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Author: Herbert D. Ward

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A REPUBLIC WITHOUT A PRESIDENT AND OTHER STORIES

BY HERBERT D. WARD

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW SENIOR AT ANDOVER," "THE MASTER OF THE MAGICIANS," ETC.

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A REPUBLIC WITHOUT A PRESIDENT.

PART I.

On the morning of the eighth of June, 1893, at about ten o'clock, crowds were seen clustered in front of the daily newspaper bulletins in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Boston. The excitement rivalled that occasioned by the assassination of Garfield, and by night the country was as bewildered and aghast as when the news came that Lincoln was murdered. This was the announcement as it appeared in blood-red, gigantic capitals by the door of the New York *Tribune* building:

UNPRECEDENTED CALAMITY!

AWFUL MYSTERY!

THE PRESIDENT AND HIS WIFE SPIRITED AWAY FROM THE WHITE HOUSE!

TWO SERVANTS FOUND GAGGED!

NOT A TRACE OF THE DISTINGUISHED COUPLE!

THE COUNTRY AGHAST AT THE DREADFUL POSSIBILITIES OF THIS DISAPPEARANCE!

Extras found enormous sales, but they contained no more news than this. Business was brought to a standstill and stocks fell in half an hour from five to twenty per cent. The land was convulsed. It was true that there were those who thought the whole thing a colossal hoax perpetrated by the defeated party. But as time went on the startling and incredible news was confirmed. The evening edition of the New York *Sun* had these ominous headers.

THE PRESIDENT AND HIS WIFE HAVE ACTUALLY DISAPPEARED.

THE GAGGED SERVANTS OF THE WHITE HOUSE TELL THEIR STORY.

THEY ARE IN PRISON ON GRAVE SUSPICION OF CONSPIRACY.

THE CARD OF AN EMINENT POLITICIAN FOUND IN THE VESTIBULE OF THE EXECUTIVE MANSION.

IS A DARK POLITICAL PLOT ABOUT TO BE UNEARTHED?

The next day found the situation unchanged. Rumors of every description ran wild. Telegrams of condolence from all the sovereigns of the world were received at Washington by the dazed Department of State. These were fully given to the omnivorous press. By order of the Vice-President, all other news was for the present rigorously withheld from publication. To this censorship the press submitted cordially. Mystery was brooding over the land, and despair laughed detectives in the face. Men met each other and asked only this question:

"Have they been found?"

A sad shake of the head always followed.

"No wonder," the Governor of Massachusetts was heard to say, "with thousands of assassins coming over here every year. Even our President was not safe. God help our country!"

At the end of a few days the full news, as far as it went, was published, and the nation then drew its second breath. The facts about this stupendous abduction, as given to the public by the end of the week, were briefly these: This is the affidavit of the night sentry, who was stationed in the vestibule of the White House.

"My name is George Henry. I am thirty-four years old. I was born in this country. My father was a slave. It was about one-thirty last night when I was aroused by a double rap at the main entrance. I was not asleep, but I may have been a little sleepy. I asked who was there, and a voice answered that the Secretary of State wished to see the President on business of the greatest importance. I answered that the President was in bed. He said that he must see the President immediately. Then I thought I recognized the voice of Mr. Secretary. I opened the door and, sure enough, Mr. Secretary entered. He had on a silk hat and the gray overcoat he usually wears. He gave me his card, and told me to take it right up to the President. The door was left open and I noticed it was raining. The carriage of the Secretary was standing under the portico. I did not see the coachman. When I bowed and turned to go upstairs there was a strange smell in the air, and I remember nothing more."

The cross-examination brought out from the prisoner, who seemed to answer honestly and

intelligently, that he was sure it was the Secretary of State, but his voice seemed changed by a cold. He felt positive about the carriage, for he recognized the team, a gray and a black. He heard no voices outside. When chloroform was produced, he said that was the same smell, but there was something more that was considerably tarter. He persisted in the same story, and repeated it over and over without variation. It looked dubious for his excellency the Secretary of State.

The next witness was the night sentry on the second floor. He was badly frightened, was a little confused, but told a straight story. His deposition was as follows:

"Yes, sah, my name is Frank Steven. I have alluz been a colored man. I was bahn in Ohio when I was twelve years old." [At this juncture a glass of ice water restored the equilibrium of the witness.] "I moved to Ohio when I was twelve years old. I was born in Mississipy. I'm forty-two now, I think. It might have been half after one or two when I heard a step a-coming up the stairs. I went to the landing and saw Mr. Secretary of State a-coming up with his hat on; and how he got there the Lawd only knows. He told me to show him to Mr. President's room. He spoke mighty sharp, and I thought it was all right, so I led the way. When I was a-going to knock at Mr. President's door, he told me to stop and have a cigar first. He never offered me one before, and I was mighty surprised. There was a strange smell, like an apothecary store and I don't know anything more about it. That is all I know, sir."

Subsequent examination brought out no new fact, except that the prisoner remembered that the Secretary coughed behind a handkerchief as he spoke, and that one hand was concealed under his gray overcoat; this was pulled over his ears. The thing that struck him most was that the Secretary kept his hat on during the whole interview. The watchman had never known him to keep his hat on in the house before. Like the first witness, he recognized the odor of chloroform, and thought there was something else besides. He was surprised to find himself gagged and bound when he came to.

As the two witnesses corroborated each other, and as neither had any communication with the other, they were substantially believed. The fact that this testimony was indisputably damaging to the Secretary of State, and the further circumstantial evidence of his card having been recovered from the floor of the lower vestibule, caused the investigating committee, of which Inspector Byrnes was the chairman, rigorously to exclude all reporters, lest the evidence might make it, to say the least, uncomfortable for the suspected dignitary. It was natural that, by ten o'clock on the morning of the drama, a secret guard should be placed over the head of the Department of State, though no movement was made as yet toward his arrest.

The next witness of importance was the President's valet, who swore that the President retired unusually early that night and dismissed him with the special injunction that the house should be kept quiet, as the President had a headache and wished perfect rest.

It may be well to state here that the new incumbent of the presidential chair shared with his wife the traditions of Jeffersonian simplicity of living, and that they departed so little from their original home habits that house detectives were abolished, and the distinguished pair lived, entertained, and slept with as scant formality as the sovereign people allowed. The doors communicating with their sleeping apartments were rarely locked. Full dependence for safety was placed upon the two trusted watchmen whose deposition has been given.

The children and their attendants, who slept in adjacent rooms, heard no noise during the night. In short, none but the two under strict arrest were aware of the entrance of any person or persons after twelve o'clock. In the meanwhile, detectives were stationed unostentatiously throughout the White House, watching with professional acuteness the movements of everyone within its doors.

At eleven o'clock precisely on the morning of the ninth of June, Inspector Byrnes and the chief of the Washington police drove up in a hack to the door of the Secretary's mansion, and requested a private interview. Within was feverish commotion. Senators and Representatives, public officials and men of eminence were sending in their cards and excitedly discussing the dreadful news. Telegrams were beginning to pour in. The first impression was confirmed that a political coup or revenge was at the bottom of the shocking affair, and whispers were mysteriously exchanged between sombre and stately heads.

When the Secretary saw the cards he immediately withdrew, with an aside to the Secretary of War: "This visit may clear up some of the mystery." These words were not calculated to soothe the impatience of the inner circle.

When the three were alone in the private office, the chief of the Washington police force tersely opened the subject. He was a blunt official of adamantine integrity, a veteran of the war.

"Mr. Secretary," he began, "this is the saddest day the country has known for many a year. You must pardon me if I ask you a few leading questions."

Inspector Byrnes sat with his back to the light; for, with an inimitable fashion of his own, he had, upon entering, made a debouch between two chairs and a table, forcing the Secretary to sit with his face to the glare of the window. Shaded himself he could with impunity watch the least expression on the sensitive and noble countenance before him.

"Sir, do you recognize this card?" The question came like a musket shot, and a card dropped, face

upwards, on the Secretary's knee. Kellar could not have performed this feat more neatly.

The Secretary glanced at the pasteboard for a moment, and said in evident surprise:

"Why, yes. It is one of my cards."

"Have you any more with you?" asked Inspector Byrnes, speaking for the first time.

The Secretary seemed puzzled, but good-naturedly opened his wallet, and produced several of the same description. These he handed to the Inspector, who took them and bowed profoundly. A moment was spent in intense examination.

"You must pardon me if I ask you if you use these cards when calling upon the President?" proceeded the Washington officer. The Inspector's eyes seemed to be still riveted upon the cards in his hands.

"Why, yes—no—that is, once in a while, if I happen to desire an audience at an unusual hour," answered the Secretary, exhibiting the first signs of embarrassment.

"Will you please tell us when you called there last?" asked Inspector Byrnes, furtively glancing up and speaking in a chatty, assuring tone.

The Secretary's face expressed relief.

"Certainly," he answered; "that is easy enough. I attended an informal reception in the Blue Room from three to four yesterday and saw the President alone a minute afterward. That is the last time I saw him." One might almost have fancied at the last sentence that tears arose to the eyes of the cabinet officer; at least there were tears in his voice.

"Just as a matter of formality, Mr. Secretary, will you tell us where you were between twelve and two o'clock this morning?" asked the Inspector, with the unconscious look of a man who was asking for a glass of water.

"What does this mean, sir? Do you suspect me in this infernal mystery?" ejaculated the Secretary. His face was pale from excitement; his eyes flashed in manly protest.

"Not at all, not at all, sir. Calm yourself. This is only a matter of curious coincidence and a disagreeable formality," answered the Inspector, waving his hand as if he were brushing away a fly.

The Secretary stood a moment in thought, and then turned and touched a button. Immediately a servant appeared to whom the Secretary whispered a few words. The man in livery bowed and went.

"Now, gentlemen," said the Secretary, standing with much dignity before his callers, "wait a moment, and so far as I am concerned this mystery shall be cleared. I happened to be in this room last night from twelve until half-past two with some gentlemen, whom I am sure you will recognize. Ah! here they are."

A tap at the door and a "Come in" revealed to the astonished detectives the Secretaries of War and of the Interior, who entered the room.

"Now, Inspector," continued the Secretary of State in his grandest manner, "will you kindly ask your question again?"

It then transpired that the three Secretaries had conducted an informal meeting to confer about the distressing question of war with Canada which was at that time agitating the country, and that their interview had been prolonged into the small hours of the morning. The chief of the Washington police could not refrain from profuse apologies after this denouement. Inspector Byrnes thought profoundly, and then, after a pause, burst out with unparalleled frankness:

"Gentlemen, this is the most startling mystery in the annals of American crime. I must confess that up to this moment I am absolutely foiled." He then recounted, under seal of secrecy, the whole story as we have seen it. Ending his exciting narrative, he said:

"And, Mr. Secretary, do you know of any one in Washington or in the country that resembles you enough to deceive two men, taking into account a natural drowsiness that each admitted?"

The three gentlemen of the Cabinet thought hard but were soon bound to answer in the negative. For the Secretary of State was no ordinary-looking man. Conspicuous on any occasion, though not what might be strictly called handsome, he always commanded attention by his distinguished air. His luxuriant side whiskers, which were really magnificent were the most noticeable feature of his face. He had the happy consciousness that there were none like them in the United States.

"There is only one more question you can answer, Mr. Secretary," said Inspector Byrnes, with a deferential look. "The watchman on the first floor said he recognized your team. Will you please find out whether your coupé was in or not between twelve and two? Coachmen have queer tricks at times."

The coachman was immediately sent for. Meanwhile the Secretary stated that he had come in at twelve from a late call on a personal friend.

"May I ask your friend's name?" interrupted the national sleuth-hound, swiftly and politely.

"The Patagonian Ambassador," replied the Secretary with hauteur. He added that he had sent his carriage instructing John, the family coachman, to be on hand at eleven that morning. The carriage was evidently not there, and in the excitement of the news the Secretary had foregone his morning's Department business.

After half an hour of waiting, during which the two police officers had sent out several messages, the coachman was ushered in among the impatient quintet. Instead of the prim and stately master of the horse, who was the despair of even his co-peer the Jehu of the English Ambassador, and the admiration of the Washington gamin, there skulked in a battered, bandaged, hastily-dressed man, who shuffled out incoherent excuses, and burst into moist apologies.

"It wasn't my fault. The divil was in it. The hosses are safe. The kerridge is well. I woke up in the gutter, the blood sputterin' down me backbone. They were picked up this morning. Don't discharge me! I've served you fifteen years and only trained twicst. What'll become of me? Lord have mercy!" The coachman of the Secretary had a stock of irreproachable syntax, which had been utterly scattered during the experience of the last night. At this spontaneous moment his native grammar got the best of him.

The coachman's testimony amounted to this: The driver was walking his horses to the stable in the fog when he saw a man beckon him from the sidewalk. Not a soul was on the street. Beyond was a dark, private lane. He stopped, and, to his surprise, saw, as he thought, his master standing and motioning him to come to a halt and get down. The Secretary's face was turned toward the dark. The voice sounded muffled. When the coachman alighted his master produced a silver flask and told him to take a drink as it was so damp. He dared not disobey, though full of wonder at this unprecedented favor. As soon as he had taken a pull he felt dizzy. Two or three more black figures appeared like ghosts before his eyes. He thought he struck out or tried to run to the coach, he didn't know which. A queer odor mounted to his head. Then he lost consciousness. He came to, early in the morning, a little after four, and staggered to the stable. The team was not there. He fell into a stupor of despair. About an hour after, an acquaintance of his drove the span up, and said they had been found unchecked, grazing near the Smithsonian Institute. He supposed that they had run away. The Secretary's coachman had then given the fellow five dollars for his services and to hold his tongue. He was afraid of being discharged. He had just heard of the disappearance of the President and he feared being implicated in the affair. After the name of the person who found the horses was taken down, and after a searching cross-examination, the frightened man was sent away to rest, with assurance of continued favor. Subsequent examinations failed to find any traces of the catastrophe in the coupé. It had been carefully cleaned when it came back to the stable. There was no blood visible.

This completes the whole of the testimony and information that was received or discovered by the united efforts of all the detectives in America up to the fourteenth of the month. Clews had been manufactured and followed with desperate rapidity, but to no avail. Numberless arrests had been made, but no one could be legally held for high treason against the Chief Executive. All that was known was this: that some bold villain had successfully personated the Secretary of State; that he had gulled three servants by a close resemblance; that he, with others, probably, had forcibly carried the President and his wife from their very beds, leaving them but scant time to take the necessary articles of clothing; that these abductors had audaciously used the State carriage for their nefarious purpose; that they had left absolutely no trace behind; and, that moreover, in the darkness of the fog and rain no further track could be found of the direction they took. They could not have gone by train; so every house in the city of Washington and in the suburbs, to the distance of fifteen miles or more, had been searched in vain. A like systematic investigation was carried on along the river, to the bay, in search of anything suspicious afloat. The authorities gave the robbers of the nation no time or opportunity to escape by land or water. All avenues were watched. Where were they and their noble booty? In short the foremost couple of the United States had utterly disappeared, to the horror and despair of the civilized world.

It was just one week from the morning of the shock when the New York *Herald* published the following manifesto in its original form. It was sent as an advertisement with five dollars enclosed. The envelope was postmarked from division II of the New York Post-office. The document bore no superscription. It read as follows:

> TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES:
>
> *We have abducted your President and his wife, and hold them for ransom. They will not be delivered up until their fine be paid publicly, under full sanction of Congress. Moreover, Congress and the people must guarantee, in addition to the full payment, C. O. D., entire liberty to the abductors permanently to withdraw from this country and live in future peace. Unless Congress and the nation give their honor for the payment of the ransom and our personal and impregnable liberty, we will not deliver our prisoners. We impose a ransom of a million dollars apiece for each week, for such time as this offer may remain unaccepted. The time begins from date of capture. These conditions are final. When the country, through its representatives, accedes to this demand, the time and place of delivery will be published in these columns. The loyalty and honor of the nation are now on exhibition before the world.*

This communication burst like dynamite upon the people. Did it not bear an undeniable stamp of genuineness upon its face, not only through the firmness of its tone, but by the audacity of the demand? Yet there was an equal division of opinion. Some thought it was the raving of a crank in

search of notoriety, but others looked upon it as a veritable communication from those who held the President and his wife in their possession.

Two millions of dollars a week! A princely ransom worthy of a royal couple and of the United States.

It was natural that the handwriting of this letter should be scrutinized severely. Every ingenuity that detective art could devise for finding the sender was employed. During the next few days New York underwent an espionage worthy of the court of St Petersburg. But, to the utter mortification of Inspector Byrnes and his myriads, of Pinkerton and his myrmidons, they were bound to confess their utter failure. The perpetrators of the incredible deed, like

"An arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,"

brandished the sword in the air and disappeared.

In the meantime the political nation was aroused. It experienced some measure of relief to know, if it were true, that its chief was held for paltry gold. In that case, he and his would be safe from the assassin's sword or the vengeance of an alien party whose hatred he had incurred by patriotic scorn in his inaugural address. An yet, the question was raised whether some treasonable secret society had not secluded him, hoping to increase its revenue at the expense of the United States treasury. Many went so far as to pronounce it a Fenian plot to raise money for Parnell in his final overthrow of English rule in Ireland. Constituents wrote to their representatives in Washington, instructing them to vote the ransom, without delay, from the surplus fund, which was now one hundred and seventy-eight million dollars. Others instructed them not to waste the public money, as the President and his spouse must soon be found by competent detectives, and thus a "creditable saving to the treasury" would be made. The Vice-President, who had succeeded to full powers, sent a special message to Congress, requesting it to vote the ransom, no matter how enormous. The strain on him was not worth the people's money. So Congress met in secret session, and spent the balance of the week fighting, temporizing, and receiving telegrams to the effect that new clews were found.

On the twenty-second of June, exactly two weeks from the time of the distinguished capture, the following epigrammatic communication was printed by the New York *Herald*, in the same handwriting as the previous one. The envelope bore a Chicago postmark:

> "*Congress has disregarded our generous offer: The ransom for the President of the United States and for his wife is therefore raised two million dollars.*"

This was all; cold and ominous. Like the first message it was unsigned. The style was unrelenting and imperious. Citizens awoke to the sensation that they who were now the nation's martyrs were in the hands of men who would not shrink from enforcing their demand. It was now universally believed that these were *bonâ fide* bulletins sent by the unscrupulous abductors themselves. This became the detectives' final theory, and they massed their skill towards it.

The unsolved mystery brooded like dog-days over man, woman, and child. A nameless fear, that of an unknown and irresistible enemy in their midst, paralyzed the citizens. Prayers were offered in every church, school-house, and home. The hostilities that but lately threatened the country ceased. Civilization breathed nothing but sympathy for the bereaved republic. Sovereigns redoubled their private guards and quaked upon their thrones. And yet, in the face of fears, petitions, and threats, Congress, in a spirit of disastrous conservatism that has marked so many of its deliberations, allowed itself to be ruled by a dissenting minority. Detective Byrnes, hoping to gain imperishable credit and also the reward of five hundred thousand dollars which Congress had been liberal enough to offer, counselled delay in a private letter to the Speaker of the House. So it happened that this august body would not ratify the overwhelming vote for immediate payment of ransom which had just been passed by the Senate.

This filibustering brought the country into the third week of the calamity. The following communication to the New York *Herald*, postmarked Boston, written in the same hand as before, brought matters to a crisis:

> "*The nation has evidently more love for their surplus than for their President. The requisite ransom has reached six millions of dollars in gold. The treasury is not yet exhausted, nor are we. None can find us. Our defences are unapproachable. We laugh at your attempts. The wife of your President, we are grieved to say, is ill.*"

This proclamation aroused a new element, which had been smouldering, to white heat. The women of the country rose *en masse*. They fired old societies and organized new to collect ransom. The W. C. T. U. and W. H. M. A. and A. S. A. and A. B. C. and X. Q. B. Z. thrilled to the occasion. Infant Bands of Hope and Daughters of Endeavor invaded private families with demands for penny subscriptions. Weeping women persuaded dollars by the tens, hundreds and thousands from responsive men. They renounced their bon-bons and new dresses, parties and dowries in their patriotic fervor. The presidents of all the women's societies in the land trooped to Washington. They cried shame at those who trifled for the sake of the fiftieth part of the gold in the vaults with the noblest life in the Union. These unselfish women stormed the capital, and literally poured two millions of dollars, which they had collected in less than three days, upon the floor of the House to rescue the first lady of the land from who knew what? They forced their

husbands, their representatives, to do their bidding, and the final vote was passed amid indescribable scenes.

The ransom was now ready for the President and their lady. It had to be accompanied by the national promise to secure freedom to those who delivered up the suffering couple. That was the third of July. Still the impotence of the nation in this new crisis filled thoughtful men with apprehension. Was it moral that cash instead of justice should be given to these stupendous criminals? What a precedent for infamous success! Of what avail courts of law and prisons if such consummate daring goes unpunished? Is there a portion of our national machinery out of gear? If so, which? Nevertheless the excitement was now beyond fever heat. It is safe to say that the temperature of the people had risen ten degrees when the news was flashed abroad that the "President's money," as it was called, had been unanimously voted by Congress. Tears streamed as patriots met each other. Many developed a new species of insanity in their suspense.

The country had now done its part toward the rescue of its chief magistrate and of his perishing consort. Would the abductors be true to their portion of the contract? Party strife had been forgotten in this new anguish. All Fourth of July demonstrations had been postponed until a loving people's thanksgiving for their President's safety could blend with the time honored celebration of a nation's birth.

But suspense was not long delayed. Promptly the New York *Herald* received a manifesto, this time the last, sent by the arch-conspirators to Congress and the people. This envelope was boldly postmarked Washington. This fact made those in the capital city almost afraid to stir from their homes lest unawares they might meet the demon in their midst who had dwarfed all principals in the records of crime up to the present date. But this final proclamation read as follows:

> TO CONGRESS AND ALL AMERICANS.
>
> *We note your late and liberal response to our proposal. We shall not be outdone in the honorable discharge of obligations. At precisely eight (8) o'clock on the morning of July sixth (6th) the payment of ransom and delivery of captives will take place within one mile of Washington's homestead, Mt. Vernon. The government vessel with ransom and proper officials on board will remain in near sight of Mt. Vernon. At our signal (which shall consist of four Japanese day rockets, each representing a flaming sword) whether hurled from land or water, the officers of the government will steam toward the place of delivery. Guards will fall back immediately upon the discharge of whistling bombs until the ransom and the ransomed meet. The Presidential party will bear a flag, vertically striped black and crimson. On its centre will be a gold half-eagle. Payment must be made as follows: There must be eighty (80) leathern bags, each containing one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) in gold; the amount of ransom being eight million dollars ($8,000,000) for four weeks' board at one million dollars ($1,000,000) a week apiece. This money must be paid and its genuineness certificated upon the honor of the United States by the Secretaries of State and of the Treasury. If there is any suspicion of infidelity on the part of the nation, the President and his wife will be held for another month on the same terms. Should we be betrayed in the trust which we have reposed in the American people, on the 6th of July, at, or previous to the time of delivery, the distinguished hostages will immediately be put permanently beyond reach of hope.*

Unscrupulous and stern was the message, yet tinged with a spurious color of honor that demanded the true blue in return. It was the consensus of opinion that it would be madness to attempt arrest during the culminative ceremonies. The required gold was transferred from the treasury vaults to the new and swift cruiser *Washington*.

Final arrangements were made for giving the imprisoned couple the most glorious reception which ingenuity and patriotism could devise. Reporters by hundreds bivouacked on the grounds of Mt. Vernon on the night of the fifth. Gunboats, steamers, yachts and sail of every description congregated to the scene of the surrender. The land teemed with sight-seers and soldiers with stacked arms. In the midst of all this apparent disorder, Inspector Byrnes, on his own responsibility, had his thousand trained men, who patrolled every foot of ground within five miles of the historic site, and who had surveyed every inch of water from the mouth of the Potomac to the city of Washington. He had hoped to retrieve his fame by a successful capture at the eleventh hour.

At last, though it seemed a century in coming, the morning of the sixth of July broke solemnly upon Mt. Vernon. The revered site was flanked on all sides by seething, excited, hopeful humanity such as these historic shores had never before witnessed. The official command had been to abstain from all noise and confusion on land or water from the time of the sunrise gun.

The cannon boomed from the new navy. Then came the hush. The last hours of waiting were spent in maddening inactivity, in strained repose. From what quarter would the ominous signal be seen? Who would catch the first glimpse of the boldest and most successful gang of malefactors that this country had ever produced?

PART II.

Colonel Oddminton was a widower, with only one son, fifteen years old. It was natural, then, that the colonel himself should balance between forty-five and fifty years of age. Let the fact only be whispered in desert places that the colonel was no more a colonel than you are. He had never smelt powder, except when shooting mallard ducks. He never had seen a regiment, except when it was marching on Decoration Day peacefully through the woebegone streets of Charleston, preparatory to a good dinner. His nearest idea of regalia and medals consisted of the many adornments worn by Queer Fellows or any other order of Honorable Unextinguished Redskins as they either laid a corner-stone or a comrade ceremoniously in the ground. Where could he have lived and not have been an active partisan in the stirring days of our devastating civil war? Surely, not in the United States!

Of English exile blood, that came over a hundred years ago, he would have been a thorough American had his parents and his environment permitted. His family had settled on one of the many Sea Islands that dot the coast of South Carolina, and there they had staid and raised the famous Sea Island cotton which is still successfully used, so fine its fibre, to adulterate a fashionable fabric. Like the baryte of Cheshire, the cotton of Oddminton Island became valuable as it became an ally to fraud. The one increased the weight of white lead; the other swelled the unlawful receipts of the manufacturers of silk. Oddminton Island did not follow the regular markets of trade. It always had its peculiar channels of commerce; its cotton had an undiscoverable destination.

The colonel, as we will still call him, was, from his earliest memory, sternly brought up under an atmosphere of uncanniness and secrecy, nor did he leave his fertile island, except, as we shall mention, until his father died and made him sole proprietor of land, slaves and family traditions. Fully two hundred acres were under cotton cultivation. The insignificant remainder was unentangled marsh.

Colonel Oddminton's father died in eighteen hundred and sixty-one. Then the colonel began to expand. He had two hobbies that consumed his imagination by day and agitated his visions by night. The one had been shared by his deceased parent, namely, an inordinate desire to be rich; not as wealthy as the richest family in Charleston, but as rich as all the merchants in the "City by the Sea" put together. Cotton had always given a comfortable living, but cotton was declining. It became unsatisfactory. It was not enough.

Colonel Oddminton's other hobby was a fast boat. He had always been a more than enthusiastic sailor. When the boy was only eighteen, his father had given him a ten-ton sloop and allowed him to go anywhere, provided he did not touch the mainland. This order was in accordance with the old man's peculiarities, but was strictly obeyed. With his black sailors the boy had cruised in every bay and inlet for a hundred miles about. Though no one else knew it, he was the best pilot those waters ever saw. During the war, when he was master, he never left his island except to put his own cotton aboard English blockade runners. In these hazardous attempts he never failed. This experience cultivated his native qualities of courage and of self-possession.

On this island of his there was a bay that afforded fine anchorage for two large boats. It abutted on the marsh. It was there he had built a small camphouse. Neither the cove nor the house could be seen from the open sea. The former could only be entered through an intricate channel, and that when the wind and tide were favorable. The latter was approached through heavy underbrush by a winding passage that was known only to a few.

Colonel Oddminton was a tall, fine-looking man. He wore a long flowing beard that had never seen the razor. His build was massive; his height was manly.

About the time of which we are writing—this was in—but the reader remembers—his new schooner, which he had dignified by the name of yacht, much to the amusement of a few acquaintances, had been easily beaten by a trim stranger, that ploughed its way to windward as if it had been a knife eating into the teeth of the gale. He had followed this new craft to harbor and found her to be a Herreshoff model. That night, for the colonel's schooner was really an able and fast one, the disappointed man was sadder than when he saw his only friend, his father, die. He was proud of his schooner. He had cruised in her from Baltimore to the St. John's river, and had never been so disgracefully out-pointed and outfooted by any boat of her size before.

It was at this time that he fell into a revery that lasted a month. It was the longest month in his life, the only one he had ever spent upon the mainland. People pronounced him "daft," decidedly cracked, but "harmless, you know." His tall figure flitted from the lobby of the Charleston Hotel to the great cotton wharves, and then back again. At last he awoke, and this was the outcome of his supposed aberration.

"I don't care if it costs me my last cent, I'll have the fastest boat in the world, and no one shall beat me again, by gum!"

To make a long story short, he sold to an eager syndicate of English capitalists his island for an asparagus farm, reserving for himself the odd acres of marsh, his camp house and bay with its two moorings. On this sale he realized a hundred thousand cash down. He then turned his father's savings, fifty thousand dollars' worth of London consols, into ready money. He now had a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. With this he and his boat disappeared. No note was taken of his absence either on his former property or in Charleston, the only other place that really knew him, so frequent were his vagaries, so infrequent his presence.

Let us follow the Colonel in his unostentatious wanderings. He first sailed with his son and his

two trusty men direct to Washington city. He took in the sights of the Capital for a few weeks, and then, leaving his boat behind, pushed on by train to New York, that wonderful metropolis that obliterates or worships men with an idea. He took lodgings with his son in a modest boarding-house, and there met a Swedish sailor, a man who had been captain of a steam yacht during the summer, and now happened to be out of employment. Nautical people do not take a long time to become acquainted. Colonel Oddminton at the end of a week had engaged Hans Christian on the strength of his name, without further references, at a salary of one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month, with the proviso that his new captain should hold his tongue and obey orders. This was about the first of November. During the last week of the same month the yachting world, and indeed the whole maritime contingency, were interested in the following paragraph, which was duly copied and commented upon by the national and foreign press:

> "*The famous builders, the Herreshoffs, have taken a contract to build a steel yacht that shall develop the enormous speed of 35 knots an hour. They are given 'carte blanche' for everything that pertains to increase of speed. The new phenomenon will be about a hundred and fifty feet long, as less water line will not admit of the speed contracted for. A bonus of $500, it is rumored, will be paid for each additional one half-knot speed over the contract requirements of 35 knots. The engines that will effect this speed will be of a new and untried pattern. They will not be exhibited unless the vessel prove a success. The owner of this phenomenal craft, which will be the fastest in the world, is unknown. It is suspected that it will go to the Swedish government for use as a torpedo boat. The yacht will be finished in five months, and her name is undecided. We should respectfully suggest 'Sheet Lightning.*"

At this time Colonel Oddminton and his son began to travel restlessly. They kept it up all winter until the first of May. The lad had developed as much aptness for the land as he had for the water. There were two things the boy did admirably, and for which he was conspicuous beyond his years. He held his tongue and obeyed his father; moreover, he was clever enough to take care of himself.

