little heap of bright coins, laughing like children with each discovery. A

deeper probe resulted in the unearthing of a splintered cedar plank evidently torn from a chest that had contained the money.

"Of all the astonishing things that ever happened this is the most utterly paralyzing!" exclaimed Archie jubilantly.

Using the board as a spade he scooped out a capful of coins—gold, American, English and French, which the Southerner had buried in the northern wilderness.

"It won't do to leave this place unprotected, and we must stop or we'll have more than we can carry. We must bring Putney back to help. It's my guess that there's a chest of money at the foot of each of these blazed trees."

"And pretty good hiding places, too, where the gold might have remained forever if—"

"If you hadn't been hating me so that you lost your way!"

They stood with the heap of gold between them, the bewilderment of discovery in their eyes.

"This is the end of the rainbow and the gold lies at our feet!" he said, and he took her hands, and the one still wearing the bandage he held very, very gently. "Love we know to be better than much fine gold; and wouldn't it be a pity for the finding of these coins to mark the very end, with nothing beyond! And life is so big and wonderful I want your help to make mine of some use—"

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She looked at him long and searchingly, and her eyes were so grave, their questioning seemed so interminable, that he did not know until she spoke that her lips had trembled into a smile.

"If you can forgive me," she said; and she laid her hands upon his shoulders, lightly as though by their touch she were investing him with her hope in life renewed and strengthened, and giving pledge that they would walk together thereafter to the end of their days.

During his convalescence the matter of the sixty thousand dollars taken from Seebrook at Cornford troubled the Governor greatly. While he had not personally profited by that transaction it was, he said, his nearest approach to actual larceny and he wished to make reparation, the more particularly as Eliphalet complained that the sale of his stock was frustrated by the mysterious substitution of Leary's stolen bills for the money in Seebrook's trunk. Whereupon Archie bought the stock from Eliphalet and sent it with ten thousand dollars in cash to Seebrook, enclosing in the packet he confided to Briggs for delivery a note explaining that the theft had been a mere bit of pleasantry for which the guilty person offered the sincerest apologies.

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Before he left the North the Governor made generous provision for all who had shared his fortunes. Perky sold the *Arthur B. Grover* to a dredging company in Chicago and the proceeds were divided among the crew. To each man's share the Governor made a substantial addition with the stipulation that the recipient should engage thereafter in some honorable calling. It may be said that in every instance of which the present chronicler has knowledge the man thus endowed invested wisely in a lawful business and so far has kept his promise.

When he closed the hotel Leary took Perky to his home further up the lake, and as Mrs. Leary was perfectly capable of managing the confectionery alone, the two old friends purchased a garage, where in the abundant leisure of the long northern winters they discuss the exploits of their lawless days and read the newspaper reports of the performances of their successors in the predatory arts, deploring, of course, the ineptitude of the new generation. The underground trail ceased to exist with the passing of the Governor, and as you tour the Green Mountain State you may pause at Bill Walker's farm and enjoy a glass of buttermilk on his veranda without fear of a raid by the constabulary.

Eliphalet Congdon is at peace with all the world, and wherever a chess tournament is forward he may be observed, sometimes an interested spectator, but not infrequently a participant and a shrewd and dangerous adversary.

Sally Walker deserves and shall receive a final word. When Mrs. Graybill left Huddleston, happy and wholly at ease as to her brother's future, she took Sally with her, with every intention of adopting the girl and carrying her abroad for a protracted stay. As Pete Barney was killed late in the summer while attempting to escape from the Ohio penitentiary, Sally was quite free to enter upon a new life, and from all accounts she is realizing fully the expectations of her benefactress.

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In the loveliest of Colorado's valleys you may, if you exercise your eyes intelligently, note three houses in the Spanish style, with roads that link them together as though publishing the fact that the owners of the surrounding ranches are bound by the closest and dearest ties. As an adjunct of his residence Putney Congdon maintains a machine shop where he finds ample time for experiment. The Archibald Bennetts are learning all there is to know about fruit culture; and they are so happy that they are in danger of forgetting the existence of cities. Farthest of the three homes from the railroad, and where the hills begin, Philip and Ruth Van Doren chose their abode. And you may see them any day that you care to penetrate to their broad pastures, riding together, viewing with contemplative eyes the distant peaks or the cattle that are the Governor's delight, a link, he says, between the present and the olden times when the world was young. And often at night, when they are not with the Congdons or the Bennetts, they ride for hours in silence, so great is their happiness, so perfect their understanding, so deep their confidence in the stars.

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