With the first of May the ceaseless journeying came to an end, and Rupert Oddminton was sent to Washington to put his father's old schooner in readiness for future orders.

The press, which had volunteered during the winter much plausible but little real information about the wonderful new Herreshoff model, now blazed into the rare glory of fact.

> "*The first trial trip of the unknown took place yesterday. The marvellous witch astonished spectators by showing up to the tune of 35-1/2 knots, and it is suspected the end was not reached. This unparalleled speed was continued for 125 minutes in favorable weather. This proved the most successful trial trip the Herreshoffs ever held. Thus the singular and hitherto undivulged electric machinery proves a triumphal hit. After a few minor changes the unnamed yacht will be ready for its destination. Who will own the fastest ship in the world? It is conceded that she goes to Sweden. Her crew, which is entirely composed of Swedes, is strangely uncommunicative——*" and so on.

One fine day, the magic craft shot out of Newport harbor and vanished. Some said she went straight to Europe. Each daily had its own theory. The boat and her evanescence were a nine days' wonder. The yacht that represented the most exhaustive skill man had ever applied to navigation had melted away, unnamed, unlicensed, and without destination. Even her builder knew her no more.

The reader knows, as well as we, that this triumph of speed was Colonel Oddminton's venture. He had literally sunk his all in it with maniacal satisfaction, and had only a few thousands left, barely enough to pay expenses for three months. He had pursued his ideal until he had her under foot. He had not touched the new yacht until after it had left the world in wonder. He had now met her on the high seas in his old schooner, and the four—himself, his boy Rupert and the two black sailors—with sad eyes, scuttled the home of many years. When the Colonel's foot touched his new, bright deck, Captain Christian nodded, and the blue flag to starboard of the mainmast (signifying owner absent) was hauled down. The crew beheld their master for the first time. Not a sail was in sight. The Colonel was dazed. He went below, gulped down a pint of whiskey, and tried to think. He was intoxicated—not on liquor, but on final possession. When he came aloft, spray was whistling from stem to stern, and behind was a wake that overtopped the racer itself. Water rushed as though projected through a pipe, past the shining sides of the vessel. Colonel Oddminton, in a trance, leaned over and touched the steel plates carefully. He expected to feel the heat generated by the tremendous friction. Captain Hans Christian stood respectfully at his side.

"What speed does she register, Captain?" asked the owner, with a tremulousness new to the man.

"Only thirty-two knots, sir, in this chop, but we can drive her thirty-eight. I think she can go forty on the hardest push."

Only the owner of Nancy Hanks, the fastest racing horse the world has yet produced, can imagine the sensations of the Colonel at this answer.

"What is the speed of the fastest government boat?" he asked with deliberation.

"Twenty-six knots, sir," was the quick reply; "they've only two torpedo boats that go that; and they are always up for repairs. As for war-ships or cruisers, none average over twenty. A common ocean steamer can beat them out." This last was uttered with the contemptuousness one always feels toward a mighty government that allows itself to be outdone by corporations or individuals.

"Suppose you change her top hampers, and make her so that no one can recognize her; say, tack on a false stem and stern to the water line, will she still go as fast?" continued the Colonel cautiously.

"Certainly, provided you don't interfere with her hull," answered the captain in surprise.

"I will take the wheel," the Colonel said. The electric vessel from whose wheel there was an unobstructed view ahead, without smokestack, with masts that could for speed's sake be lowered, was steered like any sail-boat, from her heaving stern. The owner's hand marked half speed, quarter speed upon the indicator. To the disgust of the crew he gave orders not to have the speed increased except to keep out of sight of coasters. At dead of night the beauty was anchored in his own cove, opposite his clapboard shooting lodge on the marsh. No one noticed his approach. The marsh and the bay hid their secret.

The next day at dawn a transformation began to take place. The white paint, the original and dainty body color of the electric yacht, was changed to a dull gray, and the new coat looked as if it had been put on in amateur patches, so dingy was its appearance. The boats on the davits were touched up with a combination of green and black. They looked at first glance as if a collier might have lost them at sea. The electric launch was smeared with the refuse of the paintshop put into one pot. The mixture attained was indescribable. But by far the greatest change consisted of a false stem and stern. These were modelled and put on, so that after a few screws were drawn, the mask would slip off, leaving the original sheer of the boat in all its beauty. A large smokestack of hollow timber, painted black with a red stripe, was improvised and set up. This ornament led into the galley stove below, and the cook was instructed to burn smoky materials when on the run. The deck was then covered with canvas and painted a sickly yellow. The brass work went unpolished. As may be imagined, the new model was as different from the old as the carefully disguised ruffian on the stage is from his elegant self.

"Now she is ready," said Colonel Oddminton to his captain. "I will double the wages of all on board if the crew does not leave the ship or converse with any person off of it except by order. My two colored men will get all supplies. The future speed of my boat will be eight knots an hour. She is incapable of going more. That is her limit until further orders. Give command for an immediate start. We will now go to Charleston."

The son and the crew from the captain down suspected that something was in contemplation out of the usual run of pleasure trips. The son dared ask his father no questions, though he burned with indignation at the vandal changes. The crew did not care, even if they went pirating. Nothing could overtake them. Their fuel was limitless. Their pay was princely. Their cook was supreme. These stolid natures obeyed orders and drew their rations with faithful punctuality.

It does not take long to run to Charleston, going at even so slow a pace. Small steamers ply daily between the Sea Islands and the cotton metropolis. It happened that some of the Colonel's acquaintances were on board one of the passenger boats, and they saw this new craft lumbering along, puffing out volumes of black smoke. They slowed up, and were soon overtaken by the strange boat. The Colonel was sitting on deck.

"Halloa," one of them yelled, laughing. "Where did you pick up that thing, Colonel?"

"Oh, down in New York. She's an old-fashioned steamer. I haven't had time to get her fixed up yet," answered the Colonel. "I always wanted a steam yacht, and I got this cheap." The passengers set up a laugh.

"We'll race you in," spoke up one of the Colonel's acquaintances, with a wink at the others. The man knew the Colonel's weakness when he challenged him.

"All right," said the Colonel briskly. "John!" yelling forward, "tell the engineers to put more steam on and let her go."

New puffs of smoke came from the bogus smokestack. The sidewheeler increased her pressure. It forged ahead at its highest speed, ten knots, and no more. Colonel Oddminton swore, but to no effect. The passenger vessel left the Colonel behind, amid jeers and all the catcalls familiar to Southern methods of demonstration. The Colonel seemed heartbroken. When he *steamed* into Charleston harbor two hours after his ancient rival, the wharf was crowded with the Colonel's "friends." When the Colonel came ashore he dropped a few characteristic oaths, ordered drinks all around, and said that, after the *Mary Jane* (that was the name painted, on her square-stern) was prinked up and her bottom scoured, she would beat the best of them yet. He had great faith in her possibilities. At any rate she could go in a calm.

Similar performances were repeated for a week. The Colonel planned it to get to the city in the morning and he went back at night, until Charleston was thoroughly familiar with his ridiculously antique yacht, and had joked itself tired at his expense. Soon an elopement and a murder tickled the palate of the city, and the Colonel and the *Mary Jane* were forgotten. When that stage was reached Charleston knew him no more. It was now the second of June, and the *Mary Jane* turned

her ugly prow toward the mouth of the Potomac river.

Every one knows that the Potomac empties itself into the Chesapeake bay. The Potomac is between ninety and a hundred miles long, in its tortuous route from Washington to the bay. At its mouth are many inlets. Each one of these was known to Rupert and the two negro sailors. It was in the most retired estuary that the *Mary Jane* cast anchor on the evening of the fifth of June. At her normal rate of speed she lay within two and a half hours run of the Capital. At nine, at black of night, she started for Washington. Her deck-log registered thirty-six knots an hour. She hugged the shore, where she laid for safe passage, until she modestly crept to an anchorage near a city wharf. Then the Colonel went ashore with his two black men and two Swedes, to reconnoitre the town. He always took with him a preparation of chloroform and another drug, which, for the sake of public safety, we will not mention. This was compounded for him in Chicago, by a chemist formerly in the employ of Anarchists. This preparation was warranted to "make a man who smelled it lose consciousness in less time that it takes to say Herr Most."

When Colonel Oddminton was last in Washington a casual smoking-room acquaintance remarked, eying him with the gaze of a professional physiognomist:

"If you'd shave off your chin, and keep your hat on, you'd be the very picture of Senator X——."

Now Senator X——, through a revolution of the political wheel, had become Secretary of State. That casual remark had penetrated into the imagination of the Colonel. He tried to shake the impression off. Flattered by this suggestion—no one had ever made it before—he bought photographs of the Senator, all he could find, and studied them diligently. For days he haunted the Senate chamber and learned the personnel of the Senator by heart. [This, it will be remembered, was in the last administration.] Then was born the thought, Why not make capital out of this resemblance which art could easily magnify? The Senator was a millionaire. There might be money in it. But this seemed, after all, rather impracticable and rather commonplace. The Colonel was no sneak thief. He had broader elements than that. The man, but not the blood, was ignorant that his grandfather's great-grandfather was hung for piracy in England. It would be impossible to state when the stupendous plot, which he finally executed, shaped itself in his subtile brain. This idea startled him, haunted him, conquered him; why not kidnap the President of the United States, demand a ransom and throw suspicion, for a time at least, upon the wily politician? His thoughts now worked only in that conduit. Jacobi said that the greater a man's ability to act for distant ends, the stronger his mind. The Colonel silently plotted for months. We see where it had led him. Having studiously perfected himself in the rôle of Secretary, which he was prepared to play at a moment's notice, the Colonel spent the remainder of these last nights in Washington, awaiting an opportunity to capture the Secretary's coach, after it had been dismissed by its owner for the night.

He also kept himself closely informed of the President's habits and his simple domestic hours without arousing any suspicion. All Washington knew the customs of its unostentatious chief. Society had criticised his "affected Democratic ways." Every one knew that he habitually retired as early as a New England deacon, never later than eleven. White House dissipation was now out of season. The Colonel knew that the interior of the executive mansion was unguarded at night. Could he once gain access thereto, the rest of his plot, so ignorant and so trustworthy his tools, could not miscarry. The Colonel made the attempt for three consecutive nights to capture the Secretary's coach. He arrived each time in Washington between eleven and twelve. He knew the approaches to the stable, and luckily for him, on the dark night of the eighth of June he accomplished his design, how successfully the reader well knows.

The strategic Colonel, with his four devoted men, invaded the privacy of the White House at exactly quarter of two o'clock in the morning; he had the aid of a card taken from the case in the coupé, and the re-enforcement of his now marvellous resemblance. What he now did the veriest tyro could have performed. He had not meant to abduct the first lady of the land, but what could he do with her? His native chivalry would not permit him to harm her, though the President was made unconscious by the aid of the Chicago anæsthetic. The wife entreated to accompany her husband. She would undergo any fate so that he should not be taken without her. On condition of perfect quiet her wish was gratified. She was softly led, the President was carried, down the deserted stairs. The familiar state coach bore the distinguished victims away, and the deed that baffled the detective skill of the country was done with an ease which seems ridiculous.

The next evening the President and his wife might have been seen by Inspector Byrnes, had he been there, silently sitting on the deck of a murky-looking vessel, bearing name *Mary Jane*, and anchored in a little cove off a swamp and cottage on Oddminton Island. So remote and quiet was this locality that the rumor of the President's effacement had not even reached it. The kidnapped couple waited patiently for the relief that they momentarily expected. They had no news, nothing but scrupulous consideration, attention, and a respectful but firm guard night and day. But rescue did not come.

One member of that dark crew was left in Washington to hold continual communication with the Colonel. This was the boy Rupert, who, if he had suspected by this time what had happened, was either too loyal or too terrified to reveal the fact. The letters that astonished the world were written by the Colonel, sent to his son sealed, directed each in a different handwriting, and stamped with full instructions how and where to mail them. The boy had travelled faithfully and far. Of course a letter posted by an innocent-looking boy of fifteen, who was unsuspected and unknown, was able to baffle the law. He was the only confederate, a helpless and faithful tool.

A country that opens itself in so many ways to foreign foes must not be startled if one of its own sons, perceiving the weakness of the armor, should take advantage of it and choose his direction for the vital thrust. The Colonel aimed high. He kept his counsel and accomplished the incredible in the simplest way. Who thought of him and the crazy *Mary Jane*? The President and his wife were as far away from rescue as if they were on the Island of Borneo. There are a thousand such places on our coast where a hostile fleet might ride without even the suspicion of our "Lord High Admiral."

It was ten minutes of eight o'clock on the morning of the eighth of July. A fleet of many hundred vessels of every description lined the banks of the Potomac opposite the revered home of Washington. There were gunboats and catboats, excursion steamers and yachts from every part of the country. They idly lay at anchor, or jogged barely enough to hold their own in the tidal river. All flags hung at half-mast. While most eyes scanned the heights with impatient glance, others watched the water for a revelation. The sides of the hills were black with humanity. The world seemed to wait there with a throe of hope subsiding to an interval of despair.

The high officials of the government were standing on the quarter-deck of the new man-of-war. *The Washington*. Each had a pair of glasses to his intent eyes. This was the moment when the Secretary of State, from his high elevation, spied a long, low vessel moving slowly amid the floating palaces and dreary hulks. It seemed apologetic in its movements, and afforded a sad contrast to the jaunty yachts it almost grazed. None but the Secretary had as yet noticed this in significant boat. Somehow it fascinated him, and he followed it intently. It was propelled by steam, and crept up as if it wanted a nearer view of the morning's performance.

Now a police patrol launch whistled that way, and gave the sailor at the wheel an abrupt command to bring her up to a stop. Hardly was this order given when there came a puff of smoke from her uncouth bow, and an ominous flaming sword appeared against the dead gray sky. A sound that could at first have been mistaken for a subterranean growl rolled upon the still air. When the second flaming sword flashed into mid-heaven the mutter of the populace became a roar. It was true! True! The President and their lady were at hand and in their midst. Two more ill-omened rockets gleamed above. Was it execration or was it joy—this mighty sound that broke from river to shore? Then silence came again. Eyes strained to see this mysterious thing that made straight for the great man-of-war. But one soul was seen on its dingy decks. Only the man at the wheel was visible. He was clad in black. A hundred vessels instinctively closed about this daring and defiant craft. Its escape was cut off. It could neither go to the right nor to the left, forward nor back. It sullenly stopped.

Then came a whistling shriek, followed by a cannon peal from its forequarter—another—and the flag of black and crimson crowned by the gilt eagle, touched by unseen hands, shot like a baleful spirit from the peak.

"Keep off!" shouted a stern voice from the bow. "Keep off, ahead there! Let the nation stand back at the peril of their chief magistrate!"

Now the Mystery swung ahead, until she was abreast of the high warship, any one of whose lowering guns would have gladly shattered her if it had dared.

When the execrable vessel came to a halt, and breathless and dignified faces peered upon her decks from above, a sudden bustle was observed. From below there mounted slowly his excellency the President of the United States, attended by the first lady of the land. Both looked pale and anxious, but bore signs of powerful self-restraint. At sight of the revered couple, the man-of-war's crew could not control themselves, and set up a mighty cheer. This was caught up from ship to ship, from shore to height. Flags were hauled aloft. Guns were discharged. A pandemonium of joy set in. Behind the captured couple two men in black walked, each with a cocked revolver. The honored pair reclined on steamer chairs in full view of their people. The world knew now that they were safe and nearly home. Greetings were exchanged between Cabinet and Chief. Even war-scarred veterans could not choke down the rising apple in their throats.

Again there was a hush. A figure now stepped from a forward hatchway on deck of the *Mary Jane*, walked up to the captured couple, and bowed low. This salute was succeeded by a courteous recognition of the impatient crowd above on board the *Washington*. As the unknown raised his silk hat for the second time, he stood directly in line with the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State and Col. Oddminton regarded each other. Bystanders started in surprise. The resemblance between the two men was deeply suggestive of the success of the plot. The villain had the same noble brow, the same delicate complexion, the same incomparable whiskers. But, alas! he was bald on the top of his head. The Secretary involuntarily stroked his own luxuriant crown with a sigh of relief.

"Gentlemen, representatives of these United States," said the Colonel slowly, "I have faithfully fulfilled my part of the contract. Do you yours. I will come aboard and inspect the ransom. Then it may be lowered down, and the President is free. I have not long to stay." In the meanwhile, so intent were all eyes upon the star actors of this scene, it was not noticed that men were busily engaged at stem and stern of the unshipshape-looking steamer.

Hands worked deftly at masts and funnel.

After a few minutes, during which the expectant couple sat with as much comfort as one can before loaded pistols, the ransom was inspected, the Colonel satisfied. Eighty bags of gold were

carefully lowered to the pirate craft.

As the Colonel descended alone to his own deck he motioned with his hand. Immediately the pistols were flung into the water. The seamen in black fell back as a guard of honor. The Colonel, with Southern grace and British dignity, extended his arm to the distinguished and trembling hostage. This she did not refuse and he led her to the cream-white companionway that now reached from the *Washington* to the *Mary Jane*. The marines presented arms. The women sobbed. Then came the President. When his foot touched his own deck there thundered forth a salute of twenty-one guns from the American navy. Whistles blew, flags and handkerchiefs fluttered, and mad salvos rent the air from subjects that any sovereign would gladly call his own.

The President now looked down with sad curiosity upon his former prison. But there strange things had happened. The caterpillar had cast off its chrysalis, and the incomparable butterfly appeared. Where was the smokestack? Where were the masts? Where was the *Mary Jane*? A load seemed to fall from stem to stern, and there appeared beneath dingy paint a sheer which a king might long to possess. This was the crowning surprise. Naval officers now recognized for the first time the nautical marvel which had deluded the nation. The Colonel stood alone upon the deck of the transfigured boat. With uncovered head he spoke. His left hand grasped the wheel.

"Mr. President—I have guarded you safely, and treated you as well as circumstances could permit. Your patience in adversity, and that of your wife, have compelled my reverence. You were but the scapegoat of a nation. This country can never afford to be careless of its defences and of the treasures which they protect. People of America! You regard me as the chief malefactor of your times. The day may come when you will call me its greatest benefactor. To-day you execrate me. To-morrow you may bless me. I have taught you a solemn and a costly lesson, but the price of such wisdom is cheap. Good-morning!"

There was no opening, but the hawsers were suddenly cut. There was a rush and billows of foam. As a cat plays here and there in her pretty antics the "*Lightning*" (for a blow of the hammer on the stern had annihilated the *Mary Jane*) wound in and out at an unequal rate. When she turned, she careened far over on her side. The water lapped the Colonel's feet. Who could stop her? Who could overtake her? At the first shock the gunners stood motionless, then sprang to their guns. The President, Commander-in-chief of the army and navy, raised his hand and shook his head.

The faith of the nation was pledged, and the pirate escaped without a shot. The incredible speed of the *Lightning* increased. It became terrific. Nothing like it had ever been witnessed in maritime history. Spectators stood with held breath.

A lieutenant in his excitement shouted: "For God's sake, overtake her!"

The crowd yelled: "Run them down! See where they go!"

But the navy of the United States might as well have chased a cannon ball. The mental pressure became tremendous. Spectators had hardly drawn a breath when the miracle was hull down. The American love of audacity and speed struggled mightily for the moment with American patriotism. The moral sense of the people could not prevent a murmur of admiration when the *Lightning*, with eight millions of national gold aboard, in less than nine minutes was but a speck. A bend of the river, and the mysterious, courtly and successful pirate was gone.

THE LOST CITY.

I.

"Great guns!" The ejaculator tipped his straw hat off with his left hand, let it roll upon the office floor, made a dab for a damp pocket handkerchief in his right pistol pocket, and stared at the yellow paper again. "Whew! I don't believe it!" he muttered. Then, aware that the keen eyes of the three-and-a-half-foot messenger boy were upon him, as if sizing him up for news, he stared at the telegram again, mumbled "It's a fake! Great guns!" and rushed from the room.

The messenger boy looked after the editor's retreating form with a knowing wink, as if the whole thing had been a special job put up by himself, whistled "Annie Rooney," took up a tattered copy of "Famous Quotations," laid it down again with an expression of mingled respect and scepticism, characteristic of his kind, and then swaggered out of the editorial sanctum.

"Well, Swift, what's up now?"

The editor-in-chief of the *Daily Planet* (Democratic) lifted his young, alert face from the evening edition of his own journal to that of his news editor. Interruptions were the expected thing in that stirring office.

Swift did not speak, but laid the telegram upon the desk, pulled out a Victoria Regina, and chewed it nervously. The chief read the message through once to himself, gave one glance at the face of his subordinate, and then said:

"This is a repeat, is it not?"

"Yes sir. First news came three hours ago. I didn't believe it. Thought it a fake. Half think so still. I wouldn't insert it, and wired for an immediate reply. Here it is. It is too late for the five o'clock edition. What shall I do?"

"Well, this *is* extraordinary!" conceded the chief. This admission meant a great deal in that office, deluged with news from all parts of the world, where it frequently happened that fourteen columns of purchased and paid for telegraphic despatches were not considered important enough to use, and were dropped in the waste-paper basket. The chief pressed the button in his desk and asked the boy that appeared to inform Mr. Ticks that he was wanted at once.

Mr. Stalls Ticks answered the summons promptly. He was a sallow, faded, middle-aged man, dressed in a sere and faded Prince Albert coat, with sallow and faded boots. In fact, the whole appearance of this invaluable member of the *Planet* corps gave one the impression of the last minute of autumn, when even the trunks of the trees, the stones of the hills, the soil of the valleys look sere and yellow and faded and ready for a winter's sleep. Mr. Ticks looked as if he were waiting for the trance that never overcame him.

"I wish to know something of Russell, the capital of the new State of Harrison, Mr. Ticks."

Mr. Ticks pulled out a yellow, faded, silk bandanna, wiped his spectacles sadly, and with an over-aspirated tone asked:

"Yes, sir?"

Mr. Swift looked at him with mingled disgust and respect, and tapped his foot impatiently on the bare floor.

"Let me see; it is situated?" proceeded the chief quietly.

"On the southeast shore of the Great Gopher lake." Mr. Ticks finished the sentence mechanically.

"Ah! I remember. Its population?"

"Twenty-nine thousand five hundred and fifty-two. It increases at the rate of thirty a day."

"Exactly so! It is—?"

"Just two years nine months and twelve days old."

"To be sure. Its property—?"

"Is one hundred and sixty-four million dollars, in round numbers."

"Of course. Its industries are—?"

"The usual pertaining to Western cities, I suppose. I confess ignorance to concrete particulars. The reports have been singularly deficient in this respect. I credit this entirely to its youth."

"Indeed! Its railroad facilities—?"

"The C. H. & S. F. is its great trunk line. Three branch lines have their centre there—just built. Two roads are surveyed to shorten the distance to Chicago and San Francisco respectively."

"Any other facts of interest, Mr. Ticks?" Mr. Ticks hesitated.

"Well—no—yes—no. In fact, there is nothing of special importance that I—that is different from any other city—except—nothing, sir, that I am willing to stake my professional reputation upon; you must excuse me, sir."

"Is it in the cyclone area, Mr. Ticks?"

"No, sir. The centre of barometric depression is farther north. The Buzzard mountains to the south deflect all such storm centres. Russell will be singularly free from tornadoes."

The editor-in-chief looked somewhat nonplussed, and handed Mr. Ticks the telegram, with the remark:

"What do you think of that?"

"I do not know, sir. I cannot give an opinion."

"I, Mr. Ticks, I for one believe this is true. I'll—I'll stake my reputation on it!" said Swift decidedly. Mr. Ticks' exasperating caution grated on the news editor and converted his scepticism into conviction.

"If it is," replied his chief, quietly, "you can start for the scene to-night on the six thirty express. You did up the Charleston earthquake. You were the first on the spot at Johnstown, and this promises to be as bad—or as good."

Swift tried to look indifferent at this cumulation of trust. He had been on the paper for five years; he had started in as night reporter, and his own ability and quickness, united with a certain caution, one might call it a news integrity, had raised him to his present position. The *Planet* had the singular reputation of printing the truth. It rarely was "taken in," with a false item. It aspired

far beyond the local.

The *Planet*, under the able management of its chief and of Swift, had become the mirror of the world. And, if at times it reflected important news from a convex surface, it did no more and far less than the majority of its contemporaries, who had no telegraphic facts to throw away daily, and who, when hard pressed to it, manufactured a murder at home or a war rumor abroad to help pad their lean columns.

"Let me see! It is five forty-five," continued the chief, consulting his watch. "I will not detain you any longer, Mr. Ticks. We shall want a column from you on Russell, to-night. And now, Swift,"—when Mr. Ticks had faded out of the room,—"who's this correspondent signed D.?"

"It's Dubbs. You know him. Associated press man and special correspondent. Never failed me. He's the only one there who knows our cipher."

The editor-in-chief did not change his expression, but his eyes had the steady, stern look that showed easy determination. He quickly wrote a few words on his pad and handed them to his favorite "sub."

"Take this to the cashier! Get to the elevated as fast as you can! Buy what you need when you get time, and—*go!* I depend on you for the fullest description to be had. If you do as well as you did on the Conemaugh, I'll give you a raise on your return. Good luck to you."

It did not take Mr. Swift five minutes to rush to his den, slip on his coat, snatch his hat from the floor, run downstairs, receive a fat roll of bills from the phlegmatic cashier and bolt for the elevated train. In twenty-five minutes he was at the central station, with two minutes to spare. He nodded pleasantly to the gatekeeper and boarded the train as nonchalantly as if he were going to his suburban boarding-house.

II.

All of our readers will remember the curiosity, the speculation, the horror, the apprehension, and the sympathy universally excited when, on the tenth of September, it was learned from the morning papers that Russell, the new capital of Harrison, was cut off from all communication. Each morning sheet hinted darkly at the cause of this unheard-of calamity. The *Daily Braggart* said there was no doubt that a cyclone of gigantic proportions, followed by a water-spout, had swept the city entirely away, and that its evening edition would print full details of the "awful visitation," with pictures by their special artists, now on the spot, illustrating the ruin.

Rut there was one piece of additional news about Russell that only the *Daily Planet* gave. Let us quote, in order to be perfectly accurate. The sheet is before us as we write:

> "EXTRAORDINARY CALAMITY!
>
> "RUSSELL CUT OFF FROM ALL COMMUNICATION!
>
> "*The citizens of the State of Harrison are wild with apprehension. As yet we cannot speculate on the nature of this disaster. Up to this moment no one knows what it is. We will be honest, and say we know no more than our neighbors. But this much is assured: Not only is communication cut off within a radius of twenty miles of the ill-fated city, but it is impossible to re-establish it at present. There are forces at work as yet uncatalogued by scientists. There is a definite circle drawn about Russell, and to cross it means death. Two men repairing the C. H. & S. F. tracks dropped, smitten by a mysterious and invisible hand. The white mile post announced that Russell was twenty miles from the spot where the corpses of these brave fellows lay. What baneful miasma envelops this broad area? What is the fate of the thousands within its borders? Time will tell. Our reporters are on the spot. But as we go to press we do not know.*"

Most people sniffed at this "dead line" as the wildest newspaper canard of the lot. Many shook their heads. While those who had relatives or friends or business connections in Russell tried to drown their horrible suspense as best they could.

The *Planet*, it may be remembered, closed its leading editorial as follows:

> "*We are a Democratic paper, and we had little love for this baby State and its upstart capital, created solely to guarantee a Republican majority at the next presidential election. But when the news that an inscrutable fate had overtaken this fraudulent State (we may be pardoned for saying that it seems to us a sort of Divine retribution for political jobbery) party feeling was washed away in that common compassion that all Christians feel for their enemies in adversity.*"

Who could mistake the diction of the uncompromising but tender chief?

But it happened this time, as so often before, that the *Planet's* information was true. Again that enterprising daily had made its "scoop" on the other papers. Its elation was pardonable.

It is an indisputable fact that civilization as it progresses develops in its advance new diseases

and new catastrophes. Hay fever and la grippe were not popular a hundred years ago. To breed a first-class cyclone, cut down your trees and dry up your water supply. This has been conscientiously attended to, and the natural consequences have followed. Science can eliminate the simooms that strike Bombay and Calcutta at such a day year after year, by simply flooding the desert of Sahara. England can be more easily conquered by deflecting the Gulf Stream a quarter of a point than by a thousand ironclads. Who knows but that it would be less expensive to change her into a glacier than to bombard her with hundred-ton guns?

More white people are killed by railroad accidents yearly in our highly civilized land than were slaughtered by native braves in the palmy days of the "Last of the Mohicans." It is a fact that our boasted civilization, instead of affording surer protection, murders more men in one way or another than barbarism, only in the present case the victims are not eaten; the coffins are sumptuous; the processions decorous; the mourners in good form; the burial service pregnant with hope, and culture is not shocked. With us murder is committed by corporations, not by paid assassins. That is the difference. The assassin fails in his blows once in a while; the corporation never.

But where was Russell? What was the nature of the calamity? The impenetrable fact that there was an actual, invisible dead line cast about that territory, with Russell as its centre, became confirmed with every report. It will be recalled that all the railroad tracks entering the doomed city were twisted as if clawed by a maddened monster. It presented a similar appearance to the South Carolina railroad on the day of the Charleston earthquake. This gave rise again to the earthquake theory. But why had not the shock been felt? No rumble had been heard. Could an earthquake account for the deadly something that filled the air?

No intelligence came from Russell. The way must be forced to it.

Who forgets the relief expeditions started in wagons and on foot from every point of the compass? These were invariably repelled on reaching the dead line. We could understand the fetid miasma that made the Great Dismal Swamp an unknowable country. We could comprehend the encroaching dead line of the spreading yellow fever bacillus. But this fearful death, that brooded silently, impenetrably, mysteriously and occultly over a vast area once the garden of civilization, baffled all attempts at explanation. Even birds were observed to vacate this tract. Only a few sinister buzzards wheeled their flight, with straight, unflapping wings, high above Russell, almost out of sight, as if they were the embodied ghosts of Russell's unbaptized inhabitants.

What was that implacable power? Reporters and trackmen who steadily scoffed at it were themselves attacked with violent heart-beats when they crossed the invisible and fatal line. A convulsion of all the members followed, as if in an epileptic fit,—insensibility and, generally, death ensued. Many who were with difficulty rescued, and who finally recovered, averred that they experienced an overcoming odor, acid and penetrating, such as is peculiar to ozone when manufactured in a chemical laboratory.

At the end of the fourth day of Russell's complete isolation a despair settled upon the country. England was staggered by the uniqueness of these phenomena. The French Academy of Sciences, after a prolonged sitting, announced that they could suggest no solution. It is only too well remembered that the newspaper bulletins were besieged in our own cities, but these offered no further information or encouragement. Was advanced civilization responsible for this disaster or not? That was the burning question. Or was this a special visitation of God, a plague new to the medical world, spontaneously generated, sporadic in its appearance, and destined forever to be an *obscurum per obscurius* or perhaps to spread with further undetermined horrors?

Thousands were now on the ground. They encompassed that section about as Joshua did the city of Jericho, as the settlers did the Territory of Oklahoma on the day of its opening, as the rabble do a house when a murder has been committed.

On the evening of the fourth day from the time when the messenger boy brought the first despatch to the office of the *Daily Planet*, its chief, obviously nervous for the first time in his public life, received the following cipher telegram, which cheered him wonderfully:

> "*On the spot. Situation desperate. Worse than described. Will penetrate to Russell or die. Dead line still impassable. Trust me.*
>
> "SWIFT"

III.

When Swift boarded the Western express he walked through, starting from the last car, to see if any rival reporters happened to be there for the same purpose. He scanned the backs of the heads of the passengers first, and then looked keenly into each man's face as he passed. He had, in common with all newspaper men, the detective instinct. Who knew what eminent defaulter or renowned cracksman was fleeing the city in dark disguise? However, he observed no familiar or suspicious character until he entered the smoking car.

He did not go through, for, although a great smoker, he took no pleasure in indulging in his favorite vice in the air of a democratic smoking car. What fastidious smoker does? He was content to let his eyes wander up and down the aisle. He was about to turn, when his gaze fell upon the back of a dingy linen duster, which was surmounted by a large, faded, black sombrero. The man under these garments had the upper part of his face hidden beneath the broad flap of his hat, while the under part of his face was entirely submerged in a large pamphlet. The man had the air of extreme retirement. Something about the dinginess of the felt hat seemed familiar to Swift. But, no; it could not be. To make sure, the new editor of the *Planet* approached, and bent behind the man. The gentleman was ignorant of the attention he attracted, and did not stir. He seemed to be engrossed in one of Mr. Atkinson's incomprehensible financial reports. Swift caught sight of the travellers face, started back in amazement, and said:

"Excuse me, sir: is this seat engaged?" and without further ceremony sat down beside the recondite stranger, who dropped his paper and stared at Swift in return.

"Great Cæsar!" blurted out Swift. "How the D—epartment did you come here?"

"On the five fifty-eight elevated," replied the man, imperturbably.

"I—I didn't know you were sent, too." Swift's heart burned within him at the fancied slight.

"I wasn't," answered Mr. Statis Ticks, laconically and wearily.

"Where the dickens are you going, then?" asked Swift, warmly.

"To Russell, of course."

"How on earth did you get off?"

"I didn't, young man. I skipped." This exceptional occasion doubtless accounted for the only bit of slang that was ever heard to fall from those dry lips. "You see," proceeded Mr. Ticks drearily, "the circumstance is a little unusual. I have read of nothing similar in the casualty reports. I thought it best for my reputation to make my own personal observations and figures on the spot."

"But your position?" asked Swift in surprise.

Mr. Statis Ticks raised his head proudly.

"If the *Planet* can get on without me, let it!"

"But your family?" continued Swift, somewhat dazed. Who had suspected this animated reference library of such enterprise?

"I sent messenger number thirty-seven to them," he answered with a sigh, as if he were bored by such trifles.

Then considering this topic exhausted, Mr. Ticks took out his notebook and looked absently out of the window; now and then he jotted down a few abstruse figures. He was engrossed in calculating the farm acreage adjacent to the railroad track between New York and Albany.

When they drew nearer to the region of the catastrophe the papers gave more lurid accounts of it. These were purchased and read with avidity by those on board the flying express. Groups centred in the cars talked only of one thing. Reporters now joined the train at each prominent city.

As the train approached the stricken territory it became crammed to suffocation. It crept at a funeral pace. People fought at each station for seats. The train split into sections on account of the added cars, filled with mourners, with rescuers, with sight-seers, with villains.

Swift now took to himself a certain measure of authority. Was he not the experienced representative of the greatest daily in America? But no one noticed Mr. Statis Ticks, who silently blinked at the excited crowds and then jotted down his estimates of them.

On the afternoon of the fourth day Swift bounded from the front platform of the baggage car, the first to leave the train, and looked with a professional eye about him. The scene that met his quick gaze was unprecedented. Clamoring, gesticulating, shrieking, crying men and women were rushing here and there in frenzy. Here was a group of women wailing for their husbands, imprisoned or dead—and who knew which?—within that awful circle. There a man looked, vacantly, with trembling lips, from group to group, hunting for the wife snatched from him. Here was a rude fellow peddling half a bushel of potatoes from a rickety farm wagon. There a woman, hungry and desperate, was aimlessly dragging an orphan child about. Yonder a confidence man was set upon and beaten by infuriated victims. In the midst of a jostling, eager, credulous mob was a man who fancied he had some real news to tell.

Now and then, as if by mutual consent, these people lifted up their heads towards the Great Buzzard mountains, toward Russell, the city of their despair, and clenched their fists and uttered an exasperated groan. Agents of the Red Cross Society and of the Law and Order League had already erected their tents, and were doing all they could to restrain the lawlessness and relieve the discomforts of the mob. Swift critically watched these seething thousands, who had come upon the spot from motives of sorrow, curiosity, gain, and plunder, all miserable, poorly housed and scantily fed. The reporter's inquisitiveness was well ahead of his human sympathy up to this point.

Within these few days the border line about the afflicted city had become an improvised camp, that extended for miles and miles. It was enforced here by a railroad track, there by a village, until, having completed the gigantic circle, it met again. Thousands were flowing in each hour. They came from all points of the compass, like flocks of angels and of devils. As yet the military was not at hand, and the little law that existed was not of the gospel, but of brute force and adroitness.

Swift, having sent off his dispatch at the improvised office, and having forgotten his companion, whom he expected to be a nuisance on his hands, retraced his steps and hurried to the dead line, where it impinged on the railroad track. Here was the centre of the maddest rush. Here men groaned and cursed and wept aloud. Swift pushed his way through until he reached that portion of the track that defied further passage. A cord had been stretched there to keep the crowds back. Upon showing his badge he was received with respect.

"Take keer, boss," said the huge policeman, whose sole duty up to this time had been to drive the spikes into the sleepers. "I tried it yesterday. They just pulled me out. I got the d—d shakes yet." With a grave smile Swift ducked under the rope and looked before him. The solitary, motionless, blasted prairie stretched out, relieved only by the outlines of the Buzzard mountains. Where once the tops of towers, grain elevators and steeples were to be seen on the horizon, there was a cloud. A dense, strange, ominous mist overhung the stricken city.

This cloud was of a yellowish color that recalled to Swift the dreadful yellow day of '72. It reached nearly to the summit of the great Buzzard mountain. Within five miles of the spot on which he stood this phenomenon became more and more attenuated until it disappeared in dull transparency. What did that cloud contain? What horrors did it hide? Of what was its nature? What was the secret of its deadly influence? No American catastrophe had impressed the reporter so much as the sight of this veil, hiding the unattainable city. Curse this maledict, deadly vapor! It paralyzed his inventiveness. It baffled his imagination. For the first time in his reportorial career Swift was stunned and without resource.

Now it was said that not a breath of air had stirred over the polluted area since the morning of the loss of Russell.

As the news editor looked down the tracks he saw that the tracks, which were torn up and twisted beneath him, within a hundred feet, disappeared utterly from view. The wooden ties were blackened into charcoal in their places, but the iron rails had evaporated. It was the same with the telegraph wires. At a certain point they stopped and were gone. The poles, tottering and scorched and bare, looked like a procession of naked ghosts, undressed for livelier mockery. Before him the trees, the shrubs, the grain, the grasses—in fine, all vegetation had been smitten unto death.

The face of the earth was black and crumbling. It looked as if the roots of this unconscious vegetable life had been suddenly touched by volcanic fires and had died from the ground up. There was not a vestige of life as far as the eye could see. Had a fire swept the land? But no! No smoke had been hitherto visible, unless this inexplicable cloud were smoke. And yet, to Swift's practiced eye, there were evidences of a violent, a sudden, a consuming heat. The men in line behind Swift stood respectfully back while he observed this unique scene. He noticed a white mile-post close at hand. It was inscribed, "Russell, 20 m."

"Only twenty miles to Russell! and no one there yet! What a field for the news editor of the greatest paper in the land! The competitors were keen. The chances were even, the honor great, and no favors asked. As he stood for a moment, lost in thought over the apparent hopelessness of the undertaking, and almost wishing he had not sent so confident a telegram to his chief, he felt a hand upon his arm.

"I have found one," said a slow voice.

"Have you? What?" asked Swift, with careless interest. He recognized the aspirated tones of Mr. Ticks.

"I have calculated this thing over. There are between six and seven thousand on the spot. Five hundred reporters are here, and more expected by every train. There is no food, no bed, no roof for us here. This place has been completely done up. It is exhausted. To get facts we must move on."

"Jove, you're right, old man!"

Mr. Ticks acknowledged the compliment with a slight motion of his hand.

"Yes, I have just purchased the only team to be had, for four hundred dollars."

Swift glanced enviously at his autumnal colleague, who had already outdone him in enterprise.

"Cyclones and tornadoes in this part of the country," proceeded Mr. Ticks sententiously, "travel to the northeast. We will go to the north. If there are any remains they are to be found there," Mr. Ticks had, it would seem, embraced the tornado theory.

"We will go immediately!" exclaimed Swift.

"Hold!" cried the man of figures quietly, "I wish to test this phenomenon. Wait for me here!"

Before Swift could utter a protest or arrest his colleague's arm, the philosopher started up the vacant track. No one dared to follow him. The crowd were too much stunned at his audacity. Had they not dragged a dozen adventurers back from the same mad enterprise? Men shuddered before this unknown fate that stretched out its relentless arms so far and no further. A cocked pistol would have been more comfortable.

But Mr. Ticks walked on slowly, unconsciously, as if in a revery. He put his hands out as if to feel the air. He put his tongue out as if to taste it. He had not gone forty feet when he was observed to tremble violently. Those on the dead line united with Swift in shrieking "Come back!" The experimenting member of the *Planet* staff only shook his head. He was not twenty yards away when he stopped abruptly. He put his hands to his head and heart, and struggled against the unseen force. It beat upon him: but he steadied his legs the firmer and met the shock. It smote at him, but he wearily smiled in return. He even made a motion as if for his notebook. But such temerity was too much for the occult fluid to suffer. It breathed upon him and felled him to the ground. As he dropped he rested for a moment spasmodically upon one knee, and peered into the air as if he were penetrating the secret of this baleful agent. Then he fell back insensible.

Half an hour afterwards the newspaper man came to. Swift was bending over him.

"We rushed you out. You'll pull through all right, old man," said his colleague cheerily.

"Did you note the symptoms?" asked Mr. Ticks feebly.

"Yes."

"Did you wire them?"

"No; I hadn't time. I——"

"Then do so!" He sank back exhausted.

"But how did you feel? How *do* you feel?" asked Swift anxiously.

"As mortal never felt before," replied Mr. Ticks solemnly. With these words upon his lips he lapsed away again into unconsciousness.

That evening at a late hour Swift made his way to the four-hundred-dollar team under whose protecting shelter he had ensconced his patient with such poor comfort as was possible.

Mr. Ticks raised himself from the cushions upon one arm.

"Are you ready?" he said restlessly.

"For what?" asked Swift in astonishment.

"To start."

"Not to-night surely?"

"Yes—immediately. Harness up! We must be at the extreme north of this unclassified belt by to-morrow morning."

IV.

Empiria, the new county seat of the new county Dominion of the new State of Harrison, was twenty miles away to the northward as the crow flies, and at least thirty miles off by road. The horse that Mr. Ticks had the forethought to purchase developed an unaccountable spavin, united with an unmistakable case of the heaves: when the whip was applied it furthermore exhibited an innate tendency to back. Mr. Swift drove through the darkness of the night, picking out the road with that genius for locality which the general and the reporter in the field share alike. Barring mistakes, accidents, or further exhibitions of depravity on the part of the equine department, they hoped to reach Empiria by dawn.

Mr. Ticks leaned back upon the jolting seat in unbroken silence. When his colleague, who drove, hazarded a question, the only reply was a low grunt. As sleep was out of the question in that wagon, behind that horse and in those roads, was it pain or mighty thought or nebulous calculation that oppressed the wise man of the *Planet*? At about two o'clock in the morning Mr. Stalls Ticks broke his long reserve with the following remark:

"If it is, it is a unique case. The phenomenon is isolated."

"I hope you feel better now?" Swift had been anxious about his colleague, and had interpreted his silence as evidence of physical distress. Mr. Ticks gave an invisible shrug of his shoulders to express the contempt he felt for his own anatomy in comparison with the attainment of exact knowledge. Otherwise, heedless of the interruption, he proceeded:

"It is physically impossible that a low-pressured area could have had its centre three or four hundred miles northwest of Russell."

"Indeed?" replied Swift, vaguely and unsympathetically.

"It must travel towards the centre of the low pressure."

"Of course," assented Swift, as he would to a lunatic. Evidently that inexpressible shock had been too much for the middle-aged man.

"The Gopher lake on the north, and the Buzzard mountain on the south, prevent the isothermal curve from being deflected toward the north."

"Really?" said Swift.

"It will be deflected to the south, young man," said Mr. Ticks, severely. "The atmospheric equilibrium can suffer no centripetal disturbance."

"Well, what then?" asked Swift, a little bored.

"There could be no gyrating motion of the atmosphere. There will be no aerial contest. There could be no colder stratum above the warmer layer coming from another direction. Both would flow from the south. There could be no inversion of these conditions. My friend, Russell has experienced no tornado or cyclone. And yet—" he added wistfully and thoughtfully, "and yet—"

"Well, if there was no tornado, what the deuce are we going to Empiria for?" demanded Swift. He forgot himself, and gave the four-hundred-dollar horse a sharp cut with the whip, in consequence of which the animal backed them so nearly toward the place from which they started that the journey to Empiria was seriously lengthened. Mr. Ticks did not notice this delay.

"—And yet?" he mused.

"What is the matter, then, if it isn't wind?" asked Swift, impatiently, after he had persuaded his horse to defer the next attack of backing for a mile or so. "Is there a new variety of atmospheric disturbance? If so, it might strike us here!"

"Sir—no! This is not a common tornado. As to further theories, they are not formulated as yet. No, this quadrant of the State of Harrison was not subjected to such a violent disturbance. I am prepared to say that there will be no evidences of a vortex wind in or near Empiria." Mr. Ticks relapsed into further thought, nor could he be aroused until the jaded horse brought the two jaded reporters into the open square of the county seat.

It was early, about five o'clock, but still there were evidences of stirring and excitement. Upon the village common two or three large tents were erected, and from out of these, scantily dressed men and woman emerged. As these came into the cool, open air they lifted up their faces to the south, searching the horizon and sky to see if there was anything new in the smitten district. It was a motion as instinctive as that of the Mahomedan toward Mecca when he prays. The appearance of our two strangers excited no notice. Empiria was on a branch road, difficult of access, but people had flocked in and the village had become a city.

After a hard struggle, in which persistent ingenuity won, Swift obtained a little corn for his horse, and a promise of breakfast for himself and companion.

By six the populace was awake, bustling with feverish eagerness and oppressed with dread and suspense. Swift questioned a hundred, climbed to the tops of trees, advanced upon the mysterious dead line, and retired baffled at every step.

As he thought of that vast enclosure, that was now an unapproachable cemetery, his soul shuddered within him. Like a thousand beside him, this man of nerve was baffled and overcome.

By nine o'clock, Swift had exhausted the spot, and was for pushing on to the westward to complete the perplexing circle if necessary. Perhaps an entrance might be forced elsewhere. He was sitting in his buggy with Mr. Ticks, who was as uncommunicative as the dasher when he looked for the hundredth time towards the Buzzard mountains. As he gazed he saw turkey buzzards, of which there are thousands in that land, wheeling their spiral flight above the afflicted territory. Swift looked at them as he always did, wondering how they could fly so long without flapping their wings, when suddenly he cried out:

"By Jove! I have it!" This startled Mr. Ticks.

"What? Have you new information? What has occurred?"

"No; but I have an idea—*the* idea—but I don't see how I could put it through without time. I will go to Russell, or over Russell in a balloon!"

The light of inspiration and sympathy flashed from one to the other.

"I congratulate you on the thought," said Mr. Ticks gravely. "I think I can procure you one in a quarter of an hour."

Now, under no circumstances is a balloon an easy thing to obtain. Even in a metropolis like New York or London it will take the cleverest reporter at least eighteen minutes, if not a few seconds longer, to hunt up a suitable means of ascension. It is not as simple a matter as one may suppose, to "go up." Therefore, when Mr. Ticks, in a matter-of-fact voice, asserted that he would procure the balloon in fifteen minutes, Swift fetched a long low whistle. But not in the least disconcerted by Swift's manner, Mr. Ticks slowly descended from the vehicle, and said:

"Just wait here until I come back, so that no time may be lost." He strode towards one of the large

tents on the common and disappeared within its flaps. Had Mr. Ticks the formula for inflating a canvas tent into a balloon? Who knew?

In a few minutes the statistician returned, bringing with him a tall, cadaverous man, whose leanness was heightened by a long chin beard, which descended upon his chest to the middle button of his coat. Having a beard of this description, the gentleman had no need of a necktie, and having no necktie, he, of course, dispensed with a collar.

"Professor Ariel, my friend Mr. Swift, who wishes to talk business." Mr. Ticks performed the introduction in his blandest manner. The man who seemed to see nothing had seen everything. It had taken the unpractical, the scholar, the dreamer, the muser, to observe the broken remnants of a county fair, and the advertisement of that aeronautic expedition, conducted by the renowned Professor Ariel, who was to have made an ascension at twelve o'clock that awful day, taking with him a couple to be married in the seventh heavens and a Seventh-Day Baptist clergyman to tie the knot. It was at ten in the morning that Russell was closed in, and the balloon and the professor had been ignominiously forgotten.

"Where is your balloon, professor?" asked Swift, when he had learned these preliminary details.

"Darn it all, in that barn there!" The professor spoke as if he had a personal grievance against the barn.

"Are—were they to have paid you for your ascension?"

"Five hundred dollars, and I hain't seen a red, and I can't get out of this infernal place."

"I suppose it is in good condition?" inquired the editor.

"You bet! It's new. Never been used. Cost twenty-five hundred dollars. Cash!"

"How long would it take you to get her ready?"

"Three hours' pushing would do it, I suppose."

"We want to go up in that balloon, Professor Ariel," said Swift, after deliberation. Mr. Ticks confirmed this demand with an affirmative gesture of his sad head.

"Can't be done, sir. I wouldn't risk her in this crowd!"

The professor spoke decisively.

"Do you know who we are?"

The professor shook his head.

"We are here representing the *Daily Planet*, and it will be the biggest advertisement you ever had."

The professor still shook his head doubtfully.

"If you were the President and all his angels I wouldn't risk it. A counter-current might carry us over that cussed spot, and we'd all be stiff before you could say Jinks."

Nothing daunted, Swift took the aeronaut by the arm, offered him a cigar, and pointed towards the Buzzard mountains.

"That's just where we want to go. D'ye see those birds up there? If they can stand it we can. This deadly what-you-call-it doesn't reach as high as that."

The professor stared and then muttered to himself:

"Gee—mima! The feller's hit it right."

"Now, look here, professor! You're a famous man. Everybody knows *you*. The *Planet* charters your balloon for five hundred dollars. Is it a go?"

The professor's eyes glittered yellow, the color of greed.

"I couldn't think of it. I couldn't risk the danger. It's an unknown country, now—no, I couldn't."

"Call it six hundred."

"Impos-sible!"

"Seven!"

"That wouldn't pay me if she breaks."

"Eight hundred dollars!"

"Couldn't do it."

"Nine hundred dollars. I'm tired."

"Subtract eight and add a cipher, and I'm your man."

"Very well! Mr. Ticks is witness. I will give you five hundred when we leave the ground, and the

balance when we touch it again."

"Done!"

The two men shook hands over their bargain.

"Let me see," said Swift, glancing at his watch, "it is ten o'clock. We will ascend at one."

"I will assist the professor in preparing his airship," said Mr. Ticks. "By the way, how tall is your balloon, professor? What is her cognomen?"

"I call her *High Tariff*, mister. That's her name. You'll see it on her. Wait till she gets her forty thousand cubic feet of gas in her, and you'll see her height."

By twelve o'clock the multitude had got wind of the undertaking, and were thronging towards the fenced enclosure, where the huge monster was flapping with that inane motion that only a half-filled balloon can take to itself. Rumors of the wildest description were afloat. By half-past twelve the balloon was, to all appearance, full, and sandbags were being put aboard. By one the crowd could hardly be kept back by self-sworn marshals, and the balloon tugged at its warps as if it would burst its bonds at the slightest provocation.

The *High Tariff* now awakened the utmost enthusiasm. Men came by tens and hundreds to make offers for the risky trip.

"Blank it all, she's chartered, the *High Tariff* is," was the aeronaut's invariable reply. "She don't belong to me this trip. Ask the owners."

At ten minutes after one precisely Swift appeared upon the ground. He had just sent off the following message to his paper:

"*Start immediately for Russell by thousand dollar balloon.*"

He had sold his horse and team and had purchased provisions with the proceeds. Five minutes after the sale the horse backed into the hotel and smashed the buggy into Chinese joss-sticks.

Swift walked calmly to the car and ordered the provisions aboard.

"Have you a long ladder and grapnel?" he inquired.

"Two hundred and fifty feet each."

"Anchor?"

"Two hundred pounds."

"Are you ready, professor?" asked Swift, satisfied with his inspection.

"She's full to bustin'!" said the professor, looking uneasily at the straining cable.

"Jump in, Mr. Ticks!" The crowd was almost beside itself at the boldness of the undertaking. Men yelled and hooted encouragement as the venerable and musty editor stepped into the car with a natural air. It took more than this to embarrass Mr. Ticks.

"Now, professor!" As Swift spoke he handed the professor a draft on the *Planet* for five hundred dollars. The professor hesitated no longer. He snatched the check and bounded in. An assistant stood ready with an axe to cut the ropes that held the impatient balloon. Swift then stepped in leisurely. It was just twenty-nine minutes and a quarter past one o'clock. The crowd shrieked as if their throats would burst. Swift lifted his hat in acknowledgment.

"Good luck!"

"Never say die!"

"Come back and tell us all about it."

"If you see my husband tell him I'm waiting for him."

They cheered and yelled and cried and cheered again.

"Are you ready?" asked Swift, looking at his companions.

"Then let her go!"

A cut, a swirl, an indescribable motion, and shouts became to those in the *High Tariff* whispers, men became ants, and they were gone.

V.

"Look! For God's sake, look! What is it?"

Swift strained his eyes to the southward, toward the death-bound territory. The malignant cloud that settled over plain and mountain slope was broken on the Gopher lake. As soon as Swift had

recovered from the first bound of the balloon he had scanned the dark mist, and by the borders of the lake he had found a rift. This rift indicated the spot where the city of Russell should have been. As he spoke he clutched the arm of his colleague, and pointed over the side of the rising car.

"I—I'm afraid I can't see what you mean," stammered Mr. Statis Ticks, "my glasses are blurred."

The man of figures was really agitated. But Professor Ariel, like many an adventurer, had more than his share of what one may politely call sang-froid, but what is known in common North American as simple "cheek." Besides, in some sections of the country, he might have been called a profane man. With his hands on the safety valve, he looked and then ejaculated:

"By ——. It's gone!"

"I see nothing—nothing but black streaks," said the elder member of the *Planet* corps hurriedly. "Can't we stop, professor? Perhaps that isn't the site of the unfortunate city!"

The professor, obedient to the suggestion, pulled the safety valve, and the gas rushed out with a wheeze.

"You bet it is! That's the place! Didn't I land there before I struck Empiria? Darned lucky for me they didn't take stock in the *High Tariff*. I might have been—God knows what, now!"

Even as the three men looked, the cloud closed in upon the land. Strangely enough, it shunned the surface of the water. The travellers cast their eyes upon the sullen bosom of the Gopher lake. This body of water glittered like the scales of a leaden serpent. It looked from that great height poisonous and discontented. Swift gazed upon it intently.

"Why? Wouldn't they have you?" inquired Mr. Ticks, absent-mindedly of the professor. "See! Haven't we struck another current?"

As he spoke the huge *High Tariff* swayed. A breath of chilly air smote them. Then gently the balloon swung toward the Gopher lake—toward the fateful city.

"Well, you see, the balloon was too old-fashioned for them," answered the professor, still bent upon his grievance. "Now, if it had gone by electricity that 'ud been another thing."

"How so?" asked Mr. Ticks, with polite interest.

"Well! Everything in that gol-darned town went by electricity. They had electric cars, electric lights, electric shampooing, electric cigars, electric sewing machines, electric elevators, electric table service in the hotel; worst was, they had electric cabs. They kept quiet about some of their notions. Folks did say they had their reasons. I didn't hear nothing about all this electric tomfoolery till I struck the city."

"Ah!" interrupted Mr. Ticks, pricking up his ears. "I have heard about those cabs, but I have had no reliable information that they were a success."

"They ain't!" answered the professor, rubbing his right arm with a wince of memory. "Like a darn jack I took one for a spin. They go on three wheels; one in front, two behind. The driver, he sits in front and steers the shebang with the forward wheel. I hadn't gone two blocks when I leaned out of the window and the current struck me in the arm like a shot. You bet I yelled bloody murder and got out of that trap in two shakes of a colt's tail."

"How does all that electrical system work otherwise?" asked Mr. Ticks slowly, after some thought.

"Everybody perfectly wild over it. They won't allow a horse in town, nor even a ton of coal. Electricity is the big thing of the future. They fight electrical duels. Feller that stands the greatest number of alternating volts gets the apology. I saw a dog-fight in the street stopped by the Humane Society. A man would drop a wet sponge on the dog's head, another on his back, and turn on the circuit. They generally both dropped and never knew what struck 'em. Two dead dogs better than one fight. But they kept it all dark enough. These were jest experiments, they said. When they were done that they were going to have an electrical exhibition and invite the hull world. Why, I heard they were fool enough to put in a bill in the Legislature to have the name of Russell changed to Electra. As if Russell wasn't good enough for them!"

Mr. Ticks mused over these facts. Why was it that his acquisitive mind had not roamed over this field before? Perhaps because it was acquisitive, not imaginative. *He* could only account for the unpardonable omission on the ground that there were so many new competing Western cities, each with its peculiar advantages: and that there were so many strange electrical inventions new each day, that he had overlooked Russell and its progressive hobby. Besides, was he not on the staff of a Democratic paper, which would, perhaps, on the whole, prefer to ignore the new Republican State and its flourishing capital.

"How was all this power produced if coal was excluded?" asked Mr. Ticks.

"Oh, windmills did that. A half a dozen huge windmills, with wings, each as big as the *High Tariff*, were the first things you saw. They were nearly three hundred feet high——"

"Good Heavens! Look, man! Look down there! Don't you see something in the middle of the lake!" Swift pulled the professor over to his side of the car, and pointed directly below the balloon.

They had now struck a dead calm and the *High Tariff* floated motionless two thousand feet above the lake. Directly below them was something resting upon the waters. It looked fixed and dead. A log? A wreck? A raft? Slowly the outline took to itself the form of a boat.

"Have you a pair of glasses here?" asked Swift, all of a quiver.

The professor shoved one of Steward's field-glasses in his hand.

"There's a body in that boat!" cried Swift, after a prolonged examination. "No—Great God! It's alive! It moves! It's a *woman*!"

The professor took a long look.

"I guess you're right. She's a female!"

"But she must be saved," insisted Swift. "We must save her."

"Yes, Professor Ariel," said Mr. Statis Ticks, sententiously and with trembling dignity; "being a woman, she demands our attention, and, besides, as a survivor she can give us the information and suggest the figures we need."

"I'll do my best, gentlemen," said the professor, shaking, his head, "but it's mighty ticklish business. Supposing we drift into the deadly air. I don't know what that vapor means, but it evidently means the 'Sweet By and By.' Even the *High Tariff* wouldn't save us then!"

"Look here, professor," jerked out Swift, peremptorily, "it's got to be done. Now dry up!"

"All right, it's a go. I can stand it if you can."

So the valve was opened cautiously, and the balloon with majestic slowness, obedient to its master's hand, descended toward the Great Gopher lake, and hovered over the cockle-shell upon its malignant bosom.

As the *High Tariff* approached the little boat, Mr. Ticks looked at it eagerly.

"She's alive and unmarried," said the oracle, slowly.

"Why unmarried?" asked Swift, with a vague flutter of the heart. He had watched the figure of the woman attentively with the spyglass. It was rounded and supple. Masses of dark-brown hair hid her shoulders and face.

"Because," answered Mr. Ticks, "she is under eighteen. The statistics of this section of the West show that no female over eighteen years of age remains single."

The balloon had now descended to within three hundred feet of the boat. The girl in it did not stir. She lay with her head propped in the bow, so stiffly and so still that to all appearance she was a dead woman. But the three men agreed they had seen her move. Had her rescuers arrived too late?

"Let down the ladder!" cried Swift. "I'll go down and pick her up!" Ignorant how hard it is even for an experienced hand to climb up and down a rope ladder swinging in space, he clambered over the side of the car.

"Hold, young fellow!" Professor Ariel spoke sharply. By this time they were within two hundred feet of the water.

"Hold, I say!" yelled the professor in a rage, letting go the rope to the safety-valve and at the same time, grabbing a sand-bag. "If you stir out of this car I'll pitch ballast out and you'll never see your gal again!"

Swift stopped short. The rope-ladder swayed like a double snake beneath them. Its end was fifty feet above the boat, but, O horrors! It was also nearly fifty feet to one side of the boat—no human power could reach the lady from the ladder. A breath might blow the *High Tariff* even farther away.

At the same time the girl, doubtless aroused from her stupor by the professor's loud call, opened her eyes slowly. Above her loomed a gigantic monster. Was it a dream? Was this apparition a final terror added to her awful experience, sent to crush out the last remnant of her buoyant life and magnificent courage? She stared at the thing above her; then opened her mouth and gave a scream, such as can only be the result of full Western tracheal development.

"Oh! don't be frightened!" cried Swift quickly, "Don't! We've come to save you!" He could not think of anything more to say; and it occurred to him that he was a donkey to say anything.

But the professor, who had few delicate scruples, waved his hat and shouted:

"What's the matter with the *High Tariff*? She's all right!"

This yell, so frequently heard on Eastern land and sea, had penetrated even to the Great Gopher lake, and it reassured the girl more than anything else could have done.

She sat up weakly enough in the boat, and, after waving her hand, with feminine instinct tried to coil her hair and otherwise prepare herself as best she could to receive these angels from the clouds.

"Can you catch?" yelled the professor.

"Try me!" came back a voice undaunted, though enfeebled by long suffering.

The professor coiled a stout, light rope on his arm, shot out a few thundering orders about safety-valves and ballast, and cautiously, but with gymnastic quickness, descended the yielding rounds of the long ladder.

To the lady in the boat, to the passengers in the car it seemed hours before the professor reached the last of the two hundred rounds. It might have been forty seconds.

Swift called out to the young lady encouragingly:

"Hold out a little while longer and you'll be safe!"

"I'm all right now, since you have come." The young woman's trembling voice seemed to lay an actual emphasis on "you" that Swift was selfish enough to take to himself.

"How long have you been there?"

"Five days. I am nearly dead!"

"Poor, poor thing!" said Swift to himself. Tears of sympathy came into his eyes. Even Mr. Ticks blinked.

"She's office editor on some Russell daily," said Mr. Ticks after another long look through the field glasses.

"How do you know?" asked Swift in displeasure.

"She's got a stylograph behind her right ear and a yellow pad in her lap; besides, there are some clippings at the bottom of the boat."

By this time Professor Ariel had reached the lower end of his ladder.

"Now, catch!" he cried, hurling the light rope with sure skill. It whistled through the air and the end fell across the boat.

"Make fast to something, quick, now!"

As he spoke he felt a breath of air upon his face. The balloon careened over slightly and righted itself. The *High Tariff* was slowly settling to the water's surface. As quickly as he could the professor pulled the boat toward him.

"You can't. It's anchored," cried the girl. She tugged at the rope with the last strength of hope, and actually brought it up. The skiff yielded to the professor's clutch. By this time the balloon was so low down that the aeronaut's feet were nearly in the water.

"Throw out sand by the handful!" he ordered. This gentle lighting kept her at the right elevation.

Now the professor touched the boat. He jumped in. "Don't talk!" he cried, "hold out your arms instead!" He knotted the rope underneath her arms and tied the other end firmly to the ladder.

"We've got to hurry. Now, Miss! you keep cool, and we'll save you all right." It was a desperate chance.

"Now let go a couple of sandbags!" the order came up to Swift in the car.

Mr. Statis Ticks, with his hand upon the safety-valve, and hearing the order, became, for the first time in his life, confused. He pulled the safety-valve wide open, and the gas rushed furiously out. Even with the two sandbags overboard and lightened of fifty pounds dead weight, the balloon descended suddenly.

The professor saw the mistake at a glance. He yelled furiously:

"Good God! Close that valve or we're lost!"

But the mischief was already done.

"Heave it all out!" shrieked the professor, climbing up the ladder like a cat. The car of the balloon grazed the side of the boat. Mr. Statis Ticks, in such atonement as he could make for his awful error, reached over his thin arms. The girl arose, tottering to her feet, and, with a mighty effort, the gray, gaunt man lifted the heavy girl into the car. That was the most humane, and, at the same time, the maddest thing he could have done. Under the influence of the added weight the car struck the boat, over-turned it, and then dragged in the water.

"Out with everything!" howled the professor.

The three looked around in despair. The girl had dropped limp upon the floor, and the water was upon her. Above them was a cloud of the darkness of night. Cirrhus clouds scudded here and there in confusion. There was strange atmospheric howling in the distance, approaching nearer and nearer. The water assumed that angry hue it takes to itself before a desperate storm. The monstrous balloon writhed intelligently above them. All the sandbags were now pitched out. The *High Tariff* shook itself loose from the water. It rose. It fell. It rose again.

"Are we safe?" cried Swift, looking anxiously at the girl.

"Take off your coat and vest and shoes, everything, and chuck 'em over like lightning, and we'll see," answered the professor, solemnly.

VI.

With wild energy the men threw out of the car everything that had a semblance of weight. Aeronauts well know the difference that a few ounces make to safety when the gas has been exhausted from their balloon. Professor Ariel had cast everything overboard with maniacal celerity, and now, clad only in his undershirt and trousers, was hacking at the trailing ladder to cut that off. The balloon had risen some fifty or a hundred feet. It now halted irresolute. Could it recover itself and mount? or would it lose courage and fall, dragging its passengers to a certain death?

But far more fearful than the latter imminent danger was the sight of the threatening sky. Not one of these imperilled people had ever seen such whirling masses of mad, black, revengeful clouds. These centred from all sides upon the site of the lost city. They rushed together and formed eddies and funnels. They roared like live things. It was in one of these smaller whirlwinds that the balloon was caught.

The massive folds of silk beat and writhed and tried to tear themselves loose from the clutches of the elements. The four in the car clung to it with terror, watching the mad-cap play of the wind.

"It's no use—I can't!" cried the professor with damp, white face, throwing down his knife. "The wire is too strong. We must get to the rigging, cut off the car, and God help us!"

The situation was indeed appalling. The ladder, for purposes of greater stability, was made of wire woven over with manila. The sharp knife could not cut that useless weight.

In this crisis the young lady recovered her equipoise. She began to take off her shoes.

"It will help a little," she said. Then she began shyly to loose her overskirt. But the whirlwind caught the car and nearly upset it. It swirled and almost touched the ground.

"Up!" cried the professor. He caught the girl and tied her in dexterously. Every man held himself in the ropes that bound the car to the balloon as best he might. It was a fearful chance. The professor cut a rope and made bowline chairs. Each sat in his noose and held on for dear life. The professor, who never lost his coolness, worked as if he had done this before. And indeed he had.

Swift had the presence of mind or the presence of heart to support the young lady in this perilous moment.

Cut! cut! The car had been caught in a counter eddy, and was five hundred feet or so in the air, but rapidly descending. Then the last strand parted. Relieved of several hundred-weight, the balloon bounded up. It was buffeted and whirled and tossed from cloud to cloud. The maddened elements clutched at it. Balls of fire danced upon the ground beneath, and darted here and there from cloud to cloud. As the professor gave the last cut and the balloon soared aloft, there was a report as if a thousand rounds of artillery were concentrated in one shot. There was a dazzling streak of light. It smote the adventurers blind. It smote them deaf. It stunned them into insensibility. Like limp corpses the four sat as they were whirled on high, each clasping his arms instinctively about the rope that held him.

It seemed as if death had overtaken them all and petrified them with its touch.

"I have solved the problem." Mr. Ticks opened his eyes and gasped. "By my faith, where are we?"

Far below were opaque blackness, storm and wind. Above, the blue, infinite ether. The sun shone brilliantly. It warmed the balloon. It expanded the gas. The *High Tariff* kept rising. The stillness was a miracle. Beneath stretched the panorama of a stricken country. The highest peaks of the Buzzard mountains were below the balloon. The storm raged over the lake and the lost city like a mock storm, it was so distant and so unimportant. Now and then there was a flash of yellow light and a distant reverberation. The storm was fearful, but it was only a small blot upon a fair landscape when viewed from such a height.

"Yes," mused Mr. Ticks aloud, pulling his energies together. "I know now what it all means. I know the secret of Russell's unparalleled disaster."

As he spoke he reached out and shook the professor, then Swift; then he touched the young lady with gentle deference. The three opened their eyes, one after another.

"We're saved! Oh, what luck! We're saved!" cried Professor Ariel. Tears of joy started from his eyes. "Say, mister," his devil-may-care manner returning to him in the fulness of his ecstasy. "Say," punching Swift, "you ain't got a chaw about you, have you?"

But Swift, lifting up his bewildered eyes, took in the glorious blue sky and sun, then his gaze fell upon the horror from which they had escaped. Mechanically he searched the pockets of his trousers. Out of his pistol pocket he pulled a flask of brandy—all that survived to him of his outfit

for this ghastly journey. This he had forgotten, otherwise it would have gone by the rail along with his pocketbook, to lighten the car.

"Not yet," he said, pushing aside the professor's longing hand, "the lady first!"

The brandy, the warm sun and the prospect of safety roused the girl considerably. Possibly Swifts supporting arm hastened her recuperation.

Swift passed the bottle to Mr. Ticks, who drank, and coughed, and drank again.

"It's St. Croix, vintage of forty-two," said Mr. Ticks, gratefully. The professor got what he could. But Swift would not touch any. He was experiencing a finer intoxication. His eyes met those of the girl, who had been the unconscious cause of all their danger. She seemed to perceive this, for she soon broke the profound silence by suggesting with a blush:

"You needn't hold me so tight, sir. I'll try not to fall."

"Can you talk now?" asked Mr. Ticks of their lady companion.

This question deflected a possible embarrassment, but Swift, deeming it safe to allow no risk, did not relax his hold of the girl.

"Are you a reporter?" he asked, with an unaccountable desire to keep the conversation in his own hands. "This gentleman and myself are on the *Daily Planet*, the other man is professor of the balloon."

"How did you know?" she answered with a first approach to a smile. "I am, or at least I was, society reporter on the *Russell Telegraph*." The last word started Mr. Ticks up again.

"You witnessed the destruction of Russell? Do you know that its cause is the despair of the world? Do you know——"

"Oh, it was dreadful! dreadful! dreadful!" interrupted the girl with a shudder. "I was out in my boat alone and saw it all!"

The lady hid her face. "I was so tired that morning I couldn't breathe. It was oppressive. The air was over-charged so strangely. You touched an iron post and a spark shot out and gave you a shock. I couldn't stay, so I begged off and took my lunch and my work in my little skiff and rowed two miles out and anchored and tried to write."

"Can you state for the *Planet*, Miss——?"

"Insula Magnet, that's my name, sir."

"Miss Magnet, can you state at what exact hour the catastrophe occurred?"

The balloon had now come to a standstill, and floated quietly above the lake and the doomed city. The four wriggled uncomfortably in the improvised seats. The ropes cut them. The sun beat upon them hotly. They were exhausted and hungry and parched.

"Can't we go down?" suggested Swift. His brain reeled at the great depth below him. The person who lost his hold and fell would die before he reached the earth. The first stage in the Strasburg cathedral is two hundred and fifty feet high, and it is a terrible sight to look over its stone balustrade. No one forgets his sensation when he leans over the top of the Eiffel tower, a thousand feet from the asphalt pavement below. Judge what it was to those inexperienced travellers to be over ten thousand feet high, clinging like weather-beaten flies to these straining ropes!

"No, I wouldn't descend yet in this calm for as many dollars as we are feet high. We're safe enough here. Look up, man! Look up! Shut your eyes. That's best!"

But Mr. Ticks pugnaciously returned to his question. What was a little matter of falling ten thousand feet or so? A fact startling and valuable was at stake and at hand.

"It was just a quarter of ten," answered Miss Magnet, in a low, horror-stricken tone. "I was writing. Suddenly a bitter vapor enveloped everything. There was no wind, no sun, no clouds, only this dense, strange atmosphere. It prostrated me. There were a number of boats near me. These were all of the new patent. They were steel. I saw great balls of fire dance from boat to boat. Then there came from the city a light such as I never saw before. It flashed like an enormous meteor, like an incandescent flame. It enveloped Russell. I was scorched even where I was by the flash. I heard a hissing sound like water on melted iron. And then—"

"And then?" persisted Mr. Ticks in a kind of rapture.

"And then I must have fainted away. When I came to there was no city, only masses of blackness and—and—Oh, the boats! The people! They were all gone! Not capsized—not drowning—but gone. There were no boats. There were no people. There wasn't even a dead body to keep me company. I, only I, was left, living and alone upon the hissing water.... When I was able I rowed back. The shore looked horrible and ridged, as if molten lead had been poured into it. When I came nearer an awful heat and a deadly odor overcame me. I had barely strength to row back and anchor again. Then the mist settled everywhere except where I was." The girl stopped for a moment, breathless.

"I couldn't see anything. It was hot, and then it was cold. I tried to eat my luncheon. I tried to get some sleep. I called and called for help. I couldn't tell night from day. I can't say whether it was four or five days. I said five. I must have been faint a good deal. The worst thing was being alone. I expected to die. I got pretty weak.... Then I saw the balloon." The girl bowed the face which she could not hide, and sobbed at her own dreadful story.

Swift was greatly moved. "Miss Magnet," he said gently, putting her head upon his shoulder. "I think you had better rest. You are tired out. This is different, you know. You needn't when you get safely down." The girl gave him a grateful glance and obeyed him quietly.

"How did she escape?" soliloquized Mr. Ticks, loud enough to be overheard.

"Oh, I don't know—don't ask me—unless it was that I was in a wooden boat. All the rest on the lake go by storage battery and are made of steel. Mine is the only old-fashioned boat, but I was always afraid. Everybody laughed at me, but I did what I do at home. I cut off the legs of a chair and fixed them in glass tumblers. I always sit in my office on glass tumblers. My bed rests on glass tumblers, too. It's a non-conductor, you know. I used to get shocked every day. Everybody got shocked in Russell, but they pretended not to mind it."

"But, Miss Magnet, do you know what is the cause of Russell's fate? of this deadly atmosphere beneath us?"

"N-no—unless—of course that can't be. I guess it's a visitation of Providence—but I don't know for what." The girl stopped, awed at the thoughts she had evoked.

"A visitation of Providence!" repeated Mr. Ticks, slowly. "Yes, she is right. The sin of presumptuousness was visited upon that unhappy place."

"Do you mean to say"—Swift started up. Somehow he had forgotten Russell, its mysterious fate, his mission, everything but the girl. He had awaked to his duty. "Do you mean to say that the whole thing is due to e—?"

"Hold on! Look below!" interrupted the professor.

They clung to the ropes and glued their gaze upon the sight so far beneath them. The storm had magically cleared away. The sunlight now pierced the whole landscape for the first time since the disaster. The lost city, in black, shapeless ruins, lay directly beneath them.

"We will go down." The professor opened the safety-valve cautiously. "The devil has been chased away by the storm," he said emphatically.

Indeed, the baleful vapor had gone. As they swiftly descended strange sights met their eyes. They could still see everything microscopically for a radius of twenty miles around. Black specks were rushing up the stricken railroad tracks, along the roads, hurrying to the city of doom. Linemen began to extend the wires; trackmen began laying new tracks. Fully fifty thousand impatient men were madly plunging these twenty miles from different points of the circumference, converging toward Russell. The dead line had become a mysterious thing of the past. The danger to life was over, and it became an unprecedented race to see who would get first upon the spot.

"If this calm lasts, as I think it will, we will be on the ground two hours ahead of the crowd."

Swift's eyes sparkled in reportorial ecstasy.

There was no time now nor inclination for words. In ten minutes the *High Tariff* was within a few hundred feet of the doomed city. Buzzards followed its descent curiously.

"My kingdom for a notebook!" cried Swift, in anguish.

"Take mine," said his companion, shyly, "and my stylo, too."

Swift would have been more moved by this attention had he not been absorbed in the sight at his feet.

"Do you mean," he turned to Mr. Ticks, "that this is all the effect of e——?"

"Look sharp, now!" interrupted Professor Ariel. "Stand ready to be cut down!" The Professor had manipulated the safety-valve so skilfully that in another minute they grazed the serrated ground. They were not hurt. One wide sweep of the professor's knife, and the *High Tariff* freed now from all restraint, bounded away never to be seen again.

"I am sorry, Professor Ariel," said Swift, immediately, "that circumstances compel me to postpone my part of the contract. But, as we are responsible for your loss, I will guarantee that the *Planet* will make it all right."

The professor did not answer. Absorbed, he followed the *High Tariff* in its capricious departure with tender interest.

When the three turned and stared about them, they stood palsied by the terrible sight before them: a sight never permitted to mortal view before, and we pray that such be withheld from the gaze of our poor race henceforth forever.

The wide-awake, the proud, the busy city of Russell had vanished. Russell in its short and meteoric career had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on its tall, iron, fireproof blocks, its

steel grain elevators, its gilded capitol, its granite churches, its hundred factories, its indestructible depots. Where were they? Where was the "busy hum of men"? Not a girder, not a column, not a trace of the complicated iron vertebræ of this metal city was left to mourn the grandeur of its structures. Not a corpse, not even a bone remained to tell the tale of the death agony.

Stricken as dumb as the lower brute creation, this one poor girl, the sole survivor of thirty thousand hopeful citizens, bereft of home, of friends, of employment, of hope, of everything in life but this hideous memory, uttered a low cry and sank senseless. Swift laid her gently on the parched, cracked ground; it was yet heated as if a conflagration had passed over the place. Where but five days ago haughty, frowning, iron blocks of stores, of hotels and exchanges stood, there were ragged gullies and deep fissures and jagged ravines, shining in the sunlight with a black, streaked crust. The sight was dreary and dead and deserted as if our travellers had been suddenly dropped upon the surface of the moon. The ground was riven as by some prehistoric upheaval. It looked as if subterranean springs of molten steel lava had spurted from the ground and had melted the unhappy city in their onward path and had carried it down in liquid solution to the lake.

Mr. Statis Ticks picked up a piece of this plutonian slag and examined it attentively.

"I didn't know that brick would melt like this," he said. Then again: "Here is platinum fused with iron and another substance I do not know." In a second or two he added:

"I see no remains of glass. It must have evaporated." He then took a few steps. "It is lucky," he said meditatively; "if we had been landed a few more feet to the left we should have been broiled to death. A part of this lava is still in a liquid state."

VII.

The three men looked each other in the eye. Swift forgot the girl. The professor forgot the balloon. Mr. Statis Ticks had forgotten his wife and seven children; but this was no unusual circumstance. The aeronaut, having less awe to the cubic inch in his make-up than his companions, was the first to speak.

"What does this gol-darned thing mean, anyhow?"

"Hush!" said Swift, recoiling.

But Mr. Statis Ticks bared his head before the extinct city.

"It means," said the student, solemnly, "the presumptuous impiety of man and the vengeance of Almighty God! It means," he added, slowly, "incalculable volts of uncontrollable electricity acting and acted upon by nascent oxygen and hydrogen. It means that Russell, the greatest producer of the electro-motor power on the continent, has been smitten by its servant. It means that man has outstripped his knowledge of this mysterious fluid, and has ignorantly converted through millions of inadequate conductors and faultily insulated wires the terrible, the unfathomed power of electricity into light and heat and force; that Russell was gradually becoming a gigantic storage battery, charged and surcharged, until the time when its electrostatic capacity had been criminally abused, the negative forces of the heavens concentrated over the obnoxious territory, and a discharge unparalleled in electrical experiments restored nature's equilibrium, and consumed in one unspeakable spark Russell and its blind inhabitants."

"My God! Can this happen to Boston?" cried the professor, trembling.

"Or New York?" asked Swift.

"Or to Chicago?" added the girl, faintly. She had revived and was looking about her in a ghastly way. "My mother used to live there."

This truly feminine view of a scientific subject passed unnoticed.

Mr. Ticks stood with his uncovered head yet bent before the annihilated city. He spread his two hands out, palms to the ground, with a gesture of indescribable significance, and made no reply.

Black, vitreous masses of melted conglomerate spread before them. Where had stood the city, the sloping plain offered no obstruction to the view. Russell, to the last splinter of iron or of wood, to the last chip of brick or stone, to the last bone of the last corpse, was fused into a terrible warning to the world by the rebellion of its own electricity.

"I guess none of 'em knew what struck 'em!" The professor hazarded this humane suggestion, feeling that the oppressive silence should be broken somehow.

"The Kremmler chair was nothing to it," said Swift.

"You are right," answered Mr. Ticks, gravely. "That was the only boon. So sudden and intense was the heat that men were ashes and the city was molten before nerves could convey sensation to the brain. In the fraction of a second, in the twinkling of a thought it was not, for God took it."

The four breathed heavily. Again Mr. Ticks broke the silence. He laid his hand paternally upon the young lady's shoulder.

"It is very fortunate, Miss Magnet, that you were the only thoroughly insulated person in this whole territory. The wooden boat, the inverted glasses saved you. You only had a normal amount of electricity in you. You were a poor conductor, otherwise you would have evaporated through the law of induction."

"I can't stand this any longer, or I'll be a fit candidate for an idiot asylum!" blurted out the professor finally. "I am dying for a chaw."

He cast impatient glances at a trackless, desolated grade a mile away. This grave of a great trunk line extended beyond their view.

The four had not stirred from where they had been dropped by the balloon. To do so they would have had to pick their way cautiously. Russell was like an extinct volcano. She was yet hot. But she did not smoke, as one might have expected. There were no smouldering embers left to produce smoke. Combustion had been instantaneous and complete.

But the travellers had no need to go sight-seeing. Everywhere was the same blackened, cooling, ferruginous slag. To see one square yard was to see the whole. The appalling thing about the effect was the cause. Civilization, ever ready with revengeful thrusts, as if protesting against the advance of science, had produced a new accident, a unique disaster.

Swift made an automatic motion for his watch.

"I must go," he said; "I must get my despatch to the *Planet* in time for the evening edition. We will have a scoop on the whole world."

"I'm your man," said the professor. "We can foot it to the nearest telegraph station in four hours."

"Ah, I forgot," said Swift. "That will lose me the four o'clock edition. I'll have to hold the wire all night if I can get it. I'll wire such an account as no other paper will ever get. There isn't a minute to lose!" It was then that Mr. Statis Ticks, realizing, whether from calculation or from sympathy, that Miss Magnet could make no such forced march, and seeing that the girl only held herself together under the tension of the great excitement, gallantly proposed to remain by her and join the rest of the party that evening by the first team that could be chartered.

But the young lady unexpectedly refused the proposition. Her whole nature shrank from spending another minute in that blasted spot. It was therefore arranged, much to Mr. Ticks' disappointment (for he had hoped to add to his copious stock of mental notes by further investigation on the ground), that the girl should accompany them, as far as she was able, down the railroad, away from the lost city.

After a drink of lake water they started off, Swift supporting Miss Magnet on the one side and Mr. Ticks on the other, the professor stalking ahead.

"Even the lake tastes of it," said Swift. "Ugh!"

"Pass a current of electricity through a tumbler of water and there will be detected the same flavor, though not so strong," answered Mr. Ticks.

The party made two miles slowly. Despite all her Western courage and energy, Insula Magnet tottered by the way. To divert her attention, Mr. Ticks led her on to talk about the electrical wonders of the extinct city. The girl enlarged in a sad way upon its many and its curious uses. The baby carriages, she said, took their helpless occupants on an unaided turn around a large oval track in the park. They went by storage battery. One electrician could take the place of twenty nurses and control the power. Once in a while a baby died suddenly. The doctors invariably pronounced it a case of heart failure. Washing was now entirely done by electrical apparatus, likewise ironing and cooking. The great American problem of the "hired girl," Russell considered herself to have solved.

An ingenious arrangement had been recently devised to have the electricity supply the place of valet-de-chambre, but only a few had used it. One or two thought it a hardship to be aroused from bed whether one would or no, to be washed and summarily dressed by an implacable power that performed its set tasks stolidly in spite of anathemas and threats. Can a man abuse his electrical valet? Let him try it if he dare.

The phonograph was in universal use. *The Phonograph Daily* was a rival—one cannot call it sheet, rather wax cylinder—just started, and the din made by those loquacious instruments was worse than the chatter of monkeys in the cocoanut groves of New Guinea.

Electric heaters warmed the rooms. Electric paper lighted them with a suffused and generous glow. No one used stairs. Electric elevators did all the arduous house-climbing. No one made calls any more, for it was an easy matter to ring your acquaintance up and see her in her drawing-room while you talked to her. Women made an elaborate toilet for such interviews. It was soon expected that conversation would be entirely dispensed with, for with a sensitive galvanoscope attached to the brain at a certain point, that was to be patented, the minutest current of thought could be registered upon a cylinder.

Authors would only need to fix their attention upon the plot; the delicate instrument would record

it indelibly for their hearers' gratification.

The well-appointed electric coupé was always ready. There was no worry about oats and spavin and glanders. Miss Magnet told of many other new contrivances that electricity had now to perform. The development of this power through the new dynamos made it possible for men in Russell to dispense utterly with work. You went so far as to put five cents in the slot at any one of a hundred street corners, and your shoes were electrically polished to a patent leather shine. There was no more night, for carbon and incandescent lamps had stabbed the night so that any hovel was brighter than the average day. The girl stopped for breath and sat down. She was exhausted. Swift cheered her tenderly. But Mr. Ticks dryly remarked:

"*Better a city without electricity than electricity without a city!*"

The girl smiled at this heresy, and nodded her head emphatically in a feeble way. She could hardly move.

It was at this stage that Mr. Ticks seemed overcome with uneasiness. He got up and sat down again. He kicked the earth. He examined the charred sleepers. He dug for the lost rails. Then he awoke from his occupation with a sudden start as if rudely shaken from a dream. Swift was used to his colleague's idiosyncrasies. Besides he did not now notice them. He was otherwise occupied. But the professor could stand these performances no longer, and with rude emphasis he burst forth:

"Dang it, man, if you've got anything on your darned mind, jerk it out, if not—" Professor Ariel's manners had become decadent in proportion to the time that had elapsed since he and the *High Tariff* had parted company.

"I—I—" interrupted Mr. Ticks, with a start. "The fact is, I cannot as yet account for that deadly atmosphere that enveloped this section. What was in it to kill? Its effect on me was unlike any other experience that I can recall. It is my inconsolable regret that it is not classified in my mind."

"Did you know," asked Miss Magnet, suddenly, "that a new land improvement company was started this spring for raising four crops a year? All the farms for twenty miles around were bought up. They spent over a million dollars in laying wires in the ground throughout the whole country, on the theory that these voltaic currents applied to grain and fruit and vegetables would excite such crops to quicker verdure and maturity. The company said that it was an experiment on a grand scale; but they were much laughed at. I said it was a dangerous scheme, and nearly lost my position in consequence. I have heard, though, that it was a great success."

During this recital Mr. Ticks' eyes glistened with excitement.

"Ah!" he said, "I am under a thousand obligations to you, young lady. Of course I could not conceive of such a thing, not knowing the facts. It is all plain now. The first discharge, enormous and deadly as it was, was not enough. This network of wires attracted the surplus electricity. The soil must be of such a quality as to convert this territory into an enormous secondary battery. The subsoil must have acted as a monstrous insulator. I shall subject it to a minute analysis. Are we on the verge of a new electrical discovery? Was this deadly phenomenon a hitherto unknown property of the electrical fluid? For to walk within the dead line was like walking into a saturated Leyden jar. Its effect must have also been to devitalize the oxygen and nitrogen of the atmosphere. The victim was electrified and suffocated to death at the same instant. At last I understand the complexity of my astonishing symptoms. The vibratory storm that we so narrowly escaped was not due to barometric depression, but came as a responsive consequence of this surcharged area. When that wire ladder was finally cut off and fell; when it reached a certain position; when one end touched the negative, the other the positive pole, then the current became completed and this gigantic battery was discharged. Had we not been rising at the rate of a hundred feet a second we should have been fused after the fashion of the inhabitants of this ghastly territory. The discharge once having taken place, this country is again free to man and beast."

"Gosh!" was all that the subdued professor could say.

And now the four travellers lifted up their eyes, and saw before them on the horizon black moving, indistinct masses, as if brobdignagian locusts were swarming up the track. Here were the hosts of careworn men, plunging impatiently toward the lost city for the news that the unaccountable and malignant power had hitherto denied them. The four needed courage to meet this unrestrained and desperate mob. Who were these in the van? What pallid faces, what haggard eyes, what piteous gestures! Alas, they were the mourners of the dead! Love had wrestled its way ahead of plunder, and grief had outrun greed. In the front ranks were women wailing and panting desperately to keep pace with unmanned men.

This woeful sight aroused Mr. Ticks. He raised his hands towards the lost city after the manner of an inspired prophet, and there and then uttered the following impassioned warning to humanity, which Swift took down in shorthand in the borrowed notebook:

"Woe unto you that multiply currents you cannot control! Woe unto you that net your country with the trap of sudden death! Woe unto you that toss innocent men on broken wires; that surprise your victims in the counting-house, the home, the street, with destructive bolts! Woe unto you that undermine and overcast the land with a mysterious foe! Behold! your dead shall

rise in serried phalanx against you, and their mourners shall rend you to pieces!"

The only burst of eloquence known to the biography of this prosaic man subsided into apathetic silence. His hands dropped heavily at his sides. He turned away from Russell and beheld its blackened site no more.

The throng was now upon them. Multitudes of wild faces asked questions of the four. Who would answer these? Who could tell the terrible truth? The professor paled and walked behind Swift. Mr. Ticks shrank at the awful responsibility, and took refuge behind the professor. Swift halted and trembled.

"Go," he said to the girl. "Go! Only a woman can."

And she went. She stepped out alone—a few paces, and stood quite still. Instinctively the masses stopped before her. Eyes, sleepless with weeping and waiting, riveted themselves upon eyes that were still haunted with a portentous experience. The girl stretched out one hand in mute appeal, and then burst into tears and sobbed:

"Don't! Don't look like that! Oh, you poor people! I am the only one!"

Awestruck and silently, men and women enveloped her and ministered unto her. It was the advance guard of the Red Cross Society, led by Clara Barton, that sheltered this derelict and messenger of woe.

Set upon by a thousand men, Mr. Ticks and the professor told what they knew. Some cursed and doubted and pressed on. Some bowed their heads and turned back. But Swift, who had recognized Dubbs driving two powerful horses and unreeling two telegraph wires, one for the special use of the Associated Press and the other for the *Planet*, accosted him, and sent the most famous message known to the American newspaper world since the close of the civil war.

It was a long message, and we can only give the more important headlines:

> Russell is no more!
>
> Thirty thousand people killed by one unparalleled electric discharge.
>
> The gigantic spark fuses the whole city into one indistinguishable molten slag.
>
> Miraculous escape of one lady. The sole survivor.
>
> Thrilling rescue by the *Planet* reporters in a special balloon.
>
> The reporters complete the circuit and touch off an over-charged storage battery with a circumference of one hundred and fifty miles.
>
> The territory that was impassable now open.
>
> Fifty thousand people race toward the lost city.
>
> Russell perished of her own electricity.
>
> Civilization's new and formidable danger.

Three months later, on a secular evening, the upholstered pews of an uptown church were filled with a fashionable audience. As the church bells tolled eight the organ pealed forth the wedding march. It was noticed with much comment that the vast audience-room was lighted with gas, the new electric lights being dispensed with. The bride, Miss Insula Magnet, had especially desired this.

When the solemn ceremony was ended, and when, amid the craning of necks, the bride and groom were walking down the white-ribboned aisle, a diversion happened that arrested the newly wedded couple. But this was not construed into an ill-omen. A diminutive messenger boy, with a super-experienced countenance, had met them half way to the vestibule, and, with a saucy smile, held up an envelope to Mr. Swift's face.

"It's half an hour late. Wires burned out. Guess you'll read it now!"

Mr. Statis Ticks, who, although well and worthily married, officiated in some unprecedented capacity as best man, gave Professor Ariel, one of the ushers, an intelligent glance. The latter, being the happy possessor of a new balloon (which he ingenuously called *Reciprocity*), supplied to him by the always generous *Planet*, and fully elated by his present position, answered with a broad wink. Mr. Swift, unconscious of the thousands that were standing in their seats to look at him, and of the general buzz of interest, tore open the colored envelope with reportorial haste, and read as follows. It was cabled from his chief, the proprietor of the *Planet*, now unavoidably detained in England:

> "*Congratulations. Advance of one thousand a year. Report after two months' bliss. God bless you!*"

A TERRIBLE EVENING.

Harland Slack sat in the café of the Parker House carelessly sipping whiskey and Apollinaris. He fondly cherished the thought that this combination was an excellent anti-intoxicant, a brain-quieter; on the same principle that B & S is supposed to clarify an Englishman's head. Harland Slack was an attractively repulsive man. He was tall, and vigorously put together. Evening dress was becoming to him. He never appeared after six o'clock without it: for it set off his long blond mustache, his fine artificially curled, blond hair, and his pale regular features to their best advantage. Seen from the front there were times when he was considered positively handsome, after the same fashion that an aristocratic French doll is admired. When he turned his profile, then there appeared certain hard lines of the check and weak lines of the forehead and chin that grated on austere physiognomists. The giddy set of fashionable women, at whose five o'clock teas he still remained the *éprouvette positive*, thought him adorable: the matrons with marriageable girls thought him debatable: if he chanced upon a spiritual woman, she considered him dangerous. The club men privately thought him unreliable.

It was not so in college before his father died. Then the main features of his life were promising. If he indulged in occasional gayety he did not lose all of his self-respect. His classmates noted in him a certain quality of strength or reserve that was supposed to emanate from himself rather than from the hard fact that his paternal allowance was only seven hundred a year, and that he was threatened with disinheritance if he ran into debt.

But now he had inherited. He had changed. His hands trembled. His eyes twitched. The corners of his mouth danced the dance of St. Vitus. He had terrible nightmares, and awoke with parched mouth and with disagreeable eyes, and with a rebellious head whose disorders required what he called "an eye-opener" to cause them to abate.

His best friends took him apart and said: "Now really, old fellow, this won't do. Its—playing the devil with you. Come now, knock off for a bit. I'll bet you a hundred dollars you can't confine yourself to claret for a month."

And Harland Slack would answer:

"Done! Have a cocktail?" He usually paid the bet before three hours were up. The limitation, he said, was too strict.

"I'll give him two years," said his nearest intimate; "and then—" He whistled The Dead March in Saul, and the fellows wagged their heads ominously over the sad case—and their ale.

In short, Harland was not only addicted to drink, but he was given over to it hand and soul. Yet he was very seldom drunk. He paused at that excessively polite stage which was the surveyor's line of inebriety. An eminent bar-keeper pointed him out one day and said:

"It isn't the boys that get drunk and then get over it, that go to the devil so fast: it's the fellows that take a little all day long and keep at it who can't be reformed."

So it naturally came about that while Harland Slack was in this benevolent mood, which usually lasted from ten in the morning till one in the morning, and which might aptly be described as betwixt Hell and Earth, he became the common prey of common humanity.

> His was not to reason why;
> His was but to lend a fi'.
> Theirs was but to take and sigh:
> "I'll pay you sometime by and by."

He seemed to take it as a compliment that his purse was everybody's bank, with a daily run on it. It was lucky for him that the enormous principal left by his economical father could not be touched. But at last, as it once in a while happens to the repleted, the unqualified ability to borrow, or rather, in this instance, to steal, led to a pall. Unlock every safe, unbar every vault, open up every store to pillage, and the robber, glutted with desire, will disappear. On the same principle, at the time of our historiette, Harland's friends, even his bar-room acquaintances, were overtaken by a sentiment of self-reproach or honor, and there was a general movement to swear off borrowing from this man who never refused a loan.

On the evening of which we speak Harland sat languidly waiting for a friend who had an appointment to accompany him to the club. It was early, scarcely eight, and he aimlessly fingered a loose roll of bills in his waistcoat pocket, smiled inanely at the man behind the desk, and then, despairing of entertainment, began to spin a trade-dollar on the polished table. The café was nearly empty, and he was to all purposes alone. This was a state which he dreaded above all others. Like Napoleon, in the company of even one he felt an inspiring confidence and security. When he was with people, he forgot that whiskey was an insisting necessity: he only thought he drank because he was a good fellow and "one of the boys."

Harland had never been visited by the uttermost penalty of his condition. It cannot be said that he never feared that state whose ugly name we omit when we can, or reduce to its significant initials; as if that reduced the horror of the fact. But he feared it: he feared it greatly. The possibility of delirium tremens unmanned him. Then he sweat drops of apprehension, and with vague, shuffling remorse promised himself to improve. He possessed all the weakness of Sydney

Carton with none of that martyr's pathetic nobility or ability.

Harland Slack sat alone and began to scowl at the bottle of Apollinaris. His weak face looked haggard. Perhaps he felt that he had cast the key of his tomb through the grated door after he had immured himself within. He glared at the whiskey, and his thoughts cursed it; then he smiled and took another swallow. Even as he drank his mind wandered back to his college days when he was unimplicated in high treason against himself. He could not help remembering, sometimes: he seldom thought of the future.

The door opened. He tossed the remainder of his glass off, and looked around, expecting his companion. Then he turned back, disappointed. Then he looked again.

A stalwart man entered with an air of vitality which is often mistaken for authority. The vigorous development of his body gave a startling impression of height and power. He was dressed with elegant negligence. His dark beard was cut to a point, and he looked like a Parisian artist. Black eyes from under the brim of a silk hat compelled attention by reason of an imperious steadiness that indicated the possession of unusual self-control. The waiters jumped to serve this man. Harland was annoyed at this obsequiousness which he had never received. He tried to look haughtily indifferent, but he could not take his eyes from this person. The stranger returned his glance. He advanced upon the fashionable inebriate, and paused at his table. Harland Slack arose as if he were accepting a challenge, and trembled. The two looked at each other.

"I declare, old fellow. Is it you? Why, I haven't seen you since Class Day. You know me, Slack, don't you?"

The speaker smiled and took off his hat. This action heightened the impression of power which he had first made. His forehead was literally the dome of his body. It was as if the Creator had determined on granting this man an unusual supply of brains, and had then packed them in until the pressure had distended the frontal lobes. His brow was an overhanging arch, massive, high, compelling. This was so marked that the head gave almost a painful impression of superabundant intellectuality. Harland immediately recognized his classmate from that distinguishing feature. It was the only recognizable one left.

"Randolph?"

"The same. Do you live in Boston now?"

"Oh yes, of course. Sit down—and you?"

"I? I am a practising physician, now: that's all. Am just back from Paris a while ago, and have taken an office. I was telephoned suddenly to a patient out of town and ran in here for a chop before I went home."

The keen eyes of Dr. Alaric Randolph examined his vis-à-vis as he gave his brief explanation. He ordered his chops, declined an offer to drink, and noticed with professional intelligence Harland's demand for some more whiskey and the tremulous way with which it was taken. No words were necessary to tell this student of human miseries the nature of Harland Slack's disease.

Randolph was as much changed for the better as his classmate was for the worse. It was a wonder that they recognized each other at all. Harland felt the difference, but could not analyze it; while Randolph studied it more than he felt it. The college student who did not room in "Beck," and who was not a member of the Hasty Pudding Club, who had no time for society and theatricals, who was never seen at Carl's, who was suspected of being a little diffident, had suddenly become the patron; and the classmate whose father's wealth had given him an unassailable social rank, yielded with feeble will to his own unspoken instinct of inferiority.

Harland's face had become weazened since he had left college. His manly frame had shrunken. On the other hand, Alaric's features had expanded. His skull had filled out: even his frontal arch was rounded.

"What have you been doing in Paris, Randolph?" asked Harland with a good-natured laugh and a faint attempt at condescension.

Dr. Randolph looked across the table; his eyes twinkled over his classmate's tone, but he courteously answered:

"I've been experimenting there for five years. I went the usual round of hospitals and studied with Pasteur, and have raised scores of colonies of bacilli. Lately I have busied myself with investigations of too complex a nature to discuss. And you——"

"Oh,—I'm a—a member of the clubs, you know. I'm now engaged in breeding beagles. That takes lots of time you know. My father died some years ago, and I—eh—take care of the estate."

"So?" exclaimed Randolph with a German lengthening of the vowel sound. Then taking the opportunity while Harland was emptying his glass, he regarded him thoughtfully.

"Look here, Slack," said the young doctor after a moment's hesitation. "What do you say to spending the evening with me? I am lonely and want to talk over old days. You're done up and not fit to go to the club to-night."

Now Harland, though considerably astonished by the invitation, was also flattered.

"But my appointment! I never missed an appointment in my life, you know," wavered Harland unsteadily, while shifting his eyes to the door.

"Never mind that now. I'll leave word at the desk. Psst—garçon!"

The Doctor spoke masterfully; the gentleman obeyed him as readily as the servant. A pencil note, with strict injunctions for delivery solved the inebriate's sodden difficulty. Slack insisted upon adding that he would still meet his friend between ten and eleven o'clock. Randolph smiled indulgently, and they passed out into the cool air arm in arm. Randolph hailed a coupé and got his friend into it with pardonable alacrity.

Harland was unusually communicative that evening with the man from whom he would have hardly deigned to accept a cigarette in his college days. He could not understand the reason for what he considered this sudden social degradation. He accepted it in a dazed way, for he had been drinking steadily all day.

The cab stopped before one of the few stone houses less common in Boston than in New York, whose construction is at once singularly deceptive and honest. It had a frontage of seventeen feet.

"A good sized dog-kennel!" observed Harland Slack, glancing at it superciliously as he got out.

"These are my offices," answered Dr. Randolph urbanely, paying no attention to the half-maudlin discourtesy.

Supposing that one of these houses with a frontage of seventeen feet, has a depth of two hundred feet, and is five stories high? The dog-kennel assumes an area of nearly half an acre. There may be large rooms, almost a spacious salon in one of these insignificant homes. Seemingly unlimited space behind ridiculously narrow stone walls, is one of the many mysteries of city life.

Harland Slack sank upon the sofa, and languidly watched the Doctor turn up the gas.

"You haven't a nip of brandy, have you? I feel so confoundedly thirsty." Dr. Randolph looked at the speaker, whose wavering eye vainly strove to elude his. The Doctor seemed to be balancing in his mind whether to grant the guest his wish or not.

"Look here, old boy," said Harland, almost with a whine, "it isn't fair, doncherno, to bring a fellow in here and stare at him that way. My beagles wouldn't treat me so. I'm burning up with thirst. Just a little. That's hospitable, you know." He finished with a sigh and a fuddled look of entreaty. He had gone a half an hour without alcohol.

"I beg your pardon, Slack," said Randolph slowly, "of course you shall have it. But I would rather give you some cordial of mine first. It will take your thirst away sooner than your infernal liquor."

Slack nodded wearily, while the Doctor unlocked a black cabinet and took from thence a brittle flask and a liqueur glass. He held the flask up to the light before Slack's face. The liquid flamed yellow in the gaslight. It seemed to have concentrated in its ebullient elements the exhilaration of life. Now, the yellow cordial, even as the inebriate looked upon it, glowed and became incandescent. It seemed to be endowed with its own principle of energy. Harland Slack started up, and looked at this phenomenon more closely with intelligent astonishment.

"This," said Dr. Alaric Randolph observantly, "is the issue of many laborious years abroad. This is the theriaca against all vital poisons. Watch it; for even as you look upon it, you absorb its virtue."

There was no melodrama in the Doctor's action or accent. He spoke quite naturally. Harland was as much impressed by his friend's sincerity as by the singular appearance of this *elixir vitæ*. He did not need to be urged to look at the glass again. It was a fountain of boiling light.

At this moment, a knock was heard at that door of the reception room which evidently led into the Doctor's inner office. Dr. Randolph started, quickly locked the door leading into the hall, and put the priceless flask gently upon a high bookcase. It was on a level with his face. The liquid shot bubbles of animation to the surface; and before Slack's eyes, as if gathering fire from the light or the heat, it slowly began to turn red. The languid debauchee now jumped nimbly to his feet and stood entranced before this beautiful, perplexing transformation.

"Keep your eyes on it for a moment, my friend," whispered Dr. Randolph: "watch it carefully for me. I wish to note its changes. It differs under variable conditions. Tell me about it. Do not touch it. When I come back you shall taste, and then—" Harland lost the last words as the physician hurried out.

Harland Slack, feeling a dull sense of scientific responsibility, fixed his eyes upon the occult fluid, watching its strange manifestations eagerly. His brain throbbed with thoughts. If the mere sight of this curious elixir could clear the clots of alcohol from his blood and his will, what might come of a draught? He walked for the first few moments about the room briskly. He stood erect: but he did not take his gaze from the flask, nor did he touch it. It now shot forth colors of the ruby. Along the rim played the fires of the spinel. These gave way to the glow of the garnet; which in turn vanished before gleams whose indescribable radiance is only likened to the blood of the pigeon. Harland was eager not to lose the lightest stage of this marvellous metamorphosis. With every new hue fresh streams of blood seemed to come into his heart. He felt so strangely that he soon began to doubt whether he were sober or not. He rubbed his eyes, and pinched his ears. Yes, he was awake and sane. This was no delirium of a caked brain. His mind was as clear as the

waters of the Bermuda reefs. If he had been an opium eater, he might have thought these the legitimate effects of the dusky drug.

As soon as he had thoroughly assured himself of the validity of his reason he began to hear music. It came from the inner room whither the Doctor had gone. Without taking his eyes off of the blazing flask, Harland backed up to the door and listened. The strains sounded louder as he approached. There seemed to be a castanet, and a harp, and singing. In surprise he touched the door. It opened lightly. His curiosity proved stronger then the power of the elixir to restrain him, and he turned. A low cry of amazement leaped from his lips. He stopped irresolute and looked back. The glittering alembic was extinguished. The liquid shone but dully in the feeble jets of gas. What could there have been to fascinate, he mused, in that carafe of—water?

He forgot the Doctor. He abandoned the theriaca. He strode into the vast hall that opened up before him. As he advanced, his head whirled with a new intoxication. He wondered how so narrow a house could contain such a superb apartment. Then he perceived, or he fancied that two or more buildings had been thrown into one. It was the only explanation of the spacious area which his imagination afforded, and it satisfied him.

Before him extended a banquet-hall decorated with Oriental magnificence, and lighted with many lamps. In its centre was a sumptuous table. Black servants flitted noiselessly about. Upon a yellow rug at one side crouched a dark dancing girl, clad in gauze, waving a gauze scarf. She reminded him of something he had read about the celebrated dancers of the Maharajah of Mysore. This beautiful girl, with a bewitching effort at unconsciousness, arose and whirled down the long hall towards the young man, waving her bare arms to the accompaniment of stringed instruments and the measured drone of the players. Suddenly the dancer, with a blinding pirouette, wound her veils modestly about her, saluted Harland with a profound, mocking courtesy, and then pointing to the table wafted herself away. Harland was confounded. What strange orgy was this? What a scene from India dropped upon bleak, staid New England!

When he had accustomed his eyes to the blaze of light he saw that another woman was in the room. This one was reclining at the table. He recognized her immediately. This fact pleased him; for it assured him that he was still himself. It also troubled him, for he had solemnly vowed never to allow his eyes to rest upon her again. She had haunted him with her beauty and her insolence since he had forsworn her. There flashed his sapphire bracelet on her slender arm, and the Alexandrite for which he had sent to Russia, took to itself at her white throat alternate virulent moods of red and green. She was entrancing, and he loved her. She was his evil genius, and he feared her. She had flattered and despised him, and he hated her. How laughingly she had lured him with her jewelled hand and iridescent eyes down the pleasant path that brought up at his fatal vice! He thought of her polite orgies, her theatre suppers, her one o'clock germans, and her select parties at suburban hotels. To his besotted brain she was a scarlet witch and he fled from her, and returned, and fled again.

But what manner of man was this Doctor? Why would they trap him?—weak, sodden thing that he was, and knew that he was.

Now, as he looked upon her there was a snap in his heart, and her power upon him seemed to give away and break like a valve in the aorta. How was this possible? Could a man *not* care for her? With sudden surprising disdain he approached the beautiful creature before whom he had so often trembled. She did not look up at him, but threw herself back further on the couch and motioned to a servant for some wine. Something about her super-human grace revolted him. The music redoubled. The Indian dancer fanned him as she sped past. He did not notice her. He was above intoxication of the senses. What was this woman? What her wine? In a kind of sacred, cold revolt, he stood aloof. He was in an ecstasy of moral freedom. He advanced a step or two, looked down at her from his tall height and ejaculated brutally:

"*You* here?"

She did not look up at this insult. Her cheek, neck, and ears flushed and then became deadly pale. A sneer now spread itself over her chin and mouth.

"And why not, you poor fool?" The opprobrious epithet seemed feebly to express the infinite contempt in which she—even she—had held him. She had called him this with equal scorn more than once before, in her drawing-room, and he had never felt the shadow of resentment. He had been accustomed to laugh feebly and to turn the unpleasant personality away as well as he could. But now, he became aware of the contumely for the first time. He clenched his fists; he breathed heavily. He did not trust himself to speak. He ground his teeth. His thoughts became singularly clear. He took another step nearer. She turned her haughty head and smiled mockingly at him, clicking the glass with her finely-manicured finger.

"I did not know, sir, that *you* were a friend of the great Doctor," she chirped in her falsetto voice, and her lip curled.

"Its a lie! I am not! He is a scoundrel!"

Harland spoke savagely. He could not understand this moral convulsion that within the last few minutes, had dominated his nature. He could only express it. What was this house? For the first time the query arose: What had he to do with a questionable evening?

"You are drunk, as usual," answered the woman with a pert upward motion of disgust.

At this, which he knew to be a libel for once, Harland's hand tore at his heart: a terrible rush of blood ran to his brain. The music hushed. The dark dancing-girl sank with exhaustion to her rug. The room was stifling. The air was heavy with the perfume of roses, and attar, and wine. Yet the young man's head was poised, his eyes were sane, his senses untouched. With a supreme effort he held his anger in check. The beauty, not realizing the extent to which she had tortured him, laughed aloud and contemptuously cried:

"Harland Slack, you are a coward. You dare not call your soul your own; for you are always drunk. Bah!" She made as if to draw herself from beyond his touch. He did not stir, but a frightful whiteness extended over his hands and face.

"Go on," he said metallically.

With a refinement of insolence difficult to describe, ignoring his person, she looked *through* him, and with a gesture ordered the music to begin again.

Harland stood motionless for a moment. Immovable, he fixed his gray eyes upon a little black square of court-plaster under the lobe of her left ear. The music crashed through the banquet-hall. The dancing-girl tried to distract the man of stone. He looked at that little black patch. Its wearer shrugged her shoulders significantly; then, as if wearied of the thought of him, she moved her white arm to the table and took up a glass flaming with champagne; waving it towards him she said malevolently:

"There! That's what you are waiting for. Drink and go!—Sot!" The viciousness of the act and word served as the key to the situation. Like rusting steel, Harland became unlocked. Oddly enough, at this crisis it occurred to him to question whether this were his old friend at all. Then who? Then what? Was the woman an embodiment of all the past evil of his own soul? By some horrible law of metempsychosis had his old spirit passed into this too fashionable married flirt at his side? That outstretched, mocking hand—was it what the abstainers called the "demon of drink?" How often he had laughed at the phrase, lighting his cigarette with their tracts!

At the fearful import of these thoughts, he felt himself endowed by a bidding higher than fate. Justice arose and compelled him. His eyes brightened before he did the deed. With a sweep, he shattered the hand that held the slender glass, and snatching up a silver knife from the table he poised it for an instant: then buried it to the hilt.

It struck just below her left ear. It obliterated the little black patch. With a sound more like a hiss than a cry the woman drooped to her divan. The music stopped with a frightened crash. The dancing-girl fled with a shriek; but Harland stood immovable, exultant, holding his hands ready to strangle if the wound did not kill. His face, but now so weak, had acquired an inexorable strength. Strange! At this moment he felt himself not a murderer, but a man.

He watched his victim dying, without a word; and when her curse was spent, he turned and walked triumphantly back through the wasted magnificence to the room from whence he had come.

He did not hurry. At first, he did not apprehend arrest. He felt as if he had accomplished a great deed. Without looking back he closed the door and sought for his hat. He put it on and made for the outer entrance. He tried it and found it locked.

Now at last he began to comprehend his situation. Terror fell upon him. Cold drops bathed him. The enormity of his act flashed upon his conscience. *Kill!* Kill a *woman*? He struggled at the window and the door. Both were impervious. He dared not go back. How could he look at her? Escape was cut off. His head became clotted with the old sensations. Fear, such as makes a man's heart stand still, assailed him. He looked in vain for the flask. It was gone. With a loud cry, he flung himself upon the sofa and fainted dead away.

How long he lay there of course he did not know. Soon, vague cerebrations began to torture his mind. It burned as if it were being recalled to life from a frozen state. Then, soaring upward from deeps beyond the deeps, supported through irremediable turmoil by an overwhelming power, he felt himself gently laid upon a couch. There was a moment when the brain, recovering its equilibrium, swam and spun. Then suddenly he found consciousness and emerged through the mist of pain. He tried to use his limbs, but could not rise. With an effort he strove to loosen his tongue, but could not speak. With desperate will he endeavored to open his eyes. Their lids were riveted together. This was no hallucination. He was never more alert nor more helpless.

He knew that some one was bending over him.

He felt two eyes examining his soul. He had the consciousness that there was nothing hid from this intense gaze. Then a commanding voice spoke to him, and a hand of unutterable persuasion touched his forehead.

"Harland Slack!" said the ringing voice. Beginning a little above a whisper it seemed to increase to oratorical tones: then it reverberated throughout his nature, and burst upon him like the rattle of thunder. "Harland Slack, you have had a terrible lesson. Harland Slack, you will not drink again!" Then after a pause in a different voice, "Now, Slack get up! You're all right now. Come!"

With a mighty wrench Harland, at his bidding, cast off the numbness from his body, the incubus from his will, and staggering to his feet opened his eyes.

Before him stood Dr. Alaric Randolph holding his hand and looking searchingly into his face.

This fact recalled to him his awful deed. He understood perfectly that he had committed a murder. He knew not how, or why, or where. With a tremulous look about him he burst into tears and clung for protection to his enigmatical host.

As tenderly as a hospital nurse Dr. Randolph led the criminal to a deep chair and placed him in it.

"There, there, old fellow. It's all right. You will come out of it all straight. I'll see you through. Trust me. There, take my hand. That will help you, see?"

The broken man, shuddering from weakness, clasped the sympathetic hand and wrung it. Harland sat still a long while with closed eyes. The doctor watched him professionally, even tenderly, at times anxiously.

"Now," he said, "I'll go and bring you a *demitasse*. It will set you on your feet."

"No, no!" cried Harland in terror, "don't leave me. I can't be left alone."

"But only to the next room."

The patient's hands relaxed, and he assented wearily. When the coffee came, he drank a little obediently.

"Now, my boy," said the Doctor, with what under the circumstances seemed to Harland a ghastly cheerfulness, "this will get you up entirely. When you finish it, I am going to send you to the Club!" At the mention of the Club Harland began to tremble.

"My God, Randolph! I can't go there. I'll be arrested." He glanced apprehensively at the outer door as if expecting a policeman. "Don't you know," he added in a whisper, "what I've done in your infernal place?"

"Nonsense!" replied Randolph lightly, "not a soul shall know you've been here. She deserved it. I'll take all the blame. Now brace up and be a man. Don't be nervous. You're feverish. You need a tonic before you start. What'll you drink?"

Harland looked at his host in a state divided between dementia and moral nausea. What manner of man was this American Doctor with his accursed Parisian education?

"I am horribly thirsty," he admitted: "I will take a glass of water, thank you."

He said this without surprise at himself, naturally and quite sincerely. He longed for it. It was the first request of the kind he had made for years. Randolph handed the water to him and watched him narrowly. Harland held up the glass to the light with a connoisseur's eye, smiled with satisfaction, and took the clear draught down at one swallow.

"Ah!" he said: "that is good. I feel better now. Now swear that you will save me. Don't give me up. Hide me somehow. It happened in your house, you know."

"Give yourself no concern," said the Doctor easily.

"Why, man," blazed Harland Slack, "don't you know that I've murdered somebody? It was a woman. I've murdered that woman you keep here. I am a murderer."

"Your Club is only two blocks off," answered the physician with astonishing indifference; "It will do you good to walk there. Trust me. Don't worry over it. Let me feel your hand. It's moist and soft. No fever; that's good. When you step foot into the Club you will never think of the affair again."

The Doctor quietly gave the criminal his hat and coat, put a cane into his hand, and conducted him to the door.

"Go!" he said, "go directly to your Club as usual. As a physician I order it. It is the best thing you can do."

Mutely the trembling man obeyed, and thus the two actors in this awful evening parted; so, perhaps, criminal and accomplice are wont to part in the extremity of great emergencies, as if nothing had happened out of the moral order of things.

Harland Slack walked into his fashionable Club slowly. As he did so, whether by reason of the familiar atmosphere, or the contrast to the scene from which he had escaped, he did not stop to consider, his crime dropped from his memory like the burden from Christian's back. He handed his outer garments to the liveried boy, and, as was his wont, turned towards the poker and billiard rooms. There were the usual number of useless gambling and playing men uselessly drinking. Harland Slack was greeted in the usual boisterous manner.

"Hilloa! What'll you take? Here, boy, bring the same old stuff to Mr. Slack."

The gossip proceeded, the chips rattled, the balls clicked, the smoke mounted, the liquors gurgled, and the regular Club life proceeded.

The friend of his appointment now joined him.

"By ——! You look as white as that foam there. You need a nerve restorer. You haven't been idiot

enough to buck the tiger again, have you? What will you take?"

"No," said Harland slowly. "I have not gambled." He shook his head with a strange expression. He did not understand. The Club seemed different to him. It was not as entrancing or as necessary as usual. The odor of stale liquor and of staler tobacco nauseated him. Still, it did not occur to him that this was an unusual state of mind for him to be in.

The attendant placed the chased tray upon the table. His friend took the decanter from the boy and poured out the brown liquid into the delicate glasses. He then offered one to Harland and held up his own in token of courtesy.

"Well, here's to luck," he said, and nodded to Harland. Harland nodded in return. His nerves twitched him. What was this new sensation of repugnance? He lifted his glass higher to his mouth. He tried to put it to his lips. It would not go. He tried again. His arm refused him service. But the fumes of this familiar liquor mounted to his nostrils, which dilated with horror. What was this terrible thing which he was asked to drink? Never had he felt such physical repulsion. A shudder of disgust shook him. With a curse he dashed the glass to the floor, and glared suspiciously upon his companion.

"How dare you ask me to drink this stuff?" His voice rang with passion. "I loathe it! I cannot stand it. Let me go. This is an infernal den, and I will get out!"

The men around jumped up and held him. They thought that D. T. had come at last.

"Somebody send for the nearest expert," said his nearest friend.

This inebriate's first resistance to his dipsomania was interpreted darkly, with sundry shrugs and winks and gestures.

"It is too devilish bad," said his companion, "but I knew it would happen some day."

They called a cab and put him in and sent him home. But he gave no further evidence of insanity. His case became a seven days' gossip and warning behind the bulging windows of the great Club.

Harland Slack went straightway to Colorado, and came back a man. He went into law, and succeeded. It is well known that he does not drink. The committee elected a new heir to damnation in Harland's place at the Club.

At the end of an address delivered a year afterward before a close medical meeting Dr. Alaric Randolph said:

"A bit of bright, cut glass, and a healthy will, and the proportional training did this thing. I have not given the man's name, not only on account of his high social standing and marked mental ability, but also because he himself is still ignorant of the facts. I have no fear of a relapse. He has forgotten that he ever believed himself to have murdered a woman who never existed. But he has not forgotten that he no longer drinks. This case is now a tested cure. My first successful experiment in this great, unknown field, rests upon its facts. Alcoholism is probably as serious an illustration as we could present. The hypnotic therapeutics have come to stay."

SCUD.

It was the morning after my arrival. I had just come, jaded from examination papers, agued with the incessant ring of orations, abhorrent of the rustle of white tarlatans, distrustful of the future attitude of trustees, and utterly wilted from the effect of a country academy exhibition held in the heat of June in the torridest of Western towns. I had never seen the ocean, and before my window the glorious old Atlantic heaved solemnly. Its intermittent swash upon the rocks sent peace into my soul. I found myself near enough even to throw something into the water. The longing to communicate with this new friend, dreamed of for so many inland years, overpowered me. A box of buttons was all I had, and I leaned far out into the air, pungent with a mixture of fish and kelp, and cast into the deep these feminine necessities, one by one. Now a tiny disk of mother-of-pearl would glance on the float and bounce off into a gray ripple; and then a bit of jet would clatter on the red granite rocks, and be swallowed by a lapping wavelet that seemed to rise on purpose for this strange offering. Too soon the box was emptied of its contents; then there came a mad desire to throw cologne, shoes, satchel, anything, everything, myself, from the second-story window into this mysterious, beckoning, repelling Atlantic tide beneath me. Leaning on the sill, with my whole soul absorbed in this new Nirvana, I was suddenly and yet not unpleasantly aroused by a strident yell:

"Hellow, Scud! Wha'che got this mornin'?"

"Oh, no-thin', only twenty-six little 'uns, an' a couple bucket o' bait."

The answer came back in a deep, orotund, sing-song voice. It was the natural intoning of the man of the sea. Two boats shot from under a rocky headland a few hundred yards before me to the

left. One of the boats made fast to some black corks that formed a huge rectangle in the water, and two men began pulling in a net. The one in the other boat, who answered to the name of Scud, stopped rowing for a moment, exchanged a word or two, and laughed aloud, then cast a critical look at the sun's altitude, and pulled lazily away. When he was at some distance, he rested on his oars, and hilloaed with that penetrating sea cry:

"I hope you'll get two barr'l. I guess thar's 'nough to go all round."

That undulatory cadence is entirely lacking in landsmen's tones. Still this was an extraordinarily joyous voice, as if the life of a fisherman were a dream without a care or a struggle. But Scud and his queer, green boat disappeared behind the jagged outline of the rocks, and I turned at the sound of the first bell to dress for breakfast.

"Well, how do you like your room? I hope that the fishermen didn't wake you up too early."

My cousin offered me some smoking flakes of fish, new to my limited experience. This, he said, was inland hake, and was caught that morning in Scud's trap. Now, although I was hitherto ignorant of this delicious fish with its paradoxical cognomen, I felt that Scud and I were already friends; and gravely informed my host that Scud had caught twenty-six little ones that morning. This piece of information was immediately greeted with impertinent hilarity.

"So Scud woke you up?" said my cousin. "He's always doing that. There was one nervous boarder here. She threatened to have him arrested for breaking the peace. But you might as well arrest a fog-whistle."

"Does he always get up as early in the morning?" I asked, apprehensively. "He must be a very energetic person. Do tell me about it. What are 'little 'uns'?"

I must confess to a degree of perplexity when the the whole family burst into further roars of laughter at my simple question.

"Scud energetic? Why, he is the easiest, the slowest, the sleepiest, the most lovable, good-natured fellow on the whole coast. He makes the surest and perhaps the best living of any of the fishermen around here. If he didn't get up early he wouldn't do even that. As it is, Salt does most of the work. Salt is his oldest boy," explained my cousin.

"I am sure Scud needs all he can make," interrupted Mabel (she is my cousin's wife), "with his dozen children and a wife to support, and only one trap to do it on."

"For my part," interposed the oldest daughter, with a pert motion of her head, "I am tired to death having to save clothes for that—You needn't look so shocked, mamma. Yes, I am. It's always 'Take care of that petticoat; Betty can use it;' or, 'That dress can be turned and made over nicely for the twins.' I declare I don't get a new dress but the whole Scud family troop over and inspect it, and criticise it, and quarrel over it, and gloat over it the first day I wear it. I caught two of their boys fighting over which of them should have Reginald's summer ulster when he was done with it."

"I shall give it to Tommy," observed her mother, in an absent, comfortable tone.

After breakfast my cousin rowed over to the station; the eldest two children took their guest, a boy of about sixteen, out fishing; while I eagerly accompanied Mabel across the rocks and fields to Scud's house—a little rented hut, hidden and sheltered from the east winds behind a huge barrack of a boarding-house.

How clear the day! How warm the sun! How hospitable this forbidding, granite-clad North Shore! As I look back upon that memorable morning it seemed as if the bay could never be ruffled by any but the tenderest breezes, or its bright water reflect any but the dazzling glare of the hottest sun. Clouds hovered over us, delicate and fleecy as the feathers of the marabou, and white and curly as the feathers of the ostrich. They radiated from a centre in translucent films, and shot out monstrous ciliated fingers like a fan. Such a sky was never seen in my part of the country, and I attributed this ravishing cloud phenomenon to the peculiar influence of the sea, being too ignorant to notice that these streamers shot out from the west. The stillness was intoxicating after the scurry of the school-room. And now even the water made no ripples on the beach. The sea was motionless, like a distilled elixir in a serrated alembic.

We stopped before a low, pitch-roofed house that looked as if it contained three rooms at most. The yard was piled up with wreckage and drift-wood. Who ever heard of a fisherman buying kindling? Within the gate four children were playing with twice as many cats and kittens. They were all fighting like animals between themselves for a plateful of scraps of fried fish. A baby would grab a piece from the plate, and offer the remainder to a grave tabby, which in turn distributed it to her offspring. Then the kittens and "humans" rolled and scratched, and shrieked and scratched again.

"Keep yer mouths shet out there, or I'll be after ye with a stick!" This maternal sentiment, spoken in a loud shrill voice, greeted us as we stepped within the gate.

"It's I, Betty. I have brought you a little something, and a friend who wants to see the children."

"Dear sakes! 'tain't you, is it?" The shrill voice was now modulated in an entirely different tone. "Ain't I glad you've come! Step right in and set down. No? Then I'll be out and see ye ez soon ez I've tended the baby."

"Baby!" I gasped, looking at the four fighting infants at my feet, none of whom looked over thirteen months. "Are these hers too?"

"These are the twins," answered Mabel, quite seriously. "They call them 'the twin.' These are the two sets, just a year apart. The baby was born a month ago. The baby isn't named. Let me see: these are Bessie and Maurie and Robbie and Susie."

"Why, I thought you knew better," protested the mother, in a grieved voice. "Susie is in the house there. That's Bessie." She wiped her hands on her apron, and thrust one of them out through a rent in the mosquito-netted door. "I'm glad to see any of *her* friends. Yes. Good mor'n'. The children? Laws sakes, they're round the house like pups!"

The face was remarkable for a pair of brilliant black eyes, an inheritance of Italian ancestry. She was not yet middle-aged, and her hair had turned prematurely gray. Her hands were bony, nervous hands, indicative of great executive capacity, but the incessant work had left them trembling.

"Are all your children here?" I asked, not knowing what else to say.

"Here's four of 'em. Come out here, you in there, an' I'll count ye." It was a pitiful sight to see these five plump, rosy youngsters pass in review before the frail, emaciated mother.

"But here are only nine," I ventured.

"Salt's missing, mother," said the eldest girl; "he's with father to the trap."

"So he is, Kittie. They've rowed round the cove with what they ketched. They'll be back d'rectly."

"But how do you manage, Mrs.—ah—Scud?" I asked. I am afraid there was a slight choke in my throat as I spoke. The mother cast a quick look at my face, and shoving her children into the house, one by one, said:

"Now go, Kittie; finish the dishes. You, Mamie, put the baby kearfully in the box. What did you hit Jim for, Sammy? Let me ketch you a-hitten your little brother agin an' I'll spank you. Now get in the house, all of ye. You see, miss," turning to me, "we manage somehow. If it wa'n't fur *her*, we'd give up. There's that boy Jim, he took to swearing this spring. I declare it was jess awful to hear him go on. I spanked him, and Scud he switched him, but it wa'n't to no use. That boy talked jess scand'lous, till your cousin here, miss, she heerd him one mornin', an' took a white powder an' put a little on his tongue. It made Jim powerful sick. And, says she, 'If I hear you swearin' agin I'll pizen ye; an' you'll die in a minute an' never see God,' and I declare to goodness he was so skeared that I hain't heerd him swear since. There's Scud. Where's Salt, pa? Come here an' speak to the ladies. She's brought ye some ties."

"Salt's makin' the boat fast," began Scud, nodding with inimitable ease to his visitors. "I'm afraid ther's goin' to be—"

Scud stopped short in open-mouthed pleasure when he saw a couple of brilliant red and blue ties dangling from Betty's hand. He had come up the rocky path, whistling like a boy, with every line and pucker in his face on a broad smile. If Lavater had seen this fisherman's physiognomy he would have pronounced it indicative of incomparable good nature. Indeed, Scud's good nature went so far at times as to be incomparably inadequate to the demands of existence. If he happened to go for weeks without catching so much as a sculpin in his net, and the starvation of his youngsters stared him in the face, he showed none of the common symptoms of discouragement, such as swearing, drinking, beating his wife, or cursing his luck. He only whistled the blither, ran up bills at the butcher's and grocer's with irresistible faith, borrowed his "chaws" of his luckier mates, and laughed as if poverty were an excellent joke that Providence was cracking at him. Why shouldn't he appreciate it, even if it were at his own expense.

Scud was born "easy." Who could blame him? He gave up his lobster-pots because it took too much time to dry them and keep them in repair, and it was too cold and dangerous hauling them in stormy weather off the rocks. Scud found it too troublesome to underrun his trap more than twice a-day—once at six o'clock in the morning, then at six o'clock at night. Even when the mackerel or the herring struck, and every man who had a trap hovered over it night and day to keep the catch from mysteriously immaterializing, as well as to gather it in, Scud was satisfied with his diurnal visits. He "wa'n't a-goin' to keep a-runnin' to see the fish swim in. If they were fool 'nough to go in the trap, they could stay there till he underrun an' bailed 'em out." His methods of gaining a livelihood were unique on the coast; yet it was Scud who "stocked" eight hundred and fifty dollars that summer clean, two hundred dollars above any one else in the harbor. It was the saying among some of the jealous fishermen in the cove, who were not blessed with two pairs of twins, that "nobody 'arned so easy a livin' as Scud without doin' no work." But these indistinct murmurs never stimulated Scud nor impaired his good nature. Indeed, Scud was the happiest man that ever lived. What a dancing, laughing eye! What a catalogue of joys therein! What contagious, hopeful humor! What irrepressible buoyancy of spirits! Who could help loving Scud, as one loves a huge, long-coated St. Bernard dog? Scud was the laughing, joyous, piping Pan of the ocean. He smoked not, neither did he drink. He had no vices that debased him. Chewing is not a vice for a fisherman. But he did have a curious taste for candy. No present pleased him so much as a half a pound of caramels or of sugar-coated nuts. It was the sweet animal nature instinctively laying hold of sweets.

Scud's "easiness" was unmitigated—at times it was exasperating; but this made him all the fatter,

the jollier, the more companionable; and as it succeeded so well, why not? Summer boarders were appreciative of Scud. He lived upon them. Twins?—they did it. It was a dime show, and the money was paid.

Two sets of authentic twins! It was enough to drain a woman's heart of sympathy, a woman's pocket of money; and the summer boarders were mostly women—married women, with husbands sweating in the city to support them; single women, school-teachers and that sort.

But Scud stood looking at the ties. He seldom bought clothes, any more than he purchased firewood or paid for his fish. They came to him. Here was a pair of trousers that was once a bishop's. That coat and vest were the velveteen relics of a posing artist. The cap was a yachtsman's gift, and the neckties came as a matter of course. Yet Scud never begged. And once when he caught one of his four-year-old boys insinuating to a summer boarder, with outstretched palm, that he would like a penny, Scud thrashed him within a centimeter of his life. New England fishermen will take a gift as a sort of neighborly accommodation to you; but he'll starve before he will ask you for it.

"Are them fur me?" (Scud was always surprised at such a crisis.) "Thank ye, ma'am. Ain't them showy? I guess they'll skeer the mac'rel off the coast."

"I wanted you to take me out sailing this morning, Mr. Scud," I began, after a formal introduction. Scud looked somewhat gratified with the prefix to his name, and regarded me with interest. To take boarders out sailing at the rate of seventy-five cents an hour was the kind of work he would do.

"Yes, ma'am. But I'm 'fraid it'll be a little fresh to-day, if ye hain't used to sailin'." He jerked his head to the westward. "Salt is a makin' the dory fast with a new haulin'-line, ma'am. I guess we'll have a squall pretty soon."

We followed Scud's gesture and looked. A squall on a day like this? The white streamers had vanished, and above us was dark, unfathomable blue. But on the western horizon, stretching far to the south, a black bank had arisen. No cloud in the physical geography was ever sketched blacker. It had come up as stealthily as a Zulu warrior. It was the hue of unpolished iron. It had a faint reddish tint. Its outline was as clear cut as a cameo. It sent ahead here and there jagged tentacles, broad at the base and fine at the tip, that advanced, dissolved, and reappeared again with significant rapidity. The ocean had suddenly grown lethargic. It seemed unable to reflect the sun that still shone. It became like a platter of tarnished silver. As we looked, the sight rapidly grew uglier.

Now my cousin Mabel seemed hypnotized by it. She stood for a few minutes with her hands hanging at her sides; her delicate jaw dropped. Suddenly she pulled herself together, and whispered: "It is horrible! It is awful!" Then, as if seized with the full import of the scene, she cried aloud, "My *children*! They are out fishing in a sail-boat! My *children*!" She began to run towards the shore leaving us all staring after her.

My nautical sense was not as highly trained as Mabel's, but I thought the sight terrifying and fine. It was part of the Eastern culture towards the education of the Western girl. But seeing Scud look sober—I had the impression that it was for the first time in his life—I pleaded:

"Do come too, Scud. Is it so bad? Won't it blow over?"

"It's goin' to be as bad as I ever seed in these parts, miss. I'll do what I can. 'Twon't be much, I'll bet."

I ran down to the house, followed by Scud at a moderate walk. Scud never ran. Would he have run for the drowning? I doubted it.

The clouds had arisen with terrible velocity. They coursed over the bare sky like a black bull with horns down. White cirrhus clouds now darted out here and there ahead, like fluttering standards of warning. And now the sun was gored to death. The black bank advanced in one wide line. Blackness had fallen everywhere. Anxiety was visible in every form of nature—in the cries of the birds, the skulking of the dogs, the blanched faces of the boarders, the attention of the fishermen.

In the British navy, when any terrible and sudden disaster occurs on a man-of-war, such as the bursting of a gun, a collision, or striking upon the rocks, the bugler sounds, what is known as "the still." On hearing it every man aboard comes to a standstill. This momentary pause enables each to collect his nerves to meet the summons of the shock. Nature was now commanding "the still"; but the order came through the eyes. No sound was as yet heard. The sea, the air, sentient life, all souls, held their breath before the shock that must come. Men collected along the coast to meet the threatened tornado. By that subtle force which sensitive organisms will recognize, be it called telepathy or psychic power or magnetism, I knew, ignorant as I was, that nature was silently preparing for a terrific struggle.

When Scud and I joined Mabel on the rocks in front of her house we found her wringing her hands, sobbing and crying for help. It seemed that her two children, who had gone out fishing with their city guest, were in a sail-boat. This was managed by a boy about their age—none of them were over sixteen. But the lad who sailed the little boat was a fisherman's son. He was considered very expert, and had broad experience from his babyhood up. But this fact did not soothe the mother. Appalled by the color and the swiftness of the clouds, and the ominous import to the safety of the little sail-boat, we scanned the harbor and the coast; but no boat answering to

the description was in sight. Scud tried to comfort the mother in his shaggy way. "The b'ys hev sailed to the inner cove, ma'am. They's ashore by this time, I'll bet."

As Scud spoke, the large fishing-schooners, leaving and entering the broad harbor shot, one after the other, as if by mutual impulse, into the direction of the clouds, into the west, and dropped sails and anchors with incredible rapidity. Far out to sea vessels were now seen to ride with bare poles; it was evident that they had anticipated a formidable blow. We stood on a bend in the shore, and the broad bay lay between us and the rising storm. The rocky coast stood forth in a long, broken outline opposite to us, far down towards Great Brabant. The open Atlantic spread before us to the south-west. And now lightnings flashed in angry sheets. The sea took to itself suddenly a peculiar greenish tinge. There were heard distant bellowings. We strained our eyes for the boys. Where were they? Where *were* they? Two miles out ships began to rock fearfully.

"They've cotched it!" shouted Scud. "Here it comes. Look out, leddies!"

Driven by earth's mightiest, most implacable, most invisible force, a line of foam dashed across the bay. Spray from the water twenty feet below struck us in the face simultaneously with the wind. The white squall had burst upon us. I dragged my poor cousin with me to the piazza, into the house, which shuddered through all its frame and would have fallen had it not, after the fashion of this bleak shore, been chained to the rocks.

Now Scud staid outside. It did not seem clear at first why. Pretty soon we saw him trying to pull the tender upon the float, that was clean washed by every wave.

Then came the first lull. The mother ran out into it wildly. The water was green and white. Two coasters and a large yacht were running in for shelter without a stitch of canvas. They were making straight for the inner harbor.

"Look! Come here! Look! What's that boat? See! Way out there beyond the island! My God! It's *my children*!"

A half-mile or more away, in the very heart of the squall, a little boat with full sail set was staggering unto death. Language cannot hint at the horror in the mother's face. She had made her summer's home for fifteen years within a shell's throw of the sea, and she knew perfectly well what this situation meant. No one could have undeceived her, and no one tried. She stood for a moment staring straight ahead, stretched out her arms, swayed, and fell. She was one of the fainting kind, and there was nothing to be done about it. We carried her in and laid her down. It was my impulse to trust her to her terrified servants. I was too terrified myself to know whether I was right or wrong. Irresistibly compelled, I rushed out of doors again, and appealed (with feminine instinct, I suppose) to the only man, within reach. Scud responded quickly enough.

"Yes; that's them!" He pitched his orotund voice upon me as if he were giving a command in a gale at sea.

Men now began to gesticulate wildly at the ill-fated boat from the rocks, as if that could help the matter.

"Drop that mains'l, you —— fools, or you'll go to ——!" The voices struck me like a volley of bullets, but they could not have penetrated ten feet to windward.

"Scud!" I cried. "Help! Save them, Scud!"

"I can't do nothing," he howled in my ear. "No one can't. You can't row in them breakers."

By this time the wind had increased its force. The sail-boat was near enough for one to see the desperate attempts the boyish skipper made to lower the sail. One of the halyards had become caught. The boy made wild rushes to the mast. Then the boat would rock and fly around. To save her the lad darted back to the helm just in time. This sickening struggle against a knot was repeated several times. On the bottom the three passengers lay inert with terror. A twenty-foot boat with full sail, when hundred-ton schooners trembled under bare poles! Even my inexperience grasped the situation.

"He's doing all-fired well, but he can't last no longer if that—He'll be druv on the rocks! They'll be druv to——!"

The rocks were now lined with men commenting in an apathetic way upon the tragedy enacting before their eyes.

"Why don't they *do* something?" In my ignorance of the curious stolidity which falls upon the shore in face of danger upon the sea, I stood shrieking: "Why doesn't somebody go? Why don't you men do *something*?"

The fishermen and the summer people looked into each other's eyes, but no man answered a word.

"Can't *you* help them?" I pleaded with another weather-beaten fisherman.

"Can't be done, or I'd do it."

"I came down to see them capsize, an' I guess they'll go," said a gruff voice.

But Scud gave me a long look. He stood quite silent. An expression of rare gravity was on his

joyous face. He glanced apprehensively from the boat to the house.

"*She* can't, Scud; she's fainted. There isn't anybody but me. I've *got* to do something. The children have *got* to be saved, Scud!" The Western girl shook him by the arm. Her very ignorance gave a force to her appeal that intelligence could not have supplied. Had I understood what I asked I should not have said: "Scud, won't you go? They are drowning. See, Scud! *Go!*"

The doomed sail was beaten here and there in the fierce wind; the jib was blown to tatters. The boat took in water, righted, and careened with every riotous puff. A hundred times men turned their faces away and women shrieked, expecting it to go down. A hundred times repeated miracle protected the helpless boat.

Scud walked slowly down the heaving gangway that connected the rocks with the float. The man who came down to see the boat capsize followed with his hands in his pockets. He balanced himself on the railing with his elbows as the gangway jumped beneath him.

"What yer up ter, Scud?" he yelled above the tempest. "They're driftin' on yer trap. That'll fetch 'em."

Scud looked up. His feet were washed in the water that flooded the float at every surge. To strike the trap meant instant overturn. To become entangled in and driven on to the meshes of the broad, deep net meant inevitable death.

"I guess I'll go. Help me shove the dingy off." So spoke Scud, deliberately.

"You—" The rest of the expletive was lost in the gale. The breakers made sport of Scud, and spat at him with their white tongues. "Your childer! The twins! Betty!" thundered his friend.

Scud hurriedly put in the oar-locks. As he bent, the wind caught his cap and dashed it on the rocks. Scud shook his brown hair to the furies.

"Ye see!" yelled his companion significantly. "Now get in, will ye?"

"Shet up, Steve! Gimme them oars. Don't ye see I'm goin'? I wish I hed my dory."

A murmur of applause went up from the crowd as the fisherman shoved off. The light tender was twisted about and all but cast upon the cliffs before he could gain his first stroke.

And now the man of the sea set his weak mouth into petrified resolve. The wind and the water attacked his boat like assassins. They meant to kill. Scud knew this. He rowed guardedly, mistrustful of a cowardly feint, of an underhand lunge. The tender quivered beneath each dash of the waves, each onslaught of the squall, each hurried stroke of the oars. Scud rowed warily, lest he be over-turned and buried between the trough and the height of the waves. The wind howled at him. The bay showered upon him. The gale clutched him and turned him about. How now! Whence came these muscles of steel that subdued such powers arrayed against lazy Scud? How now! Whence came that indomitable judgment that baffled the elements at their own wildest sport? Fishermen stared from the shore at this unparalleled exhibition of skill, coolness, courage and strength from *Scud*.

Then, with the spite of which only a white squall is capable, it thundered against Scud, and with the animosity of which only the Atlantic Ocean is capable, it rose upon Scud and well-nigh bore him under. Hope is easily dashed in the hearts of inert spectators, but Scud did not falter. The crowd stood by commenting:

"Scud! Thet Scud? Poor Betty! Poor widder! We'll hev ter fish him up ter-night. Plucky fellow! Brave deed! That's grit! Thar's skill! Who'd 'a' thought it? *Scud!*"

But Scud the "easy," Scud the do-little, Scud the good-for-naught—Scud, of whom nobody expected anything—comfortable, self-indulgent Scud, rowed on sturdily straight out into that hell. Could he ever overtake the boat? How was it possible? If he did the extra weight would swamp the fancy tender, built only to carry two or three at the most in light weather. How could he get one in?

"Why the —— didn't he take his dory?" asked an old man.

"How in —— can he bring her up with a haulin'-line an' git in from the rocks?" answered another contemptuously.

"Scud may get 'em," ventured an expert, "but what'll he do with 'em?"

Now Scud had rowed beyond the net to the right, in order to bear down upon it the easier.

"Thar she strikes! God help 'em!" Cries came from a dozen throats. The sail-boat struck against the leader of the net. It swung broadside to the wind, that forced it over and under. Agonized shrieks were borne to the shore. I was glad that Mabel was a fainting woman.

For some time Scud's wife had stood apart and looked upon the scene. Her eyes were dry and feverish. She did not talk. She hugged a baby at her breast desperately. Salt held a pair of twins; the oldest girl another. Children sprawled upon the ground, clinging to their mother's feet and dress. None drew near or spoke to this pathetic group. What could one do? What word could one say? The storm swayed Betty here and there. Her hair waved in the hurricane. She had long, pretty hair. Spray drenched her. She did not cry out. She stood like the Niobe of the sea. She

looked like one expecting the fate that had been only delayed. An average of two hundred men a year from this fishing-town are swallowed up by the ocean that affords them sustenance, and their starving widows are left after them. Betty was only one of a thousand of her kind who stolidly concealed a desolate suspense. And now her turn had come, harder than the rest, for she was in at the death.

It is a mystery until this day how Scud reached the over-turned sail-boat as he did. With a dory his work would not have been comparatively easy; but with a thirteen-foot yacht's tender it was super-human. The two girls clinging to the wreck were lifted bodily into the boat. Scud was quick but cool, and imparted perfect confidence to the water-sodden children. At the fisherman's peremptory order, the two boys clung to each side of the tender. We could see them dragging in the water; it was the only way. Scud now began to row before the storm.

There were no cheers from the rocks. Not a man of them stirred. The fishermen, hardened to perils of the sea, had been fascinated by this exhibition of cool-blooded heroism from the least heroic of them all.

The cockle-shell dashed madly towards the shore.

No power could row it weighted against the wind that beat upon it with fitful concentration. Straight before the tender was a little beach between the rocks, not more than twenty feet wide, but this was protected at its entrance by a line of reefs, easily passable at high tide, and bare at low. The rollers broke upon most of these rocks, and the spume swirled in dirty froth upon the pebbly beach. Scud made for the opening. The gale drove him wildly along. A few men now ran to the beach and the outlying rocks, ready to do the possible at any emergency. Would Scud pass the reef or not? There was not time to answer the question. The boat rose upon a huge wave. Foam and spray enveloped it from view. There was a rumbling cry of horror. There was a dull splintering crash. Fifty men rushed to the beach and lined the cliffs. The boat had struck upon the last rock. As the wave passed on, the terrible sight of black human heads appeared in a setting of white foam.

But these were within reach almost. These could be saved. Ah! Men wade in, somehow, anyhow, forming a line, and pass one to shore. Saved! And then another. Thank God! Here comes the third on that wave! Grasp that dress! Tenderly, it is a girl. All here! All saved!

But where is Scud? Oh, but *he* can swim. He is strong and used to chilling water and fierce waves. The helpless children safe, and Scud gone? Impossible! Incredible! Too horrible!

Involuntarily one man and then another turned to look at the widow and the orphans, and then they turned and cursed the sea aloud.

At this moment a dark little figure shot past them all, by the bewildered man, and dashed with a shriek into the foam. What did she do? How did she do it? What could be done? A woman—a little woman—her baby only one month old—Betty! She caught the sinking hand, the drowning head—she never knew how. A dozen men plunged in now. Spectators who had not wet their feet during all that horrible scene swam now in the whirlpool for the woman's sake, and for the shame she wrought upon them. Brawny arms and steady feet bore her back. Her little hand, rigid, clutched her husband by the collar of his shirt.

Scud was carried quickly up and laid upon the piazza. An ugly bruise was upon his forehead.

The wind died down. The rain came in white torrents. Betty stood in the deluge and shielded her husband automatically. The children, most of them too small to know the reason why, lifted up their voices and wept.

"Father," said Betty, softly, "why don't ye speak to me? Dearie, dearie Scud. I saved ye. Hain't ye nothing to say to me, Scud?"

"You'd better go into the house," said some one. "Leave Scud to us awhile." For in truth not a man or woman of us but believed that Scud was dead.

"You jess get us to a kitchen fire," said Betty, quietly, "and leave him to *me*."

And it was repeated with many a trembling lip far down the coast that night that Scud would live.

It was the morning of my departure, and it had come by the last express the night before. It had been kept a profound secret, for we would not risk a cruel disappointment. Scud had rowed to town with a full fare of fish, and Salt was with him, doing the rowing. We left word that they should come to the house as soon as they had put up their dory. A peremptory message was sent to Betty to come over immediately to do some work. A few neighbors happened to drop in. There might have been a dozen or so in all. My cousin did not go into town that day. He said he wanted to see me off. Betty came a little early, and was set to scrubbing the pantry floor.

But Scud, a hero? He had forgotten all about it now. He was the same old fellow, just as easy, just as jolly, just as careless. Scud wasn't at all spoiled by what had happened. He was as comfortable as the sea, this very morning. Who would have suspected the passing of a grand storm upon the hearts of either? Scud's sluggish blood had been "up" for one fiery hour. For one great day he had been the hero of the coast—the peer of all its heroes. Then the fire went out, and Scud

became as he was. Perhaps Scud was more popular; his babies were better fed. Fishermen treated him with a grudged respect, and when he was pointed out to every new squad of boarders as the bravest man on the whole coast, they smiled. How could that grinning, singing Scud save a jelly-fish?

It was just eleven o'clock. With what impatience we had waited for the tramp of those rubber boots! We rushed upon the piazza and greeted Scud and Salt, dressed in their oil-skins, just as they had come from the trap. Scud halted uneasily at the front door.

"No miss, I can't come in in this toggery; I'm all gurry. I'll go home and change my clothes. Couldn't get here sooner. Herrin' jess struck. We sold ten barr'l this mornin'."

But we constrained him, and Scud entered, staring about, shuffling his rubber boots and wiping them as best he might. White scales of fish glittered upon his black oil-skins. He looked as if he were mailed in silver.

It devolved upon me to fetch Betty from the pantry; but I saw as I went that all of the people in the parlor stood up as Scud entered, as if they were greeting a prince. Scud looked from one to the other uncomfortably. He blushed a deep russet red, and stared, and then laughed in a vacant way. Betty now appeared in the doorway, and the three made a most impressive group in their working-clothes, wondering what it was all about, and what the city folk were after now.

"Scud," said the master of the house, clearing his throat, "you have done the bravest deed this coast has record of for twenty years. You have saved to us our children, dearer than our life. You had your own wife to think of, and the children who depend upon you for their bread. You have been a hero. To us you are always a hero, and our love and gratitude will last as long as our days. I have the privilege of presenting to you the highest tribute Massachusetts pays to her brave men —the gold medal of her great Humane Society, one hundred years old. This honor has not been sought, but has been eagerly bestowed. May it never leave your family! It will be an inspiration to your boys. You have obtained the reward of your pluck, and you deserve it, old fellow. Now shake!" The speech broke in eloquence, but not in feeling.

"See," said Mabel, "I kiss the medal for you and for my dear children's sake." She flashed it from its plush case, and placed the solemn emblem, whose exquisite engravings glittered like a jewel, in his great wet hands.

Salt turned his face to the wall. Betty put her apron over her face, and Scud's eyes ran dripping over. He opened his mouth, but no sound came forth.

"And now, Betty, look here," said her mistress in a gay, tremulous tone, "I have something for *you*." She held out in her delicate hand forty silver dollars, the gift of the Humane Society to Betty herself. "You are a woman, and you saved a man's life," explained my cousin, "and the society always recognizes the courage of a woman."

But Betty drew herself up in her scrubbing dress. She had a fine look.

"Thank you, ma'am," she said, "and the gentleman too. But he was my husband; I don't take no money from nobody for savin' of my husband. I'm just as much obleeged to ye." Almost every child in her house was dressed in "given" clothes, but the unpauperized soul looked out of Betty's faded eyes.

"Well," said my cousin, looking nonplussed, "how would it do to make it over to the twins?"

"As ye please," said Betty, shining. So the four twin babies received ten silver dollars apiece from the Humane Society for plunging into the water and saving their father's life. This was an illegal procedure. I grant it. And if the Society now for the first time learneth of the matter, I am fain to believe that it is too old and too great to take account thereof.

We were rowing over to catch my train. Scud was the oarsman. He sat quite still, and had a dazed look. Midway of the bay he stopped pulling, lifted and crossed his oars. I saw his Adam's apple rising and falling like an irresolute tide.

"I were took all of a sudden," he said, slowly; "I never felt so in all my life. My throat felt kinder queer an' dry. But I'm mightily obliged to yer. It might give Salt a lift. But I didn't know what to say, an' so I didn't say nothing'."

THE ROMANCE OF A MORTGAGE.

1111 Court Street,
Boston, Mass., *Nov.* 12, 1890.

Mr. Francis B. Ellesworth, University Club,
Boston, Mass.:

My dear Frank, I am sorry to inform you that the Benson note is still uncollected. The

party writes that he will try to pay it soon. Our correspondent in Sunshine, S. C., considers the Benson security in Cherokee first-class. As this is the only S. C. mortgage that has slipped up so far on our hands, I should advise you to be patient a few more days. Perhaps you had better give the party leeway up to Dec. 1, if necessary, as it is his first default since you took the papers, three years ago. However, if you are impatient and wish to settle the matter, send me down the trust deeds and notes. Run in any time. I shall be glad to see you.

Very truly yours,
JOSEPH TODD.

Young Ellesworth carefully deposited his cigar in the bronze ash receiver on the polished table by his side, and pulled out from his breast pocket a notebook which he consulted. After a few moments he seemed to satisfy himself as to the identity of his mortgager Benson; put his papers up, and sank back into a reverie.

The gray November day seemed to have contented itself with monopolizing the streets and the faded Common, and the poor tenements, and the ragged stragglers, and to have passed by the windows of Beacon Street, and the luxurious smoking-room of the new University Club. Francis Ellesworth sprawled listlessly in the deep chair by the window, and vaguely congratulated himself that he did not have to earn his supper. It was lucky that he did not have to, for any tyro of a physiognomist could have seen at a glance that the delicate features, the sallow complexion, brightened by red spots upon his cheeks, the gentle black eyes and the straight black hair, did not belong to a robust New England body.

The trouble with Ellesworth was, not that he was rich enough not to have to work, but that he was born at all. He considered it only a fair compensation for this insult that three years ago he had fallen heir to seventy-five thousand dollars, which he had successfully invested and reinvested ever since. This occupation, and the clubs and a few other necessary amusements formed his life.

He was not handsome, but just interesting looking enough not to pass unnoticed. He was not vulgar; that is to say, he did not drink too much, did not swear, and was not the kind of a fellow who compromises a woman by his attentions. He was neither clever nor stupid. Thousands of young men in our great cities are of this type, unimportant to men of intent, and a missionary field to women of character.

He needed an electric shock either to kill him or make a man of him. But perhaps, after all, Ellesworth was not wholly to blame for not trying to make his mark; for he was not so strong as other men, as I said before, and had, besides, so thoroughly coddled himself into that belief that useful activity was struck off of his list of possibilities.

Now it happened that this Benson mortgage was the first which he had taken out under his inheritance; it had a certain special interest to him for that reason; it had netted him eight per cent. clear, and he considered his fifteen hundred dollars well invested. His Harvard classmate, Todd, a good judge, had selected the mortgage for him, and altogether it seemed to the young property-holder quite an important, if not to say a public, financial affair that this first of October passed without producing sixty dollars from Benson. He didn't know who Benson was; nor did he care. How many a capitalist in the East knows the sturdy settler whose hard-earned home he holds in his relentless safe! The drought comes, the crops wither away; the cyclone sweeps the land; the only horse that does the ploughing dies; the mother is sick and the father tends the babies instead of the wheat—a hundred catastrophes menace the farmer, but whatever happens, the semi-annual dividend must be paid or the nightmare of his life comes to pass—the terrible capitalist in the East, less compassionate than the cyclone or the inundation or the drought, takes the home as a matter of course, just as he takes his dinner. Who would dare complain? Not Benson surely, thought Ellesworth, with the smile of a man who holds a "full hand."

"Work Benson for all he is worth," wrote Ellesworth on some blue club-paper, "and give him until the first of December."

The first of December came, but no South Carolina interest. Francis Ellesworth was greatly annoyed and told Todd so plainly.

"He is sick," explained Todd. "Somebody else wrote for him. The letter came the other day. But he signed it. He asks for another fifteen days."

Ellesworth frowned.

"I'm deuced hard up just now," he said, "Christmas is coming on. That would just settle my flower bill. Halvin has sent me three confoundedly gentlemanly bills. That's the worst of it. Write and tell Benson I'll give him until the fifteenth of December—not another day."

"Just as you say," answered Todd. "It's all safe enough, but it will take some time to realize. Cherokee isn't exactly booming, but he's got fifty acres and one half cleared, the other half is heavy yellow pine. The timber is worth the whole amount, my correspondent assures me, besides the house and out-buildings. You won't lose, not a cent, I'll guarantee; but it's annoying, I will admit."

Then they fell to talking about the Yale foot-ball victory. Of course they talked late and Ellesworth walked to his apartments in a heavy shower.

That night, one of the catastrophes which prove demons or angels to our lives, occurred to the young man. He was taken suddenly and violently ill. Of the three physicians summoned by the excited janitor, to prescribe for the sickness, one called the case pneumonia; another preferred malaria; and the third, having just delivered an original paper on the subject, suggested brain grippe. In only one respect the three wise men agreed—their patient must spend the winter in the South. Oddly enough, they recommended Sunshine, South Carolina; and as Sunshine is a fashionable resort, with plenty of hotels and tennis and girls, Ellesworth found no difficulty in obeying the medical counsel. Thus in ten days he found himself in the land of the palmetto and the japonica. It was an abrupt change, and therefore all the more natural for that. The other day an invalid started for India on an eighteen hours' notice.

Ellesworth's illness and the journey had entirely driven the Benson matter out of his mind. He had drawn upon an emergency fund for his trip, and the fact that he was sixty dollars short had escaped his easy memory. Therefore the further announcement from Todd that Benson could not pay at the date agreed upon came to him as a new shock. Todd had written a formal letter to his classmate, merely stating the fact and asking for instructions. As Ellesworth read it, he had a vague feeling that there was something behind that was not told. But he had just lost a game of billiards to an inferior player, and felt cross.

"Confound that Benson!" he ejaculated. Then he sat down and wrote: "Foreclose at once. My attorneys, Squeeze & Claw, will give you the Benson trust deeds on presentation of this. Hurry it through as soon as you can."

He heaved a sigh of relief, and lighted a cigar with Todd's letter.

There are critics who assert that the modern story fails of its mission unless it deals in extraordinary characters embedded like the rare crystals of Hiddenite, in an extraordinary matrix; and that the public, tired to suffocation of its own commonplaces, has a right to expect something out of the usual run. If such a *dictum* were final Francis Ellesworth is in nowise a fit hero for a "penny-dreadful," nor was it even an extraordinary circumstance that made him inquire how far Cherokee Garden was from Sunshine.

"You can go by railroad," answered the Northern clerk, "or you can go horseback. It's only eight miles by road through the pines. It's a very pretty ride to take before dinner."

Ellesworth had two reasons for amusing himself by an easy trip to Cherokee. He had a vague feeling of remorse which often follows the decree of justice. Lincoln was made ill by being obliged to refuse a pardon. The greater the power the heavier it hangs upon the heart. Ellesworth, as he entertained himself in the conventional way, ever spending, never earning, began to feel that he had done a brutal thing, without even looking into the circumstances, to order a man's home sold over his head, because he had failed to pay interest for the first time. If Benson's farm were only eight miles away why did he not see him before he sent the command to foreclose? There was an atonement owing, and this feeling, rising like a mist in the mind of the young man, who knew much of pleasure and little of misery, drew him to the mortgaged plantation. And then, if Benson did prove a shiftless fellow, he wanted to see what kind of a place he might be soon forced to own. He might make it his winter resort and come down there every year. The more selfish thought reinforced the generous one, and piqued his curiosity, as he rode slowly into the wilderness, leaving Sunshine and its fashionable savor behind.

It was a December morning. To one not used to the tropics, the sun, the heat, the greenness, the exhilaration were magical. Under what cold comforter was Boston Common shivering on this winter day! What pneumonic gales roared up Beacon Street and gnashed through Commonwealth Avenue, seeking whom they might devour, and having not a great way to go! How blue the street vendors looked—the Italian boys who gilded statuettes on Tremont Street, and the man under the old courthouse who offers to clean your gloves of the unpardonable sin—for five cents! How the fellows shivered as they stamped the snow off in the club vestibule! The wonder that New England is not depopulated when there is such an Eden in which to spend the devastating winter! So Ellesworth thought as he jogged along the uneven, sandy road, congratulating himself with every deep breath, and sitting straight and straighter in the saddle. He had never felt so happy and so free as he did this December morning. Passing slowly by a deserted orchard, he could see the yellow larks flying from tree to tree, and could hear the robins and the cat-birds calling each other names, and mocking each other merrily. Now and then he stopped his horse to watch a couple of quails leisurely hopping across the road, and strained his ears to hear their thrum as they were startled in the thicket. The very air seemed happy. Care and illness slipped away as the sunshine slipped on the faces of the leaves. It was December? No, it was summer with something thrown in that is never present in our Northern June.

Ellesworth galloped along until his horse stumbled into a mud-hole. Before him, in a hollow, a stream had to be forded in the usual Southern way. Above and beyond, a cabin could be seen from whose outside chimney smoke arose in a perpendicular column. Cocks crew in the distance, and there was every indication that the outskirts of Cherokee were represented in the hut before him. As Ellesworth halted in the deepest part of the brook, allowing his horse to drink, he saw clusters of mistletoe on the tops of slender trees. The dark green of this romantic parasite set against the gray of the trees and their moss formed a new picture for the Northerner. The glistening mistletoe with its white berries recalled scenes that he had read about. Ellesworth had played too lightly with life to have ever been seriously in love. The flirtation of a few weeks or months and the solemn tenderness of devoted love are not allied. The one passes into the other

as seldom as silicon passes into the cells of a fallen tree. Ellesworth had never gone beyond conventional devotion: and this he had so far discreetly given to married women. This emblem of Christmas troth actually growing before his eyes, and seen by him in its native state for the first time, produced a vague longing upon the young New Englander. He remembered a precise and beautiful Boston girl, rich enough and all that, whom he had vainly tried to consider in the light of a possible wife. What well-bred surprise would she have poured upon him if he had attempted to claim the right of the mistletoe branch! He had waited in order to give and receive spontaneous, unconventional tokens of affection. He had dreamed of walking in the fields by the side of the phantom he loved, clasping her hand and swinging it with his, just like children in Arcadia. He wanted no wife who would accept her husband's kiss as a matter of necessity. He had seen them, and cynically watched the husband casting furtive, longing looks at her who swore to cherish him unto death.

Thus spoke the chaste, the alluring mistletoe to his heart. These thoughts surprised him, and he hurried along in vague discomfort over the little slope (the natives called it a hill) and up to the straggling village, called in his papers of description Cherokee Garden for no earthly reason whatever.

"Is this Cherokee Garden?" he asked of the wrinkled white woman sitting in the doorway of the solitary suburban residence.

"This ain't the hull of it, young man," she answered severely, taking her corn-cob pipe out of her mouth and looking at Ellesworth as if he had cast an aspersion upon a city. "Ye kin ride down the road a right smart bit until ye come to the kyars. The post office is on the other side o' the track." This she said with an accent of resentment.

"Do you know where a man called William Benson lives, whom I understand has a—a farm here somewhere?"

When Ellesworth had finished his question the old woman got up and, supported by her stick, tottered to his side, and peered up into his face.

"Air ye any kin ter Bill Benson? Air ye an'thin' to him?"

"No, no," stammered Ellesworth, taken aback. "I only wanted to call on him. Why?"

"Ye'll hev'ter go right smart ways to find Bill Benson," replied the old woman, grimly.

She peered up into his face again, and shook her head. Ellesworth, wondering whether his creditor had "skipped to Cuba to avoid payment," awaited information.

"Bill Benson" (she stopped to take a whiff, and then proceeded with a tone of awe caught from Methodist preachers) "hez gone to glory!"

"Where?" asked Boston, ignorant of the longitude and latitude of that strange place.

"To glory, young man!" repeated the old woman, impressively. "Elder Jones buried Bill in Tantallon buryin' ground, four mile from hyar down the track," added the woman, severely.

Her voice dropped to a whisper on the last words, and she looked to see their effect upon the horseman. The red handkerchief, tied over her head and under her chin, had fallen down behind her neck and revealed a bald head. The cock crew from the step of the hut.

Benson dead! This, then, accounted for the note so long overdue. Benson had been sick, and could not pay. Why had Ellesworth not known this before? He reddened with self-reproach. This was the first tragedy which he had stumbled upon, and how much of it was his own doing! The old woman looked at him suspiciously.

"When did he die?" he asked softly.

The woman counted backwards on her fingers with the stem of her pipe. "Right smart onto two weeks," she answered after much calculation. Then she shot this question at him with a scowl, "Ye hain't no Northerner, air ye?"

Taken off his guard, Ellesworth hesitated, and then forswore his section.

"I—I am living at—eh—Sunshine."

Her face lighted.

"Mebbe ye'r raised in Charleston. Ye look like a South Carolinian."

Ellesworth was drawn to it by some occult power, and nodded assent. The old woman's manner was now totally different, and she approached him confidentially, and offered him the use of her tin snuff-box, which he courteously declined.

"Ye haint heerd, so Colonel Tom Garvin told me, that a dum Northerner hez got a holt on Bill's place; and there ain't none left now 'cept Georgy and Mrs. McCorkle as is a widder nigh on ten year. Colonel Tom is kin to her mother's second cousin, and he says thet thet dum Yankee hed better not show up 'round these parts, for he'd get plugged if he tries to take Bill's place away from Georgy, poor, innercent thing that she is." The old woman's cracked voice thrilled with the passion and tenderness of her kind; but Ellesworth did not look at her as she finished. He felt a little frightened, and he bent over his horse to fleck a bit of bark with his whip to conceal it.

"How far do they live from here?" he asked after a pause, which she interpreted as actuated by sympathy.

"'Tain't no fur at all. Ye take the next turn to yer left. It's the first plantation ye come to. I reckon ye'll see Georgy a dustin' and sweepin'. She's almighty pertikler, she is, poor creetur."

Ellesworth thanked the old woman dreamily and rode in the direction which she pointed out.

Ellesworth had never thought of this view of the subject. It never occurred to him that he would be an object of hatred in Cherokee Garden. He glanced around furtively, as if he expected to see an enemy hiding behind the trees. At any rate, so far, he was not known. He made up his mind that he should not be. Benson's daughter was undoubtedly a sallow, withered young girl, with a hot temper and a deep sense of injury; and, if she found out his identity would probably call the country to arms against him. But the Yankee had no idea of giving up his rights. His hands tightened on reins and whip. He meant to see the plantation that was mortgaged in his name at any cost. But about one thing he was now certain. Cherokee would never be a winter resort for him.

He walked his horse to the cross-road, to the left, about a thousand yards or so, until he came in front of a house. He halted and looked at it long and critically. It was a two-story house, built of yellow pine, that had not been painted. In spite of this, it did not look neglected. It had an air of scrupulous neatness and care. Around the house ran a simple fence, made to keep the chickens and the pigs that swarmed about him, from the garden and the piazza. A huge rose-bush covered one whole side of the house, while in the garden and on the veranda red and white japonicas were in flower. Flanking the walk from the gate to the house, high azalea bushes were pushing forth their buds for the spring blooming, and little borders of box protected with wooden boards, and bunches of holly intersected the little garden. It was more than a home-like looking place: it was fascinatingly cozy, with its roses and camellias and azaleas and a single protecting palmetto, and over-towering live oaks, and majestic pines. It was just the place Ellesworth had dreamed of possessing. It was luxuriant; it was tropical. The air, semi-spiced with odors of gum and blooms mounted to his brain like a narcotic. He sat upon his horse and looked about. His eyes roamed past the house and caught the contrast of the unkempt fields with the neatness within the enclosure. He noted the olive fingers of the high pines beyond the ploughed land.

It was a fair and a sad sight—William Benson was not there to enjoy his home.

With a sigh of longing and of self-reproach he turned his face toward the house again. Before him, with one hand on the gate, stood a woman. She was looking at him. Questions were in her eyes. Ellesworth stared at her in amazement, and only superlatives crowded into his mind; for she was the most glorious woman he had ever seen. She was tall, almost to his own height, and with a proportional figure. Dressed without ornament, without ruffle, or frill or white at the throat, in plain black, her face revealed itself on the green background as if it were upon a canvas by Bastien Lepage. It was a face in which there seemed to be many nationalities blended: Italian eyes, Spanish coloring of the cheeks, black Indian hair, rich Mexican lips,—these coördinated into the most startling type he had ever seen, through a quick, sensitive, high-spirited intelligence, the inheritance of Southern blood. He could not analyze this beauty; he could only gasp at it.

Francis B. Ellesworth was, as has been intimated, not a captivating man *per se*; but as he sat upon his horse, with the flush of excitement upon his face, and a certain refinement in his carriage that looked as much out of place in Cherokee Garden as the face of the girl before him, he was not an unattractive fellow. Now, as the two were not over fifteen feet apart, and were both looking at each other, one of them had to speak. She waited for him to do so. He simply couldn't. So she spoke first.

"Have you lost your way, sir?"

The tremor of the dimple in her chin and the marked effort which she made to steady her voice, showed that she was much agitated. Had she not been expecting the man who was to take away her home for a paltry sum of unpaid money? She had looked upon the Yankee who held her fathers notes as little more than a thief. And now that her father had died, she seriously considered him in the light of a murderer. She thought of his agent as his "minion," whom it was clearly due her dignity to resist. The case had been the talk of the scraggly village, and the judge of the district, who was reputed to know the intricacies of all the law that ever was tabulated, asserted vehemently in her presence that to eject her from her home was an outrage that could not and would not be permitted as long as the able-bodied men of Cherokee could carry a gun. This testimony of Southern chivalry the girl fully believed.

And now the invader had come at last. She clutched the gate and collected herself to meet him.

"No, miss, that is—is this William Benson's?—I mean——" Ellesworth halted, remembering that his debtor was no more, and not wishing to remind her of the fact. "*Was* this his place?"

The magnificent girl looked at him over that fence and measured him. Yes, the worst had come at last, and an uncalled-for insult with it. How the stranger gloated over the fact that the place was *not* her father's! She drew herself to her full height; her black eyes blazed; her cheeks became carmine. She could hardly control her voice from indignation.

"You mistake, sir. This *is* his place, and I think, sir, it will remain so."

She looked at him fiercely and waited to let that sentiment fructify in the young man's soul.

"Indeed, I—I hope so," ventured Ellesworth.

Disregarding this as a feeble attempt at apology, she asked,—

"What is your name, sir? Do you come from *him*? Or are you *he*?"

The contempt which she cast into the personal pronouns had a marked effect upon Ellesworth. The mere fact that a woman, for whom at first sight he felt a greater admiration than he had ever bestowed elsewhere, should be so antagonistic to him at the start, made his heart contract within him. Yet he managed to pull himself together and say, with admirable feint,—

"Excuse me. You must labor under a mistake. I am a total stranger here. I am—eh—merely looking about. I am staying at Sunshine, for my health."

He noted with satisfaction a look of relief stealing over her face, and a slight touch of spontaneous sympathy, too, at his last statement. Ellesworth immediately followed the lead up.

"Yes," he said, "I am an invalid, and was ordered South for my lungs. I have heard so much about Southern hospitality, would it be asking too much for me to rest here awhile? I am a trifle tired after this long ride."

He heaved a sigh and tried to look utterly fagged out as he noticed how admirably that tack succeeded.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," said the girl impulsively. "I thought you were a lawyer or a sheriff, or perhaps a man from—*Boston*." She could hardly pronounce the name of the cultured city. It stuck in her throat.

"I?" he asked in a tone of reproach. "Not at all," he answered, laughing. "I told you that I have come from Sunshine," he added, blandly.

The girl, taking his negative as a reply to all her doubts, now opened the gate hospitably.

"Forgive my rudeness, sir, and come in and sit awhile," she said, as prettily as a woman could. "I'll ask Aunt McCorkle to get you—something. Would you take a glass of milk?"

She blushed as she remembered her empty wine cellar. With a well-feigned, languid air, which he could hardly maintain, so boisterously the blood surged through his veins, Ellesworth walked up to the piazza and sat down.

He looked about him in a bewildered way. The passionless white camellia blooming by his side seemed singularly out of place. He thought of the intoxicating Jacqueminot roses he used to order at Halvin's for that chilly Boston girl he tried to love and couldn't. The red camellia had more of this splendid Southern creature's color, but that too, with its waxen, expressionless petals, had no business there either. It exasperated him. It looked at him coolly and sarcastically as if that which happens to a man but once in his life had not come to him.

Aunt McCorkle appeared with the glass of milk. She was a vague Southern gentlewoman, gentle and faded and appealing. She was just what he expected the daughter of William Benson to be. He thought of the middle-aged and elderly Boston dames with their strong profiles and keen eyes and decisive opinions of reforms and literature and charity. Any one of them might have put out her arms and have taken Mrs. McCorkle up in her lap and trotted her to sleep. Yet Ellesworth liked the Southern lady. Already he felt a queer movement of the heart toward Georgiella Benson's "relations."

"Is it lung trouble?" inquired Aunt McCorkle sympathetically. The girl came out of the house at this moment and sat down on the veranda under the white camellia. She glanced at her guest with interest.

"The doctors think I shall come out all right if I am careful of my self," replied Ellesworth, evasively.

"It is hard to be sick," said Georgiella sincerely. Illness and death had touched her so lately and so cruelly that she could not help feeling sorry for the sick young man.

"I have just ridden over from Sunshine, where I am living now," explained Ellesworth again, although his conscience gave him a twinge. He hurried on: "You see, I'm looking for a quiet place to board in." He made a diplomatic pause. "The Sunshine Hotel is too noisy, what with billiards and bowling and late dances; so I rode over here to look about, and an old lady with a pipe told me you lived here."

"That was Aunt Betsey," said the girl decisively. "But we never took boarders," with a stately drawing up of her head, "why should she send you here?"

"My dear," protested Mrs. McCorkle mildly, "the Randolphs of Sunshine took boarders last winter; and I suppose we could get Aunt Betsey to cook." She rose to carry away Ellesworth's glass, and beckoned to the girl to follow her. Evidently the two poor ladies whispered together in the hall, consulting upon the awful problem suddenly presented to their empty pockets and plethoric pride. They came out on the veranda again, and Mrs. McCorkle asked him point blank what his name was. Without perceptible hesitation he replied:

"Bigelow, madam. Frank Bigelow." The unimagined value of a middle name suddenly presented itself to the young man's mind, and his conscience slipped behind the camellias and made no protest. A very irreligious baby, black in the face from howling, had been indeed baptized Francis Bigelow in King's Chapel, twenty-nine years ago—and had since bought a mortgage on the Benson property.

"Couldn't you take me? It's a case of charity," he pleaded, turning to the girl beside him. "It's so noisy at the hotel, I can't sleep."

This last shot went straight to the mark. Sympathy and need are powerful partners, and they worked together for Ellesworth's case in the hearts of the two poor, lonely women.

It is only in the South that one can find women—ladies, and who dress like ladies, and who hardly have ten dollars in cash the year round. The mystery of the maintenance of their existence is not solved outside the walls of their own homes. Proud, refined and shy, they divulge nothing. Who is a boarder that he should think to comprehend the pathetic ingenuity of their eventless lives?

"Are you connected with the Bigelows of Charleston?" asked Mrs. McCorkle, softly.

"I think we must be another branch," replied Ellesworth, boldly.

"I will—I would pay you," added Ellesworth, blushing, "just what they would charge me at the Sunshine Hotel, if that would be satisfactory."

"How much is that, Mr. Bigelow?" inquired Mrs. McCorkle, reddening too.

"Twenty-five dollars a week."

"That is too much. We should think that enough for a month," said the girl, turning her wonderful face upon her visitor.

"I could not think of giving less," he insisted. Still he did not look at her.

"Perhaps," admitted Mrs. McCorkle with a sigh, "we might take you, sir, seeing that you are one of the Bigelow family—on trial."

"I will come," returned Ellesworth, quickly, looking straight at Georgiella, "I will come next Monday—on trial.

"You won't look upon me as a sheriff, will you?" he added, as he mounted at the gate, to ride back to his hotel.

The girl shook her head, as he looked down at her quizzically.

"That was very stupid of me. My mind has been full of my trouble. I have dreamed about it, and hate the man who holds that mortgage.

"Please do not think of it any more. And when you come, sir, perhaps you can advise us what to do."

Ellesworth looked at her gravely. What would the following week, and the next, and the winter bring forth?

"Perhaps," he said in a whisper that might have come from the Delphian oracle; and then he cantered away.

For the first time since her father's death, Georgiella sang that afternoon as she walked about the garden teasing her plants to bloom.

It was Monday, the fifteenth of December. Mrs. McCorkle ushered Ellesworth upstairs into his own room in the cottage mortgaged in his own name. The sun poured into it like a living blessing. The rose-bush enveloped the windows, and when the sash was raised, delicate tendrils insinuated themselves within, as if, in Southern fashion, they would "shake howdy." The room was dainty and home-like. It flashed across Ellesworth as he sank into the cushioned rocking-chair with a long breath of content, that it might have been Georgiella's. It was in the dreamy part of the day. The sun was dipping under the high branches of the pines. Then the luxury of leaning out of the window in December! He could not help but think of it as *his* sun, and *his* garden and *his* trees. And now Georgiella came out, bareheaded, and swept the pine needles and leaves from the narrow box-bordered path, and snipped dead branches from the shrubs, and then before she went to feed the chickens she cast up at him a shy glance that made his heart leap within him. He did not leave his room until he was called to supper. His fancy was feverish, and kept picturing his mortgaged girl in a Boston drawing-room, thrilling all the people he knew with her beauty. He called it carmine beauty; but he was young and ardent.

He felt it when he first saw her, but that eventful afternoon he formulated it and repeated it over and over again until he became dizzy—"I love her! I love her!" And then visions of work and strength and success, and ambitions that had been stifled, began to spring within him like blades from watered bulbs. The electric shock had come. He knew it. He meant to spring to it like a man.

Dreamily he dressed for supper, and dreamily descended. Mrs. McCorkle greeted him with her fine, thin manner. The young man looked about him curiously. Aunt Betsey waited on the table. He tried not to think of her hospitality in the matter of snuff. The room was worn and bare and gray; so bereft of all but the most necessary furniture that its few ornaments had a startling conspicuousness. He noticed a fat Chinese vase set up like an idol in an old escritoire. Over the mantel was a glass-case religiously protecting some coins and ancient papers. A rusty sword hung on the wall. Biographies of Lee and Jackson, flanking the Chinese fat vase in the dilapidated escritoire, and a villainous crayon framed in immortelles upon the wall, that probably represented his deceased debtor, completed the ornamentation of the room. Miss Benson entered when he had gone as far as this, and vivaciously exhibited the bric-à-brac of the room.

"This is a Ming." She pointed to the fat vase. "I understand there isn't another like it in the country. It belongs to the Ming dynasty."

Although from Boston, Ellesworth was not familiar with the Ming dynasty, but he bowed and feebly ejaculated,—

"Ah! this is a real Ming, is it?"

"And there," said the young lady, bringing him before the glass-case, "are family possessions. That is a coin of George II.; those are Pine-tree shillings; those yellow papers are two copies of a continental newspaper, and this is the South Carolinian continental penny."

Ellesworth inspected the treasures gravely. He did his best not to smile.

"Very remarkable!" he murmured. "How Southern!" he thought.

"Colonel Tom Garvin says there are nothing like them in the country. I suppose they would bring a great deal if sold," she added, wistfully. "But we don't like to sell them. Besides, we never saw anybody who wanted to buy them."

Acquaintance under one roof passes quickly into intimacy. Love moves with fleet feet when two young people breakfast and dine together with a vague chaperone. A tropical garden, soft evenings and youthful impetuosity shorten the span to experience thought necessary to precede an engagement.

Georgiella was the soul of domestic comfort—as Southern women are. She was a high-spirited, variable, bewitching creature. At first, the Northerner could not understand her indifference to her obligations as a mortgager. Why did she not sell the Ming vase? She looked upon debt not as a disgrace, but as an inconvenience. Foreclosure proceedings were under way, and it never occurred to the two women to stop them with even a part of the fifty dollars which Ellesworth paid for his board in advance. When Ellesworth found out that this trait was not a pauper's, but like Georgiella's strange beauty, constitutional, he forbore to criticise it. In truth, he was too much in love now to criticise the girl at all. It is probable that if she had robbed his pocketbook he would have merely said, "How interesting! it is her tropical way."

A day or two before Christmas he drove over to Sunshine and returned with a happy, tired face.

"You would take a Christmas present from me, wouldn't you?" he asked with unprecedented humility.

"It's in a paper," he explained.

"What is it?" she asked uncomfortably, for she felt his serious look upon her.

"It's—eh—a trifle that I think you will like," replied Ellesworth without a smile.

Christmas came cheerfully into the mortgaged house. Georgiella cried a little for her father's sake. In spite of her bereavement, and of the fact that she was sure the sheriff would attach the house that day of all others, she did not feel very wretched. She felt that she was wicked because she was so happy. There were wings in her heart.

It was not the custom to hang up stockings at the Benson's.

"My things have always been put into the Ming vase," Georgiella explained, "and the others went on the breakfast table."

She did not look at Ellesworth often. Her eyes dropped. Her cheeks were like red camellias. She felt in a hurry all of the time. The young man himself took the situation out in looking at his watch. It seemed to him as if the world were turning over too fast. He thought of what he meant to do stolidly, notwithstanding.

They went out and gathered mistletoe in the swamps. He climbed trees and tore his hands and fell into the water with zest. They brought home a barrelful of it. He thought how he had bought it at twenty-five cents a spray on Washington street. He held a great branch of it behind Georgiella over her head, and looked at her. She started like a wild animal, and kept ahead of him all the way home.

On Christmas morning Ellesworth got up early—he had hardly slept; he could not rest, and went

softly downstairs. The door into the dining-room was open, and she was there before him. She stood before the Ming vase. The mistletoe branch to which he had fastened his present, and which he had set into the vase to look like a little Christmas tree, lay tossed beneath her feet. The pearly white berries were scattered on the floor. The mortgage was in her hand—trust deeds, principal notes, interest notes, insurance policy. She was turning the papers over helplessly. She looked scared and was quite pale. Her bosom heaved boisterously. She heard him and confronted him. She managed to stammer out,—

"What, sir, does this mean?"

It required a brave man to tell her in her present mood; but he did.

"It only means that I love you," said Ellesworth point blank.

The girl went from blinding white to blazing crimson, but she stood her ground. The mortgage papers shook in her hands. He thought that she was going to tear them up. To gain time, for he dared not approach her, he stooped and picked up the disdained mistletoe. When he had raised himself she shot out this awful question, looking at him as she did when they first met.

"Are *you—He*?"

The young man bowed his head before her. If he had set fire to her place, or robbed her father's grave, she could not have regarded him with a more crushing scorn. She tried to speak again, but her passion choked her.

"I—I give you back your home," he protested humbly. "It is mine no longer. It is your own Don't blame me. I love you."

"My father did not bring me up to take valuable presents from—Boston—gentlemen!" blazed the Southern girl.

She waved him aside, swept by him without another look, and melted out of the room. But he noticed that she took the mortgage papers with her.

In the course of the morning he threw himself upon the mercy of Mrs. McCorkle.

"I have a right," he said; "I want to make her my wife."

"Georgiella is not behaving prettily," said Mrs. McCorkle severely. "If a Northerner *does act like* a gentleman, the least a Southern girl can do is to behave like a lady. I will speak to Georgiella, sir."

Georgiella came to the Christmas dinner with blazing eyes. She ate in silence, looking like an offended goddess, dressed in an old black silk gown of her mother's trimmed with aged Valenciennes lace.

But after dinner she stayed in the dining-room while Mrs. McCorkle and Aunt Betsey went into the kitchen. She walked up to the Ming vase and stood before it. Ellesworth followed her.

"I have been thinking it over," she began abruptly in a quaint affectation of a business-like tone. "I will keep the mortgage—thank you, sir. It *is* my home, you know," she put in pugnaciously. "But I will pay for it, if you please."

"*Pay for it!*" gasped Ellesworth.

"Yes, sir; I will sell you the Ming vase," returned Miss Benson calmly, "and the two Revolutionary papers, and the coin of George the Second and the rest—" She waved her hand toward the glass-case. "You may take them to Boston with you."

These were her assets. Ellesworth looked at her for a moment, torn between astonishment, pity, amusement and love; but love got the better of them all, and he answered solemnly,—

"Yes, I will take the Ming vase, and the Revolutionary papers, and the old coins and you too, my darling!"

"Well, I *do* like you," admitted Georgiella. Suddenly she began to droop and tremble, and then to sob. Then he held her.

"You must give me a first mortgage; you must," demanded the young man. "I must have everything—the whole—no other claims to come in from any quarter of the universe. You understand. You've *got* to be my wife!" he exploded in a kind of glorious anger.

She could not deny him, for she thought it was the Northern way of wooing, and smiled divinely.

"And now—may I?" He took the mistletoe branch from the Ming vase and held it over her head. Their eyes closed in ecstacy.

Mrs. McCorkle gave a funny little feminine scream of dismay. She had heard no sound, and had come in from the kitchen to see if they were quarreling.

"And I'll put it in the trust deed," he whispered humbly, "that I will make you happy, dear!"

When Ellesworth rode over to Sunshine for his next mail he found the following letter awaiting him:

1111 Court Street,
Boston, Mass., *Dec.* 22, 1890.

Mr. Francis B. Ellesworth:

Dear Frank,—What the deuce do you mean by countermanding Benson's foreclosure at this time of day? It makes a peck of trouble. In Boston we are too busy to fool with affairs this way.

Messrs. Screw & Claw desire me to enclose their little bill. Mine will keep until you get here.

Yours truly,
Joseph Todd.

COLONEL ODMINTON

A SEQUEL TO "A REPUBLIC WITHOUT A PRESIDENT."

The Colonel paced his cabin alone. The new expression which success models was becoming intensified from day to day upon his face. He had outwitted the greatest nation in the world; he had defied the best detective service of modern times; he was rich beyond his dizziest dreams; he could aspire to any position; he would be an eastern prince perhaps, and drowsy-looking girls should wave peacock fans and soothe his memory to rest with crooning songs. What a delicious future he saw rising before him! His consummate stroke of piracy should purchase him a life of lotus ease.

The Colonel, had at last achieved; and, as is too often the case with extraordinary success, his stupendous act had robbed him of vitality and invention. Already he felt and acknowledged a dismemberment of his will. But a few days before, he was of all men, the most alert, the most ingenious, the most courageous, the most ambitious; while now, he lived in dreams, which he evoked as persistently as the witch of Endor evoked the ghost of Saul. His nature had undergone a revolution, in which he gloried. Had he been poor, he would not have accepted his sudden enervation without a struggle. But he was rich—thank God! rich—and rejoiced that he was to gratify his new-born languor.

His son alone had access to his luxurious cabin. That boy, who had been the ready and ignorant accomplice of his father's picturesque villainy, had already begun to grow thin with shame. He saw his father transformed from a virile into a sleek man. He himself had changed during the few days of his knowledge of the secret from a pliant boy into a silent accusation. The Colonel could not look his son straight in the eyes. This was the first warning to his diseased mind that he was not the greatest man of his age.

The Colonel had moreover a sense of security that unapprehended malefactors cannot feel. The pledge of the United States Government had been solemnly given. He could not be punished. His freedom was assured. Whenever he paced the deck, he filled his lungs with the pure, salt air, and allowed them to expand without stint. There was nothing contracted on his horizon. True, he had lost his country—but he had gained wealth. He felt sure of admiration, and of some applause. He remembered that an unextradited bank-robber had purchased a barony from the King of Würtemburg, and had lived there much respected. What position might he not buy with his American gold?

Still, he was haunted by a feeling of mingled dissatisfaction and unrest that marred the pride he felt in his own achievement. Was it due to his son's speechless denunciation? Or did it come from the fact that his authority seemed to be impaired? There was no insubordination nor mutiny among the sailors. It had not gone so far as that, with the well-paid and well-fed men. Perhaps it never would. But men do not easily obey a scoundrel or an outlaw except when it is understood that they are felons themselves.

In a certain sense the crew of the "Lightning" rejoiced in their master's superb feat. The venom of piracy had entered their veins. They firmly believed that Colonel Odminton would soon cast off his mask, and turn the most wonderful product of marine architecture into an irresistible pirate craft.

They dreamed of an inaccessible island—of confused wealth, of many vices, and unrestricted carousals. Therefore they still obeyed readily, but with an air of *abandon* that puzzled their commander. But Colonel Odminton did not suspect these natural speculations, for he was looking forward to a life of great respectability as well as of unrivalled luxury.

For ten days or so, the "Lightning" danced over the Atlantic. Of course, it must come to shore somewhere. People cannot live on gold. They must eat. The superb electric vessel had ice-making machines; and retorts for distilling the salt water into fresh; but no electrodes were there, to reduce wood to sugar or coal to beef. The Colonel felt his cheek sting with the excitement of coming to land. At the same time he felt a reluctance to do so. He dreaded to meet men. He could not expel the consciousness that is common to all culprits,—namely, the feeling that he would be

the centre of observation. He could not be apprehended; but supposing that he were not well received?

On the other hand, when the crew learned of the decision to make for land, they were almost riotous with joy. They were mad for the long-delayed chance to spend their high wages in vice and drink. If nations would conspire to pass an international law to prohibit women and rum at every port, what a magnificent stride to uninterrupted manhood all sailors would be forced to take!

But Captain Hans Christian shook his head as the "Lightning" forged toward the land.

There were some traits that Rupert did not inherit. His limpid heart understood the disgrace of his position. He pined for freedom and gradually wasted away. With feverish eyes he watched for the English coast. It is possible that he had, bereft of an honest father, meditated desertion at his first opportunity.

Now, at last, they sighted land. The vessel that was swifter than all other ships afloat, was undisguised. The Colonel had no thought of converting her into the "Mary Jane" again. No flight, no concealment was now necessary. It was just past sunrise when the "Lightning" glided into the troubled harbor of Penzance.

The inhabitants of Land's End are no stay-a-beds, and when the oil-skinned fishermen, who were ready to push their boats off in the rising tide, lifted up their eyes and beheld the graceful monster mysteriously undulating in, with no help of sails or steam, they called to each other, they uttered direful exclamations, and they assembled in ever increasing groups upon the sands. One ran to the public house and brought back to the throng a greasy proclamation, upon which the picture of a vessel was stamped.

Upon the cliffs, red-coats pointed to the stranger, and shook their heads ominously.

Before the "Lightning" had dropped her anchor, the whole population of Penzance was out, gesticulating, pointing, execrating.

"That's she, sure enough. That's her sheer in the pictur'. Them's the di-mensions given. Blast the pirates! Old England hain't no place for them."

"'Ere, Bill! you get the Colonel down. We'll send 'em buzzin' to Davy Jones' locker if they ventur' ashore here!"

The "Lightning" had come to anchor without colors at her stern. As she had no mast, there was no opportunity to fly a signal at her head, or the Union Jack at her peak. After the manner of steam yachts she had a pole that could be fitted in a raking position aft.

"As it isn't eight bells, we need no flags," explained Colonel Odminton.

"Shall we fly the Union Jack, then?" asked Captain Hans Christian.

The Colonel changed color. "Fly?" he snarled, "By ——! Fly nothing!"

The men on board had noticed the confusion on the shore. They thought little of it.

When they had escaped down the Potomac with the ransom, they forgot that a hundred cameras were trained upon them. Even their stupendous speed could not outstride the sensitive plate that can catch a perfect likeness in one two-thousandth part of a second. The duplex shutter is craftier than the criminal. The camera can outwit the cannon ball.

It did not occur to the Colonel that the United States Government would send proclamations to every friendly nation in the world, begging each to distribute them broadcast to every port; and that these contained a reproduced picture of Colonel Odminton's venture, with a description of himself; calling upon the nations to do him no harm, but to grant him no hospitality whatever. While the Colonel was dawdling across the water, the telegraph and the swift "Liners," had alarmed the world.

There was neither admiration nor mercy in the hearts of the millions who were watching for the "Lightning's" appearance. For once, there were no sentimental women waiting to cosset the bandit. He had held the President's wife his prisoner. At last the soft heart of womanhood was turned to stone.

In short, Colonel Odminton and his crew were declared outcasts from the world; and even the most abandoned nations sprang to the appeal of the United States, and stood ready to enforce the decree.

Colonel Odminton watched his launch approaching the beach. He had not allowed his son to go, and the two stood together facing the enraged town. Already the coast guards were drawn up, awaiting the launch. When it had come within fifty yards of the pier, the man in command, cried: —"Stop her!" in a loud voice.

Captain Christian obeyed quickly. He and his crew were near enough to see that the hand of every inhabitant had grasped a stone, ready to hurl. Hate distorted the faces of the honest Englishmen, who traditionally loathed a pirate worse than a papist.

"We will give you half an hour to leave the harbor!" bawled the Captain at the launch. "My orders

are to fire upon every one of you who attempts to land. There is no landing for pirates on England's shores. Get out!"

"D—— ye, get out!" The refrain was caught up from throat to throat and hurled at the frightened sailors. The shouts reached to the vessel, until the Colonel easily understood their import. But neither he nor his, as yet, knew that the sight of this beautiful vessel would raise a similar howl of hate, a like demonstration of hostility, in every port from China, westward to San Francisco.

Hastily he gave orders to trip the anchor: in ten minutes he picked up his men, who were cursing civilization. With the pale skin cramped upon his face, with trembling hands and blinded eyes he guided the "Lightning" out of the inhospitable harbor.

In an hour the world knew what had happened at Penzance. The smallest harbor on the English and French coast thrilled with the excitement of the novel sport, while Colonel Odminton sat in his cabin alone, bereft of his complacency, and beginning to be touched with the terrors that the hunted fox feels when it sights the first hound.

"Where now?" Captain Christian had been knocking gently, and now opened his commander's door for orders. The Captain was a cautious man, and was the only one on board, who by reason of his temperament, felt the serious position to the full.

Colonel Odminton turned his head moodily, and scowled at his Captain.

"To hell with you!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir," said Captain Christian respectfully, "but we cannot get provisions there."

It was deepest night when a gurgling thud, a splash of returning waters, a rustling of chain, told that another anchor had been dropped, and that another vessel had found rest in the harbor of Brest. Her side lights were quickly extinguished, and a white light at her bow as she swung to the tide, told curious eyes, if there were any, that the stranger was snug for the night. Four bells tinkled here and tinkled there, nor did the new-comer omit the resonant salutation to Father Time.

To starboard and to port, great hulls, not many hundred feet away, could be distinguished by the sharpest eyes, rising blacker than the night. The Mediterranean squadron of France had but made port the day before, and were due in Cherbourg on the morrow. The last patient launch had brought the last gay officer aboard, and peace commanded the formidable fleet.

Through the port-holes, veiled with silk, a light glimmered from the unconscious vessel that had just dipped anchor. Colonel Odminton, at that moment, was parting the curtains from his son's bed, and was regarding him with conflicting expressions. The lad slept restlessly, and under his father's eyes began to toss and mutter. Fearing to waken him, the unhappy man withdrew softly to his own cabin. There he poured himself out a full glass of brandy and began to pace the floor furiously.

It was a changed face that looked apprehensively at the door every time the timbers creaked in the chop of the sea. He was no longer the elegant, complacent, and successful criminal; he was the bandit at bay. He was distrustful, suspicious, ready for revenge. If he had only had Gatling guns aboard, he would have taught the inhabitants of Penzance a costly lesson for their threats and curses. Now, for the first time he rebelled against his lineage, and hated Englishmen and England with a virulent abhorrence.

But France was different. Tolerant blood ran in her veins. Here he felt secure from insult. The nation that had died in ecstasy under the nod of Napoleon, could not be otherwise than liberal to him. Colonel Odminton did not exactly expect a reception by the President of the Republic; but he did look forward to a respectful and harmless curiosity that would titillate his pride and remove the memory of his indignities.

His face began to assume a more benevolent expression, and the cowering, snarling look which comes to those who find themselves detested for good reasons, and thrust out, gave way to one of hope, such as comes to the convict when his term of imprisonment is nearly over.

Soothed by such imaginations, the Colonel smiled with disdain, snapped his finger at all the world, furtively examined his secret safe, and went to bed.

It did not seem to him that he had been slumbering as many minutes as he had hours, when he was startled by a violent tramping upon the deck above him, by the clanking revolutions of the machinery that hoisted the anchor, and then, before he had mastered his laggard senses, by imperative knocks at his door. Colonel Odminton pulled the spring, and his Captain bounded in. Terror was engraved on every line of that usually calm and observant face.

"For God's sake!" he cried in broken English and Danish, "we are to be blown up in ten minutes!" His jaws chattered without saying any more. He was stiff with fear.

With inconceivable rapidity Colonel Odminton thrust himself into his clothes and rushed upon deck. He had not time to put on his cap, and as he emerged in the rosy light of the breaking sun, his bare head was seen in all its now notorious characteristics. A cry greeted him.

Encompassed about by the huge mastiffs of war, more formidable than anything the vaunted navy of the United States could boast, the toy terrier shivered.

At the earliest dawn, the look-out upon the "Formidable" had discerned the stranger, and had reported the suspicious-looking vessel to his superior officer.

The French Republic, so friendly to the Government of the United States, had eagerly distributed placards describing the nefarious Colonel and his yacht. But yesterday, copies had been delivered into the hands of the officers of the squadron with orders to keep a sharp watch for the outlaw. He was not to be harmed, but to be driven away from France, if necessary, at the torpedoes breath.

The Admiral gave quick orders, which were enthusiastically obeyed. A fleet of launches were now untethered upon the "Lightning."

"No masts! No steam! Propelled by electricity! It is she!" Such exclamations mixed with oaths were exchanged by the Frenchmen as they surrounded Colonel Odminton's venture.

"Ahoy there!" cried an officer.

The sleepy Scandinavian in the Colonel's pay made no answer. He scowled at France vindictively.

"I know you. I give you ten minutes to depart. Va t'en! Sacre Nom de Dieu, if you ever appear on ze coast of France again, pouf! sink!"

By this time the Colonel had appeared on deck. The French natives, a hundred of them, within less than a biscuit's throw of the most eminent malefactor of the age, gazed at him curiously, and then burst into a medley of curses.

As these envenomed oaths struck Colonel Odminton, he staggered as if he had been slapped in the face. Carbines were levelled at him threateningly; but the French officers imperiously gave orders for all weapons to be laid aside.

By this time, Captain Hans had the anchor raised. Although this was done by electricity, still the men worked furiously. These embryonic pirates tottered like their commander with an overwhelming fear.

This terrible, this unexpected, this deadly persecution—how far did it extend? What was its origin? Was it a chance indignation that had fomented in England, and had leaped the channel, or was it a decree of outlawry that was passed by all the world?

It was enough to scatter the Colonel's pride, to tear out of him his complacency. The proud Southerner now knew, like the prisoner at Chillon, what it was to feel the hair turn white. An arch traitor may lose his own country, and get a footing in a foreign land, however contemptible his position may be: but Colonel Odminton and his crew had no country whatever to turn to. Civilization had with one accord arisen against him. The islands of the sea were three thousand leagues away.

Unsteadily he touched the lever and his ill-omened craft forged ahead. As it did so, it grazed the side of a boat. With a final curse, one of the men in the launch stood up, wadded a piece of paper in his hands and flung it at the Colonel. It struck the malefactor full in the face. The paper itself did not hurt him, but that malicious act was as fatal to him as if he had been hit in the groin by a French bullet.

Amid derisive shrieks and whistles the "Lightning" sped out of the harbor. The men upon its decks shook their fists at France, and cast sinister looks at their employer.

As the Colonel went below, his face white as the silver poplar, his hands trembling like leaves in a storm, he mechanically turned at the companionway and picked up the wad of paper that had rolled to the sill. It was a copy of the Proclamation warning every nation not to grant him hospitality; in the name of the American Republic.

Two hours later, the Colonel and his Captain sat opposite each other, talking in low tones. The Proclamation lay open on the table between them.

"It is impossible then to provision her at all," said the Captain slowly; "there is no hope for us, but to surrender or starve: disguise is impossible."

The Colonel nodded wearily.

"We have food for twenty men for three days; we have power left to go three thousand knots at ten knots an hour. The men are murmuring; where can we renew our power? The yacht is useless in two weeks."

"It is lucky," continued Captain Hans, after a pregnant pause, "that none of the men picked up this paper; you would have been knifed before night."

If it is possible, Colonel Odminton turned a shade paler, but he did not say anything. The smallest child could see that he was a broken man.

What a trap had he sprung for himself!

"The case is desperate, sir," began the Captain again. "What do you propose?"

The Colonel shook his head vacantly.

"We can take the launch, the men, and the gold, abandon her here, and land on the coast. We might escape clear."

The Colonel shook his head vigorously. He was ready to give up his life, but not his venture.

"Then we will go, sir. Pay us, give us the launch, and we will go. We cannot stay to be starved and tossed upon the sea with not even a jury-mast and a handkerchief."

"Let them go, father!" Rupert had entered from his own room, and stood pleadingly before the criminal.

The unhappy man looked at his son: back at his Captain; and nodded assent.

"Then we will go now," said the Captain decidedly. "We are within ten miles of the coast. The launch will carry us easily. Will you give us a hundred thousand in gold? You may keep the rest, you and the boy and the three niggers."

The Colonel mechanically went to an inner room, unlocked a secret safe, took out a heavy weight of gold and threw it upon the table before the Captain with a clang.

The stolen money was newly coined, and the gold glistened in the port-hole light. The Captain tied the bag, and held out his hand as he arose. He was honest after his kind, though a masterful man; but the Proclamation had thrown him upon his self-interest. Still, he felt sorry for the man whom the Proclamation had shrivelled.

One of the Colonel's faithful colored sailors was sent to the wheel. For a half an hour there was a bustle of chests and men. There was a counting of gold, and a commanding and warning voice. Finally there was a splash, as the powerful launch dipped into the water from its davits. There was a bounding of many feet, and a cry to shove her off.

"Good-bye, Colonel!" one man shouted; but the rest kept a silence. They knew that many dangers were before them.

Then the launch became a speck against a gray coast.

"Where now, father?" asked Rupert timidly.

For the first time since the conception of his infamous deed, the man looked his son straight between the eyes. Both faces were furrowed, and worn, and prematurely aged; the eyes of both were sunken and rigid.

"Home, my son—home," said the Colonel gently.

"Oh, father!" cried the lad.

"Kiss me, my son, if you care to, and now leave me."

The United States had been plunged into a war with Patagonia. The How of it was a disgrace to the Great Republic. Jingoism had done the deed, and the mischief of the matter was that the Patagonian cruisers outnumbered our own.

There was scurry in the navy yards, especially within that upon the Potomac. Old, disabled monitors were galvanized into the delusion of life: guns were hurried to bombard an inhospitable coast thousands of miles away.

Officials at their desks were telegraphing cipher dispatches to England to furnish vessels of war on hire, which she politely refused to do. Congress was passing an unrestricted maritime bill.

During this hubbub a very unusual thing happened to increase the confusion of the Navy Department at Washington.

About nine o'clock in the morning, while several ships of war were making ready for sea, a foreign torpedo boat was seen to *ricochet* up the river, passing by hidden torpedoes as if she were inspired, and then suddenly, with a swirl, coming to a dead halt before one of the largest of the formidable vessels.

In alarm, the crew of the American flagship was drummed to arms, and the gunners were called to their ports. Evidently the virulent torpedo-boat was a foe, bent to suicide after she had destroyed. The fact that she carried no flag, no masts, nothing but a bare hull, made her alarming in the extreme. It was an apparition of death. The American fleet trembled. At what invincible vessel would the bolt be launched? Officers paled and swore. At this terrible display of audacity, a paralysis had overtaken them.

Only a boy was visible on the stern of the ominous stranger. He pulled out a handkerchief and waved it. He seemed to touch a button, and the anchor rattled to its length. Captain and gunners

breathed relief. By this time the murmur of the arrival had spread, and thousands of quaking men lined the wharves to inspect the mystery.

At last someone thought of sending a boat to board her. Twenty men manned a launch and steamed out cautiously.

"Ahoy, there! Where do you belong?" demanded the officer in charge of the launch.

"I have a letter to the President of the United States," answered the boy with quivering lips.

"Whose vessel is this? Let down the gangway."

Two black sailors sprang from the hold of the mysterious vessel to obey.

"She belongs to the United States," replied the boy. "Please let me take the letter. You can take the boat."

Astounded beyond measure, the officer leaped on board. No name was visible.

"What is her name?" he asked eagerly.

"She has none. The President can name her. She was called the 'Lightning,'" said the boy steadily.

"By ——! I might have known," cried the officer. "Where is He? Who are you?"

"He is not here. The letter tells, sir. I am his son."

Rupert put both hands upon the spokes of the wheel, and held his head up straight. He faced the officer who had ordered the chase when the "Lightning" escaped with his country's gold.

What thoughts went through the lad's mind? Did he regret this last and most quixotic step? Did he long to "up the anchor," and give the signal to fly ahead? Did he regret freedom and lawlessness? Or was his heart that was broken by disgrace, healed by the atonement?

"Let me have the letter." The officer spoke after a long look at the son of America's most execrated malefactor. His voice was not harsh, for he divined how the boy's loyalty to his father and his country really blended into an emotion which men call honor.

Rupert put his hand to his breast:—

"My orders are to deliver the letter to the President with my own hand."

"You shall do so. The President is there."

The officer pointed to a high, white monster of distinction. "He is aboard there. He is watching you this minute. Jump in!"

The boy paled. For only a moment his courage deserted him, and he almost tumbled into the launch.

A great crowd of witnesses had gathered about the President, as if to protect him.

The word "assassin," was whispered from man to man. Even the officer could not command an avenue to the Chief Executive.

"Let him be brought," said the President authoritatively. With a marine glass he had watched the motions of the vessel, the boy, and the officer.

"I know him. Give way there! Let him come alone."

Then the men formed a living circle with the President in its midst, and Rupert stood alone with him in it, with head bared, and with a letter in his shaking hand.

"You are Rupert Odminton," said the President distinctly, after a long searching gaze. "You have come with a noble purpose. What is it?"

Without answer, with blood beating a wild tattoo, the boy bowed his head in acquiescence. He handed the President the letter. This the President took, and opened and read. Then he did what the people will not soon forget. He drew the son of his captor towards him, put his left hand protectingly upon the lad's head, and with a ringing voice read the letter aloud.

> "Mr. President, and people of the United States:—I thought myself a god, and know myself a felon. I, who meant to instruct the people, have learned a lesson such as even death cannot teach. I render to you my account. My son will show you in what secret safe in the vessel is preserved the gold that I stole from the Treasury. It belongs to the Country. There lack a hundred and twenty thousand dollars. I hereby bequeath the boat to the United States in payment for the balance I owe. It cost much more, and is the fastest vessel in the world. Re-christened, it may be of service in the approaching war; and the stain upon it, which my soul tells me is indelible, may fade. I give my son to you as hostage of my good faith.
>
> "Mr. President, I am without a country. I have no citizenship in the world. I beg you, if your kindness prompts you, to offer me pardon, that my bones may rest upon the soil I love. My son will guide such a messenger of forgiveness to me. Let him be sent soon, if

at all, for my crime scourges me so that I cannot live.

"ODMINTON."

"He was no common man," said the Secretary of State, in a voice of great feeling. "Mr. President, I suggest that the pardon be sent immediately. I think he has suffered enough."

The President smiled benignly.

"Mr. Secretary," he said, turning to the head of the navy, "shall we accept the yacht? I think the Treasury will find room for the gold. Can the navy find room for Colonel Odminton's atonement?"

The eyes of the Secretary of the Navy glistened.

"With that vessel fixed into a torpedo boat, we can whip the world! I shall put the youngster as middy aboard of her; he understands her better than any one else. With your permission, Mr. President, the boy is enrolled, and his commission will be made out at once."

The Secretary bowed deferentially.

"Do you wish to enter the United States navy?" The great head of the nation bent to the lad as he would have to his own son.

"Oh, sir! But my father," cried Rupert, broken by pride and shame and filial love.

"You will bear the pardon to-morrow," said the President kindly.

"I would rather go now. I think he needs it," whispered Rupert timidly. Then the boy, keyed so high, fell and was borne away.

Who does not love the Everglades when he knows them? The adorer of the warm woods had rather put his arm about a palmetto, and his cheek against its rough surface, than be softly met by the tenderest of women. Oh, the witchery of the moss-waving Everglades!

"Father! Father!"

A longing treble cut the languorous air.

The hidden hut behind the hidden bay was empty.

The boy and the officer searched hastily and fearfully.

"He is in the woods. Oh, you know—come!"

Behind the terror-stricken son the officer plunged into the thicket. Gloomy shades surrounded him. Warm breaths and new odors caressed him. Almost lifted out of the body by these new sensations, he followed with speeding feet.

"Help! Quick!" The shrill voice recalled him. Before the officer knew it, he was upon a figure kneeling beside a body under a great tree.

"Father! *Father!* He has forgiven you. It is all right!"

But the pleading voice of the lad faltered into an awful silence. The soldier put his hand upon the penitent's head. It was warm. The dead man's arms were outstretched upon the great tree. His body was upon the huge roots. His lips were as if he had but just kissed the bark.

Did his sin at the last restrain him, that he dared not to touch the soil of America, and fondle it as his own?

He had died unpardoned: it was to be, that he should be tortured to the end. But as to when he died, they could not tell—for his strong limbs were set; the swarming Southern ants had not desecrated him, and the moaning tree seemed to be explaining that she had kept him warm upon her lap.

He was buried beneath the sod to which, with the home-sickness of the true Southerner, he had crawled back to die. They laid the pardon in his folded hands.

The officer walked out of the Everglades, with bared head. He could not understand his own emotion. But the weeping lad followed slowly. He heard a cadence above the grave. Rupert understood it. It was the dirge of the Live Oak.

THE END.

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